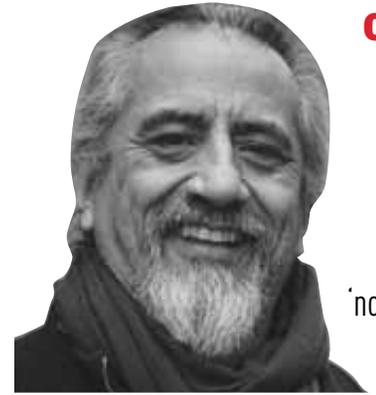


Clarion

NEWSPAPER OF THE PROFESSIONAL STAFF CONGRESS / CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

FEBRUARY 2021



CAMPUS
CSI's
failing
admin

Faculty vote
'no confidence'
in chiefs.

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Dave Sanders

MEMBERS ADVANCE **A NEW DEAL FOR CUNY**

Members have protested against cuts to CUNY at various venues, including this car caravan (above) against austerity in the Bronx. Members are now pushing new legislation that will rebuild CUNY: A New Deal for CUNY.

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POLITICS

Williams for Public Advocate

Jumaane Williams has been a CUNY advocate since his student days. The union is pushing for his reelection as the city's public advocate.

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CLASSES

Union: stop Bursar's holds

The PSC joined students to protest increasing class-size minimums and Bursar's holds that are keeping students from graduating on time.

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ADMIN

Matos joins AMG board

The chancellor has a new side gig as a board member of a publicly traded financial management company. What's he getting paid?

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ORGANIZING

Members on health & safety

More rank-and-file members are getting involved in health and safety organizing. The need for such organizing goes far beyond the pandemic.

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Williams for public advocate

By ARI PAUL

The PSC has endorsed Jumaane Williams for reelection as public advocate. Williams has been in the position since 2019, when he won a special election to replace Letitia James, who had been named State Attorney General. He is now running for a full term.

Williams has been an outspoken advocate for CUNY since his days as an undergraduate at Brooklyn



Ari Paul

Jumaane Williams

College, where he was a well-known student leader. He was an important voice in support of CUNY and the PSC as a progressive city council member serving on the council's Higher Education Committee, union leaders said.

SUPPORT FOR CUNY

As public advocate, Williams has made CUNY funding a signature issue. He issued a major report on the history of underfunding of CUNY and called for significant new state and city investment.

His advocacy against police violence has further solidified his relationship with the PSC. The union was an early critic of the NYPD's use of stop-and-frisk, and several CUNY faculty and students were key participants and researchers in litigation that resulted in a federal court ruling that the practice, according to the Center of Constitutional Rights, violated "New Yorkers' Fourth Amendment rights to be free from unreasonable searches and seizures and . . . [was] racially discriminatory in violation of the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment."

RACIAL JUSTICE

In her statement to the PSC's Delegate Assembly supporting Williams, PSC President Barbara Bowen emphasized his record on CUNY and racist violence and added that Williams had achieved an impressive 47% share of the vote in the 2018 Democratic primary for lieutenant governor, running

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR | WRITE TO: CLARION/PSC, 61 BROADWAY, 15TH FLOOR, NEW YORK, NY 10006. EMAIL: APAUL@PSCMAIL.ORG.

The 9/11 health crisis continues

● I was interviewed along with Olivia Cousins for the April 2019 issue of the *Clarion*. I was diagnosed with breast cancer and tragically, Olivia died from her 9/11-related cancer a few months after the article was published. Like many, we were unaware that we were entitled to benefits from the government as a result of our exposure to World Trade Center toxins. We both consulted with attorney Michael Barasch, who was also interviewed in that article. He advised us that we were eligible for both the free WTC Health Program and the Victim Compensation Fund (VCF).

Borough of Manhattan Community College (BMCC) has become a cancer cluster. More than 100 of us have been diagnosed with cancer and many have died. The National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) has linked 68 cancers as well as a host of respiratory illnesses to 9/11. According to the WTC Health Program, more than 16,000 people have been certi-



Dave Sanders

Yvonne Phang (pictured) says Borough of Manhattan Community College has a moral obligation to its community.

fied with 9/11 cancers and NIOSH projects that by 2025, another 35,000 people could become afflicted.

A 9/11 informational seminar, sponsored by the Barasch & McGarry law firm, was held at BMCC in September 2019, immediately af-

ter the permanent reauthorization of the Victim Compensation Fund. To qualify for compensation, the government requires two affidavits of Proof of Presence in the exposure area. Unless survivors act now to gather their proofs of presence,

they risk having their future claims denied. In addition, the VCF special master extended the deadline for family members to register claims on behalf of their loved ones who died more than two years ago. This extension will expire on July 29, 2021.

BMCC has a moral obligation to inform our community, once again, of the benefits to which we are all entitled. To the college's credit, after *Clarion* published its article, outreach efforts to faculty and former students was made by Robert Diaz, vice president of human resources before his retirement. Still, only 7% of non-responders, including those in the BMCC community, have registered for these programs. Clearly, the vast majority do not realize that they are eligible. I implore every one of the 20,000 students, faculty and staff who were at BMCC during the 2001-02 academic year to protect their rights by registering for both programs – even if they are not currently ill.

Yvonne Phang
BMCC

PSC warns of student housing insecurity

By MAURIZIO GUERRERO

Housing insecurity, an issue that affects more than half of CUNY students, has become a more pressing concern in the graduate and undergraduate community since the onset of the pandemic. Nearly half of CUNY students – or someone in their family – reported losing a job since last March. According to a 2018 survey of nearly 22,000 CUNY students from 19 campuses, one in 10 students had already experienced homelessness before the pandemic.

In the midst of this crisis, misplaced budget priorities threaten to further reduce crucial student services, warned PSC Treasurer Sharon Persinger at a New York City Council Higher Education Committee hearing about housing insecurity among CUNY students. "Many of the programs that offer critical support to students are often the first on the budgetary cutting block," she said at the January 14 hearing.

CUNY's pool of advisors and mental health counselors, she explained,

'Don't cut funding'

is already too small and under-resourced, stretched to the limit. "We are concerned about the upcoming budget fight," Persinger added. "The city can and should spend more in support services at CUNY colleges."

COVID-19 hit CUNY students "harder than students at other colleges," Persinger said, noting that about 60% of CUNY undergraduate students are from households that earn less than \$30,000 per year. Before COVID-19, CUNY students' situations were already financially precarious.

FINANCIAL INSTABILITY

Housing insecurity – the inability to pay rent or utilities, or the need to move frequently – was experienced by 55% of the respondents of the 2018 survey, published in March 2019. Fourteen percent have experienced homelessness – the lack of a stable place to live. Three percent self-identified as homeless.

Under these circumstances, it is crucial to facilitate simple access to resources and assistance to students, said Waleek Boone, a HEO student life specialist at Medgar Evers College.

"You don't want to tell your story over and over and over again," Boone said. "Students do not like to go to multiple offices seeking services and that is why they hide in the shadows. No one wants to be ridiculed or embarrassed."

CUNY should establish a single-entry office in each of the campuses, Boone said, to reduce the stressful conditions of students and identify ways of supporting them. The offices could even assist students in navigating the shelter system, where people are often treated as "less than a human being." "It's a whole different story," Boone added, when college officials intervene in shelters on behalf of students.

The pandemic provoked higher levels of stress, anxiety and depression within the CUNY community, concluded a spring 2020 CUNY Graduate School of Public Health report. "Many faced food insecurity or worried about paying rent," it read. "And not surpris-

ingly, many students had trouble with schoolwork." Helen Frank, a HEO college counselor at City Tech, agreed on facilitating students' access to resources. "Students are very reluctant to identify themselves as homeless," she said. Frank added that single mothers, immigrants and LGBTQ undergraduates are the most acutely affected by homelessness.

For students, additional support and simple ways to get access to it are key during this time of the health and economic crises. "It is no secret that students are falling through the cracks," said Juvanie Piquant, chairperson of CUNY's University Student Senate, "because of the lack of support."

Simple access to student support services

Clarion FEBRUARY 2021

Newspaper of the Professional Staff Congress/City University of New York. Vol. 50, No. 1. PSC/CUNY is affiliated with the American Association of University Professors, National Education Association, the American Federation of Teachers (Local 2334), AFL-CIO, the New York City Central Labor Council and New York State United Teachers. Published by PSC/CUNY, 61 Broadway, 15th floor, New York, NY 10006. Telephone: (212) 354-1252. Website: www.psc-cuny.org. Email: apaul@pscmail.org. All opinions expressed in these pages are not necessarily those of the PSC.

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A New Deal for CUNY

By ARI PAUL

A campaign for safety and better funding

Joined by 22 state lawmakers, more than 600 supporters and dozens of reporters during a press conference, the PSC unveiled perhaps its boldest plan yet: A New Deal for CUNY, a bill that would not only avert cuts to CUNY but make CUNY free, increase the number of faculty and staff and create a more accessible system of public higher education. (See summary of the ND4C here: <https://cunyrisingalliance.org/nd4csummary>)

Members are motivated – fighting for the New Deal for CUNY is a major campaign for the union in 2021. But it isn't the only one. In the coming weeks, members are fighting to prevent brutal state budget cuts to CUNY, and the union is advocating for higher taxes on the rich to fund education and other services. Once the union averts these cuts, the New Deal CUNY will go above and beyond mere status-quo funding. Beyond that, members are fighting to ensure that if there is a reopening of campuses in the Fall that it will be done safely.

ANTI-RACISM

At the center of this campaign is anti-racism. The historic disinvestment of CUNY is part of a ruling-class austerity agenda that hoards high-quality college education. For two decades, the PSC's central message has been that public higher education should be available to all. And the safety campaign is about fighting racism. As PSC sources said, many of the PSC-represented workers who were required to work on campus throughout the pandemic are disproportionately HEOs and CLTs, many of them in entry-level titles that have higher proportions of people of color than in faculty positions. And CUNY's student body is overwhelmingly made up of people of color, members of the same communities that have been hardest hit by COVID-19 in the last year.

The union is organizing on multiple fronts for this campaign. In addition to lobbying, press events and rallies, members are having one-on-one conversations with their colleagues about strike readiness and assessing members' readiness to engage in militant action. Members are taking on this enormous task while doing the day-to-day work of the union, as well as waging other campaigns, like the fight against increasing class sizes and the layoffs of adjuncts.

NO CUTS TO CUNY

Union members are mobilizing, as they do each year, to press state lawmakers to fully fund CUNY and defend it from budget cuts proposed by the governor. This year, the union is a part of a vast revenue coalition that is working with progressive lawmakers to impose new taxes on the wealthiest to alleviate



the state's budget crunch and have more money for services and education (see box at lower right).

Members are mounting major actions.

A union analysis of the governor's budget proposal this year shows that there will be a 5% reduction in spending at CUNY senior colleges. More troubling is that the proposal includes language that would offer tuition discounts to students for a variety of programs, including the choice to do online-only education. PSC officials and other education advocates fear that this could have a long-term effect of encouraging students toward online education, downsizing the physical operation of CUNY campuses in the future.

A PSC analysis of the governor's budget proposal, also shows that while the governor withheld 20% of the state's allocation to CUNY in 2020, he will continue to withhold 5%. This might sound like a partial victory for CUNY faculty, staff and students, but the damage has been done. Adjuncts have been laid off, class sizes have ballooned and other cuts have been made at campuses. If the money comes through it will do little for the workers and the students who have suffered as a result of the original 20% withholding.

PSC President Barbara Bowen pressed the union's case to the State Legislature on February 4, urging that the governor's proposed cuts be rejected and that "the Base Aid rate of funding for community colleges should be increased by a total of \$500 per FTE [full-time equivalent]: an increase of \$250 per FTE to fund the needs shared by CUNY and the SUNY community colleges," and other improvements (see testimony on pages 6 and 7).

Here's the good news: many lawmakers who heard the union's tes-

timony supported the calls to invest in CUNY and to enact new taxes on the rich. "We have to make it work, and we have to be smart about it," said State Senator Robert Jackson. "We have to raise revenue."

NEW DEAL FOR CUNY

On February 5, PSC members and other CUNY advocates joined State Senator Andrew Gouvardes and Assemblymember Karines Reyes in introducing the New Deal for CUNY, legislation that a union statement said will, if enacted:

- Provide a five-year phase-in of funds to save CUNY.
- Make CUNY free again (5 years – \$796 million).
- Increase mental health and academic counseling services for students (5 years – \$40 million).
- Increase the number of full-time faculty and professionalize adjunct pay (5 years – \$636 million).
- Invest in capital projects to renew CUNY buildings for greater safety and capacity.

Bowen said that the bill would "increase the number of full-time faculty by 5,000 positions," which would also allow for the university to recruit a more diverse teaching staff, while the bill would also grant "parity pay for adjuncts." She added that in addition to "making CUNY free," the bill would increase the advising staff because the university is "woefully underserved by academic advisors and mental-health advisors."

Student activist groups, including the University Student Senate, have joined the PSC by making the New Deal for CUNY a central priority this year. In addition to the two co-sponsors, dozens of state lawmakers joined the PSC press event to voice their support for the bill. Union members and students will spend the next weeks and months pushing this issue.

FOR A SAFE REOPENING

CUNY Chancellor Félix V. Matos Rodríguez didn't mince words when he said in a statement in January that "CUNY will plan for a safe and gradual return to mostly in-person instruction and support services in time for the start of classes in Fall 2021."

CUNY administration has made it clear: with the rollout of the COVID-19 vaccines the university is beginning the transition away from remote work toward a post-pandemic return to normalcy.

"If CUNY is working toward a reopening on campus in the Fall, everybody we represent and everyone at the colleges should have the opportunity to be vaccinated," Bowen said.

The PSC – along with the SUNY's United University Professions and the union's state affiliate, New York State United Teachers – successfully pushed the state to include higher education instructors in the Phase 1B priority category for vaccination. However, the PSC is pushing for that category to be broader. "The PSC calls on New York State

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ND4C
NEW DEAL FOR CUNY

Calling all CUNY alumni & former students (with or without a degree)

You're invited to an organizing meeting to support the NYS legislation a New Deal for CUNY which calls for tuition-free undergraduate education, more advisors & mental health counselors, fixing our buildings, hiring more & diversifying our FT faculty, & paying adjuncts fairly.

What did low cost or free tuition mean for you? Or, what would it have meant?

Wed., Feb. 17, 6-7 PM
<http://tiny.cc/ND4CALUM>
(URL is case sensitive)

A plan to TAX THE RICH

The union is a part of a movement pushing the New York State Legislature to pass a set of new bills that would bring in much needed revenue for the budget. Here's a look:

- Progressive income tax: the rich will pay a higher income tax. Projected revenue: between \$12 billion and \$18 billion.
- Capital gains tax: taxing stock profits at the same rate as wages. Projected revenue: \$7 billion.
- Heirs' tax: bigger tax on inher-

ited wealth. Projected revenue: \$8 billion.

- Billionaires' tax: additional tax on those above the millionaire class. Projected revenue: \$23 billion in the first year, \$1.3 billion annually after that.
- Wall Street tax: small tax on investment transactions. Projected revenue: between \$12 billion and \$29 billion.
- Corporate tax: rollback of the corporate tax breaks under Trump. Projected revenue: \$9 billion.

(Source: *Times Union*)

Jud Gutierrez

Advocates blast Bursar's holds & class cuts

By ARI PAUL

The PSC and other CUNY advocates have demanded that the University use \$455 million in new federal COVID-19 aid – on top of the \$251 million the University received in CARES Act money last year – to “keep class sections open and allow students to enroll,” according to a union statement.

In a press conference January 26, PSC members noted that at various campuses students were unable to attend the classes they needed to graduate due to both “Bursar’s holds” (when the administration keeps a student from enrolling or registering for courses due to that student’s outstanding balance, even a small one) and the lifting of class-size minimums, thus creating a rationale for college administrations to shut down classes that “fail” to reach their inflated minimum enrollment numbers.

ENROLLMENT BLOCKS

J. Paul Narkunas, an associate professor of English at John Jay College, called these blockades to enrollment “stupefying” when the University has the federal money to keep these students enrolled in the courses they need. He added, “CUNY has willfully chosen not to help these students,” adding that the administration’s decisions “will make students suffer.” Narkunas said that due to class-size minimums being increased, in his department alone 20 sections were slashed before the start of the Spring semester, with another 10 currently on the chopping block despite the \$7.66 million the college has received in federal stimulus money.

George Sanchez, PSC chapter chair at College of Staten Island, said, “The money is there, no one should be getting cut.” He added that CUNY should put “a moratorium on the Bursar’s holds.”

Inez Barron, chair of the City Council Higher Education Committee, said, “We know there is

PSC: Use federal funds



J. Paul Narkunas spoke about the “stupefying” levels of student neglect at John Jay College.

additional federal stimulus money coming...Why is this happening?”

The situation affects campuses across the city, and the union worries that these cuts could lead to adjunct job losses in the future. The union said in a statement, “Kingsborough Community College administrators have identified up to 30% of spring courses for possible cancellation and point to Bursar’s holds as a cause. Brooklyn College’s School of Humanities and Social Sciences has been pushed to raise course enrollment minimums by 33%, a change

that will lead to severe reductions in courses. At York College more than 1,000 students are barred from enrollment because they owe small amounts of money to the college.”

CANCELLED CLASSES

Immanuel Ness, chair of the political science department at Brooklyn College, decried the college administration’s decision to lift class-size minimums and the resulting class cancellations. Ness noted that in addition to putting students in a position where they

cannot take the classes they need, these soaring class-size minimums threaten the quality of education at the college.

“To have a class of 30, 35 or more is just unfeasible and not pedagogically sound,” Ness said. “You’re not getting your college education.”

But perhaps no one described the Kafkaesque situation better than Hunter College senior Tyrese Spruill, who due to a Bursar hold will not graduate at the end of the Spring semester as previously scheduled. Having to use “spotty” internet on a computer that he shares with multiple members of his household, Spruill, a creative writing major, was never able to receive clear communication from the college about his financial aid. In short, his graduation has been delayed by the chaos of distance learning and fumbling by the Hunter administration.

“I am stuck in limbo in terms of not being able to put in my classes because of the Bursar’s hold, and being unable to know whether my financial aid has gone through or not simply because of a piece of paperwork,” Spruill said. “Now that I’ve implemented this paperwork twice, I have not received any sort of information explaining [whether] it has been received or that it’s being looked over or that anything is changing for my current predicament.”

LARGER CLASSES

The union does not know how many students are in the situation Spruill is in, but the union believes that the problem is occurring throughout the CUNY system. Calling the situation “cruel” and “unforgivable,” PSC President Barbara Bowen told reporters, “CUNY should not be putting obstacles in front of our students.” She said in a statement, “This is absolutely the wrong moment to enlarge classes and risk causing another round of mass layoffs of adjuncts

at CUNY. The University should be using the federal relief funds to restore adjunct staff and faculty positions, not to throw more New Yorkers into unemployment. The PSC calls on the CUNY administration: Lift the holds, keep the classes running, and let our students and the communities that depend on them have a chance to rebuild their lives through access to college education.”

AID TO STUDENTS

The CUNY administration responded in a statement that since last Spring, it has “disbursed over \$118 million in student emergency grants to more than 161,000 students,” and that an “additional \$118 million in aid to students will be allocated shortly, using federal

Remove undue obstacles facing CUNY students.

Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act funds.”

It continued, “This aid to students is being supplemented by \$9 million the Chancellor’s Emergency Relief Fund raised through private and corporate philanthropy. The Chancellor’s Emergency Relief Fund was established in April to help students who have experienced job losses and other financial setbacks during the pandemic. The fund has so far awarded \$500 grants to more than 9,000 students, prioritizing undocumented students and international students who were precluded under the CARES Act from receiving aid.”

Noting that some of that money had been allocated to purchasing laptops and enhancing technology for distance learning, CUNY said that “The balance of CARES Act and CRRSAA funding will be allocated directly to the campuses for student support and mental health services and to reimburse colleges for COVID-19-related costs, such as refunds, among other priorities identified by the University’s community and senior colleges and professional schools and programs.”

Williams for public advocate

Continued from page 3

in conducted a courageous run with challenging gubernatorial candidate Cynthia Nixon. “That Jumaane won such a large percentage of the Democratic vote statewide shows his ability to bring New Yorkers together in support of a progressive agenda,” said Nixon. Union delegates voted overwhelmingly to endorse him.

UPCOMING ELECTIONS

The Democratic primary election for public advocate is June 22. The union expects to consider endorsements for the two other major city-wide offices, mayor and comptroller, in the coming months.

Luke Elliott-Negri, a PSC Executive Council member and the union’s legislative representative, said,

“Jumaane is someone who has independence to do things that many will not.”

‘BOLD SOLUTIONS’

Williams said in a statement, “As a two-time graduate of the CUNY system, I know how beneficial this university can be, but

the COVID-19 pandemic and long-standing lack of investment from the city and state have caused significant challenges that require bold solutions from our elected leaders. I’ve been proud to be a partner on this effort with the PSC, and am honored to receive their endorsement as we continue to fight to preserve CUNY’s standing as a top university that provides world class education.”

Council endorsements

By CLARION STAFF

The PSC’s legislative committee has unveiled the union’s endorsements in some key New York City Council races.

The union is endorsing two incumbents, Carlina Rivera (District 2) and

Justin Brannan. The union is also endorsing the outgoing Manhattan Borough President and former city Council Member Gale Brewer.

The union is backing a few newcomers who are vying for seats: Amit Singh Bagga, Jennifer Gutierrez and Olivia Drabczyk.



Inez Barron, chair of the city council committee on higher education, supported the union’s message.

Faculty vote 'no confidence' at CSI

By ARI PAUL

The College of Staten Island (CSI) Faculty Senate issued a vote of “no confidence” last December against President William Fritz and Provost Michael Parrish. The vote is just the latest sign of ongoing distrust and discontent between faculty and staff on one side and CUNY Central and the CSI administrators on the other.

The vote focused on two main issues: the undermining of faculty governance and the mishandling of the campus budget.

MISMANAGEMENT

In its statement of no confidence, the senate said the president and provost “did not articulate a clear intellectual or scholarly vision for CSI and have failed to provide leadership or consistent instructional policies, guidelines, or parameters during the pandemic.” It went on to state that administrators “approved and allowed online class sizes to increase against the recommendations of the Faculty Senate and the faculty in general,” and “ignored the Faculty Senate Committee reports on research and technology submitted over the last two years.”

The president has “jeopardized the college’s financial solvency,” said the senate. Leadership “drastically cut the budget of the library and the necessary resources for faculty to do their research and scholarship” and “cut the adjunct faculty and the staff of the college during this pandemic in order to address the budget crisis that was, in part, their own making.” At the same time, the statement continued, CSI invested “in Division II athletics without any consultation with the faculty and have yet to

Budget, governance at issue



George Sanchez, PSC chapter chair at College of Staten Island, helped organize faculty for the vote.

publicly evaluate this decision for its efficacy and impact on the college.”

CSI is the only CUNY campus in Staten Island.

ANGRY & DISCOURAGED

George Sanchez, PSC chapter chair at CSI, told *Clarion* that faculty and staff have long had questions about the administration’s sense of accountability for its fiduciary responsibility. Alleging that CUNY Central has had to give loans to the

college in the past, Sanchez said other “[CUNY] colleges have austerity funding, but they have better fiscal management and more shared governance.” Sanchez added, “The morale on the campus is so bad among the faculty, staff, and students; it’s really dropped in [the past] five years. People email me all the time... angry and discouraged.”

Deborah DeSimone, an associate professor of education at CSI

and the secretary of the college’s Faculty Senate, said, “The issues of

Unilateral decisions & divisive tactics

inclusivity, communication and accountability are particularly a problem at CSI because, in [the administration’s] attempts to divide the faculty, squash dissent and make unilateral decisions

without consultation, the administration created a crisis of confidence. This crisis has direct impact on policy making at CSI. Hence, the motion

to bring a vote of no confidence to the floor of the senate.”

Frank Sobrino, a CUNY spokesperson, said, “Amid the adversity wrought by the health crisis, the College of Staten Island nonetheless was able to accomplish a great deal. We look forward to the CSI leadership team building on these accomplishments as we turn the page on 2020 toward a brighter new year.”

HISTORY OF NO CONFIDENCE

Faculty members around CUNY have often used votes of no confidence to hold campus administrators accountable. Last Fall, PSC members at the Hunter College Campus Schools voted no confidence in Hunter College President Jennifer Raab and in Hunter College Campus Schools Director Lisa Siegmann when the school attempted to start in-person classes without proper safety protocols in place.

In February of 2020, *Clarion* reported that the Bronx Community College Faculty Council passed a vote of no confidence against Kay Ellis, vice president of administration and finance, on the grounds that she allowed “gross physical deterioration throughout campus, including a lack of proper lighting and inadequate indoor heating under her watch.”

“I believe that the president and the administration should be uniting with the faculty, staff and students to oppose cuts, instead of administering them,” said Sarah Schulman, a distinguished professor of English at CSI. “The presidents of all 23 CUNY campuses and the CUNY Board of Trustees should be the front line, not the faculty and staff.”

Matos joins AMG asset board

By ARI PAUL

Affiliated Managers Group – or AMG, as it is listed on the New York Stock Exchange – announced on January 8 that it has appointed CUNY Chancellor Félix V. Matos Rodríguez to its board of directors. The firm describes itself as a “global asset management company with equity investments in leading boutique investment management firms.” While it is not uncommon for university managers to sit on the boards of charitable organizations, the appointment of the chancellor of the largest public urban university in the country to a company whose aim is to increase the wealth of the wealthy raises serious questions. The other members of AMG’s board come from the world of private-sector asset management.

Among the chancellor’s other board appointments at the United Way of New York City and the

American Council on Education, his seat at the table of big capital seems especially odd. But there is some consistency here: Bill Thompson, the chairman of the CUNY Board of Trustees, also has parallel interests in big business as the chief administrative officer at Siebert Williams Shank & Co., a firm offering investment banking, sales and trading, research, advisory, and asset management services.

The chancellor scores a nice gig.

One question on people’s minds: How much does this side job add to the chancellor’s current salary? Upon Matos Rodríguez’s appointment as CUNY chancellor in Spring 2019, *Clarion* reported that he would be paid an annual salary of \$670,000, in addition to a \$7,500 monthly housing stipend.

Neither AMG nor the CUNY administration would confirm how much, if any, compensation the chancellor is receiving for his service at AMG, but financial disclosure review

of the firm, which operates offices across North America, Europe, the Middle East, East Asia and Australia, offers some clues. Total compensation given to its board members, including stock awards, option awards and cash payments, ranged from \$280,066 to \$401,566 per member.

INSULT TO INJURY

As for any possible conflicts of interest regarding the chancellor’s appointment to the AMG board, CUNY spokesperson Frank Sobrino said, “The chancellor requested and received approval from the New York State Joint Commission on Public Ethics prior to accepting the position.”

The chancellor has not announced or commented publicly on his appointment, though it is clear from his previous comments that Matos Rodríguez believes CUNY will need to rely increasingly on partnerships with the for-profit sector.

PSC activists have noted that the news about the chancellor



Chancellor Félix V. Matos Rodríguez joins the world of big money.

and AMG adds insult to injury for CUNY staff and faculty, having endured increasing economic and professional hardships since the beginning of the pandemic, including the dismissal of adjuncts and the increase in class sizes.

THOSE LEFT BEHIND

“It is not surprising that Chancellor Matos Rodríguez has accepted a position at a finance board where

he can expect an additional compensation of hundreds of thousands of dollars on top of his \$670,000 salary from CUNY,” said Rosa Squillacote, the PSC’s vice president of part-time personnel. “One hopes he enjoys his climb to being a millionaire, while CUNY cannot afford to keep part-timers hired, let alone paid a decent wage. Chancellor Matos has overseen a dark period in CUNY’s history.”

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

For a fair budget and a new

By BARBARA BOWEN

The following is an excerpt of testimony delivered to the State Legislature on February 4.

Weeks before the pandemic hit last March, the Legislature was poised to make significant new investments in public higher education. Then the world changed. New York State moved to an emergency budget, and many of the initiatives of last spring were put on hold. But both houses of the Legislature, with your leadership, demonstrated last year that New York can make increased funding of CUNY and SUNY a priority. We urge you to build on that momentum in Fiscal Year 2022. And this year much more will be demanded of you. You have a once-in-a-generation opportunity to change the course of history in New York State – by restoring fair taxation and reversing the policies of austerity. On behalf of the 30,000 members of the PSC, I call on you to aim high.

Aiming high will mean passing substantial new revenue-raisers and refusing to accept that even the best case imagined in the Executive Budget represents success. New York State is structurally underfunded because of a failure to maintain truly progressive taxation. For CUNY, the state budget scenario that includes the full \$15 billion in federal funds would mean a return to overcrowded classrooms, inadequate staffing, crumbling buildings and dangerously low student support. The budget the governor presented, assuming \$6 billion in federal support, delivers major cuts to CUNY. And the state has been quietly cutting CUNY funding all year, under the banner of “withholding” 20% of funds and freezing raises.

VAST DISPARITIES

The PSC joins the governor in the demand for \$15 billion in federal funds to close the current budget gap, and we will work aggressively to support passage of the full \$1.9 trillion federal relief bill. But I want to be clear: a return to pre-COVID fiscal “normal” would be devastating for CUNY. “Normal” was killing CUNY, and I would say was designed to kill CUNY, just as “normal” systemic racism was suffocating and designed to suffocate our students. The way to create a different future for CUNY and New York is to reject austerity and enact new investments.

The PSC calls on you to:

- 1) Fund the initial elements of a visionary new investment in CUNY: The New Deal for CUNY.
- 2) Raise revenue for New York State by passing the six Invest in Our New York bills.
- 3) Undo the damage in this year’s CUNY funding – the 20% “withholding” of funds and the freeze on contractual raises.
- 4) Reject the cuts to CUNY proposed in the Executive Budget.
- 5) Support us in demanding that the CUNY administration use federal stimulus funds to protect classes, students and jobs that have been imperiled by the pandemic.



PSC members rallied against CUNY cuts in the Bronx in January.

History shows us that at times of crisis governments must not be timid in their response. The current crisis, like the Great Depression, demands visionary solutions, not defensive austerity. We urge you not to waste that support.

The linchpin of the FY2022 budget must be increased revenue through fair taxation. The members of the PSC call on you to pass the six revenue bills supported by the Invest in Our New York coalition. We urge you to refuse to pass a budget that fails to increase revenue substantially and restore progressive taxation. The wealth of the rich is created by working people. The rich and their corporations must not be shielded from paying their fair share. Make this the year in which you increase New York’s revenue, invest in a turnaround for CUNY and repudiate the “normal” that has been slowly crushing CUNY to death.

REJECT AUSTERITY

“Normal” has also been crushing Black and brown New Yorkers. The report recently released by The Center for an Urban Future provides devastating evidence that New York City already has gaping disparities in college attainment by race. “Just 20% of Hispanic New Yorkers, 27% of Black New Yorkers, and 45% of Asian New Yorkers hold a bachelor’s degree, compared to 64% of white New Yorkers,” the report states. The disparities within neighborhoods are even more shocking.

In Jackson Heights, Queens, while only 11% of Hispanic residents hold a bachelor’s degree, the rate is 58% for white residents. In Bushwick, Brooklyn, 71% of white residents have a bachelor’s degree or higher, compared to 24.5% of Black residents and 14% of Hispanic residents. These disparities come at a time when the city’s economy is increasingly bifurcated, according to the report. The economy has produced “a large number of low-wage jobs that were accessible to individuals without a college credential and a smaller number of higher-wage jobs that mainly went to those with at least a bachelor’s degree.” The pandemic has made the trend worse.

New York City and New York State are clearly failing if the agenda is to support public education as a means to reduce inequalities of race, ethnicity and class. This year’s budget provides an opportunity to take an important step in creating a more just and inclusive economy; that step should start with CUNY.

The reasons for inequalities are complex, and they cannot be solved without systemic change. But many could be dramatically relieved by ensuring that CUNY is free, fully funded and a welcoming intellectual home for New Yorkers of all races and ethnicities. This year, the PSC, as part of a student-labor-community coalition, has developed groundbreaking legislation that will go a long way toward addressing such inequalities: The New Deal for CUNY. The

legislation, which will be launched tomorrow, demonstrates that there is a compelling and fiscally sound path to making CUNY tuition-free while at the same time restoring staffing and student support to the levels any students need. Join us tomorrow at the launch – but more important, join us in reimagining what the nation’s largest urban university, the people’s university, could be.

A GENERATIONAL EFFECT

I am proud to join my colleagues from New York State United Teachers and United University Professions to urge that now is the time to fight for fully funded public higher education. If the public colleges and universities are forced to remain on their current starvation diet, New York’s economic recovery will be slow, partial and racist. The priorities enacted in Albany and city hall this year and next will set a generational course for the state and for CUNY. History will judge us by how we used the power we had in this moment, however limited, to respond to the crises of public health, economic collapse and systemic racism. I am calling on you – and on all of us – not to fail. One sure way to do that is to embrace the proposals for new revenue and support an investment that empowers CUNY to address racism and inequity.

Demand is growing across the state for an end to the unfair tax system that left New York, the first epicenter of the virus in this country, fatally unprepared for a public health crisis – which also became an education crisis, a housing crisis, a transportation crisis. PSC stands in support of the six

Six bills that ‘Invest in Our New York’

w deal



Dave Sanders

through the CUNY Rising Alliance. CUNY Rising, which was formed in 2016 and immediately engaged in the effort to defeat a proposed \$500-million cut in state funding for CUNY, has spent the years since that successful campaign developing a vision of what CUNY should be: a free university with enough faculty, mental health counselors and advisors to support and expand students' aspirations for their lives. A university where students learn in appropriately sized classes from a body of faculty that reflects the diversity of the city and the student population. A university with 5,000 new full-time faculty positions, including targeted initiatives to increase racial diversity and create full-time job opportunities for current adjuncts. A university that sets a national labor standard for academia by mandating parity pay for adjunct faculty. A university where once degraded, crumbling buildings become leaders in sustainability. It is a vision of CUNY to be inspired by and to fight for.

SOCIAL MOBILITY

Investment in CUNY is not charity; it is economic good sense. CUNY leads the nation in enabling low-income students to advance into the middle class and beyond. CUNY students pour millions of dollars every year into the tax base. Because the majority of CUNY students remain in New York after graduation and move into middle-income jobs, the investment of taxpayer dollars in CUNY is fiscally as well as morally responsible. Take one example. A recent report found that City College, in Harlem, provides a three-to-one investment for taxpayers. Every dollar of public money invested in City College generates three dollars in tax income. City College alone generates nearly two billion dollars in annual income for a ten-county region per year and 16,760 jobs. There are 24 other CUNY colleges, all with similar power to repay New York's investment and transform the life-chances of millions of New Yorkers.

The Executive Budget hits CUNY hard. It cuts \$28 million from senior colleges and \$14 million from community colleges. CUNY cannot and must not be subject to these cuts.

Governor Andrew Cuomo released two plans to close the state's \$15 billion deficit. The first plan – the one detailed in the budget bills – assumes a \$6 billion infusion of stimulus funding from Washington and closes the remaining gap with a combination of 5% across-the-board budget cuts and revenue-raisers, notably a temporary, refundable tax rate increase for extremely high earners, mobile sports gambling and marijuana legalization. The second plan would close the entire deficit with federal stimulus money.

Both budget plans would rob CUNY and the Black and brown communities it serves of the investment needed to help launch New York's recovery from the pandemic and CUNY's recovery from decades of racialized austerity. Even the plan based on \$15 billion in stimulus aid to New York is a status quo budget that will leave CUNY starving. Under the Executive Budget plan that includes \$6 billion in stimulus, the 20% "withholding" from CUNY would be partially restored. But the damage from the withholding has been done. Classes have been cancelled. Jobs have been lost. A 5% cut to the CUNY senior colleges starting in the fall of 2020 would continue into next year. Community colleges and other critical programs would also lose funding.

BASE FUNDING

The governor's proposed budget allows for tuition increases of up to \$200 per year. The PSC strongly opposes this tuition hike. We call, instead, for a path to free tuition. Given the financial stress CUNY students are facing right now, another \$200 per year

increase, or additional fees, would force many to drop out.

The PSC urges the Legislature to restore the funding for CUNY detailed below, which is cut in the Executive Budget for Fiscal Year 2022.

The Executive Budget would reduce funding for CUNY community colleges by \$9.95 million, due to temporary enrollment declines during the COVID crisis. The CUNY Budget Request asks the state to restore these funds and freeze community college funding at its Fiscal Year 2021 level.

CUNY community colleges educate an even larger proportion of Black and brown students than the CUNY senior colleges. Community college students are more likely to have remedial academic needs, to have annual family incomes below \$30,000, to be first-generation students, or to be supporting children. They are exactly the students who would have their lives upended by COVID, who would be most challenged by a shift to all online instruction and services.

Instead of cutting community college funding, the PSC urges that the base aid rate of funding for community colleges should be increased by a total of \$500 per FTE (full-time equivalent): an increase of \$250 per FTE to fund the needs shared by CUNY and the SUNY community colleges, and an additional \$250 to fund the state's share of the community college investments of the New Deal for CUNY. In addition, the formula for funding community colleges should be adjusted to set a minimum floor of state investment of 98% of the prior year's funding.

CARES ACT

CUNY colleges have been allocated more than \$700 million in federal funds targeted at the massive needs created by the pandemic. More than half of these funds are available for institutional use, with the remainder specified for direct aid to students. The CARES Act, passed in June 2020 allocated \$251 million in federal funds to CUNY colleges, with at least \$118 million for student aid. CUNY reports that the student aid was distributed to 197,000 students in the fall. The Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act (CRRSAA) passed by Congress in December 2020 allocated another \$455 million, again with at least \$118 million for student aid.

We are grateful for your efforts in advocating for federal emergency aid for CUNY as well as to U.S. Senate Majority Leader Schumer and Senator Gillibrand for their continued support securing additional federal funds. But now we need the Legislature to make certain that CUNY uses every dollar New York's Congressional leaders fought for to ensure that students can continue

their progress to graduation, and faculty and staff jobs are protected.

CUNY must be far more transparent about its use of the federal stimulus money. Quarterly reports posted online indicate that CUNY has spent about \$33 million in institutional CARES Act funds. Why is CUNY continuing to hold the remaining \$100 million in institutional CARES Act funds? How is the money to be spent? The Legislature has the responsibility to demand answers about the CARES Act and the new CRRSAA funds.

In an August letter replying to congressional representatives who demanded similar answers about the CARES Act and called for the restoration of adjuncts' jobs, the CUNY Administration claimed to "have submitted a plan to the State that prioritized student support and mental health services, reimbursements to campuses for COVID 19-related costs such as refunds, and investments in online infrastructure and training. The plan has been approved by the State, but we decided to hold back the use of the majority of these funds until we conclude our budget process."

Is that budget process now complete? All who care about CUNY, who care about accountable government, should demand the best use and a clear accounting of how the aid is being spent. We request that the Legislature require CUNY to publish robust quarterly reports that detail how federal stimulus funds have been spent, how much of the funds remain and in what accounts they are being held, along with details about how CUNY plans to distribute the funds.

The federal money must not be used only to offset budget cuts while course sections are cut, adjunct workers are laid off, class sizes are increased and student services are reduced. Federal funds should be used to keep courses open, allow students with small unpaid tuition debts to enroll and to rehire laid-off adjunct workers, restoring coverage to those who have lost health insurance.

This has been a year unlike any other, and the members of the PSC thank you for holding important hearings throughout the year, for being responsive to our calls, and for being willing to work with us to find solutions through government. Our union has responded to this catastrophic year by demanding more of ourselves and imagining how New York needs to be not just healed but transformed. We ask you to take that imaginative leap with us. We call on you to use your position in government as courageously as the original New Deal reformers used theirs. Whether we are in government or not, we get only a few chances in a lifetime to change history, and I believe this is one of them. The PSC urges you to take it.

revenue bills being advanced by Invest in Our New York. Together, they would end tax breaks for the rich and raise approximately \$50 billion a year for New York.

High up on the list of needs being embraced by the entire coalition supporting the package of six bills is \$2 billion for CUNY and SUNY; there is recognition throughout the state that investment in public colleges and universities is essential to the well-being of the entire population. The resources that would be freed up by the new revenue bills would provide a lifeline for CUNY and our students, not only restoring academic programs, but supporting the services CUNY students rely on – essential housing, health and nutritional programs (15% of students reported that they were often or sometimes hungry in a 2018 survey).

Tomorrow will see the launch of landmark legislation sponsored by Senator Andrew Gounardes and Assemblymember Karines Reyes: The New Deal for CUNY. The PSC invites you to join these legislators as cosponsor and to pass the legislation this year for a five-year phased-in transformation of CUNY's ability to serve New York. The New Deal for CUNY redirects current TAP funding and makes CUNY tuition free; it establishes minimum staff-to-student ratios for mental health counselors, academic advisors and full-time faculty, while professionalizing compensation for adjunct faculty; and it supports the call for a five-year capital plan that would make CUNY's buildings safe, capacious and sustainable.

Since 2016, the PSC has worked in coalition with student, community and labor groups

Restore CUNY Funds Cut in the Executive Budget	\$42 million
● Senior College Operations	\$26.2 million
● School of Labor and Urban Studies	\$1.5 million
● CUNY Pipeline Citizenship Now	\$270 thousand
Senior College Restorations Subtotal	\$28.2 million
● Community colleges held harmless against enrollment loss	\$9.95 million
● Accelerated Study in Associate Programs (ASAP)	\$2.5 million
● Rental Aid	\$447 thousand
● Childcare Centers	\$902 thousand
Community College Restorations Subtotal	\$13.8 million

Barriers to college attainment

By CHARLES SHAVIRO, ELI DVORKIN,
JONATHAN BOWLES and LAIRD GALLAGHER

Class and race matter

An inclusive and equitable economic recovery in New York will require major new investments in job training, apprenticeships, digital literacy programs and other skills-building initiatives that help lower-income New Yorkers access good jobs. The city's employers should also rise to this challenge, making fundamental changes in how they recruit, hire, train and promote employees, and shifting toward practices that value skills alongside educational credentials. But it will also require policy makers to make a bold commitment to help more New Yorkers achieve a college credential.

While New York City is home to an almost unparalleled concentration of highly educated people, this report finds glaring and persistent educational attainment gaps by race, ethnicity and geography. Just 20% of Hispanic New Yorkers, 27% of Black New Yorkers and 45% of Asian New Yorkers hold a bachelor's degree, compared to 64% of white New Yorkers. In 39 of the city's 55 census-defined neighborhoods, fewer than one-quarter of working-age Hispanic residents hold a bachelor's degree – and in 14 neighborhoods, the rate is under 15%. In 29 neighborhoods, fewer than 30% of Black residents hold a bachelor's degree.

COLLEGE ATTAINMENT

An analysis of U.S. Census data on college attainment rates across the five boroughs shows a city sharply divided by educational credentials. For instance, while 87% of working-age residents in Manhattan's Greenwich Village and 86% of those living on the Upper East Side hold at least a bachelor's degree, the rate is just 15% in Brooklyn's East New York, and 13% in Mount Hope and 12% in Hunts Point, both in the Bronx. In one-third of the city's U.S. Census-defined neighborhoods – 18 out of 55 – fewer than 30% of residents hold at least a bachelor's degree. In eight neighborhoods, fewer than 18% of residents do.

Overall, 2.84 million working-age adults across the five boroughs do not have a four-year degree or higher. This includes nearly a million working-age New Yorkers in both Brooklyn (867,129) and Queens (862,209), and roughly 600,000 in the Bronx (596,462). In every borough but Manhattan, the number of working-age adults with a high school diploma or less outnumbers those with a bachelor's degree.

For New York to succeed in rebuilding a more equitable economy, city and state policy makers – working with employers and philanthropy – will need to prioritize closing gaps in college attainment and helping far more New Yorkers get on the path to a credential. This is especially the case given the city's increasingly bifurcated economy, which over the past decade produced a large number of low-wage jobs that were acces-

sible to individuals without a college credential and a smaller number of higher-wage jobs that mainly went to those with at least a bachelor's degree.

These trends have only accelerated during the pandemic-induced economic crisis, which has disproportionately impacted workers without a college credential and industries with large numbers of accessible jobs. The challenges are compounded by the likelihood of a slow recovery for New York's tourism economy, which supports a higher share of jobs that are accessible without a college degree than any other sector, the acceleration of automation across a broad cross-section of the city's industries and occupations – such as food service, logistics, construction and book-keeping – and deepening problems for brick-and-mortar retailers even as e-commerce booms.

NEIGHBORHOOD DISPARITIES

To be sure, New York has made progress in boosting college attainment. Over the past decade, college attainment rates increased in every borough and across all racial groups. Citywide, the share of working-age residents with a bachelor's degree or higher shot up from 35.1% to 40.1% between 2008 and 2018. The rate increased in all but three of the city's 55 U.S. Census-defined neighborhoods. In total, 290,863 more working-age adults across the city had at least a bachelor's degree in 2018 than in 2008. The City University of New York (CUNY) is also graduating more New Yorkers: 57,139 in 2019, up 44% over the past 10 years.

But the growth in degree attainment has not been rapid or equitable enough to keep pace with the changing economy – or to spark meaningful changes in the racial composition of New York's high- and middle-wage industries. At the same time, some of the recent gains in college attainment are likely the result of highly educated people moving into the city. Indeed, this analysis shows that college attainment rates increased fastest in gentrifying neighborhoods, with many of the greatest gains among white residents.

Other findings of our report include:

No other city has more college-educated residents, but the high overall number masks enormous disparities by race, ethnicity and geography.

- While 65% of working-age Manhattan residents have a bachelor's degree or higher, the rate is considerably lower in each of the other four boroughs: 39.6% in Brooklyn, 35.7% on Staten Island, 34% in Queens and 20.5% in the Bronx.

- The bachelor's attainment rate is over 50% in just one-fifth (11) of the city's 55 neighborhoods.

- In eight neighborhoods across the

city – all in the Bronx and Brooklyn – fewer than 18% of residents have a bachelor's degree: Hunts Point/Longwood/Melrose (12.2%), Morris Heights/Fordham South/Mount Hope (12.7%), Belmont/Crotona Park East/East Tremont (14%), East New York/Starrett City (15.5%), Brownsville/Ocean Hill (16.1%), Bedford Park/Fordham North/Norwood (16.2%), Concourse/Highbridge/Mount Eden (17.3%), and Castle Hill/Clason Point/Parkchester (17.5%).

- In 39 of the city's 55 neighborhoods, less than one-quarter of Hispanic residents hold a bachelor's or higher level of educational attainment. In

The largest gains in college attainment over the past decade have occurred in gentrifying neighborhoods, exacerbating racial and ethnic achievement gaps.

- In Brownsville/Ocean Hill, the share of white residents with a bachelor's degree nearly quadrupled, from 11.4% to 42.7%. The increases were smaller for Black (11.5% to 16%) and Hispanic (6.2% to 12.2%) residents.

- In East Flatbush/Farragut/Rugby, bachelor's degree attainment rates for white residents similarly shot up by nearly 400% (14.8% to 57.7%), whereas the gains were more modest for Black residents (19.6% to 26.5%) and Hispanics (10.6% to 21.2%).

- In Jackson Heights/North Corona, the share of white residents with

- In Central Harlem, the number of Hispanic residents with a bachelor's degree is up 118%, white residents up 113.2%, and Asian residents up 79.9%, but the number of Black residents with a bachelor's degree has grown just 22.7%, despite Black residents making up 53.2% of the neighborhood's working-age population.

Nearly 700,000 working-age New Yorkers have completed some college but have no degree, signaling an important opportunity to boost college attainment.

- A reported 678,871 working-age residents across New York City – 14.3% of all New Yorkers between 25 and 64 – have some college, but no degree.



The PSC has long been concerned about accessibility to higher education in New York City.

16 neighborhoods, fewer than 25% of Black residents have a bachelor's degree. The same is true in two neighborhoods for Asian residents and four neighborhoods for white residents.

While there are racial disparities in college attainment across the city, several neighborhoods have particularly wide gaps.

- In Jackson Heights, while only 11.1% of the neighborhood's Hispanic residents hold a bachelor's degree, the rate is 57.8% for white residents.

- In Bushwick, 71.1% of white residents have a bachelor's or higher, compared to 24.5% of Black residents and 14.1% of Hispanic residents.

- In East Harlem, the bachelor's attainment rate is 74.9% for white residents, 26.9% for Black residents and 19.0% for Hispanic residents.

- In the Concourse/Highbridge/Mount Eden neighborhood in the Bronx, 46.2% of white residents have a bachelor's degree, compared to 13.7% of Hispanic residents and 22.9% of Black residents.

a bachelor's degree went from 39.6% to 57.8%, but the share of Hispanics fell from 12.8% to 11.1%.

- The share of Bushwick residents with a bachelor's degree skyrocketed from 13.8% in 2008 to 33.5% in 2018, yet the biggest gains were among white residents (41.7% to 71.1%). The gains were notable but more modest among Black (14.6% to 24.5%) and Hispanic (8.2% to 14.1%) residents.

- In Concourse/Highbridge/Mount Eden, the increase was higher for white residents (18.4% to 46.2%) than for Black residents (13.8% to 22.9%) and Hispanic residents (7.9% to 13.7%).

- In Prospect Lefferts/Wingate/Crown Heights South, bachelor's attainment is up 14.3% higher overall, but up just 4.9% among Black residents despite their making up 63.1% of the working-age population. Twenty-three percent of Black residents of Prospect Lefferts hold a bachelor's degree, compared with 67.4% of white residents

- This includes roughly 220,000 Hispanic New Yorkers, 210,000 Black residents, 170,000 white residents, and 61,000 Asian residents.

- Twenty-one percent of working-age Black New Yorkers have some college, but no degree, compared with 17% of Hispanic New Yorkers, 11% of white New Yorkers and 8% of Asian New Yorkers.

There are many complex factors driving disparities in educational attainment. Some populations are aging out of the workforce, while influxes of immigrants, recent college graduates and others are reshaping neighborhood demographics.

But the bottom line is that New York City needs to help thousands more city residents – particularly New Yorkers of color in lower-income households – get on the path to a college credential. Doing so is not only crucial to creating a more equitable and inclusive economy by helping New Yorkers from all backgrounds access the good jobs of today and tomorrow. It will also

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Members campaign for funding, safety

Continued from page 3

to clarify that ‘instructors’ includes all on-campus instructional staff – professors, lecturers, librarians, registrars, laboratory assistants, counselors and all other instructional staff members represented by the PSC,” Bowen said. “Many of these dedicated employees have been working in person, without any option to work remotely, since the pandemic began.”

WINNING LEAVE

The union said in a statement that the union has “won agreement by CUNY management to provide two hours of paid leave time for all full-time CUNY employees who have a vaccination appointment, for a total of four hours per person, covering two doses of the vaccine. The union will continue to press to achieve the same provision for part-time faculty and staff,” and that “The PSC has offered to facilitate delivery of vaccines to our members, in response to the governor’s statement that unions could play this role. To date, requests to both New York State and New York City governments are awaiting responses.”

The union held a town hall event on vaccinations with a representative of the city’s department of health in February.

Rank-and-file members are getting more involved in the union’s Health and Safety Watchdogs, in part due to the pandemic (see story page 11). Such organizing is going to be essential, because many members believe vaccination is just the first step. For example, some higher education of-



Dave Sanders



Dave Sanders

State Senator Andrew Gouardes, left, and Assembly Member Karines Reyes are co-sponsors of the New Deal for CUNY.

ficers and college laboratory technicians have felt they are not being prioritized when it comes to the university’s safe reopening plan.

“Some HEOs were already asked to return before the campus was ready. Reopening plans look good ‘in writing’ but when some HEOs returned they were not working in areas with proper social distancing and were told to bring their own PPE [personal protective equipment]. Even before the pandemic some offices were very cramped. Many HEOs cannot trust it will be better when they return,” said Cindy Bink, the PSC chapter chair for HEOs. “There are a number of HEOs with fears over returning to work and facing the risk

Getting faculty and staff vaccinated.

of infection, particularly those with immune issues or family members with immune issues.”

Bink, the director of counseling at City Tech, continued, “Governor Andrew Cuomo offered vaccines to in-person teaching faculty, but did not consider staff who have already returned to campuses. Many people are worried that our buildings are already in disrepair and will not be ready for us. With limited CUNY funds, HEOs know that we must fight any attempt to return before it is safe. Our message is: ‘Fix our buildings, get us vaccinated, keep us safe.’”

For years before the pandemic, *Clarion* has reported on building

deterioration, mold, busted pipes, out-of-order bathrooms and more at countless campuses. Given the issues surrounding ventilation, social distancing and general cleanliness at CUNY, members are pushing not just for more vaccines, but for more federal and state money to be used to fix long-standing physical issues on campus.

SAFE BUILDINGS?

“CCNY [City College of New York] has many older buildings and it is structurally impossible to bring enough outside fresh air into them to make the buildings safe for us to work. Not to mention, the college’s North Academic Center’s air conditioning was broken

even before it was closed down last March,” said Carol Huang, PSC City College chapter chair. “Cleaning up is another issue, not just reopening.”

Scott Cally, PSC chapter chair at Kingsborough Community College, echoed those concerns, saying, “Any large-scale return to campus must be contingent on the availability of COVID vaccines well in advance of the start of the semester to all members of the college community: faculty, staff and students. We also need the financial and logistical resources to ensure that appropriate health and safety guidelines are followed along with proper maintenance of our HVAC system campus-wide.”

College attainment

Continued from page 8

be critical to reviving the city’s battered economy and meeting the workforce needs of city employers in an environment where a global pandemic may force businesses to rely on the local workforce more than ever before.

Making meaningful progress will require significant new educational investments, from early childhood through the city’s public community and senior colleges. It will necessitate improvements in college readiness among the city’s high school students, as well as continued improvements in graduation rates at CUNY – particularly for students in its community colleges. At the same time, the massive number of New Yorkers without a college credential – including nearly 1.2 million Black and Hispanic residents who have at most a high school diploma – suggests that city officials need to significantly ramp up adult workforce training programs. Although this data brief is intended to shed light on the scope and scale of the disparities in college attainment across the city, there are a number

of steps we believe city officials should take.

- **Set a 10-year target to achieve a 50% increase in the number of Black and Hispanic New Yorkers with a college credential.** A bold goal can help drive this issue forward, but only if it is backed up with a multifaceted set of policies and investments to get there. To rebuild a more inclusive economy, New York’s next mayor should make boosting college success a top priority.

- **Double community college graduation rates by expanding evidence-backed programs that have proven effective.** It’s not enough to help New Yorkers graduate high school and enroll in college; persistently low college completion rates demand that city and state leaders do much more to ensure that low-income students who do enroll in public colleges can graduate with a credential. Despite some clear progress in recent years, graduation rates remain painfully low: just 22% of students at CUNY’s community colleges earn a two-year degree within three years.

To dramatically boost college success, city and state leaders should create a Student Success Fund to scale up evidence-backed interventions that work, starting with making CUNY’s successful ASAP initiative universal for all community college students. For many students, the non-tuition costs of attending college prove far more challenging than simply affording tuition. New York can help tackle these barriers by granting every community college student a free MetroCard, subsidizing technology and broadband costs for low-income students, and expanding free on-campus and community-based childcare to all student parents. The city and state should also incentivize the continuing push to reimagine counterproductive remedial education, such as by expanding the CUNY Start program and initiatives designed to help students start earning college credits from day one.

- **Expand innovative alternative pathways to earn a college credential.** While a four-year degree is clearly linked to much higher lifetime earnings, these high-stakes, high-cost degrees should not be the sole focus of higher education. Policy makers and education officials

should work with industry leaders to develop and expand short-term academic certificate and industry-recognized credential programs that can stack up to a two- or four-year degree. A major expansion of academic certificate programs could provide quicker access to job opportunities and income gains while helping far more New Yorkers earn college degrees while working. Likewise, the city should greatly expand efforts to enroll high school students in early college programs – including through career-focused programs like apprenticeships. In addition, city leaders should launch a major campaign to help more of the nearly 700,000 working-age New Yorkers with some college but no degree to access job-relevant, credit-bearing courses that can help them reach the finish line.

- **Include investments in skills-building programs that go beyond college degrees.** A comprehensive plan to expand access to good jobs should also include non-degree investments in skills training for adults who don’t have a college credential, such as apprenticeships, workforce training and tech skills-building programs, which can provide

valuable credentials for New Yorkers looking to gain a foothold in high-growth sectors such as technology, health care and advanced manufacturing – or who see the need to reskill as the needs of the economy change – but for whom a traditional college degree may not be the best option. These programs should be developed in partnership with industry leaders and small businesses, result in marketable credentials, focus on the neighborhoods and communities with the greatest need, and include wraparound supports for the same non-tuition barriers – from childcare to technology – that derail aspiring low-income college students.

METHODOLOGY

This analysis is conducted on data from the U.S. Census Bureau’s 2008 and 2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. More specifically, we look at educational attainment for working-age (age 25–64) residents of the five boroughs of New York City.

This report was reprinted with permission from Center for an Urban Future. For the full report, go to <https://nycfuture.org/research/boosting-college-attainment>.

Hubbard becomes new exec. director

By ARI PAUL

Dean Hubbard, a labor attorney with decades of experience in politics and the union movement, has become the PSC's new executive director after a lengthy nationwide search.

Hubbard has worked at numerous labor law firms and unions like the Transport Workers Union (TWU) and the Amalgamated Transit Union. He was propelled into the movement in 1983 after he was fired from a SoHo restaurant job after he tried to form a union.

"That led to a decision to add law school to my organizer training, and to what has now become decades of experience as a union and social justice organizer, educator and advocate," he said in a statement, noting that he has also taught at CUNY and other academic institutions.

A BIG JOB

The PSC faces a pandemic, austerity and a post-*Janus* environment. Hubbard brings to this challenge the skills he learned navigating the tumultuous times at TWU Local 100 after the 2005 transit strike.

"[The union was] still reeling from the loss of dues checkoff and financial penalties imposed under the Taylor Law at the urging of Governor George Pataki and Mayor Michael Bloomberg during the successful 2005 transit strike," Hubbard said about his hiring at that union.

Decades of labor experience



Dean Hubbard is a labor veteran.

"With the support of the local's leadership, I conceived and drove a strategy of building a Taylor Law reform campaign around a complaint to the International Labour Organization that the law's ban on and penalties for strikes violated the ILO conven-

tions that protect workers' human right to freedom of association."

He added, "I was also with the TWU national union in early 2011 when, in the wake of the Supreme Court's *Citizens United* decision deeming political spending by

the wealthy a form of protected speech, Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker unleashed his existential attack on public-sector unions. Ohio's Governor John Kasich and many other newly Republican governors and legislatures quickly followed suit. Together with my colleagues Roger Toussaint and J.W. Johnson, I recognized the need for the union to develop a national mobilization strategy to defend public-sector unions, and conceived and co-led the union's national 'Workers' Rights are Human Rights' campaign."

Hubbard continued, "The successes of the Workers' Rights are Human Rights campaign included helping to drive the citizen's referendum which overturned Kasich's anti-union legislation in Ohio, and strong material, communications and organizing support for the [Occupy Wall Street] movement, not just in New York but around the country and the world. Those and other experiences helped forge in me the knowledge, strength and resilience the PSC's executive director needs to support the union's leadership in this difficult moment as we navigate through the COVID-19 pandemic, out of decades of racialized austerity and into a New Deal for CUNY."

Hubbard has also worked as an independent consultant and as the

director of the labor and economic justice program at the Sierra Club.

Hubbard's appointment was approved by the union's Delegate Assembly in January. He replaces Debbie Bell, who served as PSC executive director for two decades. She retired in June. He was one of 169 applicants for the position and was interviewed at least four times, meeting with principal officers, the entire Executive Council and PSC staff directors.

DEMOCRATIC IDEALS

Hubbard said that he believed in democratic unionism and that he aims to build the "kind of collaboration it takes to run an effective, successful democratic union, and inspire people to emulate that example," and that "while the executive director is accountable to establish a structure in which staff do their best work, there should be no kind of work the executive director is unwilling to do."

Hubbard has a B.A. in theater and politics from Hampshire College and a law degree from Northeastern University.

"We worked really hard to find the best person, and we feel we have," PSC President Barbara Bowen said. "He has a lovely way of working and I think he will be very good for our union."

A long search comes to an end.

Reflecting on a PSC career

By ARI PAUL

When PSC Membership Coordinator Diana Rosato retired last year, she felt that she had come "full circle" at the union. Her last several years were spent preparing the union for a post-*Janus* era, in which public-sector unions are no longer able to collect agency shop fees. Her earliest years had been spent steering the union membership through an equally difficult time, the fallout of the 1975 financial crisis.

But the union has grown since Rosato joined the PSC staff in 1977. For one thing, Rosato said, there were no computers and the staff was "bare bones" – she kept all information on neatly kept index cards, all of which are still on file and in mint condition, a testament to her fastidiousness. Today, the union boasts a large and sophisticated staff and a leadership that puts a tremendous amount of time and energy into organizing. "The devotion that [leadership and the union activists] have to their work is really amazing," said Rosato.

Rosato grew up in Queens and graduated from St. John's College with a political science and sociology degree. She wound up at the union af-

Membership chief retires

ter answering an advertisement for a legal assistant at the PSC in the *New York Times*. She didn't get that job, but was offered a position working directly with the executive director and the PSC principal officers instead. It was a tough and busy time, but Rosato enjoyed the challenges and the experience of drafting financial documents, organizing conferences and proofreading contracts.

TOUGH JOB

In 1983, she became membership coordinator, which Rosato recalled as a tough, but important job. "Membership is the heart of the union," she said. "It's the customer service of the union. It's the dues that pay our salaries and the functioning of our office. It's always been important to me to hear our members; It's important to listen to members and to hear them, and to do the best to guide them."

After eight years serving members as coordinator, Rosato stepped away from the union in 1991 to spend more time with her family and relocated to Yorktown, New

York. But in 1998, the PSC called her to come back. After some consideration, she agreed.

Rosato encountered big changes in the union upon her return. Part-timers were entering the union, a monumental change that Rosato played a key role in managing the logistics of. Dues were no longer set

at a flat rate, but restructured as a percentage system.

More recently, Rosato had been responsible for overseeing all computerized PSC member and non-member records pertaining to employees covered under the PSC contracts on CUNY and Research Foundation (RF) payrolls. She was also the resident expert on any and all things membership – from dues deductions, union codes, and refunds to membership benefits and membership status for both members and nonmembers, staff, officers, CUNY and RF personnel, New York City and New York State payroll agencies, CUNY payroll, hu-

man resources staff, Office of Labor Relations and PSC affiliates. A big part of Rosato's legacy will be the hours she poured into digitizing decades-worth of union membership efforts, which will enable staff organizers and union activists to organize more efficiently and effectively.

"Diana's extensive knowledge and mastery of the rules of membership was evident throughout the training process," said Denyse Procope-Gregoire, who took over for Rosato last year. "She kept meticulous, well-organized records for every aspect of her job. She worked closely with PSC affiliates, CUNY, and city and state payroll agencies, building strong relationships to support her work. Exceptional excellence and competence defined her," said Procope-Gregoire.

OTHER DUTIES

Rosato has served on several union committees and as a trustee for the Professional Staff Union pension plan for many years.

Rosato formally retired this past summer, but continued to work as a PSC consultant until December. Rosato, who lives in the Hudson Valley town of Cold Spring, New York, said that when the pandemic is over, she hopes to do some traveling and participate in community service. In addition to that, she hopes to take part in one of her favorite personal activities: researching her ancestral roots in Italy and the former Yugoslavia.



Diana Rosato served PSC members for nearly four decades.

A union soldier leaves a legacy.

Health and safety in a pandemic

By SHOMIAL AHMAD

The current COVID-19 public health crisis has amplified health and safety concerns across CUNY, where an aging infrastructure, lack of proper ventilation, outdated HVAC systems, mold and air quality problems and inadequate climate control are perennial issues.

“Funding has always been part of the issue for repair,” said Jacqueline Elliot, a cochair of the PSC Health and Safety Watchdogs. “Now that we are dealing with COVID, which

Members take the lead

has taken us to an all-time high of concern, we are in a life-threatening situation every time [a member] go[es] into work.”

EXPERT RECOMMENDATIONS

In response to the crisis, the PSC Health and Safety Watchdogs began regular weekly meetings in April of last year, eventually moving to meetings every other week in September. A typical meeting

averaged around 50 participants from across the CUNY system, all brought together to discuss pressing health and safety concerns. As the crisis continued, the Watchdogs developed guides based on state and expert recommendations and developed a “COVID is Airborne” initiative that sought specific information about each occupied building’s ventilation system. (These guides are available on the PSC website.)

The CUNY administration’s response to COVID has lacked central coordination. There is no consistent definition of an essential worker, and there is no uniform policy for calling CUNY employees back to work. With more and more members returning to on-campus work, a major union concern continues to be adequate and ongoing testing.

“CUNY offers our on-campus members 45 minutes to get to a Health and Hospital site to get COVID tested. And there is no COVID testing for students. This

is insane,” said Joan Greenbaum, a retired Graduate Center and LaGuardia Community College professor of environmental psychology who is active on the Watchdogs committee. “Other colleges test everyone once a week. We have a long time before the vaccine is rolled out to everyone and, even after that, COVID testing is essential on a frequent basis.”

Below, PSC members who have been active on health and safety issues this past year share their concerns.

BACK IN MARCH and April we didn’t have much information from the Hostos Community College administration. People were scared – HEOs, CLTs, college assistants and faculty. They were scared of being called back on campus, and many people reached out to [the PSC] with concerns.

Even before the pandemic, Hostos had serious ventilation issues in its buildings. Throughout the crisis, students and faculty in the dental hygiene, nursing and X-ray programs have been coming in, and the dental hygiene program provides direct, close-quarters medical care to our community through its free clinic. After much insistence, we were able to get an industrial hygienist to evaluate the quality of Dental’s HVAC system. That was a major intervention.

We also hosted a forum for the college community and surveyed their issues and concerns. Maintenance workers were only given one mask per week; only in the December labor-management meeting were we finally told they could ask for more. Student success coaches were told to come back to campus once a week,

even though their advising would still be remote, which made no sense. Only through union pressure and the coaches speaking up for themselves was this requirement dropped.

A CLEAR PLAN?

The biggest problem overall with Hostos administration is a lack of communication and transparency. The union has been asking for documentation of HVAC upgrades for months, and the campus reopening committee – which includes our PSC chapter rep – did not meet all fall.

We must insist on more dialogue in the coming months as we think about the reopening of campus. There must be a clear and reasonable plan, not just bringing people back haphazardly. It’s important for members to be engaged and to stay in touch with their union. The PSC is all of us.

The bottom line is everybody wants to come to a safe, clean, and healthy work environment.

LIZETTE COLÓN

Lecturer
Counseling
Hostos Community College

YVETTE LUYANDO

Executive Administrator of
Enrollment Support
Office of Student Development and
Enrollment Management
Hostos Community College

HARUKO YAMAUCHI

Associate Professor
Library Teaching Coordinator
Hostos Community College

AS A CLINICAL lab scientist, I deal a lot with lab safety and lab protocol. In 2017 when I was elected as a PSC delegate, I decided to chair the campus’s Health and Safety Committee.

I quickly realized that there was a disconnect with the PSC membership and contacting the union about health and safety concerns. I created an online platform where members could anonymously report health and safety violations to us and include pictures. I would go to the area, take pictures, and along with the committee, devise a plan to tackle it. We also had to see if work orders were submitted prior to contacting the union and that essentially removed anonymity. We’ve had some successes; we’ve had some impasses.

We were able to secure an independent walk-through of two major Bronx Community College (BCC) buildings and inspect the compliance to BCC’s reoccupancy plan and the PSC’s health and safety guidelines. In late November, I went along with some key administrators and found some faculty and staff areas that did not comply with the BCC reoccupancy plan. There were several locations without proper signs and no safety dividers between faculty and students. There were also some areas where the college was doing things right. During the walk-through, we were able to devise ways that they could solve the problems. They agreed to do it.

One of the successes has been coming to administration with solutions. Administration never created a solution, and it would lead to an impasse. I know it goes against our training; it’s CUNY’s responsibility to address the problems. But I’ve created a template that seems to be working. I draft an email to key administrators, identify the problem, describe how it is a violation, explain its adverse effects and propose resolutions. For example, if there’s a strong smell of mold and mildew, I explain how, according to the CDC that can lead to respiratory illnesses, including breathing issues and shortness of breath. I say that we’d like the problem remediated. I just make sure it is not abstract but that it’s very factual. It’s not necessarily a militant action, I go about it scientifically.

DIANE PRICE BANKS

Assistant Professor, Biological
Sciences
Program Director, Medical
Laboratory Technician Program
Bronx Community College

I CAME INTO health and safety issues because of the pandemic. I saw a vacuum, and I filled it. In mid-March, CUNY abruptly moved classes online and everyone had the idea CUNY was closed. It wasn’t. Libraries, research facilities and dorms were among the places open. I became involved with the PSC Library Committee and CUNY Libraries COVID-19 Task Force, which was organized

by CUNY Central and the Council of Chief Librarians.

People believe libraries are low-risk environments, not just at CUNY, but everywhere. But they’re not. You’re interacting with the public. We’re often invisible: people see the book, not the library worker. One campus opening affects every other campus.

Your fellow union members are behind you.

We were hearing from librarians at the College of Staten Island, Queens College, and a lot of places that just were not closed. We were in this moment of panic and had to shout to anyone who would listen. The trauma of that closure and that it was not centrally coordinated has really, really been incredibly frustrating and demoralizing.

As a campus committee, we’re paying attention to the ventilation system: What are the settings? What are the capabilities? You can ask the questions and get the written responses, but you can’t independently verify if that is happening. There are things that one can see in person, but right now, the Graduate Center is pretty much locked down.

TRANSPARENCY AND UNION INPUT

We want assurance from administration that they have created a low-risk environment with union input and transparency that we can understand. We want union members to know the safety measures in place and to inform their chapter leadership if they’re going in to work or being asked to go in. If they have any concerns, there are fellow union members behind them who can help them get answers.

ROXANNE SHIRAZI

Assistant Professor
Dissertation Research Librarian
The Graduate Center

To get involved with the PSC Environmental Health and Safety Committee or ask health and safety questions, email hswatchdogs@psc-mail.org. Detailed health and safety guides are available at psc-cuny.org/about-us/environmental-health-and-safety and psc-cuny.org/covid-19. The Watchdogs meet every other Thursday at 3:30 pm. For meeting dates, visit psc-cuny.org/calendar.



In the fall, PSC members at Hunter College Campus Schools mobilized against an unsafe reopening plan.

Dave Sanders



15-MINUTE ACTIVIST

Pressure the State Legislature

As readers can see in our cover story (page 3) and PSC President Barbara Bowen's message (pages 6-7), the next few weeks are critical. The union is pressing state legislators to pass the New Deal for CUNY and avert cuts to CUNY.

Some members will be taking part in virtual lobbying for February's Higher Education Week from February 16 to February 19. Even if you aren't available that week to lobby, please take a few minutes to write state legislators and urge them to pass the New Deal for CUNY and avoid needless cuts.

Go to: tinyurl.com/write-lawmakers

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A CUNY prof on the front lines

By CLARION STAFF

Denis Nash, a distinguished professor of epidemiology at the CUNY Graduate School of Public Health and the executive director of the CUNY Institute for Implementation Science in Population Health, researches COVID-19, testing methods and the effect the virus has on stress and mental health. He was recently quoted in a damning *New York Times* piece about the state's vaccine rollout.

Nash recently spoke to *Clarion* Editor Ari Paul.

There's been a lot of news about the vaccine rollout in New York. What do you think the main problems have been?

A major flaw is centering vaccine distribution around an appointment system that is not under the control of the government of New York. It is first come, first served, setting up a situation where appointments made are not aligned with what is needed for public health within what I would call very broad categories of eligibility. There is not enough vaccine right now and community transmission is high at the moment. People have and will be hospitalized and die of COVID because they couldn't get vaccinated in time.

When you can't vaccinate everyone at once, you wouldn't want to vaccinate all the 65-year-olds before all the 75-year-olds, or all the younger teachers without comorbidities before the older ones with comorbidities. This is what the current system does, among other things that virtually guarantee inequity when it comes to this amazing public good. But any time you have a public good that is in short supply, the benefit will be unfair unless you put some guard rails on the system that provides it.

How could it be done differently? The state could ask people to sign up and provide their personal details (age, comorbidities, race/ethnicity, geography, other demographics, other eligibility info, and contact information) and enter everyone into a virtual queue. That queue would

A COVID expert speaks



Dave Sanders

Denis Nash: an academic soldier in the pandemic.

be tapped every week according to the number of vaccine doses available and in the order of priority/need, including priority access to those living in communities and from demographic groups that are hardest hit.

A lot of parents are eager to get their kids back in schools. In your estimation, can schools safely reopen?

In some cases, yes, but it is important to consider what we mean by safe and for whom we mean safe. There has been a lot of discussion about how there is not a lot of evidence of transmission in elementary schools. If that is true, it is a great thing. Some of the city's surveillance testing suggests it might be true. However, when I think of what safe means, it includes how much increased risk there is among students, their families, teachers, staff and administration with schools open compared to the risk to all these folks when schools are not open.

If you think about it this way, you realize that, even if a school is safer on the inside (good ventilation, enough space to distance, good mask wearing adherence, etc.), you also have to consider the risks associated with going to and from the school for all the students, their families, teachers, staff and administration.

In addition to research like your own, what role can CUNY play in fighting the pandemic?

CUNY could be doing more to get ready to go back to in-person learning and to support our students to help bridge them through what has been a very difficult year. There could be a lot more communication around plans for in-person learning and vaccination. I have not really heard anything from CUNY and its plans to help faculty, staff and others in our community stay safe and/or get tested and/or get vaccinated, beyond what is on the state and city websites.

People are interpreting the guidelines differently, and I really wish CUNY would clarify things here, as well as tell us how they plan to help ensure those of us who are eligible for the vaccine can receive it before we are expected to teach in person. That would be more in line with what other universities are doing.

You've done a lot of work on HIV/AIDS. What do you think we can learn from that crisis to get us through this one?

It is very interesting that a lot of researchers and epidemiologists who have dedicated their careers to addressing the HIV/AIDS pandemic, are also working on the public health front lines of the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic. I think this is because there are a lot of similarities and lessons from how we have tackled the HIV/AIDS pandemic that are relevant to this one.

The first one is how rogue and inept politicians can have such an outsized influence and role in steering us into utterly avoidable public health devastation. The second one is how fear and stigma can divide us when we really need to be united and care for one another. And there is the importance of prevention and testing – the need to rapidly advance science to increase our understanding and capacity to adequately respond and address all the dimensions of havoc that this pandemic has brought upon us.

Working-class communities and people of color seem to be highly at risk in this pandemic. What kind of policies do you think we can implement to address that?

In my view, we have done so much to try to control this pandemic and to reduce its impact, but there have been no targeted efforts to address the risk among those who are bearing a disproportionate burden of disease and death. Namely Black and Hispanic communities, and essential workers (and others who need to work). It is incumbent upon government leaders, public

health leaders, decision makers and policy makers to anticipate and proactively design pandemic response implementation strategies and metrics/targets that account for and counteract the fundamental and prevailing structural forces that will, without fail, otherwise create, perpetuate, or exacerbate inequities in safety, health and well-being.

There is a lot in the control of government that can help protect those that they have been unable to protect to date. Keeping community transmission low, increasing workplace safety, increasing access to testing for essential workers and their household members, ensuring that public transportation is safe and incentivizing isolation and quarantine when the need arises. Most importantly, we must ensure the vaccine rollout doesn't leave the hardest hit communities behind again.

Some of your research has focused on the effect anxiety has had in the pandemic. What should readers know about that?

The pandemic is taking a mental health toll on a large number of people who are affected by the pandemic and all of the hardship and stress that comes with it. Our own research at CUNY in the "Chasing COVID Cohort Study" has found that the levels of anxiety and depression are much higher than would be

Nash: 'CUNY could do more.'

expected had there not been a pandemic. Overall, 35% of our participants had moderate to severe anxiety, which is high. Even higher levels of moderate to severe anxiety were reported among people

who have had COVID, have family or friends with COVID, and people who worry about getting COVID themselves or worry about a family member getting COVID. In addition, people who have experienced job or income loss as a result of the pandemic had higher levels of anxiety, as did those with a prior diagnosis of depression.

We are also finishing a small study that focused on educators. Between September 8, 2020, and November 17, 2020, we recruited 469 educators into "The Educators of America COVID Cohort (TEACCH) Study": 41% had moderate or severe anxiety and 37% had moderate or severe depressive symptoms.