The union helped win significant funding gains for CUNY in the last state budget agreement, including money to fund more than 500 full-time faculty positions. Now, the PSC says it’s time for the University to “Hire From Within” CUNY’s rich and experienced pool of adjuncts.
Ensuring pay increases

The PSC College Laboratory Technicians Chapter announced the 2022 winners of the Unsung Heroes Awards during its Unity Day event, a hybrid in-person and virtual ceremony in June attended by dozens of members. CLTs across CUNY were nominated by their colleagues and students for going above and beyond the call of duty.

HELPING STUDENTS

Mohammed Jahed Sarwar, a library systems administrator at York College, was hailed by his colleagues for being an “inspiring person” and having an “extraordinary commitment to students.”

Teeshavi Acosta, a CLT who specializes in toxicology at John Jay College of Criminal Justice, was cited for her exceptional handling of potentially hazardous chemical waste and aiding students. Acosta was inspired to become a CLT after receiving her master’s and bachelor’s degrees from John Jay College. She is now pursuing a PhD in toxicology at St. John’s University and is an adjunct instructor at John Jay. As a CLT, she’s responsible for setting up lab sessions and ensuring that all the equipment students need for their lessons is available. “I fell in love with teaching, and watching the students grow into these independent scientists is so fulfilling,” Acosta said.

INSPIRING WORK

The other winners were Jodi-Ann Douglas, a CLT in the department of radiologic technology and medical imaging at St. John’s University; Clarion Guardia, a CLT in the chemistry department at Lehman College; and Jo-Jones, a senior CLT in the department of middle and high school education at Lehman College.

Amy Jue, a cross-campus officer on the PSC Executive Council and a CLT in the geography and environmental science department at Hunter College, said, “Feeling genuinely appreciated lifts people up. At the most basic level, it is energizing and makes us feel safe, enabling us to do our best work and have the potential to unify and unite us all.”

She added, “This is an award that ex- cept the fund of the profession.”

By ARI PAUL

Chapter highlights its ‘unsung heroes’

CLTs who lead and inspire

ADJUNCT TITLE

SINGLE HOURLY RATE

Effective 8/25/2022

$19.67

$100.00

$108.33

$112.50

3-CREDIT COURSE

(45 instructional hours + 15 office hours)

$55

$6,500

$6,916

$6,750

4-CREDIT COURSE

(60 instructional hours + 15 office hours)

$6,875

$7,500

$8,125

$8,438

To make the gains that we must be united around a strong groundwork on which future efforts are made to achieve fair wages for all and crack the prevailing exploitative system. With a more stable instructional workload, students benefit from having professors who are well-compensated and better able to provide them with the support they need to thrive.

Teaching adjuncts, please check the hourly rate schedules to determine your appropriate pay rate.

If you know any colleagues who have not yet joined their union, please direct them to psc-cuny.org/join or simply tell them that one of our students deserve the PSC, the union must be united around a strong union membership.

NARROWING THE GAP

The current contract substantially narrows the gap in pay between a full-time lecturer and adjunct lec- turer for an equivalent teaching load. The CUNY Board of Trustees’ recognition that current adjuncts should fill some of the new full-time faculty lines reflects the fact that our contract has diminished the economic incentive to rely on adjunct labor. The current contract provides the groundwork on which future efforts are made to achieve fair wages for all and crack the prevailing exploitative system. With a more stable instructional workload, students benefit from having professors who are well-compensated and better able to provide them with the support they need to thrive.

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**Major city cuts to education**

By ARI PAUL

Mayor Eric Adams and New York City Council Speaker Adrienne Adams have agreed to a city budget that enacts 3% cuts to most city agencies, sparing the New York City Police Department but not others, including K-12 schools.

The union waged an intense campaign to protect CUNY from budget cuts in recent months, by organizing rallies, lobbying New York City Council members and renewing its alliances with other CUNY advocates. Cuts to CUNY, fortunately, were minimal, and the University still has federal stimulus money to draw upon. The new budget agreement also included some additional funding for CUNY, including money for childcare centers and about $2 million for remediation programs.

**MONEY FOR CUNY**

A City Council statement said the budget included “$4.4 million to establish the [CUNY] Reconnect pilot program to help working-age adults attain a degree that expands earning potential and $1 million for CUNY STEM to support programming at campuses citywide.”

Union activists see a bigger fight ahead.

“Now we need to work with our new partners in the council to push for transparency as CUNY begins to spend the money it was allocated,” said Heather James, President of the New York State United University Professions (UUP), the union representing faculty and staff at SUNY. “We need to ensure that agencies can transmit paperwork on behalf of workers to build bridges across titles and to increase interest in the city budget.”

**Bill expands debt relief for adjuncts**

By ARI PAUL

In a major victory for the union and its adjunct members, both chambers of the New York State Legislature passed a PSC-backed bill that paves the way for more adjuncts to receive some student debt forgiveness. The bill still requires Governor Kathy Hochul’s signature in order to be enacted into law.

The Public Service Loan Forgiveness Program (PSLF) “requires that public servants work 30 hours a week in order to be eligible for loan forgiveness,” said PSC Legislative Representative Luke Elliott-Negri, who added that “this bill that the legislature just passed counts 3.35 hours for every one classroom hour worked by part-time faculty, thus making adjuncts eligible for PSLF.”

State Senator Kevin Thomas and State Assembly Member Harvey Epstein were the chief authors of the bill that further clarifies the requirements for public employment, and thus improves upon Biden administration changes to the PSLF Program. PSC, the United University Professions (UCP), the union representing faculty and staff at SUNY, as well as the PSC’s state affiliate, New York State United Teachers (NY-SUT), all supported the bill.

**EXPANDING ELIGIBILITY**

“I was personally moved to get active on this bill when I saw PSC Brooklyn College Chapter Chair Carolina Bank Muñoz post on Facebook that the new Biden PSLF changes had enabled her to eliminate all of her student debt,” Elliott-Negri said. “I was so happy for her, and it also struck me that in order for long-serving adjunct members to be able to make such a post on Facebook, we’d need to pass this bill.”

While Bank Muñoz is a full-time faculty member at CUNY, many CUNY adjuncts did not meet the PSLF 30-hour a week requirement before the passage of the new bill.

Rebecca Smart, the PSC part-time liaison at Baruch College, traveled to Albany to push lawmakers to pass the bill. “My understanding is that without this bill, we don’t qualify because we’re part-time,” she said speaking for herself and fellow adjuncts.

Organizing by PSC staff and member leaders like Smart helped move the bill along and made sure it was at the front of legislators’ attention in this crowded season. It was frequently the case that legislators intuitively agreed with the premise of the bill. “I didn’t really have to campaign,” Smart recalls of her meetings with state lawmakers, noting that the bill had widespread support, even from Republicans.

Smart added that she would personally benefit from the bill, and that the debt forgiveness would eliminate a huge financial burden for adjuncts.

**Student loan forgiveness possible for adjuncts**

“The stress relief is as important as the material relief,” she said.

Assembly Member Epstein told Spectrum News, “From applying a multiplier to teachers’ in-class hours so that hours worked outside of class are more accurately reflected to ensuring that they can transmit paperwork on behalf of workers to the federal government, our legislation will help more New Yorkers get their loans forgiven faster.”

For more information on the PSLF Program, go to [studentaid.gov](https://studentaid.gov).
If you read the pages of the New York Post or Fox News, chances are you will hear voices from the right-wing media decry something called critical race theory (CRT). But what is critical race theory? As an educator and a member of the United States, in housing, employment, education, social welfare, health care and other areas too numerous to identify.

A FULL HISTORY
Deale continued, “The attacks on CRT are rooted in the history of their ignorance and nefarious motivation. Conscious that they are losing their grip on power, white supremacists are attacking anything that they perceive as undermining their hegemony, going so far as removing books from libraries and school curricula. This is but one step away from burning them and the ideas that they contain, a strategy utilized historically by regimes, including the Nazis and fascists of 20th-century Europe.”

The chairs of the union's Anti-Racism Committee released a statement: “The ARC coheres fully support and endorse the UFS resolution regarding the affirmation of academic freedom, and as a total rejection to the proponents...and state [legislatures], who have spawned gross mischaracterizations and undermined the tenets of critical race theory, by harnessing the crucial truth of this country's history of settler colonialism, racism and gender inequality. The UFS resolution resolves to stand by the state legislature, city council and other differences and state [legislatures], who have spawned gross mischaracterizations and undermined the tenets of critical race theory, by harnessing the crucial truth of this country's history of settler colonialism, racism and gender inequality. 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NEWS

A movement for a new contract

By PENNY LEWIS
PSC Secretary

What are your priorities for our next round of contract negotiations and what are you willing to do to win a great contract? These questions framed the PSC Contract Priorities Survey that the union sent to members in early May. The survey itself was developed with input from union members, leaders and PSC staff, by looking back at previous surveys and bargaining demands and through listening sessions and small-group breakout sessions at chapter meetings this spring (see article below).

NEW POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT

Our current PSC-CUNY contract expires at the end of February 2023. This will be the first time we’ll be bargaining with CUNY in the political context set by who won the New York governor’s race in November 2022, and New York City Mayor Eric Adams. For the first time, we’ll be bargaining in the midst of a broad, public campaign to win a New Deal for CUNY. Needless to say, the experience of the pandemic has shaped our sense of what we want and need, as does inflation.

Many of the topics covered in the survey are familiar questions about pay, workload, job security and basic measures of respect. The survey also asked members to consider how our contract can better address structural racism at CUNY, including issues such as the racialized salary and benefits gap that exist between titles or diversifying the higher ranks of the titles we represent.

The survey further considered health and safety, remote work and online teaching issues, which have a new salience and urgency for many of us today. And we asked you to consider whether using our contract as a vehicle through which to fight for student needs in areas like housing, transportation access, food insecurity and tuition was a priority for you.

PRIORITY

Other more typical priorities considered by the survey included various questions regarding compensation (such as, longevity increases, teaching adjunct pay parity, equity raises and across-the-board salary increases), contingency (for example, dedicated lecturer lines for teaching adjuncts), promotion (like strengthening promotional opportunities for CLTs), workload (such as protections against over-work, tittle work), security (like shortening the time to attain job security through 13.3b for HEOs), respect (such as anti-bullying language), and professional enhancements (for example, improvements to the sick leave bank policy and expanded tuition waivers).

Most members were able to reflect on title-specific issues as well, many of which have come up before in previous rounds of bargaining. But some of the concerns are new and are made more important after our experience with the pandemic over the past two years.

SURVEY RESULTS

Learning your thoughts about these topics is the primary goal of the survey, as we will inform the development of demands for the next round of bargaining. But critical to our future success at the bargaining table was the final, shorter part of the survey, which concerned how all of us can be part of the fight to win what we want. The survey asked members what they would be willing to do, including attending demonstrations, mobilizing colleagues through texts and phone banking, participating in PSC campus action teams and engaging in civil disobedience.

But pressure to get a good contract does not end there. Members could also testify at a CUNY Board of Trustees hearing, speak about a specific bargaining demand during a bargaining session with CUNY or attend a session as an observer. We also asked about the political pressures members are willing to assert in order to gain the funding for our demands, including writing or visiting lawmakers or becoming a political district representative.

We wanted to hear from as many members as possible. If you did not complete the survey early on, you may have noticed that you received a lot of notices in your inbox. The deadline for submitting the survey was June 24, but our work to find out about members’ contract priorities is not done. We invite all members to participate in one-on-one and small-group conversations that have been organized by members of the PSC campus action teams for this summer and fall. At the PSC Brooklyn College chapter, for example, union department representatives have been conducting walk-throughs, where they meet with colleagues in various offices to listen and talk about campus and university-wide priorities.

During much of the past two years of the pandemic, many of us have worked from home or on half-empty campuses. We’ve lost a lot of time we would have spent working alongside each other, hearing about our work experiences, getting to know each other better, and for our new colleagues who started during the pandemic, getting to know each other at all. Hearing from each other about needed workplace improvements is one critical way we have to reforge the connections that we have lost.

LOOKING FORWARD

We will be sharing what we learn from the survey. It’s our hope that this will steer us in a good direction for both our contract demands and contract campaign next year, but the survey results will also help individual campuses identify the issues most pressing to their chapter members.

In order to win what we want in our contract—and for CUNY and our students—we need a strong contract campaign and must organize collectively. Together, we can create the CUNY we want to work in, and the “People’s University” our students and city deserve.

Listening to members, across CUNY

By FELICIA WHARTON
PSC Treasurer

PSC members had the opportunity to talk openly and candidly to PSC principal officers and vice presidents at chapter listening sessions held across CUNY in April and May. Among those attending these meetings were the union’s four principal officers and vice presidents for senior colleges, community colleges, cross-campus units and part-time personnel. The leaders had the opportunity to engage with PSC members to gather input, suggestions, concerns and contract priorities that will help guide bargaining in our upcoming contract negotiations. The current PSC-CUNY contract expires at the end of February 2023.

LISTENING MATTERS

Listening plays an essential role in democracy, as it builds recognition, power, legitimacy and at times silence depending on who is in the room, according to environmental political theorist Andrew Dobson. PSC members in every title had an opportunity to listen to each other about their colleagues’ personal experiences, frustrations and issues that affect their day-to-day working conditions. Craig Bernardini, the PSC Hostos chapter chair, asked members attending his chapter meeting, “What brings you joy in the work you do? What sucks the life and joy out of the work you do?”

These listening sessions took a variety of formats, with presentations from members in different titles, breakout rooms by titles or rank-and-file sessions, small group rooms with a report back to the entire chapter. The sessions aimed to provide an environment of mutual respect, where there was recognition that all titles are essential for the college to function effectively. Member voices at these listening sessions provided a transparent picture of members’ needs, contract improvements to union organizing necessary to win contract gains, all with the goal to ensure that our contract priorities will positively impact all titles and units.

Chapter listening sessions with PSC leaders

Input on many of the themes were also solicited in the PSC Contract Priorities Survey.

To all the members who participated in the chapter listening sessions, we, the elected union leadership, thank you for the insights, which are valued and much appreciated as we head into our contract campaign. The qualitative information collected from these listening sessions will be combined with the input gathered from the PSC Contract Priorities Survey in drafting contract demands.

Remembering those we lost

Former USS Chair Juvanie Piquant (left) joins Brooklyn College President Michelle Anderson to memorialize CUNY employees lost to COVID-19.
By SHOMAIL AHMAD

In a big win for the PSC in this year’s state budget agreement, the union secured more than $50 million dollars to hire more than 500 full-time faculty across CUNY. The victory is the result of years of PSC advocacy to better fund CUNY and a major part of a push to pass the New Deal for CUNY legislation. Now comes the next crucial step: advocating that long-time CUNY adjuncts who know the university and its students be prioritized for these hires.

“These are instructors who, in many instances, would have attained full-time employment had the academic labor market not been eroded over the past several decades,” PSC President James Davis and PSC Secretary Penny Lewis wrote in a May 5 letter to CUNY department chairs. “They are an asset to CUNY’s students and their years of investment should be taken into consideration.”

ACROSS CUNY

Many of the adjuncts who have taught at campuses across CUNY, have developed teaching methods informed by several academic departments and have, despite the abysmal pay, formed relationships with CUNY students, for whom they write recommendation letters and spend countless unpaid hours grading and providing directed guidance. Their dedication should be recognized – not taken for granted.

This year’s state budget funds a mix of full-time professorial and lecturer positions. The CUNY Board of Trustees Fiscal Affairs Committee recently approved funding for 500 lecturer lines and 160 professorial lines in this year’s state budget, but the union is advocating for even more professorial lines. The union sees this as a starting point for improving the public university system, which has been hollowed out by decades of austerity funding and the loss of more than 380 full-time faculty positions (that have not been replaced since the Fall of 2019, according to the union).

FULL-TIME JOBS

In early May, around 400 people attended a professional development workshop, hosted by the union’s Committee for Adjuncts and Part-Timers. PSC members who served on faculty hiring committees gave targeted advice on how CUNY adjuncts can highlight their experience and expertize of part-timers. Since part-time workers in CUNY are underpaid and have very little job security, a track to full-time work is essential.

Clarington spoke to PSC members, asking them to share why they think adjuncts make strong candidates for CUNY’s full-time positions and how they believe these jobs will transform an adjunct’s career and life. Here are a few of their stories.

David Hyman

Associate Professor and Department Chair, English Department, Lehman College

Adjuncts are dedicated, passionate and committed to the University and its students. Yet, all too frequently, their essential work is taken for granted. The lecturer lines represent a concrete opportunity for departments to challenge this injustice by showing adjunct colleagues that they matter and that the only thing separating them from full-time instructors is the opportunity.

No matter what strides the union makes toward improving the salaries, benefits and working conditions of adjuncts, the gap between full- and part-time compensation and status remains wide. As a chair who worked as an adjunct for the first four years of my CUNY career, I passionately believe that my fellow chairs and I must do everything we can to encourage current adjuncts to apply for lecturer positions and to support them throughout the process.

PROVEN TEACHERS

Above and beyond the ethical imperative to redress historical inequities, hiring adjuncts to teach positions is in a department’s best self-interest. Adjuncts are proven teachers and tested colleagues. They remove the question that all good chairs have after interviewing and reviewing an applicant: How well will they actually perform their jobs? Adjuncts already perform vast amounts of service beyond instruction, which is experience of great value to departments, schools and colleges.

If we fail to provide adjuncts with every opportunity to successfully compete for lecturer lines, we are reinforcing the inequality at the heart of an archaic and unjust system by telegraphing that their work is qualitatively different from that of full-time faculty. As a union representing many titles, we need to fight biases that create artificial orders of value that keep us apart. We need to send a loud and clear message that adjuncts are not permanent second-class members of departments but valued colleagues with whom we stand in solidarity, not just in words but through actions.

Olivia Wood

Adjunct Lecturer, Department of English, John Jay College of Criminal Justice

Adjunct Senior College Laboratory Technician, OpenLab, New York City College of Technology

When I first moved to New York in 2013 to begin my PhD program at the Graduate Center, I began adjuncting. I could not afford to live in New York City on only my graduate student stipend. My commute from Washington Heights to Jersey City was longer than the class I taught there. I quit as soon as I could find a new job as an adjunct CLT at the OpenLab at City Tech. The following year, I was traveling to three campuses: taking English courses at the Graduate Center, teaching at John Jay through my Grad Assistant B position and working as an adjunct CLT at City Tech.

EXTENSIVE ENGAGEMENT

I teach first year writing, which means my courses involve extensive engagement with multiple drafts of student writing. With 27 students per section, it’s difficult to give each student and their work the attention they deserve on top of my other responsibilities. While I made do living in a small studio apartment with my partner before the pandemic, once work shifted to remote, it was unsustainable. We moved, and I needed more work. In Fall 2020, I took over a course at John Jay. When someone had to go on emergency leave, I was also freelancing for the College Board, writing short essays to be used on the SAT and looking for new adjunct positions outside of CUNY, since I was already at my max hours under the PSC contract. I was hired as an adjunct lecturer at Fordham University in Fall 2021.

LOADS OF WORK

For the past academic year, I’ve been teaching three courses per semester. Traveling between John Jay and Fordham, on top of my PhD work and my City Tech adjunct CLT position. The only way I’m able to make this work is that all of my supervisors are willing to be flexible; not everyone is so fortunate. I’ve applied to almost all of the CUNY lecturer lines and chose to remain teaching at one CUNY college, LaGuardia. And I began working as a high school math teacher at Bronx Compass High School. I teach there during the day and then at night, two or three days per week, I teach as an adjunct at LaGuardia.

A full-time position would give me the flexibility to spend more time with my young teenage children and be a father who attends their sports activities and recitals, rather than moonlighting as an adjunct during these important moments in my children’s lives.

I’ve taught at the high school, community college and senior college levels, and I know what teaching methods work and what supports are needed in order to retain students and allow them to create successful academic careers.

CUNY PROUD

If I get a full-time line teaching at CUNY, it will transform my life and fulfill a long-desired dream to teach at CUNY, my alma mater, and thus, becoming a true product of CUNY. Teaching at the college level full-time will give me more academic fulfillment and more opportunities to teach higher-level math subjects, such as calculus and statistics.
Tips for your academic CV

By STUART DAVIS

The PSC Committee for Adjuncts and Part-Timers held a professional development workshop in early May to provide advice for developing applications for tenure-track assistant and tenure-track assistant professor positions at CUNY, being created through increased state funding. Nearly 400 people attended the virtual workshop. The event covered how to develop various elements of a job application, including the drafting of cover letters, teaching philosophy statements, diversity statements and curricula vitae (CVs).

At the event, I shared tips on best practices for CV design and content. I’ve served on hiring committees for both tenure-track and non-tenure-track assistant professor positions at CUNY and at other colleges. Over the years, I’ve learned that a clear and well-outlined CV might not be the single deciding factor for getting hired, but it can often help a candidate move from the initial screening to the first-round interview stage. Conversely, a CV that is missing essential information or structured in a disorganized way can result in the hasty removal from the stack of applications considered for the job.

In general, an academic CV contains educational history, academic employment history, courses taught and teaching interests, research experience and academic employment history, professional memberships and a list of references with contact information. CVs should be organized in reverse chronological order. Each section should begin with the most recent information. There are no universal minimums or maximums for the CV, though some job descriptions will provide limits to orient candidates. Finally, the entire CV should be in one font, with the same font size and margin dimensions throughout. I use 12-point Garamond.

EDUCATIONAL HISTORY
Begin with educational history because most academic job descriptions include “minimum” or “preferred” qualifications that are often linked to achieving a terminal degree in one’s field. For some positions, professional experiences might compensate for not holding the terminal degree. A master’s degree is usually the minimum qualification for lecturer positions. For tenure-track jobs, a PhD or an equivalent terminal degree is the minimum qualification.

ACADEMIC EMPLOYMENT HISTORY
Educational history should be followed by an academic employment history, listing college-level institutions where you have taught. This section can include full-time and part-time teaching positions. If the job description specifically states that the new position prioritizes professional experience, non-academic employment history can be included and listed directly after academic employment history.

TEACHING EXPERIENCE AND INTERESTS
Academic search committees often scan CVs for a list of classes a candidate has taught or has interest in teaching, and they are often looking for gaps. Include a broad list of “teaching interests” (especially for those lacking significant prior teaching experience) can show a search committee the courses one is qualified to teach and interested in teaching. For example, with my PhD in communication, I include that I’m interested in international communication, advocacy communication and communication theory.

RELEVANT RESEARCH EXPERIENCE
This section gives search committees an idea of one’s record of published research, relevant grants as well as future research trajectory. List publications, research grants, presentations from academic conferences and research in-progress.

The publication list should be limited to peer-reviewed academic articles and book chapters or single-authored or edited books from academic publishers. For grants, include both grants one has applied for and been awarded and grants one has applied for and been rejected, which shows an active research trajectory despite the denial. Conference presentations should be limited to those where one has published a poster, presented at major academic conferences within one’s discipline and only listing presentations within the past five years.

NON-ACADEMIC EMPLOYMENT HISTORY
Jobs outside of the academy should be minimized when applying for an academic position, except when one’s professional experience has direct bearing on the open position.

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS AND LIST OF REFERENCES
Include any professional academicians or organizations you are active with. List three to five references, including title, place of employment and contact information. Preferably, these references should be from the academy, including mentors from graduate school, department chairs and teaching supervisors. If you need to submit your material and still need to contact your references, it is acceptable to write: References provided by request.

I hope this guide to constructing CVs does not fix the decades of defunding of full-time positions, but I do hope these instructions are helpful for PSC members who are crafting their CVs to apply for the new full-time jobs at CUNY.

Stuart Davis is an assistant professor of communication studies at Baruch College, where he also serves as the PSC chapter chair.

Shauna Vey
Professor, Theatre History, New York City College of Technology
Recalling the PSC’s history

By CLARION STAFF

The PSC Retirees Chapter held a virtual celebration to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the PSC. On April 14, 1972, the Legislative Conference and the United Federation of College Teachers merged to create the Professional Staff Congress. With a half century of labor organizing, coalition activism, political pressure and contract bargaining, members had a lot to reflect on. PSC retirees, many who are longtime union members with some who are 50-year members, spoke about how the union has shaped their lives and shared some of their most memorable union moments.

UNION SOLIDARITY

Several moments stand out in the 50 years that I’ve been a PSC member. In the early days of the PSC, I was present at the meeting where we voted for a strike authorization vote, resulting in a 92% “yes” vote. Again, the strike was not used, but the union was stronger for having faced the possibility and having members expressed a willingness to authorize a strike if necessary.

These were times when we weren’t talking about union solidarity and power, but we were exercising it and experiencing it. History shows that unions are effective when they unite and fight together. I’m glad that these struggles for our own interests and the interests of other parts of the working class have been part of the PSC’s history. May these campaigns and coalitions become stronger as we move forward.

John Hyland
Former PSC Treasurer
LaGuardia Community College

WOMEN’S LAWSUIT

The truth is that I didn’t pay much attention to the union nor did I even vote in favor of unionizing. Fortunately, clearer heads prevailed! And I will say I always used the union pocket calendar that was sent to me every fall.

I remember one instance of discrimination that predated the PSC and hopefully would not happen now. I was still working on my PhD, so I was working at City College as a lecturer with the provision that I would be promoted to assistant professor when the degree was completed. When that time came, my department chair said nothing and did nothing. When I approached him, he said something to the effect of, “Why did I care about the promotion and the money because he had heard my husband did well financially?” And he was a very nice man!

Then in the 1970s, there was the lawsuit brought by a group of women from Brooklyn College who realized women were earning considerably less than their male counterparts. I was astonished by that news. I received a settlement in the amount of about $4,000, but the pay disparity was not addressed and continued for my remaining years at City College.

Doris Weisberg
City College of New York

MAKING THINGS POSSIBLE

I don’t know what year I became a dues-paying member, but I began teaching in the City College music department (as it was then called) as a part-time lecturer in 1963, becoming full-time faculty the next year in 1964. Ten years later in 1974 and until 1979, I was an assistant professor. But I was not awarded tenure. This is where the PSC came in. Our union had included in its contract negotiations that if a faculty member had taught as a lecturer, full-time, for seven years, they were granted tenure! It allowed me to continue publishing and teaching at CCNY, becoming an assistant professor with tenure in 1983 and an associate professor in 1986. I retired in January 1998 to conduct a community chorus and complete a book on Estonian music. In 2022, I’m still writing and singing, in part, because the PSC made it possible for me to stay at CCNY for 34 years.

Mimi S. Daitz
City College of New York

FOR A BETTER CUNY

A life-changing day in my 50 years at CUNY was the day I went to testify against the end of open admissions. I met activists from all over CUNY who were passionate about the rights of all CUNY students to have access to a great education. That is the day I first met the beauty of Barbara Bowen and so many other PSC activists. My CUNY life changed, from one of isolation at York College to joining with my colleagues, including Randy Punter and Peter Ramis of York, to fight for a better CUNY.

Mimi S. Daitz
City College of New York

Continued on page 9
GOING TO COURT

In the 1990s, when Ann Reynolds was CUNY chancellor, the governor and the state legislature were playing their usual budget games. CUNY’s budget, small relative to that of the City University of New York, was the state university system’s major source of funding. When the chancellor made tough decisions about service cuts, sufficiently that the phrase “financial exigency” was used in a statement, the budget was revised with increased funding and the exigency avoided. CUNY then won a legal case on the appeals level, and rather than appeal further, we worked out a deal. Naturally, the CUNY Board of Trustees ignored it and subsequent CUNY Central administration acted as if it was not binding. Debt was a compact that the CUNY Board of Trustees had established and the chancellor and the president were the leaders at the time, the CUNY University Faculty Senate (UFS) and the PSC went to court. We won on the first round.

COMPACT WITH CUNY

Meanwhile, as I had expected, the budget was revised with increased funding and the exigency avoided. CUNY was in the legal case on the appeals level, and rather than appeal further, we worked out a deal. Naturally, the CUNY Board of Trustees ignored it and subsequent CUNY Central administration acted as if it was not binding. Debt was a compact that the CUNY Board of Trustees had established and the chancellor and the president were the leaders at the time, the CUNY University Faculty Senate (UFS) and the PSC went to court. We won on the first round.

Adjoint Pensions: Know Your Rights

Navigating the system

By CLARISSON STAFF

CUNY adjuncts and other part-timers are eligible to join the New York City Teachers’ Retirement System (TRS) Qualified Pension Plan and Tax-Def erred Annuity programs from their first semester at CUNY. The plan includes a pension, death benefits and a disability pension. It is funded by the employee and the employer. You can get enrollment forms from your campus Human Resources (HR) office or the TRS website at trsny.org.

Because of the particular, contingent nature of adjunct work, there are important issues adjuncts should be aware of to protect their pension rights. Below you will find detailed information about 1) joining the TRS Qualified Pension Plan (QPP), 2) buying back your service credit, 3) the pension if you have less than in TRS.

The way most people buy back service credit is that, once they are a TRS member for two years, they contact TRS to request and complete a buy back application. TRS will seek out your employment records for the colleges and public employers you listed on your application. Once it analyzes the records it receives from those public employers, TRS will send you a cost letter. The letter specifies what you are able to buy (in years), the cost, the deadline to pay the money and ways you can pay. The amount you pay includes interest, which is compounded annually.

However, you may also purchase prior service credit if you are over the age of 55. If you are a TRS member once you meet the retirement age, you are able to file for a retirement benefit once you meet the service credit to qualify for a pension. The way most people buy back service credit is that, once they are a TRS member for two years, they contact TRS to request and complete a buy back application. TRS will seek out your employment records for the colleges and public employers you listed on your application. Once it analyzes the records it receives from those public employers, TRS will send you a cost letter. The letter specifies what you are able to buy (in years), the cost, the deadline to pay the money and ways you can pay. The amount you pay includes interest, which is compounded annually.

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How to enroll and get help

How to enroll and get help

If you enrolled with TRS after March 31, 2012, you joined as a Tier VI member. Vesting as a Tier VI member occurs after five years of credited service, thanks to a change in the law that went into effect this year. (Previously, Tier VI members needed 10 years of credited service before they vested.) Vesting means you have earned enough service credit to qualify for a pension benefit once you meet the minimum age requirements established by TRS. Therefore, you are able to file for a pension with TRS once you have obtained five years of credited service and are over the age of 55. If you are under age 61 and have less than five years of credited service when you retire, the amount of your pension will be reduced based on your age at retirement. If you do not vest and you leave CUNY, you will be able to receive the contributions you made plus interest in the form of either cash or rollover to an IRA.

TRS translates the time you work for CUNY as an adjunct or other part-timer to service credit differently than it does for full-time employees. See below to determine how much service you are credited with, based on the hours worked.

TRS Adjust Service Conversion ▪ 40 paid adjunct hours = 1 year of credited service (the maximum you will get in one year) ▪ 240 paid adjunct hours = 6 months of credited service ▪ 180 paid adjunct hours = 6 months of credited service ▪ 90 paid adjunct hours = 3 months of credited service ▪ 60 paid adjunct hours = 2 months of credited service ▪ 45 paid adjunct hours = a month and a half of credited service

‘BUYING BACK’ SERVICE

This is also how TRS calculates service credit when you buy back credited service. You have to be a TRS member first and then, two calendar years after your initial enrollment, you are eligible to buy back the service you have had with CUNY and/or another state public entity before you enrolled in TRS.

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Multiple jobs

For example, let’s say you were enrolled in TRS as an adjunct at John Jay College, and you observed in your pay stubs that the mandatory employee contributions to TRS were being taken out. Then, you also started as an adjunct at Baruch College but never went to Baruch HR to make sure you were a TRS member in the TRS QPP. After you have enrolled, make sure you check your pay stubs to verify the mandatory contributions are being deducted. Also, if you begin work at any other CUNY college and you are a part of the TRS QPP, please go to HR and make sure you provide your QPP number and contribute through that college as well.

You should reach out to TRS first with your questions about pension issues. If after reaching out to TRS your question has not been answered or resolved, you may contact Sandra Zaconeta at the CUNY Welfare Fund, at szaconeta@psccunywf.org.

If you have a problem working with a CUNY college HR department on a pension issue and need assist- ance, you may contact Greg Douras, a PSC contract enforcement coordinator, at gdouras@pscmail.org.

Although CUNY should ensure colleges share this information or maintain it centrally, they do not. If you have asked HR to make these corrections, based on a new college or a new line, and they don’t show up in your paycheck, feel free to reach out to the PSC Contract Enforcement Department for assistance. Contact information is below.

It is important to note that CUNY and TRS process adjunct service information manually because CUNY has not invested in automating pay-roll for TRS adjuncts. PSC is advocating for CUNY to automate this process and submit information to TRS centrally. Until they do so, it is important for adjuncts to know their rights and self-advocate, with the assistance of PSC.

QPP enrollment

You can enroll in TRS by clicking a join or enroll button on the bottom of the TRS homepage or by going to trsny.org/Trs-enrollment. Please make sure you are enrolling in the QPP. After you have enrolled, make sure you check your pay stubs to verify the mandatory contributions are being deducted. Also, if you begin work at any other CUNY college and you are a part of the TRS QPP, please go to HR and make sure you provide your QPP number and contribute through that college as well.

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Achieve Your Rights

Commonwealth of the Bahamas

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The purpose of PSC/CUNY is to advance and securitize the professionally-related interests of the instructional staff and the other members of the bargaining unit of the Professional Staff Congress of the City University of New York. The PSC/CUNY is responsible to and subject to the auditor's supervision of the audit of the PSC/CUNY and the City University of New York as a whole, in conformity with the auditing standards generally accepted in the United States of America.

Management’s Responsibility for the Financial Statements: Management is responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of the financial statements as a whole and for its internal control. Accordingly, management expresses no such opinion.

Auditor’s Responsibility: Our responsibility is to express an opinion on the financial statements based on our audit. We are responsible for conducting the audit in accordance with the standards of public accounting, and to express an opinion on the financial statements based on our audit.

In our opinion, the financial statements referred to above present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position as of August 31, 2021 and 2020, the result of operations, cash flows, and changes in net assets for the years then ended, in conformity with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America.

Next, we would like to present the notes to the financial statements.
The Plan’s expected long-term rate of return on assets is based on a long-term investment strategy and expectations of future investment returns. This assumption is determined by considering projected future economic conditions or model-based valuation techniques.

The change in unfunded pension benefit obligations is a result of the following:

- Changes recognized in net periodic pension cost
- Other actuarial assumptions changes
- Asset returns
- Plan amendments
- Other

The change in plan assets is due to:

- Contributions
- Investments
- Benefits paid
- Other

The change in net assets is due to:

- Contributions
- Investments
- Distributions
- Other

The Plan’s net assets consist of the following:

- Cash and equities
- Equities
- Investments
- Other

The fair value hierarchy for investments is:

- Level 1: Observable inputs
- Level 2: Inputs other than Level 1 inputs that are observable inputs
- Level 3: Unobservable inputs

The Plan’s contributions for the years ended August 31, 2021 and 2020 were $12,620,304 and $9,177,118, respectively. The allocation of the Plan’s net assets is as follows:

- Cash and equivalents
- Equities
- Investments
- Other

The Plan’s assets are valued using observable inputs except for

- Plan assets that are not traded in an active market
- Plan assets that are valued using fair value models

The Plan’s net assets for the years ended August 31, 2021 and 2020 were $12,620,304 and $9,177,118, respectively.

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Suit over unfair vax rule

By CLARION STAFF

The union has filed a lawsuit with the Supreme Court of the State of New York in Manhattan “challenging the legality of the COVID-19 vaccination policy as CUNY has applied it,” wrote PSC President James Davis in a June 3 email to PSC members. The union’s suit argues that “CUNY’s partial vaccine policy [is] arbitrary and capricious” under the state law used to challenge decisions of state and local agencies in the courts.

The union supports a vaccine policy, Davis said, but CUNY’s policy only covers PSC-represented employees and those under the executive compensation plan. More than 10,000 other CUNY workers are not required to vaccinate. A vaccine policy that covers some job titles and not others is not only unfair but defies a public health approach to limiting the spread of COVID-19, said the union.

A CUNY Board of Trustees resolution in late January recognized the massive risk to public health that COVID-19 poses and the need for vaccination. Davis noted CUNY’s actions falls short. The custodian, cafeteria staff, college assistant, electrician, or accountant who declines to get vaccinated, for example, risks no adverse employment actions, while PSC-represented employees who do not qualify for a medical or religious exemption, as a public health necessity, are subject to discipline for noncompliance while others who occupy the same offices, corridors and places of assembly suffer no penalty whatsoever for the very same action.”

The union is seeking to negotiate a prohibition against terminations through impact bargaining. PSC is optimistic that the legal action, combined with public pressure and the union’s continued efforts at the bargaining table, will lead CUNY to implement a fair and consistent policy.

“We continue to support a vaccine mandate for all CUNY employees, with medical and religious exemptions, as a public health necessity,” Davis said. “But no employee should lose their job for failing to comply; there are other measures CUNY can take.”

CUNY pride programs

By CLARION STAFF

In support of Pride Month, CUNY issued a statement reaffirming “its commitment to its LGBTQI+ students with a wide array of supportive programs tailored to provide them with career engagement opportunities and leadership skill development.”

CUNY highlighted the “CUNY LGBTI+ Summer Internship program, launched last year to provide career engagement opportunities for LGBTI+ students across the private, cultural and nonprofit sectors,” and said that “the CUNY LGBTI+ Advocacy Academy has been training selected students to serve as advocates and leaders through a non-credit certification course taught by Queens College Distinguished Lecturer Jimmy Vacca, a former New York City Council member from the Bronx.”

In addition, “the David Mixner Fellowship, provides paid opportunities to work with organizations at the forefront of the LGBTI+ rights movement. The fellowship is open to full-time City College undergraduate students who identify as LGBTI+ and want to work on LGBTI+ advocacy. Advisers work with selected students to connect them with organizations across the city and the country, based on their areas of interest.”

The good doctor is in: Dr. Fauci honored at City College

Anthony Fauci, director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (left, at podium), spoke at City College’s graduation on June 3.