

# Clarion

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



MARCH 2023



## ARBITRATION Protecting rights at KCC

Admin violated a  
HEO's rights;  
PSC fought back  
and won.

PAGE 8



Dave Sanders

## MEMBERS TO CUNY COME TO THE TABLE

PSC members gathered outside CUNY's Midtown Manhattan headquarters, demanding that the administration come to the table to bargain a new contract. The PSC also delivered its contract demands to management.

PAGES 2-5

### POLITICS

## Closing in on the budget

The state budget deadline is approaching. The PSC is fighting on all fronts to ensure that it includes fair and full funding for CUNY.

PAGE 2

### EXPLAINER

## Meet the NY power players

The path to a fair budget – which the union needs for a fair contract – requires a lot of political maneuvering. Meet the politicians who hold the power.

PAGES 6-7

### ORGANIZING

## Expanding the union staff

As the union ramps up its contract campaign, it has hired new staff who bring years of labor, political and community outreach experience.

PAGE 9



### ENROLLMENT

## Queens members save classes

Members at York College and Queensborough Community College help avert draconian class cuts at the beginning of the spring semester.

PAGE 12



# The union won't wait – negotiate now

By ARI PAUL

More than 500 CUNY faculty and staff gathered outside CUNY's Midtown Manhattan headquarters in the early morning hours of February 27. It was a day before the PSC-CUNY contract expired, and members demanded that the administration begin negotiating a new collective bargaining agreement with the union.

At a table on the sidewalk in front of CUNY's entrance as coffee-clutching commuters rushed by, members placed fists of approval ink stamps on a sign demanding the administration come to the table. PSC leaders, CUNY students, elected officials and labor allies addressed the crowd, voicing the PSC's key demands: raises that go beyond inflation, remote work options for staff, increased benefits, pay parity and more job protection for adjuncts and key health and safety protections. This bargaining agenda is meant to enrich university life for students.

## NEEDED RAISES

Yasmin Edwards, the PSC chapter chair at Bronx Community College, emphasized the urgent need for expanded contractual protections for health and safety, citing deplorable conditions at her college. She also noted that investments in CUNY's faculty and staff are needed to educate the next generation of civil servants and civic leaders.

Carolina Bank Muñoz, the Brooklyn College PSC chapter chair, said that faculty and staff have faced nu-

## PSC demands admin come to the table



PSC members take up an entire city block outside CUNY headquarters at an early morning demonstration on February 27. They demand that CUNY begin contract bargaining with the PSC.

merous financial burdens, including higher rents and new expenses related to remote work as a result of the pandemic. CUNY pay scales, however, have failed to keep pace with other public university systems. "We don't just deserve wage increases; we need them," she said.

Bank Muñoz added that above inflation wage increases are necessary to recruit and retain people of color in faculty positions. "Our

students deserve to have professors who look like them and understand their experience," she said.

## Raises, remote work and pay parity

The demands were ratified by the union's delegates during a meeting on February 2, after the union's Executive Council and top leadership spent many months listening to members' thoughts and concerns for a new contract. The demands can be found on pages 3–5 of this issue of *Clarion*.

Under the New York State civil service law, the terms of the previous agreement will stay in effect until a new contract is ratified and implemented.

## BARGAINING CONDITIONS

The conditions of bargaining are complex. On the one hand, CUNY's budget allocation from the state has improved under Governor Kathy Hochul as compared to her predecessor Andrew Cuomo. There is

more money available now to pay for raises and new faculty and staff positions, but the State's budget is not yet where it needs to be to fund the union's vision for #A Peoples-CUNY. City Hall, a major funder of community colleges, is seeking more cuts to education, and it recently reached a tentative contract deal with District Council 37 that includes four 3% annual raises and one 3.25% raise.

## AUSTERITY MEASURES

The University has threatened to cancel classes and even implemented a hiring freeze, all while "the bosses have given themselves obscene raises," said Andrea Vásquez, the union's first vice president.

At the rally, former PSC President Barbara Bowen, who led bargaining for the union for two decades, spoke optimistically about the union's current contract goals and listed accomplishments achieved in the last few agreements that many once dismissed as too ambitious.

PSC President James Davis told the crowd that the union's bargaining committee has a tough road of negotiations ahead, adding that a united membership gives the union the power it needs to prevail in bargaining.

"We need you by our side," he said. "I mean that symbolically, and I mean that literally.... You are the union. We are the union." Davis then repeated the chant of the morning: "When we fight, we win!"

# Critical moment for state funding

## Organizing to forestall cuts

By ARI PAUL

The PSC sees an opportunity to achieve sizable increases in state contributions to CUNY during this budget cycle. On March 9, the union will send buses full of faculty, staff and students to Albany for a rally demanding that Governor Kathy Hochul and the leaders of the New York State Legislature reach a state budget agreement that rectifies decades of underfunding public higher education and funds the next PSC-CUNY collective bargaining agreement. (See pages 6–7 for more information about the elected political leaders central to budget negotiations.) The state budget is due April 1.

## HIGHER ED FUNDING

The governor's budget briefing indicates investments of "\$1.5 billion in new capital projects for SUNY and CUNY" and "\$270 million in new operating support for SUNY and CUNY campuses." The total increase to CUNY operating funds that the governor proposed is \$94 million for CUNY's senior colleges and flat funding for its community colleges.

CUNY advocates have seen far worse executive budgets than this one during the Andrew Cuomo era, but it's not nearly as generous as last

year's state budget, which included a tuition freeze. As *Gothamist* reported, student leaders lashed out at the governor's plan for a "3% annual tuition increase for in-state SUNY and CUNY students." Salimatou Doumbouya, CUNY University Student Senate chair and City Tech student, said, "The pandemic has made things hard for students already.... A tuition hike does not help at all."

In a statement, the union said, "Last year, Governor Kathy Hochul made a five-year, \$1.5 billion commitment to restoring CUNY and SUNY and set an ambitious goal to increase New York's college graduation rate because she knows the

power of public higher education to transform lives and strengthen the economy. The planned FY 2024 CUNY increases of \$94 million in recurring operating funds and \$643 million in capital investment are a welcome and needed investment, for which we thank the governor. Unfortunately, these increases fail to keep pace with the five-year plan or

## The union mobilizes to fully fund CUNY.

to meet CUNY's budget request. A budget that depends on tuition hikes and leaves CUNY underfunded will further entrench the racial and economic inequalities that have plagued New York's system of higher education funding."

It continued, "Our students need more full-time faculty and advisors, well-equipped libraries and labs and safe, modern buildings and classrooms. The shortage of full-time mental health counselors at CUNY should be prioritized in the governor's \$1 billion mental health plan. In short, New

York City needs a fully funded, tuition-free university, not another round of annual tuition hikes. With tax revenue running several billion dollars ahead of projections, according to the comptroller's latest report, Albany is positioned to make these investments."

Continued on page 11



James Davis, left, calls for tuition-free CUNY at a Baruch College rally.

## Clarion MARCH 2023

Newspaper of the Professional Staff Congress/City University of New York. Vol. 53, No. 2. 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, 25 Broadway, 9th Floor, New York, NY 10004. Telephone: (212) 354-1252. Website: [www.psc-cuny.org](http://www.psc-cuny.org). Email: [apaul@psccmail.org](mailto:apaul@psccmail.org). All opinions expressed in these pages are not necessarily those of the PSC.

PSC OFFICERS: James Davis, President; Andrea Vásquez, First Vice President; Penny Lewis, Secretary; Felicia Wharton, Treasurer; Lawrence Bosket, Luke Elliott-Negri, Jennifer Gaboury, Sharon Persinger, Youngmin Seo, University-Wide Officers; David Hatchett, Vice President Senior Colleges; Michael Batson, Susan Kang, George Emilio Sanchez, Senior College Officers; Sharon Utakis, Vice President Community Colleges; Geoffrey Kurtz, Howard Meltzer, Emily Schnee, Community College Officers; Iris DeLutro, Vice President Cross Campus Units; Amy Jeu, Lucy McIntyre, Janet Winter, Cross Campus Officers; Marva Lilly, Nancy Romer, Retiree Officers; Lynne Turner, Vice President Part-Time Personnel; Ángel Martínez, Pamela Stenberg, Part-Time Officers; Peter I. Hoberman, Vice President Emeritus, Cross Campus Units.

STAFF: Dean Hubbard, Executive Director; Anais Surkin, Associate Executive Director; Denise Poché-Jetter, Director of Human Resources and Operations; Faye Moore, Director of Contract Administration; Rico Doan, Director, Organizing; Francis Clark, Director, Communications; Bettina Damiani, Director, Policy and Research; Denyse Procope-Gregoire, Coordinator, Membership Records; Peter Zwiebach, Director, Legal Affairs; Ida Cheng, Director, Strategic Research and Special Assistant to the President.

Editor: Ari Paul / Associate Editor: Shomail Ahmad / Designer: Margarita Aguilar / Copy Editors: Teri Duerr, Matthew Schlecht  
© 2023 Professional Staff Congress/CUNY



# A fair contract for a people's CUNY

The next PSC-CUNY contract will be historic as it is the first to register the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on our lives and work. The union will continue to address the areas of need that preexisted the pandemic and build on the advances of previous negotiations. But this contract must also address needs that the pandemic exacerbated or exposed for PSC members and for our students.

Pandemic-era inflation has eroded the real value of our salaries, many of which were made uncompetitive by years of underinvestment in the university. For too many, work at CUNY before the pandemic was unsecured and precarious; these conditions are even more clearly unacceptable today. To enhance the quality of education at CUNY, the next contract must fairly compensate and support CUNY's workforce, expand full-time hiring and combat contingency, ensure academic integrity across modalities, and foster a safe and sustainable learning environment. To respond to enrollment declines, facilities degradation, and the attrition of faculty and staff, CUNY must rebuild itself as the university where New Yorkers want to study and academic professionals want to work. Only by organizing together, with our many titles and ranks united by this vision for CUNY and our next contract, can we make these goals a reality. Recent contract struggles in higher education, including our own, have lifted the sights of faculty and staff across the country and inspired us to build on one another's gains.

From the onset of the pandemic, PSC members have responded consistently to the challenges.

- Health and safety have been of paramount concern to employees returning to classrooms, labs, and offices. Hundreds of union members have pressed this struggle forward. Contract negotiations are an opportunity for the university to commit to reporting on key metrics to ensure that our campus communities stay healthy and flourish. Here we must amplify the union's budget campaign for new resources to overcome chronic disinvestment in CUNY facilities.
- Budgetary uncertainty accompanying the pandemic made CUNY workers on contingent appointments more vulnerable. Thousands were initially non-reappointed and although many eventually got their jobs back, the insecurity of at-will appointments persists. The contract must increase access to full-time appointments and improve job security for those in part-time positions.
- When work went remote almost overnight, our members reinvented how they did their jobs. Under duress, faculty learned to teach online and developed courses for online or hybrid delivery. This work went largely uncompensated, and the contract must address the expectation – and the desire –

## A bargaining agenda for negotiations



All illustrations by Jud Guiteau

to serve our students in multiple modalities, while ensuring the conditions necessary for students to succeed and thrive.

- Professional staff and library faculty transitioned to working remotely and continued to meet the needs of students and colleagues. The contract must evolve to reflect the fact that much of our work can be performed partially remotely while continuing to serve our students.
- The pandemic revealed the extent to which institutional racism undermines the safety and success of many New Yorkers and prevents all of us from prospering. A faculty that more closely reflects the communities we serve will better support our students and strengthen our academic programs. Only 38% of CUNY full-time faculty identify as Black/African American, Hispanic/Latino, Asian/Pacific Islander, Indigenous American, or multi-racial, while nearly 80% of students identify as one of these groups. Collective bargaining is an arena for the union to secure management's commitment to diversifying the faculty. Our campuses must be healthy, safe, bias-free spaces in which every student and worker can thrive.

Adjunct employees contend with many adverse effects of contingency: insufficient wages, uncertain employment, barriers to career advancement, lack of access to benefits. The PSC negotiated major raises for teaching adjuncts in the last contract. As a result, it is more expensive for CUNY to rely on adjunct labor, and this has led to

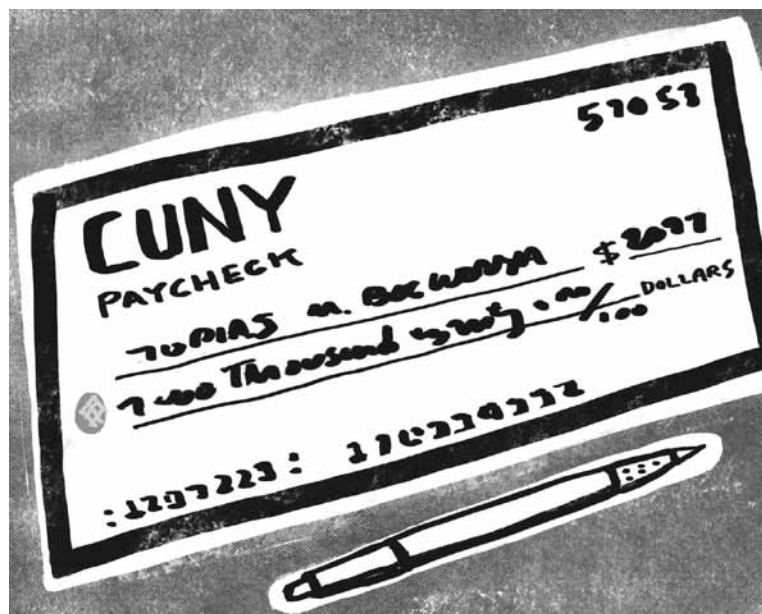
full-time hires – more than 500 lines this year alone. The next contract must build upon those achievements to meet the needs of all contingent employees, for whom the impact of contingency goes well beyond wages. Critically, we will continue to move the university toward full-time appointments, thousands more of which are needed to reverse the impact of decades of disinvestment. New full-time appointments must include professorial hires; the research that professors perform is vital to the classroom and the public good. Fostering research and scholarship has been a long-standing aim of the PSC, and the union will seek to enhance support in these areas.

Our history as “The People's University” has made CUNY widely renowned for offering access and

academic quality to New Yorkers from all walks of life. Decades of neglect and disinvestment have threatened to undermine that legacy and compromise the quality of the education CUNY offers. The talented members of the PSC can no longer do more with less; for our own benefit and the benefit of our students and their families, our contract negotiations will prioritize raises, justice, and community.

### A. SALARY

PSC members need real raises. Salaries have eroded in the face of long-term disinvestment in CUNY and are uncompetitive with peer institutions. The real value of the salaries of all members of the bargaining unit has declined during this period of rapid inflation, while the cost of living in



the New York metropolitan area has increased rapidly.

1. All members of the bargaining unit shall receive across-the-board salary increases that exceed inflation and address the rising cost of living. (Article 24)
2. Members in the College Laboratory Technician titles shall receive equity increases to approach the salaries of other full-time professional staff, Assistants to HEO, Continuing Education Teachers, and CLIP and CUNY Start Instructors shall receive equity increases in addition to across-the-board salary increases. Continuing Education Teachers appointed to the Math Start and English Start programs shall be subject to the terms and conditions of Appendix D that apply to CUNY Start Instructors. (Article 24 and Appendix D)
3. Equity and pay parity for teaching adjuncts with full-time faculty shall be achieved through equal pay for the equal work that teaching adjuncts do. (Article 24)
4. Promotions and reclassifications shall be accompanied by an automatic increase of at least one step on the new salary schedule. (Articles 22 and 24)
5. Additional increases shall be added to the top step of all full-time titles to address salary compression. For full-time employees, the five-year step shall be converted to a three-year step. For hourly employees whose salary schedules are covered in Article 24, movement from the penultimate and antepenultimate steps will take place after one year. (Article 24)
6. Improvements shall be made to the provisions for HEO reclassification, discretionary salary differentials, and salary differentials for advanced degrees. (Articles 22 and 24)
7. Salaries in the Research Professor and Research Associate series shall be determined by salary schedules rather than ranges. (Article 24)

### B. BENEFITS

1. The annual per capita contribution to the PSC-CUNY Welfare Fund shall be increased for active and retired employees in order to continue improving the benefits the Welfare Fund provides. (Article 26)
2. Eligibility for tuition waivers shall be extended to non-teaching adjuncts, CLIP and CUNY Start Instructors, and adjunct CLTs, and to children of members of the instructional staff. The eligibility requirement for tuition waivers for teaching adjuncts shall be reduced, and may be established through service CUNY-wide. (Article 29)
3. All reappointed teaching and non-teaching adjuncts, including adjunct CLTs, shall accrue and carry over sick leave. Annual leave and sick leave provisions for CLIP

Continued on page 4



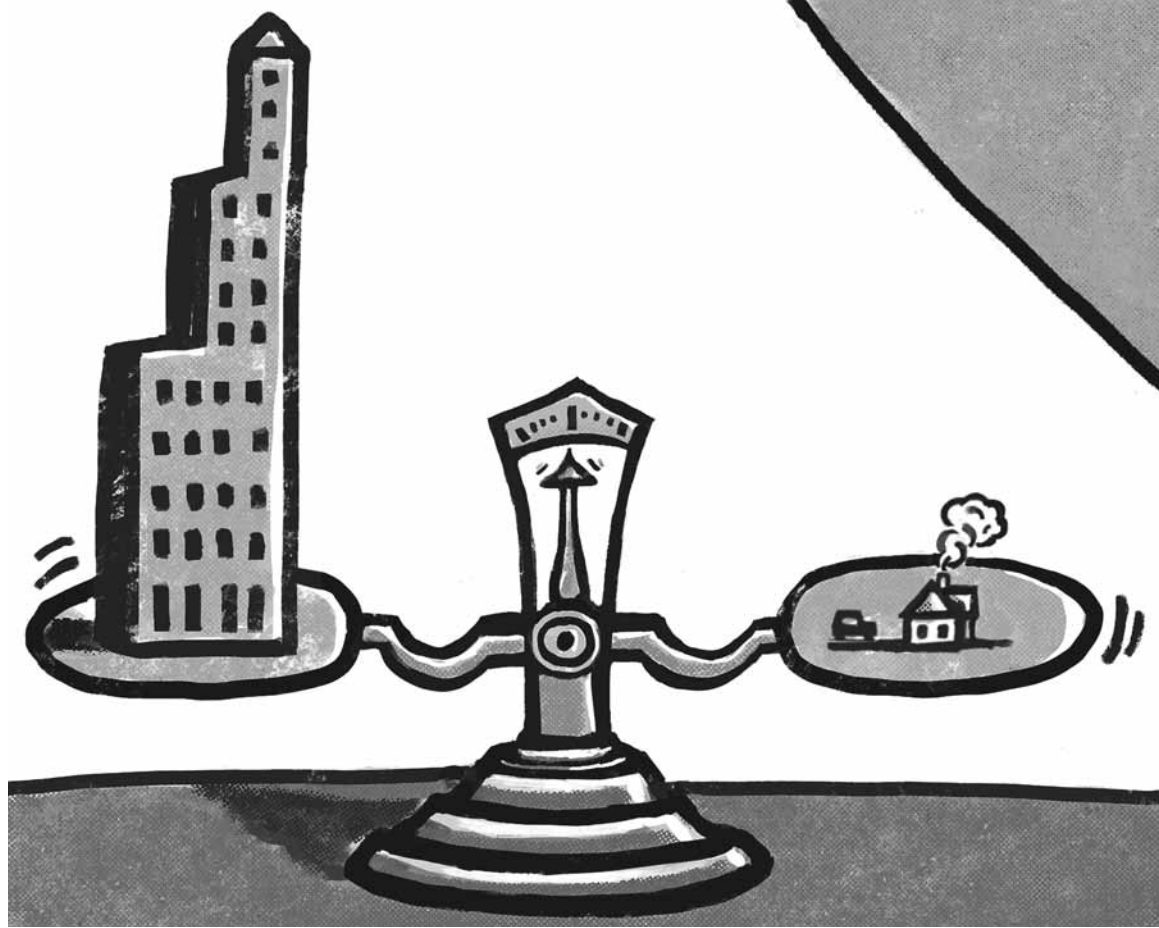
# A fair contract for a people's CUNY

Continued from page 3

- and CUNY Start instructors shall be enhanced. (Article 14)
4. Eligibility for health insurance shall be expanded for teaching and non-teaching adjuncts. (Appendix J)
  5. Teaching and non-teaching adjuncts who retire into the TRS pension system shall receive retiree health insurance in the same manner as full-time retirees. (Article 27 and Appendix J)
  6. Service performed by Graduate Assistants and doctoral students employed in other PSC-represented titles shall count toward their contractual benefits in subsequent CUNY appointments.
  7. A labor-management committee shall be established to resolve problems related to the tracking and implementation of retirement benefits, including pensions, and shall meet twice a semester. (Article 27)

## C. WORK-LIFE BALANCE AND PROFESSIONAL RESPECT

1. All professional staff and library faculty shall, with limited exceptions where job responsibilities preclude it, have the option to perform their work remotely at least 40% of the time.
2. A procedure shall be established for employees and supervisors to arrange a mutually agreed upon flexible workday and workweek schedule.
3. Teaching adjuncts and Graduate Assistants shall be compensated when a class they are assigned to teach is cancelled or reassigned. Cancellation or reassignment shall not constitute a break in service. Members of the non-classroom instructional staff shall receive timely notice of schedule changes. (Article 10)
4. PSC and CUNY will work jointly to combat harassment and bullying in the physical and virtual workplace (cyberbullying). A university-wide labor-management committee on professional respect shall be established.
5. A fair system shall be created to compensate employees for late paychecks.



6. Teaching adjuncts and Graduate Assistants shall be entitled to the same jumbo-class provision as their college's full-time faculty for calculation of compensation and teaching support.
7. Essential workers in the PSC bargaining unit who are called in to work when a campus is closed shall be entitled to additional compensation.

## D. EDUCATIONAL TECHNOLOGY

Educational technology (ET) has become an essential component of the full spectrum of teaching modalities, including but not limited to in-person, hybrid mixtures of in-person and online, online synchronous, HyFlex (in-person, asynchronous, and synchronous online at once), and online asynchronous modalities. Distance learning (DL) shall be understood to include hybrid mixtures of in-person

and online, online synchronous, HyFlex (in-person, asynchronous, and synchronous online at once) and online asynchronous modalities.

1. All credit-bearing courses offered by the University that employ distance learning technology, including courses that are fully online, hybrid courses, or courses that blend online and face-to-face teaching modalities, shall be designed and developed by faculty and professional staff, and taught by faculty, in titles included under Article 1.
2. Courses developed for online or DL are the intellectual property of the creator, unless explicitly designated to be CUNY's or another party's intellectual property by CUNY's Intellectual Property Policy. In those cases when a faculty member develops a course using distance learning modalities in a "work-for-hire" capacity (compensated in salary or time, or both) under CUNY policy, the University shall provide, before the course is developed, written notice to the instructor, separate from the employment contract, clearly setting forth the specific terms governing the ownership of and rights to the intellectual property created.
3. All faculty who develop a course for online delivery shall have the right of first refusal to teach and revise the course they develop.
4. Within the terms set forth by governance bodies, academic departments shall have the right to decide the teaching modality of their courses, and participation in any DL shall be at the discretion of individual faculty members.
5. Instructional staff must have meaningful participation in decisions

about digital platforms and learning management systems prior to their selection for use by departments, colleges, and the university.

6. Faculty shall receive adequate compensation (in salary or time, or both) for the professional development, course development and additional instructional time that is required by the use of ET and DL across the teaching modality spectrum, and be provided with adequate technological support services while teaching their courses. Such time shall not be charged against office hours.
7. At the conclusion of the 2022 HyFlex pilot, HyFlex shall be considered a teaching modality subject to the approval process of appropriate governance bodies. Faculty teaching HyFlex shall be compensated at twice the time or pay rate of regular classes (online, hybrid or in-person). All HyFlex courses shall be assigned appro-

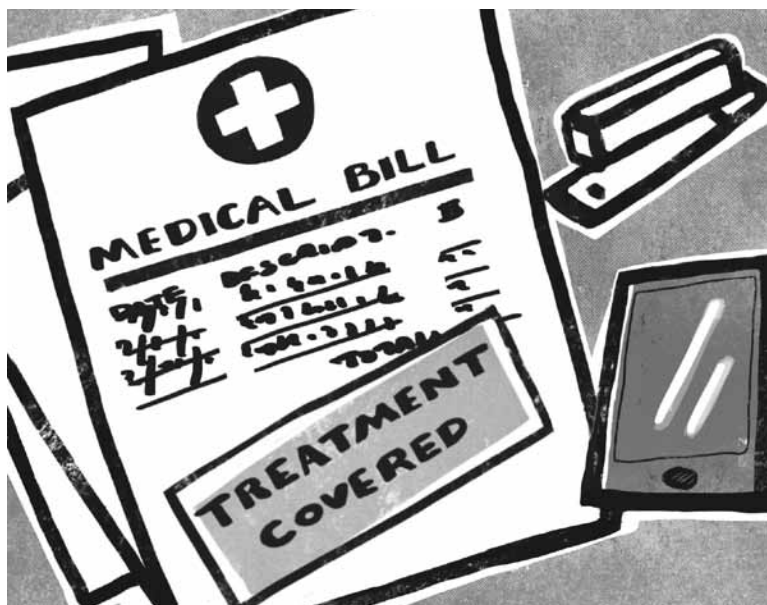
priate synchronous technological and academic support.

8. Educational technology shall not be used by management for surveillance of job performance or time for faculty or staff, including but not limited to the tracking of hours worked, or tracking of work progress.
9. Insofar as professional staff are required to provide support services for online education and DL, such work shall be appropriate to the title, included in job descriptions and workload calculations, and considered in reclassification requests.

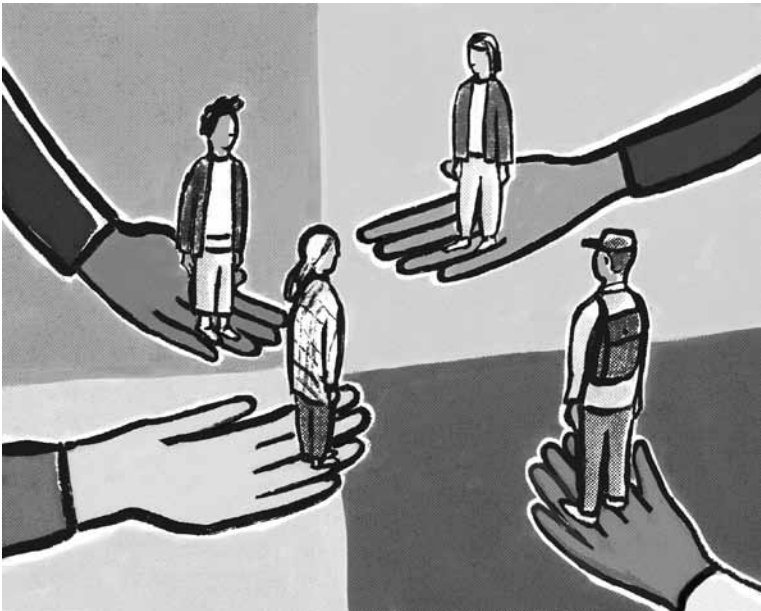
## E. JOB SECURITY

1. The number of annual reappointments required before granting a Certificate of Continual Administrative Service for Higher Education Officers shall be reduced. (Article 13)
2. The pilot program on multiyear appointments for teaching adjuncts shall be made permanent and modified to expand the eligibility criteria and improve consistency and fairness in implementation. (Appendix E)
3. Teaching adjuncts shall be eligible for a Certificate of Continuous Employment (CCE).
4. Eligibility for multi-year appointments shall be extended to non-teaching adjuncts and adjunct CLTs, and an appropriate review process shall be established. (Appendix E)
5. CLIP and CUNY Start Instructors shall be eligible for a Certificate of Continuous Employment, in accordance with Article 12. A procedure shall be established to facilitate movement of employees in these titles between worksites if low enrollments jeopardize reappointment. (Article 12)
6. The university shall authorize the appointment of 600 new dedicated full-time Lecturer positions for colleges to allocate to academic departments for the conversion of their qualified teaching adjuncts. The university shall authorize the appointment of 50 new Instructor lines dedicated to CUNY doctoral candidates.

Continued on page 5







Continued from page 4

- 7. Research Professors and Research Associates shall be eligible for a Certificate of Continuous Employment. (Article 11) Research Professors whose appointments are explicitly contingent on external funding shall receive a 6-month notice, or pay in lieu thereof, if the university moves to terminate them due to loss of external funding.
- 8. SEEK Directors and College Discovery Directors shall be added to the PSC bargaining unit. (Article 1)
- 9. There shall be a university-wide cap on the number of full-time contingent positions, including Research Professors. (Article 11)

F. WORKLOAD AND PROFESSIONAL ADVANCEMENT

- 1. College Laboratory Technicians shall have increased promotional opportunities. (Article 22)
- 2. CUNY shall provide additional compensation and recognition of seniority in the Lecturer titles, including but not limited to multi-step advancement in salary schedule to accompany conferral of the CCE. Doctoral Lecturers and teaching adjuncts with doctoral degrees shall be eligible for professional development workshops to support research and scholarship for those seeking Assistant Professor positions. (Article 11)
- 3. Annual teaching load for Educational Opportunity Center faculty shall be reduced from 30 to 24 contact hours annually.
- 4. CUNY shall provide additional support to department chairs. (Article 25)
- 5. The university shall authorize 50 Assistant Professor lines dedicated to current Doctoral Lecturers at CUNY. Doctoral Lecturers with four or more years of continuous full-time service in their title shall have the option to expedite their tenure clock. (Article 9)
- 6. Improvements shall be made to the review and revision of job descriptions for the nonteaching instructional staff.

G. HEALTH & SAFETY

- 1. Article 39.1 shall be amended to add the following requirements: “to furnish to each of its employ-

ees a place of employment free of physical or environmental conditions that interfere with teaching and learning or with the ability of employees to perform their assigned duties.” This article shall be further amended to indicate that an alleged violation of the provision may be grieved up to and including Step 3 of the formal grievance procedure.

- 2. Colleges shall be required to report publicly each semester in detail on air quality, water safety and availability, and facilities maintenance. (Article 39)
- 3. The labor-management committee on Health and Safety shall meet at least twice per semester. In addition, campus-based labor-management committees on Health and Safety shall be established. (Article 39)
- 4. Environmental Health and Safety Directors shall be included in the PSC bargaining unit. (Article 1)

H. SUPPORT FOR THE ACADEMIC COMMUNITY

- 1. CUNY shall substantially increase funding for faculty reassigned time for unsponsored research

at the senior and community colleges. (Article 6)

- 2. Annual contributions to the HEO-CLT Professional Development Fund and to the Adjunct-CET Professional Development Fund shall be increased. (Article 33 and Appendix B)
- 3. Funding for the PSC-CUNY Research Award program shall be increased. (Article 25)
- 4. Library faculty shall have the same amount of annual leave as teaching faculty. (Articles 14 and 25)
- 5. Fellowship leave decisions shall not be based on budgetary considerations. (Article 25)
- 6. Teaching adjuncts serving in multi-year appointments and nonteaching instructional staff shall be eligible for paid leave for research and professional development, which shall not constitute a break in service. (Article 14)
- 7. There shall be a uniform and enhanced system of funding and NYSHIP provision for all CUNY doctoral students, including but not limited to those who are currently employed as Graduate Teaching Fellows and Science Fellows, and those who are recipients of tuition-only support. (Article 11)
- 8. Improvements shall be made to various compensation terms that apply to bargaining unit members at the Hunter College Campus Schools.
- 9. CUNY shall encourage all search committees to refer candidates to the Professional Staff Congress as a resource as soon as they are offered a position.

I. RACIAL JUSTICE AND SUPPORT FOR THE COMMON GOOD

- 1. In recognition of the pervasive effects of institutional racism in higher education and CUNY’s responsibility as the nation’s leading public urban university system, CUNY shall establish a fund to support departmental efforts to-



ward racial diversity in recruiting and retaining faculty.

- 2. CUNY shall provide reassigned time for faculty who provide exceptional service for mentoring, advising and outreach to first-generation and/or traditionally under-represented students. Procedures for administering the reassigned time shall be established by college governance bodies. (Article 6)
- 3. In recognition of the climate crisis, New York City’s goals to achieve net-zero carbon emissions, and CUNY’s role in contributing to the City’s emissions, CUNY shall reduce carbon emissions, meet with key stakeholders, and report annually on progress.
- 4. In recognition of the devastating environmental, social, and financial impact of single-use plastics, 36 million pounds of which enter the City’s waste stream annually, CUNY shall provide food service and vending machine offerings that are free of single-use plastics.
- 5. In recognition of the extensive research showing that smaller class size improves student retention and learning outcomes, CUNY shall reduce the average size of undergraduate classes over the

duration of this contract and report annually on progress.

J. ENFORCEMENT OF THE COLLECTIVE BARGAINING AGREEMENT

- 1. The university shall increase reassigned time to PSC to implement the collective bargaining agreement. Teaching adjuncts on multi-year appointments shall be eligible for reassigned time to implement the collective bargaining agreement. (Article 6)
- 2. HEOs shall remain on payroll during disciplinary proceedings. (Article 21)
- 3. Each College President shall meet with the PSC Chapter Chairperson and a reasonable number of other Officers of the PSC, including cross-campus representation, twice each semester. (Article 2)
- 4. CUNY shall provide the PSC with information about new retirees, reporting on the names and college appointment status of adjuncts who receive multi-year appointments, and adjuncts who receive health insurance through their CUNY appointment. (Article 5)
- 5. A bargaining sub-committee shall be established to address out-of-date job titles and practices.

The Professional Staff Congress reserves the right to amend, withdraw, or add to these demands. Approved by the Delegate Assembly on February 2, 2023.



The road ahead

The contract has expired, and the union’s delegates have ratified the bargaining demands. The PSC has told CUNY loud and clear that it is time to negotiate.

There will be lots of ways to get involved in the contract campaign, including attending a bargaining session with CUNY, organizing on your campus locally or joining union-wide rallies around the city.

Stay informed on the contract campaign, by visiting [psc-cuny.org](http://psc-cuny.org) and reading communications from your chapter leadership.



# Pressing lawmakers for CUNY

## A guide to top officials in the budget process

By SHOMIAL AHMAD

The PSC bargains in the public arena because CUNY is funded by the State and City. Decades of defunding have to be reversed if CUNY is truly to live up to its public mission of providing high-quality education to all New Yorkers. With state and city budget surpluses, the moment to better fund public higher education is now.

In the first months of the year, PSC leaders and union activists press state and local lawmakers to fully fund CUNY in their budgets. But it doesn't end there. Union members also push for the passage of crucial legislation that affects CUNY, their students and the communities they

serve. The current legislative session, which coincides with the PSC-CUNY contract expiration, is a critical moment to confront lawmakers with the day-to-day realities that faculty and staff have faced, under decades of enforced austerity in order to educate the next generation.

### KEY ELECTEDS

There are key politicians at the city and state level on whom lobbying efforts are focused. Some have a major role in the state and city budget process. The state budget is typically finalized with three politicians – the governor, the senate majority leader and the assembly speaker – in negotiations now known

as “three people in a room.” (It was previously called “three men in a room,” but with a female governor and a female senate majority leader, it’s an outdated term.) Others chair committees that help shape educational priorities. Many are CUNY alumni who know firsthand what kind of access and opportunity a CUNY education grants. Over time, the PSC has developed relationships with these key lawmakers. During the next few months, the union will call on its members to address these elected officials during key pivotal moments. This guide is intended to help *Clarion* readers understand the roles, experiences and backgrounds of key players in the budget process.

### KATHY HOCHUL

New York Governor (2021–present)

In her first year as governor, Hochul reversed the pattern of defunding higher education in New York State. While the gains did not make up for decades of disinvestment, there was significant progress. The enacted FY 2023 budget included more than \$240 million for new and recurring funding to hire more full-time faculty, close the TAP Gap and fund employee benefits and campus child-care, among other things. There was also \$1 billion in new capital funding to fix CUNY infrastructure.

The governor’s executive budget released in January only adds \$44 million in new operating funds for CUNY above last year’s budget, which does not come close to CUNY’s needs. The PSC has advocated for more than \$430 million in additional operating aid, while CUNY’s budget request to both the State and City is near that amount at \$416 million. Hochul also proposed tuition increases at CUNY and SUNY, a move that goes against the union’s goal of making CUNY tuition-free. The New York governor sets the budget priorities for the State at the beginning of the calendar year with her proposed executive budget. The budget is finalized through negotiations with the NYS State Legislature by April 1, and the state constitution

grants the governor tremendous influence over the final budget. Around 50% of CUNY’s overall funding comes from the State.

- Governor of New York State (2021–present)
- Appointed governor after Andrew Cuomo resigned; elected to a full term in 2022
- First woman to become governor in New York
- Lieutenant Governor (2015–2021)
- Former Chair, NYS Regional Economic Development Councils
- Representative, US House of Representatives, Congressional District 26, which contains Western New York, including Buffalo (2011–2013)
- Erie County Clerk (2007–2011)
- Board Member, Town of Hamburg (1994–2007)
- Worked for US Representative John LaFalce and Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan
- Catholic University of America, JD
- Syracuse University, Bachelor’s in Political Science
- Born in Buffalo, New York

### ANDREA STEWART-COUSINS

State Senate Majority Leader (2019–present)

Stewart-Cousins leads a conference

that includes a mix of some of the most progressive and more moderate lawmakers in the state. Democrats have a supermajority in the senate, which gives them the power to override a veto by the governor. In February, the NYS Senate dramatically rejected in a 39-20 vote the governor’s Court of Appeals nominee due to his anti-union and anti-abortion rights record. The senate majority leader, along with other legislative leaders, negotiates the final budget with the governor.

- State Senator, District 35 (2007–present)
- Represents Greenburgh, Scarsdale, and parts of White Plains, New Rochelle, and Yonkers
- State Senate Minority Leader (2012–2018)
- First woman and African-American woman Senate Majority Leader
- Westchester County Legislator (1996–2006)
- Director of Community Affairs, City of Yonkers (1992–1996)
- Pace University, Master’s in Public Administration and Bachelor’s
- Lehman College, Graduate Certificate in Business Education
- Pace University, Bachelor’s
- Lives in Yonkers

### TOBY ANN STAVISKY

State Senate Higher Education Committee Chair (2019–present)

As chair of this senate committee, Stavisky shapes the agenda for higher education in the state. Senate bills on higher education, once passed by the senate, go through committee review here. Stavisky has convened hearings on crucial issues, including regional meetings on public higher education across the state. Most recently, she helped advocate against class cancellations at two Queens campuses (see page 12). In the past, she has been especially vocal on increasing funding for the Tuition Assistance Program (TAP) and closing the TAP Gap. Committee chairs are also present as representatives of



Governor Kathy Hochul, right, with PSC President James Davis

higher education priorities when hearings on the state budget are conducted by the Finance Committee and Ways and Means Committee.

- State Senator, District 11 (1999–present)\*
- Represents parts of Queens and Nassau County in Long Island
- Trustee, City University Construction Fund (CUCF)
- Board Member, Higher Education Capital Matching Grants Program (HeCap)
- Former High School Social Studies Teacher, New York City
- Hunter and Queens colleges, graduate studies
- Syracuse University, Bachelor’s
- Married to State Senator Leonard Stavisky (d. 1999), a City College alum and adjunct professor at Columbia University
- Born and raised on Manhattan’s Upper West Side; currently lives in Whitestone, Queens.

\*In 2022, her district changed from District 16 to 11.

### ANDREW GOUNARDES

State Senate sponsor for the New Deal for CUNY, S4461A

Gounardes is the lead sponsor of the New Deal for CUNY bill (ND4C), state legislation that would transform CUNY and reverse decades of defunding. Major aspects of the bill are increasing full-time faculty-to-student ratios, improving ratios of mental health counselors and academic advisors to students, professionalizing adjunct pay and making CUNY tuition-free again. Gounardes campaigned on the ND4C, launched grassroots efforts to support ND4C, and is committed to improving mental health at public colleges, a major element in ND4C.

- State Senator, District 26 (2019–present)\*

- Represents parts of Brooklyn, including Bay Ridge, Dyker Heights, Sunset Park, Red Hook, Park Slope, Gowanus, Carroll Gardens, Boerum Hill, Cobble Hill, Downtown Brooklyn, Brooklyn Heights, and DUMBO
- Chair, Committee on Budget and Revenue (2022–present)
- Former Counsel, Brooklyn Borough President Eric Adams
- Former Adjunct Associate Professor, Hunter College
- Former Trustee, New York City Employees’ Retirement System
- Former Aide, City Council Member Vincent Gentile
- Cofounder, Bay Ridge Cares (which provided hot meals after Superstorm Sandy)
- George Washington University Law School, JD
- Hunter College, Bachelor’s in Political Science
- Born and raised in Bay Ridge, Brooklyn

\*In 2022, his district changed from District 22 to 26.

### CARL HEASTIE

State Assembly Speaker (2015–present)

Heastie leads a chamber of 150 assembly members, the majority of whom come from the five NYC boroughs. Democrats in this chamber comprise a supermajority. As assembly speaker, he plays a critical role in determining the final state budget, because he carries the chamber’s priorities into the final budget negotiation with the governor and senate majority leader. He has been receptive to increasing CUNY’s funding, and the assembly’s one-house budget last year included needed investments in CUNY.



Senator Toby Ann Stavisky, center, listens to state education union leaders.

El-Wise Noisette/NYSUT



# funding

- State Assembly Member, District 83 (2001–present)
- Represents parts of the Bronx, including Williamsbridge, Wakefield, Edenwald, Eastchester and Baychester
- First African-American State Assembly Speaker
- Former Chair, Assembly Labor Committee
- Former Budget Analyst, Office of the NYC Comptroller
- Former Adjunct, Monroe College
- Baruch College, Master's in Business Administration with a concentration in Finance
- Stony Brook University (SUNY), Bachelor's in Applied Mathematics and Statistics
- Born in the Bronx

## PATRICIA FAHY

State Assembly Higher Education Chair (2023–present)

As chair of this assembly committee, Fahy shapes the agenda for higher education in the state. Assembly bills on higher education go through committee review here before they go to the full assembly for passage. The chair has convened hearings on crucial issues, including the impact of COVID on higher education and a joint hearing on higher education and mental health. Committee chairs are also present as representatives of higher education priorities as hearings on the state budget are being conducted by the Finance Committee and Ways and Means Committee.

- State Assembly Member, District 109 (2013–present)
- Represents Albany, New Scotland and parts of Guelderland
- Board of Directors Member, Center for Women in Government & Civil Society, University at Albany (SUNY)
- Associate Commissioner of Inter-



Eric Dinowitz

- governmental Affairs and Federal Policy, NYS Department of Labor
- Former Board Member, Albany School Board; and Boys and Girls Club of Albany
- Former Executive Director, Chicago Workforce Board
- Former Associate Director for Employment and Training, Congressional Affairs Office, US Department of Labor
- Former Legislative Analyst, US House and Senate
- Married to Wayne Bequette, a Chemical and Biological Engineering Professor at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute
- University of Illinois at Chicago, Master's in Public Administration
- Northern Illinois University, Bachelor's in Political Science
- Lives in Albany

## KARINES REYES

State Assembly Sponsor for the New Deal for CUNY, A5843A

Reyes is a sponsor of the New Deal for CUNY bill, and she has talked about how a CUNY education brought her to where she is today. Central to the bill's mission

is increasing the full-time faculty-to-student ratios, improving ratios of mental health counselors and academic advisors to students, professionalizing adjunct pay and making CUNY tuition-free again. Reyes has marched with the PSC, addressed crowds at union events and is a key member of the CUNY Caucus, a group of lawmakers, PSC members and CUNY students who meet regularly to strategize around improving CUNY funding, including passing the ND4C.

- State Assembly Member, District 87 (2019–present)
- Represents parts of the Bronx, including Parkchester, Hunts Point, Mott Haven, Tremont, Morris Park, Kingsbridge and Riverdale
- Chair, NY Assembly and Senate Puerto Rican/Hispanic Task Force (2023–present)
- Registered Nurse, Oncology Department, Montefiore Einstein Hospital
- Former Executive Committee Member, Einstein Hospital, New York State Nurses Association (NYSNA)
- NYSNA Representative, speaking on nationwide community health issues
- Nurse Volunteer, Hurricane Maria
- Chamberlain University, Bachelor's in Nursing
- Baruch College, Bachelor's in Communications
- Bronx Community College, Associate's in Applied Sciences

## ERIC L. ADAMS

New York City Mayor (2022–present)

In his first city budget, Mayor Adams made 3% cuts to most city agencies and institutions, including CUNY, despite claiming no fiscal emergency. This year, the mayor is seeking an additional 3% cut, followed by increased cuts of 4.75% in each of the next four fiscal years. At CUNY, these cuts primarily represent understaffed lines that will not be replaced. The FY 2024 preliminary budget funded certain CUNY programs, including CUNY Reconnect and the Inclusive Economy Initiative. The mayor sets the budget priorities for the City and all its agencies at the beginning of the calendar year with a preliminary budget. The city budget is finalized through the City Council's negotiations with the mayor by June 30. The mayor has an outsize influence in determining funding priorities. Around 14% of CUNY's total operating budget comes from the City, while nearly 50% of the operating budget for CUNY's community colleges comes from the City.

- Brooklyn Borough President (2014–2021)
- State Senator, District 20 (2007–2013)
- Police Captain, New York Police Department (1984–2006)
- Marist College, Master's in Public Administration
- John Jay College of Criminal Justice, Bachelor's in Criminal Justice
- New York City College of Technology, Associate's
- Born in Brownsville, Brooklyn, and grew up in South Jamaica, Queens



City Council Speaker Adrienne Adams, left, with Council Finance Committee Chair Justin Brannan

## ADRIENNE ADAMS

New York City Council Speaker (2022–present)

In her first year as Council Speaker, Adams proposed the CUNY Reconnect Initiative, a \$4.4 million program to encourage New Yorkers with some college credits to return to earn degrees at CUNY. The speaker has an important role in determining the final adopted city budget. Last year's budget drew criticism from major progressive organizations, particularly with respect to Department of Education funding. The deadline for the adopted budget is June 30.

- Council Member, District 28 (2017–present)
- Represents parts of Queens, including Jamaica, Richmond Hill, Rochdale Village, and South Ozone Park
- First African-American Council Speaker
- Former Board of Trustees Member, Queens Public Library
- Former Chair, Education Committee, Queens Community Board 12
- Local Planning Committee Member, Jamaica Downtown Revitalization Initiative
- Spelman College, Bachelor's in Psychology, minor in Early Childhood Development
- Studied at York College
- Grew up the daughter of union workers in Hollis, Queens

## ERIC DINOWITZ

New York City Council Committee on Higher Education Chair (2021–present)

As chair of this City Council committee, Dinowitz shapes the agenda for higher education in the City. A former public school teacher and United Federation of Teachers activist, Dinowitz has joined the PSC at various rallies to support resources for CUNY, including the New Deal for CUNY. He is on the Council's budget negotiating team, which represents the Council in final budget negotiations with the mayor.

- City Council Member, District 11 (2021–present)
- Represents parts of the Bronx, including Bedford Park, Kingsbridge, Norwood, Riverdale, Van

Cortlandt Village, Wakefield and Woodlawn

- Chair, New York City Council Jewish Caucus
- Former Special Education Teacher, New York City Public Schools
- Former Chapter Leader, United Federation of Teachers
- Former Aging Chair, Bronx Community Board 8
- Hunter College, Master's in Education
- Binghamton University (SUNY), Bachelor's in Music and Political Science and Government
- Son of NY Assembly Member Jeffrey Dinowitz, District 81 (1994–present)
- Born, raised and lives in the Bronx

## JUSTIN BRANNAN

New York City Council Committee on Finance Chair (2022–present)

As chair of the Council's Finance Committee, Brannan and the committee oversee many city departments, including the Independent Budget Office and the Office of the Comptroller. The committee also plays a role in reviewing and modifying the city budget. Brannan directs the work of this committee and convenes hearings. Brannan has also been a major supporter of the New Deal for CUNY. He helped lead the Council effort in March 2022 in passing near-unanimous support for urging the governor and state lawmakers to pass the ND4C.

- City Council Member, District 43 (2018–present)
- Represents parts of Brooklyn, including Bay Ridge, Dyker Heights, Bensonhurst, and Bath Beach
- Former Chief of Staff, Council Member Vincent Gentile
- Former Director of Intergovernmental Affairs, Department of Education
- Former Announcer and union member, WNEW-FM
- Former Clerk, Wealth Management Division, Bear Stearns
- Guitarist, Indecision and Most Precious Blood
- Fordham University, Bachelor's in Journalism
- Studied at the College of Staten Island
- Born and raised in Brooklyn



Karines Reyes, left, and Andrew Gounardes



# KCC admin demands 'excessive' work hours

By ARI PAUL

Kingsborough Community College (KCC) administration violated Higher Education Officer (HEO) Michael Weisenfeld's contractual protections against "excessive workloads" and must justly compensate him as result, an arbitrator has ruled.

Weisenfeld was hired in 2015 to be the director of KCC's Tutorial and Academic and Research Center, one of three KCC tutoring centers at the time. He was responsible for supervising a small staff of two and managing the office's \$150,000 annual budget. In 2019, KCC administration announced that its three tutoring centers would merge into one program and appointed Weisenfeld interim director of the college's new Learning Center. Weisenfeld told his dean that he wasn't sure he had the support to oversee such a large office within the 35-hour work week, as mandated by the PSC-CUNY contract. He was eager, though, to continue providing quality service to students.

## LACK OF RESOURCES

Weisenfeld warned his supervisors that KCC hadn't given him the resources necessary to successfully expand the office under such a merger. "You don't have offices. You don't have space," Weisenfeld recalled telling the administration in an interview with *Clarion*. They just said, 'Combine it, and get to work.'"

In March 2020, following the merger, his fears became a reality. Not only was Weisenfeld overseeing eight full-time staffers rather than two (as he had been doing) and more than 60 tutors, he was also responsible for the office's sudden transition to remote work as a result of the COVID pandemic. "I wasn't sleeping. I was stressed out," Weisenfeld said.

His work had tripled. "The administration gave me a completely new job description with more duties and responsibilities," he said. "In addition to all this work, they also gave me the responsibilities of overseeing the ASAP and College Discovery tutoring duties."

And he never saw a dime more in pay despite the increased workload. In fact, Weisenfeld presented documents showing that he is among the lowest paid in his title at the college. "Out of 47 HEOs at my college, I oversee the biggest department, yet I am paid 43rd [lowest] out of 47," he said.

Nevertheless, he continued to get things done. CUNY documents show that Weisenfeld was doing stellar work despite the trying conditions. His evaluation memo, surveying his work for all of 2020, stated that he had "an excellent operational sensibility" and continued "to respond extremely well to operational and logistical challenges." It even went so far to say that he had "effectively managed the integration of the three tutoring areas."

But Weisenfeld knew he wasn't being treated justly in terms of his pay and hours. He made various complaints, and one administrator,

## Member wins comp time in arbitration



Michael Weisenfeld, a HEO at Kingsborough Community College, prevailed in an arbitration case filed over excessive work hours required to direct three tutoring centers that were merged into one.

as Weisenfeld recalled, responded that he "should just quit" if the workload was too cumbersome. Weisenfeld said the insult stung, especially because he was getting compliments from his superiors on the hard work he was doing.

During this time Weisenfeld submitted time sheets, reflecting that he was working more than 35 hours a week, but he was told by administrators that "he was not eligible for overtime and to not put extra hours on his time sheets," the arbitrator acknowledged. Weisenfeld told *Clarion* that his superiors had even verbally promised that he could be brought up the salary ladder by several steps in exchange for his increase in duties, but that his pay raise never materialized.

Weisenfeld called the union office about his problems, and he was encouraged by Faye Moore, PSC's director of contract enforcement who was then a contract enforcement coordinator, to file a grievance regarding the violations of excessive workload. Despite having job protection under Article 13.3b of the contract, he didn't initially feel comfortable going into a contractual dispute. But at a certain point, Weisenfeld felt he had no other choice. "I had to stick up for myself. I had to stand up for my rights," he said. "I was not going to let them take advantage of me."

## PSC GRIEVANCE

He eventually filed a grievance that led to an arbitration hearing, during which the union argued that he had been mandated to work excessive hours beyond the limits

of the contract and that the Kingsborough administration knew the merger would result in an excessive workload for the new Learning Center's director. Weisenfeld's evidence was overwhelming. "I have 44 pages of documents going back and forth," he said. "They had nothing to fight me on, and they should have just paid me what I deserved."

## GRIEVANT PREVAILS

After looking at the record, an arbitrator sided with Weisenfeld.

"Looking at the Grievant's pre-merger job responsibilities and number of hours worked as the norm, in no uncertain terms the extra work and hours the Grievant generated exceeded what was 'usual or normal,'" arbitrator James Darby said in his January 6 decision. "Therefore, I

conclude the Grievant was required to work 'an excessive number of hours.' Rather than contend that the Grievant never actually worked the hours in question, CUNY simply attempts to discredit the Grievant's calculations based on a lack of specificity and his failure to submit the extra work time for approval prior to performing it. These contentions miss the mark."

Darby added, "The record clearly shows the College was on notice the Grievant was working excessive hours in order to complete the job requirements. At no time did the College instruct him that he needed to get this extra time approved in advance or that it needed to be substantiated or documented. To the contrary, the record reveals that the College understood throughout the

period of March through November 2020 that the Grievant was working many extra hours but merely assured him 'things would get better' and that he would eventually be compensated for his efforts. From the College's perspective, as director of the Learning Center, he was expected to get the job done no matter how many hours it took. For this reason, it is not surprising the record shows that HEOs like the Grievant were told to just put 35 hours on their time sheets."

## CONTRACT VIOLATION

Darby ruled that the college had violated Weisenfeld's contractual rights and thus, "CUNY shall provide the Grievant with compensatory time for each hour he worked in excess of 35 hours per week between March 2020 and November 2020," adding that if "the College's operational needs do not permit the Grievant to use all of this additional compensatory time by two years from the date of this Award, the College shall pay him any amount of compensatory time remaining at straight time."

PSC First Vice President Andrea Vázquez, who is also a HEO who once led the PSC HEO chapter, told *Clarion*, "This is one example of how professional staff went above and beyond their job descriptions, [with increased] hours and workload during the COVID pandemic. Michael Weisenfeld exemplifies the commitment of CUNY workers to keeping the university running and to meeting the needs of our students. In this victory, CUNY must now grant him retroactive comp time or pay him for the hours he worked."

## A WORTHY FIGHT

Moore added, "If members feel that they are being required to work more than 35 hours a week without being granted comp time, they should immediately document that work and contact the Contract Enforcement Department at the PSC."

On the one hand, Weisenfeld said that the decision could put the KCC administration on notice. For the union, the case sets an arbitral precedent that the union could use to protect members and enforce the contract if similar cases occur in the future.

But on the other hand, Weisenfeld said, the facts of the case demonstrate the disregard some CUNY bosses have for the contract. "With my administration this will tell them that they can't just do what they want," he said.

Weisenfeld reiterated that he was resistant, at first, to file a grievance. He believed that the administration should have just done the right thing and brought him up a few salary steps without any kind of formal fight. But looking back, he said, working with the union was the only way he could have protected his contractual rights.

"I could have let it go and let them take advantage of me," he said. "I have no regrets. I had to do the right thing."



An email, just one of the many detailed records Weisenfeld provided to successfully support his contract violation grievance



# Adding to the PSC's in-house power

By SHOMIAL AHMAD

They have led digital organizing campaigns, built coalitions around affordable housing and directed election campaigns for national political candidates. These are some of the accomplishments of the newly hired PSC staff, who will be strengthening the union's power on campus and throughout the city.

"I'm definitely excited to see what we can build together," said Rico Doan, the PSC's new organizing director. Previously, Doan organized teachers, faculty and staff with the American Federation of Teachers in Washington state. He went on to organize grocery store, retail, health care, meatpacking and cannabis workers at the United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) Local 3000 in Washington.

## DEDICATED TO CUNY

Doan joins several new hires at the PSC. Also new to their roles are Denise Poché-Jetter, director of human resources and operations; Ava Farkas, coordinator of organizing and coalitions; and Marwa Atef Mohamed Amer and Moses Merisier, two new full-time organizers.

"The PSC and our members are really fortunate to have such an outstanding group of new staff members. They have already begun to demonstrate how devoted they are to our struggle and how eager they are to bring their tremendous skills and experience to bear," said PSC President James Davis. "As we gear up for a contract campaign and a budget battle simultaneously, our most recent staff additions offer an enormous boost."

For Doan, his organizing work is personal. His father was a stocker at a grocery store when he first immigrated to the US from Vietnam. Doan, who received a public higher education, says CUNY's mission resonates with him.

"Everybody knows somebody who went to CUNY," Doan said. "[CUNY's] history is important to me. Making education accessible to people from all communities is really important, and some of the scholars that have most impacted my learning and growth over the years taught and researched at CUNY."

In Washington, he was a part of a contract campaign that won "real life-changing money" during the pandemic for some of the lowest-paid workers in the unit that he was organizing. These grocery store workers were making minimum wage and got \$7 to \$9 per hour raises once a new contract went into effect by getting reclassified. There were other wins for the union, too, including secure scheduling and increased pension contributions.

"It was really a perfect storm of organizing," said Doan, recalling how workers distributed bargaining surveys, signed up new members, trained members on their rights, recruited shop stewards and trained contract action teams. The tactics to

## New organizing staff for campaigns ahead



The PSC Organizing Department recently expanded with several new hires, including (L-R) Rico Doan, Moses Merisier, Marwa Atef Mohamed Amer and Ava Farkas.

build member organizers happened both in-person and virtually.

"We have to chart a new course forward and take stock of the fact that we have to do things in new ways, and digital organizing is one of those news spaces," said Doan, who was the digital director at UFCW 3000 and joined the organization right around the beginning of the pandemic. "Because there's no going back to 'normal.'"

Doan now leads a growing PSC Organizing Department with two new full-time PSC organizers. One of them is Moses Merisier, who has worked at the PSC for more than a decade, previously helping the organizing, communications and legislation departments with their work, including updating the organizer database.

## COALITION BUILDING

Ava Farkas has taken on a role at the PSC as the coordinator of organizing and coalitions, where, in addition to her PSC organizing assignments, she will help bolster the union's relationships with community-based allies.

Farkas was the executive director of the Metropolitan Council on Housing, a tenants' rights membership organization and a lead organizer on the livable wage campaign at the Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union (RWDSU).

"Groups want to come together around a visionary and bold idea for change, whether it's reimagining how development happens in the Bronx, public ownership of space in your community, or a livable wage. You have to put out an ambitious demand that speaks to people's lives," Farkas said, invoking

the PSC's commitment to social justice unionism. "The PSC's vision around a New Deal for CUNY is a really good example of fighting for a vision that will not only benefit faculty and staff but will transform the lives of students."

For Merisier, becoming a full-time organizer was an exciting new step in his and his family's CUNY history.

"My mother went to City College. I graduated from Kingsborough and Brooklyn College. I've worked at the PSC for more than a decade," Merisier said. "As an organizer I know the importance in identifying talent, providing them with the resources that they need and helping them build the confidence to

take on new roles. That's what builds the workplace, and that's what creates a better future."

Joining Merisier in the Organizing Department is another Brooklyn College alumnus. Amer, who most recently worked as a project manager and archivist at the PSC. She is a new full-time organizer with a background in academic labor organizing. She was involved in graduate employee organizing at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, and she served on that union's bargaining team.

"My commitment to the PSC is both genuine and deeply personal. I graduated from Brooklyn College.

## New PSC staff committed to CUNY's mission

# CUNY Rising expands its reach

ANDREA VÁSQUEZ  
PSC First Vice President

Last June, the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) announced funding for a community building effort for union locals with members in K-12 schools and higher education. The PSC received one of the Powerful Partnerships Institute grants that allowed the union to expand its outreach efforts with students, parents and community groups through the CUNY Rising Alliance (CRA) Liaison Program.

Twenty-six other AFT locals from across the country – with nearly half a dozen coming from higher education – are also embarking on efforts to

strengthen ties between union members, students, unions and community groups. The unions meet monthly to report on local progress and share strategies and skills for building power through their coalition work.

The CRA project aims to create a sustainable program and structure to educate and activate PSC members and CUNY students that would expand the reach and influence of the CUNY Rising Alliance. It will also broaden work around the New Deal for CUNY and help win a strong budget for FY 2024.

As a first-generation college student, I attended rallies to demand better funding and I learned from faculty, adjuncts and staff about the challenges they face. I've also worked as a teaching assistant, instructor and an academic advisor and mentor to undergraduate students of color. I acutely know both the pride and discomfort of what it means to work at a publicly underfunded university," Amer said. "I am eager to step into this role and be a fierce advocate for PSC members. Our members deserve it. CUNY students deserve it."

## CREATING SYSTEMS

Poché-Jetter, PSC's new director of human resources and operations, is no stranger to the union. She was a member when she taught as an adjunct lecturer in cognitive psychology at Hunter College. She has also worked as a program director at the Performance Space New York, a senior analyst at the City's Minority and Women Business Enterprise Program and a deputy campaign manager for US Congressman Major Owens, who served in Congress for more than two decades. One string that connects her decades of professional experience is building organizational systems.

"I'm a very systems-oriented person," Poché-Jetter said. "Systems really mean policy and protocol, figuring out the most effective and efficient and also humane way to execute policy and [how] to make an organization fully functional so that it has the greatest capacity possible to do things out in the world."

Poché-Jetter recalled that when she taught at Hunter College, her students really motivated her to become a better teacher. She believes strongly in CUNY's mission, especially in increasing access for working-class, nontraditional and adult students.

"The confidence that comes from going through this exercise of sitting in a classroom and thinking and reporting on your insights, I think everybody deserves that opportunity," she said.

## Building community presence

"It is important that we find and inspire new CUNY organizers, and give them the tools and resources they need to raise awareness about the New Deal for CUNY (ND4C)," said Ethan Milich, CRA coordinator. "This program will help us ensure that advocacy efforts continue and expand from year to year."

The liaison program is coordinated by Geoffrey Kurtz and Susan Kang, faculty members from Borough of Manhattan Community College and John Jay, respectively.

Continued on page 11



# GC remote work memo angers staff

By ARI PAUL

A memo in January from David Boxill, the executive director of human resources at the Graduate Center (GC), to staff seemed benign as it explained the implementation of the remote work terms for campus workers, saying, “All full-time and part-time CUNY staff are expected to work in-person at their campus office 70% of their work time.”

But as PSC members read on, the memo took on a more alarming tone: “All employees are expected to be engaged in work-related activities during their scheduled work days/hours. Engaging in nonwork activities while on work hours will be deemed theft of time and will subject you to disciplinary action. To help ensure that staff are consistently engaged and productive, it is recommended that supervisors: conduct periodic check-ins (30 minutes–1 hour) for status reports on assigned tasks and to provide any needed guidance; periodically hold unit/departamental meetings to share updates, knowledge sharing and team building; schedule supervisions to provide and receive feedback; etc.”

## ‘THEFT OF TIME’

This, of course, raised questions. Did it mean that supervisors should check in with remote staff every 30 minutes to an hour or hold one check-in that lasted 30 minutes to an hour? The memo explicitly said this directive was meant to fight “theft of time” and the threat of “disciplinary action” raised some additional concerns. Were these check-in meetings some kind of investigatory interview in which workers should have their union representatives, guaranteed under their Weingarten rights? And why were GC staff members being broadly put under suspicion of abusing work time while working remotely? What did “engaging in nonwork activities” even mean? Would answering the door to receive a package count as some kind of deviant activity? Needless to say, the tone and content of the memo didn’t go over well with GC staff.

## DEDICATED STAFF

“As usual, higher education of-ficers [HEOs] have responded and adjusted to adversity in the workplace – in this case adversity due to the pandemic – in a timely and professional fashion. Many are working on weekends and off hours to be sure to accommodate the needs of the Graduate Center and its students,” said Zee Dempster, assistant director of the GC’s Institute for Research on the African Diaspora in the Americas and the Caribbean and a PSC HEO delegate. “It seems odd to be chastised for remote work that we have already been performing professionally for close to two-and-a-half years. We have given hours, not stolen hours. We are not thieves. We have used

## Close monitoring of work



The Graduate Center, where a recent HR memo insinuating HEOs may be committing “theft of time” was sent out just weeks after faculty, staff and students signed a ‘no confidence’ letter in senior GC management

our own technical equipment to bolster productivity.”

Dempster added, “We have been conducting regular meetings through

video conferencing, have we not? We do not require policing, as we perform our duties with honor and integrity. There are annual evaluations

in which supervisors can discuss any deviant or insubordinate activity.”

It’s hard to ignore the context of this letter. It comes just weeks after hundreds of GC faculty, staff and students signed a letter of “no confidence” in President Robin Garrell, Provost Steve Everett and Senior Vice President for Finance and Administration Brian Peterson. The letter exposed many problems with GC administration, but a big part of the movement against the campus leadership came from HEOs and library faculty who believe that staff shortages have led to increased workloads for faculty and staff.

## WEINGARTEN RIGHTS

In response to the letter, the PSC GC chapter and HEO delegates based at the GC held two information sessions on Weingarten rights, which guarantees that union members have union representation during investigatory interviews with management.

In a public statement, the PSC GC chapter condemned Boxill’s tone, but members also blasted Boxill’s instruc-

tion to have supervisors closely monitor staff working remotely and called the whole memo “demoralizing.”

“Issues of disrespect from management were repeatedly raised in the recent December 5 Community

**‘We perform our duties with honor and integrity.’**

Meeting, the Letter of No Confidence, and at Graduate Council,” the chapter’s letter said. “Workers spoke passionately about the difficulties they witness and experience on the job. President Garrell claimed she wanted to address these, but does encouraging supervisors to micromanage – and potentially find ways to discipline – colleagues amount to constructive change? By courageously speaking up during last month’s discussions, workers demonstrated how deeply invested they are in the GC’s future and in working for the common good. The implication that these same community members are engaged in ‘theft of time’ is insulting.”

The letter continued, “That management chooses to threaten discipline, even as it overlooks a larger responsibility to address recent worker concerns, is baffling.”

# GC violated pact, overcharged workers

By ARI PAUL

CUNY and the Graduate Center (GC) violated a 2008 “side letter” agreement between the PSC and CUNY, which dictates the limits of graduate student worker contributions to the New York State Health Insurance Program (NYSHIP), an arbitrator has ruled.

As the PSC’s chapter at the GC explained, the union filed a contractual grievance after delegates had learned that CUNY was overcharging Graduate Center student workers who are enrolled in NYSHIP. The formal PSC-CUNY agreement on the matter mandates that graduate student workers pay 10% of the total cost of the plan for individuals, and 25% for additional costs with a family plan.

## HIGHER RATES

The PSC chapter learned that the administration was charging student workers above those rates after a student asked chapter leaders about their benefit costs, union sources said. The union’s victory in this dispute highlights how significant it can be when rank-and-file members question their administration and bring their concerns to their union chapter.

CUNY argued during the grievance and arbitration process that the wording of the side letter agreement was too ambiguous to show a violation.

In her January 30 decision, Arbitrator Ruth Moscovitch rejected the

**Some union members will see refunds.**

## A favorable ruling for the PSC

administration’s case that it was correctly passing on a similar increase as the SUNY plan.

“This is an agreement only between CUNY and the Union: No external entity has any influence or control over the eligibility requirements,” Moscovitch said. “And, Paragraph 5, the paragraph at issue here, refers only to CUNY’s obligations to the Union’s members. CUNY ‘will contribute’ specified percentages of the cost of the program. There is no reference here to any external party. Given this very clear structure and the plain language of the Side Letter, I have no alternative but to grant the Union’s grievance. There is no ambiguity in Paragraph 5 of the Side Letter: CUNY is required by that agreement to contribute 90%/75% of the cost of the program. When it failed to do so, it violated the Side Letter.”

## REIMBURSE MEMBERS

Moscovitch added, “CUNY is ordered to reimburse those Union members who were required to contribute a higher percentage of the cost of health insurance than they were obligated to pay under the Side Letter. This award shall only cover the period of time consistent with the filing of this grievance on November 19, 2020. In addition, going forward CUNY is ordered to adhere

to the cost sharing provision of the Side Letter.”

## REAL VICTORY

The decision will result in graduate student workers receiving refunds for being overcharged all this time, a true material victory for PSC members at the GC. The chapter estimates that members could see \$150 a year in back pay (more for those with family plans), with the ruling mandating retroactive back pay to November 2020.

The PSC GC chapter recognizes this decision as a victory for graduate student workers, and a confirmation of how callous the administration can be.

“The fact that CUNY management was overcharging graduate students, some of the system’s lowest-paid workers, is egregious,” Zoe Hu, the PSC GC chapter chair, told *Clarion*. “The PSC’s grievance victory shows how much we can get done when members rally around an injustice and challenge it. One hundred fifty dollars may not seem like much to some, but for workers who get only \$28,000 a year or less, it is very meaningful.”

## PSC supports striking nurses



PSC members support NYSNA members on strike at several city hospitals.



# Union fights for retiree coverage

By ARI PAUL

As *Clarion* reported in January, after an arbitrator ruled that the Municipal Labor Committee (MLC) and the City should reach a deal with Aetna in order to move municipal retirees into a privately administered Medicare Advantage plan, the City administration insisted that the City Council change the law in order to allow the City to charge a premium to retirees who choose to stay in Senior Care.

Retiree activists have resisted any plan that would force them to choose between privatized care and paying

## PSC offers alternative plan

monthly premiums to keep their existing benefits. In January, after a lengthy hearing on the matter, the *Daily News* reported that City Council leaders announced that there is “no plan to pass a bill pushed by Mayor Eric Adams that would allow his administration to charge retired municipal workers for health insurance.

### NO CODE CHANGE

For the union, this was good news. The PSC was one of the affiliate mem-

bers of the MLC that opposed the move to Medicare Advantage from the get-go, and PSC President James Davis testified at the January hearing, speaking against the proposed administrative code change. But persuading the Council to preserve the administrative code did not resolve the matter. City Hall is still seeking health-care savings by forcing retirees into Medicare Advantage through the elimination of Senior Care.

### ‘Develop a sustainable solution.’

The union has urged the City Council to find alternative retiree health-care plans.

Former PSC President Barbara Bowen and Barbara Caress, an adjunct assistant professor of health policy at Baruch College and the former director of strategic policy and planning at SEIU Local 32BJ, outlined the proposal in a *Daily News* op-ed. The proposal would:

- “Keep premium-free Senior Care in place along with traditional Medicare while buying time to develop a sustainable solution. The City can

address the immediate crisis while maintaining benefits over three years by redirecting [a portion of the \$4.9 billion surplus identified by the New York City Independent Budget Office].

- “Create a stakeholders’ commission charged with finding a path, before the temporary funding is depleted, to reducing hospital prices. The Council should appoint a commission of elected officials, leaders and members of the Municipal Labor Committee, representatives of hospitals and hospital workers, health providers, insurance companies, and elected retiree representatives.

- “End the City’s reliance on unstable and outdated funding mechanisms and rethink how the City pays for health insurance.

- “Affirm the right of the MLC to bargain about health insurance.”

The PSC has been lobbying City Council members to solve the issue swiftly, before the City completes a deal that would deprive retirees of their traditional Medicare and supplemental Senior Care benefit as it forces them into privatized Medicare Advantage. The City is reportedly close to finalizing a contract with Aetna.



PSC members rally outside a City Council hearing on Medicare Advantage, which members said would reduce coverage for retirees.

## CUNY Rising expands its reach

Continued from page 9

along with Milich. The PSC’s CRA Liaison Project is creating teams composed of one PSC member and one student at every CUNY college. Each liaison team will engage in regular campus tabling, town halls, social events, meetings with lawmakers and other CRA actions tailored to their college. These teams, along with student governments and the PSC college chapters, will promote and build joint events this year organized by both the PSC and CRA.

“The reason why I joined the CUNY Rising Alliance Liaison Program is because of the many struggles I went through trying to pay tuition. I don’t get financial aid due to my parents ‘making too much money,’ so I pay out of pocket and have to take out loans,” said Kayla Dudley, a junior at John Jay College. “It’s not easy, and I want to make it easy for the many students that come after me. Everyone deserves a chance at higher education and money shouldn’t be that barrier that stunts anyone.”

### PAST SUCCESS

In last year’s budget cycle, CRA mobilized significant numbers of students at PSC rallies in Queens and Brooklyn and brought crucial individual and organizational voices to the fore. CRA coalition partners, including New York Public Interest Research Group and Young Democratic Socialists of America have branches at some CUNY campuses but not the majority. The Liaison

Project aims to increase CRA’s presence and enable the union to build relationships with scores of students and community groups.

### CAMPUS PRESENCE

The CRA teams began their efforts by focusing on places where a strong student activist presence still needed to be created. Initially, the goal was to have six to eight teams identified by the beginning of the Spring 2023

semester, but the results have been even more impressive.

“It’s been a pleasure helping to recruit and develop campus liaisons that will work to build support among students, faculty and staff and community partners for the New Deal for CUNY,” Kang said. “Now more than ever, we need to mobilize the diverse and broad coalition of partners who support full funding of CUNY.”

With full or partial teams already at 15 campuses, liaisons have planned events such as tabling at John Jay and Queensborough Community colleges, and funding ND4C rallies at Hunter and Brooklyn colleges.

### BUDGET CAMPAIGNS

This year’s budget campaigns are proving to be even more challenging than anticipated, so CRA will need to be visible across the city and in Albany if it is to continue to make gains in the state and city budgets. Governor Kathy Hochul’s current budget was weaker than last year’s, while the needs at CUNY have only increased.

CUNY students deserve no less than upstate or private college students, and the time to end the racialized disinvestment in CUNY is now. With only several weeks remaining until the end of the state budget cycle in April and with the city budget being finalized by the end of June, CRA liaisons will build support for CUNY and the funding it needs on campuses all semester. Be sure to stop by and meet some of the new committed activists and show your support. With this initiative, there is real potential to create the kind of student and community engagement that can make a difference this year and beyond.

## Critical moment for CUNY state funding

Continued from page 2

In his testimony to the state legislature on the budget, PSC President James Davis said CUNY needs \$200 million for new faculty hires and \$112.2 million for needed professional staff hires to begin to offset years of disinvestment.

Likewise, the CUNY Rising Alliance said in its own statement that the shortcomings in the governor’s budget proposal underscore the need to pass the landmark legislation the New Deal for CUNY, which “aims to make CUNY accessible for all by eliminating in-state tuition for undergraduate students and providing high-quality education to all regardless of race or income.” The statement continued, “Additionally, this executive budget lacks action and direction on addressing the ratios of mental health counselors and

academic advisors for students in line with national standards, which would ensure students receive adequate support in order to graduate.”

### HIRING FREEZE

CUNY’s own preemptive demands for savings at the colleges make a transformative state budget for public higher education all the more urgent. In February, the administration called for a hiring freeze among other austerity measures.

“To progress further towards financial stability, the University is implementing a new savings target in fiscal year 2024 of \$100 million,” Hector Batista, CUNY’s executive vice chancellor and chief operating officer, said in a memo to college presidents and deans. “Each college must develop a savings plan that outlines expense reductions and revenue en-

hancements and describes how these targets will be achieved.”

“CUNY colleges cannot sustain more cuts without severely undermining the student experience. Larger class size, fewer instructors and less student-facing staff support will not help CUNY rebound from the pandemic,” Davis told Spectrum News. “What’s needed is immediate additional investment of public funds. City Hall and Albany must come through.”

The state government, which prides itself as a progressive bulwark against the national rightward trend in American politics, can clearly do better, union members said.

“In 2023, Illinois, for example, funded its largest increase in public higher education in 20 years,” Susan Kang, an associate professor of political science at John Jay College and a PSC

Executive Council member, wrote in *Jacobin*. “New Mexico instituted an almost-universal tuition-coverage scholarship program, one that applies to a variety of learners (part-time, traditional, nontraditional) and allows students to ‘stack’ the scholarship with other forms of financial assistance. Kentucky also made ‘historic investments’ in its higher education system in the most recent budget cycle.”

The union has strong allies in the Democratic supermajority in the state legislature. These alliances helped achieve increases to the state’s funding for CUNY last year. NYSUT, the PSC’s state affiliate, has also embraced the union’s message, launching this year a “New Deal for Higher Education” campaign. Union members have already traveled to Albany to lobby state lawmakers, but PSC leaders say that it will take continual pressure on Albany to ensure a fair budget agreement for CUNY in April.

No more  
CUNY  
cuts





## Tell Albany we need the ND4C

The next few weeks will be crucial in the fight for a state budget agreement that includes full funding for CUNY. While the governor has proposed modest increases in funds for public higher education, students deserve far more.

This March, members can make a difference by picking up the phone and calling their assembly members and senators. Our message: Students deserve the New Deal for CUNY legislation, which would make CUNY free again and provide funds to hire more full-time faculty and staff.

# Classes saved from the chopping block

By ARI PAUL

PSC chapters at two Queens campuses partially defeated sweeping class cancellations this semester that would have resulted in students being denied classes they needed to graduate.

At York College, chapter activists distributed flyers demanding that the administration reverse planned class cuts, and PSC Chapter Chair Ian Hansen also pressured the provost and president.

“Although we had cancellations, we put enough pressure to avoid the catastrophic cancellation policy presented to us,” said Fabiola Salek, chair of York’s world languages, literatures and humanities department, in an email to *Clarion*. She recalled that in January the administration had floated the idea of nixing classes with low enrollment.

Ian Hansen, an associate professor of behavioral sciences, noted that it’s a mystery as to how the York administration came to its scheduling policy. “[It] operates on a basis on minimum possible transparency and maximum flexibility for the administration to do whatever it wants,” he said.

### FACULTY PRESSURE

However, Hansen said that thanks to faculty pressure, the student body was able to avoid draconian cancellations. In an email to department chairs, he wrote that he hoped they would “strive to justify every course that is potentially vulnerable to cancellation, particularly those with 10... enrolled (or fewer, especially if the class is arguably needed for many students’ timely completion of a major, degree, etc.).” He went on to note that “cancelling classes adds significantly to student stress (and anger) and can compound enrollment and retention problems.”

Hansen said that this outreach to the department chairs was a part of the “multiple fronts” strategy the chapter used in its organizing campaign against threatened class cuts.

Rather than “the ‘chopping block’ standard the administration had prepared to use (effectively fewer than 30 students ‘and/or’ fewer than 15

## Partial victories at two Queens schools

students)...the standard that was actually used...appears to have allowed many classes as low as four to run,” Hansen said in an email.

Donna Chirico, a professor of behavioral sciences and the chair of the faculty caucus in the York College Senate, concurred that “some chairs felt that the final round of cancellations was not as draconian as anticipated.”

### PETITION DRIVE

At Queensborough Community College (QCC), the PSC chapter launched a petition demanding the administration “run all currently offered course sections regardless of low enrollment” on grounds that faculty and staff “strongly oppose cancelling classes for which budget allocations were already made when the sections were offered.”

Philip Pecorino, the PSC chapter chair at QCC, said that while there were a few cancellations in the end, “I know of no case of a student having a class cancelled and not being able to register into another section of the same class” and that “all full-time faculty and adjuncts on three-year contracts were given assignments even if their assigned classes included sections with fewer than 10 students in them.”

In a report to the chapter, Pecorino, a professor of philosophy, said, “Our petition is a partial victory we can all be proud of.” He noted that, “The College is demonstrating greater accountability to its faculty and staff in this manner in the continuing campaign to deal with the funding and enrollment challenges.”

PSC pressure and organizing at both QCC and York led to Queens State Senator Toby Ann Stavisky, the chair of the NYS Senate Higher Education Committee, to contact the CUNY chancellor, and demand that class cuts be averted.

For Margot Edlin, the chair of QCC’s English department, the campaign this semester was a complex situation because she served on the management side of the struggle as interim dean of faculty until this semester. She described tough negotiations between faculty and the administration, but she insisted that the administration listened to the PSC’s concerns and wanted to come to an equitable solution.

“We’re running some small classes, and classes where it’s the only section. We did our best because we have to honor three-year appointments and full-time faculty schedules,” Edlin said. “We did the best we

could to help as many people as possible with really competing needs.”

Fighting campus course cancellations has become a regular issue throughout CUNY. Last Fall, the PSC chapter at LaGuardia Community College beat back most of the class cuts the administration had proposed. CUNY’s overall enrollment has declined since the pandemic began. “University-wide enrollment in [Fall 2022] is down, but less than 10% from [Fall 2021] and over 10% from [Fall 2020],” University Faculty Senate Chair John Verzani wrote at the end of last year. “Ouch.”

### ENROLLMENT ISSUES

Union activists believe, however, that cutting classes hurts students by limiting their ability to get the classes they need for their majors, thus exacerbating declining enrollment. Further, the university has boasted the success of the new CUNY Reconnect initiative, which is meant to reenroll CUNY students who previously left before earning a degree.

The York administration boasted of its participation in the program, announcing in a statement a new Welcome Center intended to be a

“vibrant hub and the on-site centerpiece of York’s participation in the new CUNY Reconnect initiative, which helps New Yorkers reenroll in college,” adding that “York’s admissions team is reaching out to more than 5,000 students, who were once part of the college to help them follow their dreams of returning to York.”

### STUDENT RETENTION

From the union’s point of view, encouraging students to reenroll and then cancelling their classes only makes the enrollment problem worse.

Reenrollment is already underway. CUNY announced in January “that 14,433 students have signed up for classes at the University this 2022–23 academic year through CUNY Reconnect, surpassing the initiative’s goal of enrolling 10,000 returning students.”

Instead of responding to enrollment declines with austerity measures like course cancellations, the union believes that CUNY and its colleges should join the PSC in advocating for transformative legislation like the New Deal for CUNY, which, among other investments, would require a ratio of one advisor per 250 students, as recommended in the professional research. Advisors are critical to retaining students from one semester to the next and guiding them to graduation, research has shown.



City Council Speaker Adrienne Adams, right, tours York College, where members partially defeated an attempt to cancel classes.