

# Clarion

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



AUGUST 2024



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Erik McGregor

## MEMBERS MOBILIZE

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# Davis reelected, joined by committed co-officers

By ARI PAUL

PSC President James Davis was reelected to a second three-year term this spring, signaling strong membership approval of his administration's record of intense campus-by-campus organizing, ambitious bargaining strategy and a practice of member engagement.

Davis's first term began in the chaos of the COVID-19 pandemic. He and the new officers hit the ground running to fight against job losses and for worker protections as the union and the rest of the labor movement navigated the transformed political and social terrain. Since then, the union has won arbitrations protecting members' rights, saved jobs and attracted massive political support and media attention to the New Deal for CUNY, the union's legislative cam-

## Focus on campuses

paign to fully fund CUNY, hire more faculty and staff and make CUNY tuition-free again.

### UNITED

With members united behind them, the principal officers are energized and eager to complete negotiations on a strong contract, fight for full funding for CUNY and bring more workers into the union membership.

"It has been a privilege to serve PSC members in this role," Davis said. "I am grateful for their support for another term – we have so much to achieve together for our members, students and the city's working people. Just think of what this union has recently accomplished – from handling

management's incoherent vaccine mandate, to winning funding for hundreds of new full-time faculty, to waging local struggles on our campuses, fighting for retiree health care, and forging coalitions – PSC members built the solidarity needed to secure a great new contract and are poised to do much more. The newly elected executive council is a formidable group of veteran and emerging leaders."

### NEW OFFICER

Jen Gaboury, who previously served as a University-wide officer on the executive council and as the chapter chair at Hunter College, was elected as first vice president. Gaboury, a lecturer and adviser in

the women's and gender studies department at Hunter College, had previously been highly active in the union's legislative and political organizing – she has worked closely with members in her home borough of Brooklyn to elect lawmakers supportive of the PSC's agenda.

### PSC general election results

Since her election, she has already dived head-first into the union's campaigns to win more revenue from the city and state, working closer with PSC member activists, the legislative committee and PSC staff. It's a lot of work, she admitted, but she comes into the principal officer role excited and ready. "It's all labor I'm honored to do," she said.

Felicia Wharton, the treasurer, was reelected to a second three-year term. Andrea Vásquez, who

previously served two terms as first vice president and before that as the chair of the union's higher education officer chapter, was elected secretary, replacing Penny Lewis.

### BIG MOMENT

Lewis, who will return to teaching full-time at the School of Labor and Urban Studies, was elected vice president for senior colleges, and hopes to work closely with the other vice presidents in the executive council and with campus leaders and PSC organizers. This kind of synergy between the executive council, the principal officers and campus leaders is at the center of the Davis administration's vision of the PSC.

"I see this as a really big transformative moment for the organization," Lewis said. "Our union is only as strong as our campus chapters."

# Making the REPAIR Act come to life

By ARI PAUL

Last year, Senator John Liu and Assembly Member Zohran Mamdani, both of whom represent Queens, introduced new legislation that would curtail tax protections for the city's richest universities. If enacted, this plan could funnel more than \$300 million into CUNY, which could be used for hiring more faculty and staff and fixing the crumbling infrastructure at the city's public campuses.

The PSC supports this bill as part of the union's broader strategy to increase revenue into CUNY from the city and state.

The package of bills in both houses that would ultimately require a change in the state constitution is called the REPAIR Act – or Repeal Egregious Property Accumulation and Invest it Right. The REPAIR Act aims to end "the real property tax exemption for those private universities in New York whose annual property taxes exceed \$100 million or more, and to direct the resulting revenues to CUNY."

### ORGANIZER

In other words, if enacted, the law would tax Columbia University and New York University – which have real estate empires – like any other business and reroute that money to CUNY.

In an interview with *Jacobin*, Mamdani explained that "these universities have gone beyond the primary purpose of educating their students and now also serve to amass property. Their property holdings have tripled over the last 30 years. What we're seeing time and again is these institutions using the exemption to create a market advantage when bidding on and purchasing properties across New York City."

## Students are organizing

He continued: "To the idea that they are institutions that have given back to New York City, I think in the absence of context, you might see their charitable contributions as significant. But when you compare what Columbia and NYU have given back to New York City with the annual property tax bill of more than \$320 million [that they would be paying without the exemption], you realize that the

charitable contributions are a drop in the bucket compared to what they should actually be paying. We should measure their contributions in terms of what any other property owner of this scale would be paying."

### CHALLENGES AHEAD

Erin Lawson is the new coalition's campaign director. Lawson is a New York University graduate who was active in campus organizing and with the Young Democratic Social-

ists of America. She has spent the summer organizing weekly trainings with students from CUNY, Columbia and NYU to get ready for a bigger campaign for the legislation in the fall. Each session has been attended by about 40 students, she said.

Lawson said that private university students see the inequity and recognize the need for taxing these universities fairly – "they often act like corporations at this point."

She said students notice how grand and opulent places like Columbia and NYU are at the expense

of working-class communities and at CUNY campuses.

"You can see it with your eyes," Lawson said. "Even if you're 18 and just moved to the city, you say, 'This isn't right, this doesn't feel correct.' I feel like it's very intuitive for students."

Lawson admitted that there are challenges ahead. The Columbia and NYU administrations are big players with lots of power, she said. But she also believes that in a time when the rich don't pay their fair share, such legislation would seem attractive to most people who would like to see more equity in society.

"I think that getting rid of the tax exemption is something a lot of people can get behind," she said.



Student activists at a recent organizing training for the REPAIR Act campaign.

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# CUNY must meet PSC's demands

By ARI PAUL

More than 60 PSC members gathered in Lower Manhattan on June 28 to tell CUNY Board of Trustees Chair William Thompson that CUNY must get serious about settling a contract.

The PSC had gathered outside the offices of Siebert Williams Shank, the financial firm where Thompson – the former city comptroller and Democratic Party mayoral candidate – currently serves as partner. The union, PSC President James Davis told the crowd, had now held nearly two dozen bargaining sessions with management since the contract expired more than a year ago.

## LONG STRUGGLE

It has been a hard struggle to fight CUNY's draconian demands that would diminish job security and impose inadequate wages onto a workforce that has already been cut to the bone.

"We have managed to move CUNY management, and we have moved them because of actions like this," Davis said during the morning picket. "CUNY still has a bunch of garbage demands and proposals on the table."

The union has staged many different actions to push CUNY management. Just weeks before, more than 100 members filled a Board of Trustees meeting at Bronx Community College, where Davis interrupted the meeting to demand real movement on the contract, leading chanting members out of the room in a show of force. Over the course of the last few months, the union has been able to beat back inadequate wage demands and other issues. But there is more work to be done, the president said.

"Your pressure has already been working," Davis told members, not-

## A new contract is long overdue



PSC members rally outside of CUNY Board of Trustees Chair William Thompson's Wall Street office.

ing that CUNY management has had to back off some of its worst demands. "But they have not moved enough."

But CUNY has stalled talks over the summer. At the time of the rally, management had only agreed to one bargaining date over the break. The union is still fighting management on several key issues including real pay, job protections and faculty governance.

Above all, PSC members want wages that keep up with inflation and bring CUNY faculty and staff more in line with the pay their colleagues at peer institutions receive. CUNY management have come off as pennypinchers when it comes to faculty and staff, and freewheeling spenders when it comes to management. The *New*

*York Post* reported in June that the trustees "approved an eye-popping \$320,681 salary for Gayle Horwitz, who was elevated to senior vice chancellor as well as secretary to the board," a figure that "far exceeds the \$250,000 salary for Gov. Kathy Hochul and \$258,000 compensation for Mayor Eric Adams." The paper added, "Horwitz, who has held top posts at CUNY since 2016, saw her salary jump from \$267,628 – a 16% increase, records show."

This injustice at CUNY has fueled much of the member outrage this summer, much of which was on display outside of Thompson's office.

"While Bill Thompson is serving his wealthy clients, he is not serving the

city of New York or meeting the needs of CUNY students and CUNY workers," PSC secretary Andrea Vásquez said during the picket.

## ATTENDING SESSIONS

Over the summer, dozens of members continued to attend bargaining sessions between CUNY and the PSC. The inclusion of member observers has been central to the union's strategy – the openness allows members to learn about and be involved in the process as well as show CUNY that rank-and-file members are united behind the PSC's doable and reasonable contract demands. The PSC and CUNY are slated to meet several more times in August for bargaining.

Daniel Casey, a CLIP instructor at Hostos Community College, has attended several bargaining sessions over the last year.

"We try to have at least one CLIP or CUNY Start instructor observing every bargaining session, ready to help with information during the caucus break, and to suggest talking points or rebuttals," he said. "At the outset, the CUNY bargaining team knew very little about our programs. For CLIP and CUNY Start, as with other job titles, the PSC has had to educate management before we could even begin to negotiate with them."

## PSC IS FIGHTING

He added, "Several members of the PSC bargaining team are knowledgeable and tenacious advocates for CLIP and CUNY Start. We appreciate their perseverance very much. While observing bargaining sessions, I have learned a great deal about other job titles, and this has strengthened my sense of solidarity with fellow PSC members. Collective bargaining is enormously beneficial. Thanks to gains made in previous contract campaigns, my family has enjoyed substantial improvements in our quality of life. The importance of health insurance cannot be overstated, of course, but we are not just paying the bills anymore. We are saving money for our children's college educations."

Rochelle Spencer, a lecturer in English at LaGuardia Community College, was also inspired by observing a bargaining session. She said that the union "has made strong, carefully calibrated arguments; however, we must place more pressure on the CUNY administration. Attending bargaining sessions makes the administration aware that we care."

## PRESIDENT'S REPORT

# An historic AFT convention

By JAMES DAVIS  
PSC President

The PSC delegation to the biennial American Federation of Teachers convention was dented by the CrowdStrike software failure that grounded hundreds of flights in late July, but the delegates who made it to Houston, Texas, had the opportunity to participate in an important set of events. The most widely reported was an appearance on the final day by Vice President Kamala Harris, whom AFT delegates had just endorsed for president in the November election.

But a great deal of work, debate and collaboration among delegates took place over the previous several days, with PSC delegates actively involved. We participated in a pre-convention community service event repairing houses in the historic Freedmen's Town district. We made sure that our PSC-supported resolutions got passed, including "Real Solu-

tions for Higher Education" and "Support Decarbonization of our Public Schools, Colleges, Universities, Hospitals and City Buildings." We cheered the announcement that the AFT filed a consumer protection lawsuit against the Higher Education Loan Authority for the state of Missouri for mismanaging student loan accounts for millions of borrowers.

## MEMBER ACTION

We swelled to a speech from United Auto Workers President Shawn Fain and engaged in a rousing discussion with other higher education delegates and author/organizer Astra Taylor. PSC delegate Rebecca Smart, an adjunct at BMCC and Baruch, was interviewed by the AFT Communications team to highlight the campaign against contingency in the academic workforce. Delegate Nancy Romer, co-chair of the PSC environmental justice working group, facilitated a well-attended event hosted by the AFT's environmental justice caucus.



Vice President Kamala Harris, the likely Democratic nominee for president, addresses the AFT convention in July.

A special order of business brought by the Texas Federation of Teachers resolved that the AFT activate its 1.8 million members to oppose Project 2025, the right-wing playbook to destroy democratic institutions and norms in the U.S., and to oppose candidates for election who support Project 2025. We joined our Texas union siblings and others for a rally outside the convention to rebuke the superintendent of the Houston school district, the eighth largest in the nation,

for undermining educational quality since a state takeover last year. I was pleased to speak from the floor of the convention in favor of the resolution "Support of Newcomers, Asylum Seekers and Refugees."

## LOOKING FORWARD

The full list of and links to AFT-endorsed resolutions are available at [aft.org/resolutions](http://aft.org/resolutions). The 2024 presidential election was much discussed among delegates, especially because Joe Biden's announcement that he was stepping out of the race came mid-convention. Kamala Harris's agenda for higher education is not yet clear, but she endorsed the College for All Act in 2017; she tweeted the following year, "It's time we make college tuition-free once and for all"; and as California's attorney general, she sued the for-profit Corinthian Colleges, Inc., behemoth for predatory practices and won a \$1.1 billion judgment.

The AFT and the labor movement must hold her to those same commitments should she prevail in November.

The PSC will be engaging our members and coordinating with NYSUT and AFT to help get Harris elected and defeat Donald Trump. Mark your calendars for a PSC Legislative Committee Zoom meeting at 6:30 pm on August 20 and stay tuned for registration details.



# PSC has protected senior health care

By ARI PAUL

A state appeals court has upheld a lower court's decision blocking the implementation of a contract to replace municipal retiree health coverage with a privately administered system. It's an enormous victory for retirees, organized labor and grassroots organizers who opposed the shift to Medicare Advantage, which many argued would have resulted in diminished care and higher costs.

The PSC was one of the few municipal unions that consistently opposed the shift to Medicare Advantage. The majority of affiliate unions of the Municipal Labor Committee, which negotiates health-care coverage for city workers, voted in favor of the Adams administration's privatization plan (although the plot to move to a new plan finds its roots in the de Blasio administration). But now, the United Federation of Teachers has also turned against the mayor's plan, a monumental development in the movement to protect union health care. The UFT leadership had been among the most vocal supporters and an influential voice in the MLC.

## UFT OPPOSITION

"The United Federation of Teachers withdraws its support for the Medicare Advantage program for the New York City Medicare-eligible retirees as well as for the current health-care negotiations for in-service and pre-Medicare retirees," UFT President Michael Mulgrew said in a June 23 statement. "It has become apparent that this administration is unwilling to continue this work in good faith."

Retiree activists, some of whom are PSC members, held numerous rallies opposing the plan, in addition to lobbying the City Council and taking legal action against the proposed medical care shift. They were also joined by many active-duty PSC members. "Two important organizations, the NYC Organization of Public Service Retirees [NYCOPSR] and the Cross-union Retirees Organizing Committee, emerged as leaders in the fight to save our Medicare. Many of the PSC retirees are members of those groups and have played a large role in this struggle," said Nancy Romer, who serves as a retiree representative on the PSC executive council. "These groups have maintained that the retirees were promised publicly-run Medicare and Senior Care for over 50 years of employment and that changing that service now would be a breach of our contracts, showing bad faith on the part of the city."

Former PSC President Barbara Bowen recalled, "From the start, the PSC recognized that the claim the City could pay less for retiree health-care and deliver more was a fiction. I voted against both the 2014 and the 2018 health 'savings' agreements with the Municipal Labor Committee, but the PSC's arguments did not prevail. The zero-sum logic that workers have

## A win for grassroots organizing



The PSC has long fought to protect retiree health benefits.

to make concessions to get wage increases was too deeply embedded. By late 2020, when the City sought proposals to replace traditional Medicare with Medicare Advantage (which is not Medicare at all), the PSC Retirees Chapter started organizing opposition. Supported by the union leadership, PSC staff and Welfare Fund staff, the Retirees chapter worked

courageously in those early stages of the process to inform members about the proposal and its dangers. In April 2021 the DA voted unanimously to support the retirees' call for a citywide moratorium on the proposal. That call, unheeded at the time, turned out to be prescient."

Romer credited the union's Social Safety Net committee with raising the alarm about the proposal in the MLC to approve a privately administered plan. Former PSC president Barbara Bowen raised concerns about the MLC plan and expressed the union's opposition, becoming a vocal advocate against privatization.

Romer added, "The PSC consistently offered organizing and expert medical insurance information and advice through Professor Barbara Caress and ex-PSC executive director Debbie Bell. The PSC also submitted an amicus brief in support of a recent NYCOPSR legal suit defending Medicare."

## PSC RESEARCH

PSC activists opposed the Medicare Advantage scheme because research has shown that such plans worsen health coverage for seniors and incentivize insurance companies to drain federal resources.

David Himmelstein and Stephanie Woolhandler are both distinguished



Retirees rallying against City Hall's plan.

professors at the School of Urban Public Health at Hunter College and founders of Physicians for a National Health Program, which advocates for single-payer insurance. "Medicare Advantage (MA) plans are immensely profitable for insurance companies like CVS/Aetna – providing as much as 90% of insurers' total profits – but bad for patients and for taxpayers," they said in a statement. "While enrollees in traditional Medicare can get care at any hospital and from the vast majority of doctors, MA plans limit enrollees to a narrow network of providers, often excluding specialized cancer centers and leading hospitals and physicians."

They continued, "Reams of research has found that seniors in

MA (relative to those in traditional Medicare) receive less medical care, e.g. fewer home care visits from aides, speech therapists, physical therapists, or nurses. Among cancer patients requiring complex surgeries, MA enrollees are less likely to get surgery at high-volume cancer hospitals where quality is highest, and suffer longer delays in treatment and higher death rates. And those needing a rehab stay (e.g. after a hip fracture) are often denied coverage."

A *Wall Street Journal* investigation found that "private insurers involved in the government's Medicare Advantage program made hundreds of thousands of questionable diagnoses that triggered extra taxpayer-

funded payments from 2018 to 2021, including outright wrong ones," and that "instead of saving taxpayers money, Medicare Advantage has added tens of billions of dollars in costs, researchers and some government officials have said."

## WELCOME NEWS

"It's welcome news that Michael Mulgrew has withdrawn UFT support for the Office of Labor Relations/MLC plan to move municipal retirees from Medicare to Medicare Advantage, and has also backed off prospective MLC endorsement of a new and constricted health coverage plan, currently under negotiation, for those in service," said James Perlstein, a PSC retiree activist. "These moves by the UFT testify to the power of the diverse grassroots movement that forced the union's hand."

Romer hopes that this will spur more unions to change their positions. "We hope that this wrong-headed proposal to save the city money will be buried, once and for all," she said. "We need to tax the rich, not the elders; we need more money from the city and state to cover the full cost of our hardworking city workers and their benefits. I am proud that the PSC leadership and retiree membership stood up consistently and immediately to defend our rights."

In June, the UFT Retired Teachers Chapter elected a slate of candidates that ran on a platform opposing the city's shift to Medicare Advantage. President Mulgrew's public statement attributed the change in the UFT's position to the city's unwillingness to work in good faith with the MLC. "This administration has proven to be more interested in cutting its costs than honestly working with us to provide high-quality health care to city workers," he wrote.

## JUST A START

Perlstein, like many who fought the privately administered plan, said this development is only the beginning of establishing a more just health-care coverage system. "We would hope that space has opened up for NYC to consider the kind of structural alternatives to health-care reform that do not place the burden of reform on the backs of those seeking care," he said. "All the signs point to single-payer as the real answer."

NYCOPSR President Marianne Pizzitola said that her organization is ready to go back to court if the Court of Appeals eventually hears the Adams administration's appeal. She also said that her organization will reintroduce legislation to stop any privatization of retiree health coverage.

"We're not giving up," she said. "We're right."

Romer said that the big lesson from this fight is that different groups must come together with different tactics to take on a struggle as formidable as this one.

"It takes many, many different groups with many different approaches to move a mountain. This is what happened. They all moved together. The PSC played a role," she said. "Ultimately, we need to be singing the same song, but we have to have multiple parts."



# The struggle for city funding continues

By ARI PAUL

## Mayor is still shortchanging CUNY

The PSC spent the last year aggressively fighting to ensure the city adequately funds CUNY – the city is responsible for the lion’s share of funding for CUNY’s two-year campuses. That has been no easy task, as Mayor Eric Adams, a nominal Democrat who governs like a business-backed Republican, has insisted that painful austerity must be visited upon every institution the city’s working people rely upon.

The union participated in numerous spirited rallies in lower Manhattan demanding that the city’s budget reflect the needs of the city’s working people, one that funds social services and education from preschool through CUNY. PSC leaders testified in City Council hearings about the need to fund CUNY. And all around the city, members met with their city lawmakers to demand full funding for CUNY.

### OPEN SPOTS

As a result of this austerity, there are 400 vacant positions at the city’s community colleges, the union’s first vice president, Jen Gaboury, said in an impassioned op-ed in *amNY*.

“Student support staff are not being hired to replace those who retire or resign. Workloads are rising for those who remain, and capacity to serve, advise and educate students is reduced,” she said. “A 2023 report from our union’s Library Faculty Committee revealed that nearly 100 lights malfunctioned in the Bronx Community College library circulation area. Looking for a book requires, in some cases, a flashlight,” it said.”

Gaboury continued, “The LaGuardia Community College library only had three of its 11 units fully staffed at the time of the report, and the collections shrunk so much that access to databases needed for student and faculty research was lost. The Borough of Manhattan Community College library had its non-personnel budget cut by half.”

Faculty at two-year colleges are also working under the sharp blade



Members rallying against Mayor Eric Adams' austerity agenda at City Hall.

of the Adams administration’s knife. “Full-time faculty are taking on larger classes and more administrative tasks, leaving them less time to mentor students. Adjunct faculty have had course assignments reduced, leading to lost income and ineligibility for health insurance,” Gaboury said.

She added, “CUNY spends less by offering fewer courses – putting adjuncts out of work – but then students sometimes can’t get a seat in the courses they need to graduate on time.”

City Council members including Speaker Adrienne Adams, to their credit, were receptive to the union’s

case, and many of them worked hard for an adequate budget agreement.

However, like many well-fought campaigns, this year’s struggle for a fair budget did not produce an agreement that will fix CUNY’s problems. While the mayor trumpeted that this year’s budget agreement would avoid deep cuts to libraries and other institutions, the final agreement for the city budget included a funding plan for CUNY that fell far short of what is needed to address student needs, crumbling infrastructure and increasing workloads for faculty and staff.

“Today’s handshake agreement announced a restoration of \$15

million in operating support for community colleges. But the restorations don’t offset the mayor’s \$95 million previous cuts. Given the recent revenue projections and the increasing enrollments at CUNY colleges, it’s clear that CUNY students, faculty and staff are short-changed in the budget deal,” the PSC said in a statement in response to this summer’s budget agreement.

### COUNCIL PROGRESS

The statement continued, “We’re grateful to Speaker Adams for constantly challenging the mayor’s false austerity and to the Council members who fought hard for the \$15 million in operating aid and for the continuing investments in

CUNY Reconnect, the Accelerate, Complete, Engage (ACE) program, campus childcare centers, Vallone Scholarships, food pantries and other programs.”

### AGAINST CUTS

The union added, “The mayor insists on cuts to the community colleges, CUNY is still vastly underfunded and our community colleges are still short 400 academic and student support staff positions. We look forward to even more aggressive advocacy from the City Council in the next budget cycle.”

CUNY Chancellor Félix V. Matos Rodríguez said the agreement “recognizes the essential role that public higher education plays in New York City” and that the “\$15 million support for CUNY’s seven community colleges will help offset tuition loss from enrollment declines and help cover a range of operational needs that have a direct impact on our students.”

Nevertheless, the PSC continues to fight for more funding, and that means more sustained pressure on the mayor and the governor to fully fund CUNY.

This fall, members are encouraged to participate with the union’s legislative committee to learn how they can join the continuing fight for fair funding for public higher education from both the city and the state.

### ELECTION TIME

Susan Kang, a member of the union’s executive council and an associate professor of political science at John Jay College, noted that the union has a big opportunity to advocate for the city funding in the next several months because all city elected officials will be up for reelection in 2025. The mayor is seeking a second term. It will be time for rank-and-file union members to demonstrate to the entire city and to the mayor specifically that CUNY matters and deserves the city’s full support.

“Next year is an election year,” she said, noting that the city must replace “all the funding Adams has cut, especially to our community colleges and our student support services.”



PSC President James Davis demands more funding for education overall.



Council Speaker Adrienne Adams addresses the budget.

Paul Frangipane

Paul Frangipane

John McCarter/NYC Council Media Unit



# Arbitrator: LGCC violated promotion rules

By ARI PAUL

LaGuardia Community College's administration fought the contract. And the contract won.

The union filed a grievance in response to the college's decision to unilaterally add "leadership" as a requirement for professorial promotion, a clear violation of the CUNY Board of Trustees' (BOT) policy as well as the collective bargaining agreement (CBA).

## VIOLATIONS

Natalie Grieco, the PSC's legal coordinator, explained in the union's April 9 brief to the arbitrator that while the application of the Board of Trustees' criteria for reappointment, promotion and tenure (RPT) is subject to the academic judgment of the college, "the college may not add or subject "criteria to those issued by the BOT." And in this case, LaGuardia "issued a new set of RPT criteria that purported to add the new criterion of 'leadership' to the BOT policy and the CBA," which "is a violation of the CBA and the BOT policy."

This decision was years in the making. In 2019, the union asserted, the LaGuardia administration added "leadership" as part of the criteria needed for promotion to associate or full professor.

"Even if the addition of 'leadership' to the RPT criterion could be added solely by the college, and it cannot be, LAGCC did not follow its own Governance Plan in imposing the new standard on the faculty," Grieco said. At the hearing, the college admitted that the revisions to the Instructional Staff Handbook were made by the LaGuardia Personnel and Budget (P&B) Committee. This is an improper body for the creation of academic policy, which is what the revisions amount to in practice.

## BAD DECISIONS

A professor of English at LaGuardia and union grievance counselor, Evelyn Burg "represented faculty who were turned down for promotions prior to 2019 because of deficiencies in leadership" and she "testified that in many cases, leadership was the major factor in the

## Changes were ambiguous and arbitrary



Evelyn Burg's handling of this grievance was central to the PSC's win in this case.

negative decisions," according to the arbitrator's decision.

Grieco further argued that the application of this new requirement was "arbitrary and ambiguous," insisting that the "arbitrator uphold the grievance and remove the college's imposition of 'leadership' from the criteria for reappointment, tenure and promo-

tion in the LAGCC Instructional Staff Handbook."

Burg, who argued the case at steps one and two of the grievance process, said that the problem this created was that academics who focused on their scholarship could be rejected for promotion because they didn't fit ill-defined and narrow "leader-

ship" requirements set forth by the administration. "You had to be the chair of a major committee, you had to originate something, you had to start something. It was service on super steroids," she said. "And if you didn't do that, if you focused on scholarship, you wouldn't get promoted."

She added, "This was really a blank check to the administration to

increase the workload in an indefinite and unspecified way that was really doing their bidding."

## UNION WINS

Arbitrator Ruth Moscovitch sided with the union.

"In its post-hearing brief, CUNY argues that the word 'summary' that had appeared in the 2014 and 2016 handbooks 'was meant to indicate that there should be a summary of all activities showing leadership,'" she said. "Based upon all of this testimony, I must reject CUNY's assertion that the term 'summary' that appeared in the 2014 and 2016 handbooks actually meant 'summary of leadership activities.'" She added, "Now, as a 'requirement,' one of the seven criteria, there will need to be a different and more pointed focus on whatever 'leadership' in general means. In sum, I find that the re-writing of the handbook in 2019 to substitute the term 'leadership' for the term 'summary' was not simply a rearrangement of terms already present in the handbook; it was a material change."

## CUNY FUMBLES

But she was not done picking apart the heart of the college administration's weak case, noting that "if CUNY sought by this change to clarify terms that were ambiguous, it failed to achieve that goal." Moscovitch added, "The issue before me is not whether CUNY did a good job in clarifying matters when it rewrote the handbook, but whether it violated the collective bargaining agreement, or established CUNY policies. I find that it did."

The language about "leadership" was ordered to be removed from the college's requirements.

For Burg, this was a major victory not just for faculty at LaGuardia but for all CUNY faculty who care about the integrity of the profession, because she believed the "leadership" requirement "was changing terms of employment at the whim of the administration," which was "against the tradition" of the University.

"It made me incredibly happy," Burg said of the arbitrator's decision. "I'm no Clarence Darrow, but it was very gratifying."

## CUNY NEWS, IN BRIEF

By CLARION STAFF

### Members win payout

More than 4,300 adjuncts and other instructional staff represented by the PSC will receive a combined payout of more than \$1.7 million under the terms of a new settlement agreement signed by President James Davis on Wednesday, May 22. The settlement stems from college and CUNY-wide grievances filed by the union in June 2020 after CUNY failed

to provide proper compensation for required online training provided by the colleges and CUNY Central in the spring and summer of 2020. The affected adjuncts and instructional staff who are party to the agreement were paid varying amounts at the time of the training, but those amounts were less than what CUNY was contractually obligated to pay. The settlement will bring the full payment for the online training up to \$900 per worker, and CUNY will be required to pay each affected worker the difference between what they were paid and the agreed-upon \$900. Individual payouts will range from \$6 to \$800. The payment will appear as a line item on members'

paychecks. CUNY Payroll has not yet confirmed a payment date, but members should look out for the payment this summer.

### Remote work extended

The PSC has secured an agreement with CUNY to extend the current remote work agreement through June 30, 2025, while negotiations continue about the future of remote work for PSC members. The extended agreement provides a framework for arrangements between workers and their supervisors about the schedule and duration of remote work and guarantees certain protections when we are working

remotely. The agreement form to be signed by the employee and supervisor is posted on the CUNY website.

### Broken promises?

*Gothamist* reported that the Stella and Charles Guttman Foundation is demanding in a lawsuit that a majority of its \$25 million gift to CUNY be returned after the University "re-neged on an agreement to use the cash to build a new community college facility."

The outlet reported that the foundation "made the donation in 2013 with the agreement that CUNY's New Community College in Midtown would be renamed after the

Guttman family, and eventually would be moved to a new, permanent location to house more students. The donation was one of the largest ever given to a two-year college in the U.S."

The outlet continued, "The school was renamed Stella and Charles Guttman Community College, but the lawsuit alleges CUNY broke its contract with the charity by declining to build a new campus for the school."

And it said, "The charity wrote in the lawsuit that \$15 million of its donation was tied to the new facility through an endowment fund. The lawsuit requests that money be reimbursed to the charity, plus interest - for a total of \$21 million."

Paul Frangipane



Going down

# QCC's breaking elevators

By ARI PAUL

Imagine a dystopia where every day you arrive on campus not knowing whether the elevators are working, and where it is not uncommon to hear reports of people being stuck in broken elevators.

Welcome to Queensborough Community College.

According to research conducted by the PSC chapter at QCC, elevators have broken down on several occasions, causing massive disruptions for faculty, staff and students alike, especially for people with disabilities. "QCC offers amusement-park-like rides that are no laughing matter," Phil Pecorino, the PSC chapter chair at QCC, said in an email.

## CONSTANT PROBLEMS

One campus activist notified the PSC on several occasions this past school year when elevators have not been working, and thus obstructing education for students with disabilities, as well as incidents where both workers and students have been trapped in elevators. Noelia Diaz, an assistant professor of English, is one of many PSC members at QCC who have lived the elevator nightmare.

"I was stuck on the new elevator for the humanities building the first week it became operational in November 2022, along with another faculty member and a custodian. It took about 20 minutes to be released," she said.

But that wasn't the only incident that she recalled.

## Chapter wants repairs

"More recently, this past semester, I was teaching a class adjacent to the old elevator in the humanities building and a faculty member was stuck in it, pulling the emergency button and screaming," Diaz said. "I had to interrupt my class and notify my department to get some help. The faculty member was very upset, so some students took it upon themselves to try to calm the professor down by reassuring her help was on the way. I had to end my class early since I couldn't continue teaching while the emergency button was pulled repeatedly, and the clearly distressed professor continued to yell to please be let out."

The chapter has put forward several demands to the QCC administration that include installing mechanical chairs that can lift people up the stairs when elevators aren't working, and bringing in outside contractors to explore elevator maintenance and upgrades.

## LOWERING MORALE

Pete Mauro, a professor of art history at QCC, said that while he has never been stuck in an elevator, the consistent problems are lowering morale among students as well as among the faculty and staff. "Queensboro traditionally has a 'culture of caring.' It's a buzz phrase for the administration," he said. "But the facilities display the opposite."

He said the elevator issues compound other structural problems, like constant leaks in the building where he works. Decay in these buildings, Mauro said, hurts education. "It doesn't send the right message to our students."

## LARGER PROBLEM

For the PSC, the elevator issues at QCC are part of a larger problem. The union has fought safety and health crises at Bronx Community College, City Tech, Baruch College and York College. The union is fighting to strengthen worker protections in current contract negotiations with CUNY. The union's campaigns at the state and city level to win more funding for CUNY aim to earmark public funds to upgrade conditions at campuses throughout the University.

"It's going to take a massive investment in capital" to fix buildings at schools like QCC, Mauro said.

In the meantime, the QCC chapter is struggling to fix the issues close to home.

"It is hoped that both the college and CUNY will effectively acknowledge the need for immediate actions to be taken to safeguard the members of our community and provide access to the classrooms, labs and offices needed for our students and faculty to fulfill our primary mission safely," Pecorino said.

**Problems impact education and work**



Erik McGregor

Pete Mauro, a professor of art history, has never been stuck in an elevator at QCC, but says the problems are lowering morale at the campus.

## Graduation time at CUNY, 2024



Ayman Siam/Office of NYC Comptroller

Graduates celebrate at this year's commencement ceremonies at the College of Staten Island (left) and Hostos Community College.



# Advocating for staff over the summer

By ARI PAUL

A recent PSC survey highlighted in the June issue of *Clarion* showed that CUNY professional staff – higher education officers, college laboratory technicians and library faculty – are facing increasing workloads thanks to staff shortages. The PSC plans to use these findings at the bargaining table to better working conditions, job protections and pay.

“It confirms what we already know,” said Janet Winter, the co-chair of the union’s HEO chapter, who added that HEOs and other professional staff were demanding fair raises and remote work options.

## MORE WORK

*Clarion* reported that the survey found that “52% of members in non-instructional titles said their workload has ‘increased significantly’ over the last four years, while 33% said that their workloads had ‘increased somewhat’ and that “only 2% reported that workloads had ‘decreased somewhat’ and no one said workloads had ‘decreased significantly.’” *Clarion* said that a “whopping 71% of those surveyed reported ‘understaffing’ was the source of the increase, while 51% said that the nature of the work had changed.”

Liz Stevenson, an ASAP advisor at City Tech, said that demands for contractual language for remote work options were important because professional staff have shown over the years that they can do their jobs just as well, and sometimes better, with hybrid work schedules as they did during the pandemic. Such schedules allow for staff to “live much fuller lives.”

CUNY bosses are following the lead of most other bosses, resisting worker demands for hybrid schedules because they have a Taylorist desire to exert as much control over their workers as possible.

The union has been able to win protections for remote work since the agreement was first put in place

## HEOs and others are overworked



Jeffrey Sigler says respect starts with more pay.

in 2020. And recently, the PSC secured a deal with CUNY to extend the current remote work agreement through June 30, 2025, while negotiations continue about the future of remote work. The extended agreement provides a framework for arrangements between workers and their supervisors about the schedule and duration of remote work, and guarantees contractual protections when working remotely.

## HYBRID OPTIONS

Stevenson added that she was pushing for remote work because working conditions for CUNY professional staff are often so bad. “It’s unsafe, it’s unhealthy,” she said.

## Staff have contract demands

She often walks into an office where the heating and air conditioning don’t work. The union has documented mold at many campuses and workers complain of windows that fail to open. Stevenson said that HEOs and other staff deserve better working conditions on their campuses.

Without safe working conditions, she and her colleagues were owed the ability to work remotely, Stevenson said.

John Gallagher, a director of organization and business effectiveness for IT at Borough of Manhattan Community College, said, “HEO staff have been taking on excessive extra work to make up for [vacated] positions that were never filled. They also have been extending their hours when working remotely to make sure students don’t fall through the cracks. COVID made our jobs more difficult, but we’ve met the challenges head on. It’s fortunate that we have a union that listens to us and makes sure management knows our struggles.”

## LOW STAFFING

Alycia Sellie, the chair of the union’s library committee, said, “Overall, staffing is as low or perhaps lower than it has ever been in CUNY libraries. Across CUNY, everyone is being asked to do more and more with fewer staff. Junior faculty especially have been tasked with filling in when someone leaves or retires and a line cannot be replaced.”

She noted, “Some libraries cut hours at the last minute due to shortages, and some of these cuts overlap with the cuts to public library hours, which leaves our researchers with lit-

tle space or alternatives. Some libraries were so short on staff that their management contemplated opening the space but cutting what some of us consider essential services – i.e. open the library for spring break, but have no circulation desk staff who could help patrons check out books. It has been a very hard year.”

Sellie, a collection development librarian at the Graduate Center, explained that this has left members in her committee defeated, with some giving up on CUNY altogether. “Dedicated and hardworking librarians have left CUNY because their plates were overloaded with work,” she said. “Others have struggled in being assigned new tasks or reassigned to wholly new duties. Junior faculty are struggling to juggle increasing daily workloads alongside their responsibility to their scholarship, which will keep them in their jobs. Many people have taken on tasks in different areas of the library that have little overlap, stretching all of us far across our capabilities.”

## NEED RESPECT

Jeffrey Sigler, the director of enrollment management and student services at Medgar Evers College, hoped that the survey results “bring attention to our cause.” For Sigler, professional staff are too often an afterthought in the conversation about CUNY, even though it is advisors, counselors, library faculty and CLTs who are often directly working with students. More than anything else, Sigler believed that the survey supported the demand for higher pay.

“Respect and real raises,” he said. “People have jobs for a reason.”

The push for justice for professional staff is occurring as PSC organizers are traveling around the city to meet more professional staff members and sign up new members. “The more of us whom we engage, the better,” Winter said.



Alycia Sellie advocates for library faculty.



Liz Stevenson says staff need hybrid work options.

Erik McGregor

Dave Sanders

Erik McGregor



# WANT A STRONG CONTRACT?

**WANT TO ATTEND A BARGAINING SESSION?  
WANT TO VOTE ON A STRONG CONTRACT?**

**JOIN THE UNION! TO SIGN UP, GO TO  
[PSC-CUNY.ORG/JOIN-PSC/](https://psc-cuny.org/join-psc/)**



Dave Sanders



PROFESSIONAL STAFF CONGRESS/CUNY  
FINANCIAL STATEMENTS with SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION  
AUGUST 31, 2023 and 2022

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Independent Auditor's Report	Statements of Cash Flows
Statements of Financial Position	Notes to Financial Statements
Statements of Activities	Supplemental Information
Statements of Functional Expenses	Schedules of Expenses by Category

Independent Auditor's Report

**To the Executive Board of Professional Staff Congress of the City University of New York**  
**Opinion:** We have audited the financial statements of the Professional Staff Congress of the City University of New York (PSC/CUNY), which comprise the statements of financial position as of August 31, 2023 and 2022, and the related statements of activities, functional expenses, and cash flows for the years then ended, and the related notes to the financial statements.

In our opinion, the accompanying financial statements present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of PSC/CUNY as of August 31, 2023 and 2022, and the changes in its net assets and its cash flows for the years then ended in accordance with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America.

**Basis for Opinion:** We conducted our audits in accordance with auditing standards generally accepted in the United States of America (GAAS). Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Statements section of our report. We are required to be independent of PSC/CUNY and to meet our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with the relevant ethical requirements relating to our audits. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our audit opinion.

**Other Matter:** As discussed in Note 12 to the financial statements, in 2023 PSC/CUNY adopted FASB ASC 842, Leases. Our conclusion is not modified with respect to this matter.

**Responsibilities of Management for the Financial Statements:** Management is responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of the financial statements in accordance with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America, and for the design, implementation, and maintenance of internal control relevant to the preparation and fair presentation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial statements, management is required to evaluate whether there are conditions or events, considered in the aggregate, that raise substantial doubt about PSC/CUNY's ability to continue as a going concern within one year after the date that the financial statements are available to be issued.

**Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Statements:** Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance but is not absolute assurance and therefore is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with GAAS will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control. Misstatements are considered material if there is a substantial likelihood that, individually or in the aggregate, they would influence the judgment made by a reasonable user based on the financial statements.

In performing an audit in accordance with GAAS, we:

- Exercise professional judgment and maintain professional skepticism throughout the audit.
- Identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements, whether due to fraud or error, and design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks. Such procedures include examining, on a test basis, evidence regarding the amounts and disclosures in the financial statements.
- Obtain an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of PSC/CUNY's ability to continue as a going internal control.
- Accordingly, no such opinion is expressed.
- Evaluate the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of significant accounting estimates made by management, as well as evaluate the overall presentation of the financial statements.
- Conclude whether, in our judgment, there are conditions or events, considered in the aggregate, that raise substantial doubt about PSC/CUNY concern for a reasonable period of time.

We are required to communicate with those charged with governance regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit, significant audit findings, and certain internal control related matters that we identified during the audit.

**Report on Supplemental Information:** Our audits were conducted for the purpose of forming an opinion on the financial statements as a whole. The Schedules of Expenses by Category are presented for purposes of additional analysis and are not a required part of the financial statements. Such information is the responsibility of management and was derived from and relates directly to the underlying accounting and other records used to prepare the financial statements. The information has been subjected to the auditing procedures applied in the audit of the financial statements and certain additional procedures, including comparing and reconciling such information directly to the underlying accounting and other records used to prepare the financial statements or to the financial statements themselves, and other additional procedures in accordance with GAAS. In our opinion, the information is fairly stated in all material respects in relation to the financial statements as a whole.

Novak Francella LLC, New York, New York, April 29, 2024

STATEMENTS OF FINANCIAL POSITION – AUGUST 31, 2023 and 2022

	2023	2022
<b>Assets</b>		
<b>Cash and cash equivalents</b>	\$ 1,203,848	\$ 909,136
<b>Investments – at fair value</b>		
Mutual funds	8,949,578	10,781,323
<b>Investments – other</b>		
Certificates of deposit	795,000	993,000
Total investments	9,744,578	11,774,323
<b>Receivables</b>		
Dues	398,000	292,000
Due from related entities	290,954	176,000
Due from other	18,625	-
Total receivables	707,579	468,000
<b>Property and equipment</b>		
Equipment	800,955	764,210
Leasehold improvements	1,720,091	172,262
Furniture and fixtures	955,381	346,461
	3,476,427	1,282,933
Less: accumulated depreciation	(1,152,542)	(1,068,282)
Net property and equipment	2,323,885	214,651
<b>Right of use asset</b>		
Operating Lease	13,667,743	-
Accumulated amortization	(52,954)	-
Total right of use asset	13,614,789	-
<b>Other assets</b>		
Security deposit	100,056	100,056
Prepaid expenses	15,159	35,929
Total other assets	115,215	135,985
Total assets	27,709,894	13,502,095
<b>Liabilities and net assets</b>		
<b>Current liabilities</b>		
Accrued expenses	\$ 724,409	\$ 636,994
Accrued compensated balances	557,184	335,861
Due to related entities	1,501,068	1,362,429
Deferred revenue	81,619	-
Total current liabilities	2,864,280	2,335,284
<b>Long-term liabilities</b>		
Unfunded projected pension benefit obligation	2,836,884	3,386,842
Operating lease liability	13,868,197	-
Total long-term liabilities	16,705,081	3,386,842
Total liabilities	19,569,361	5,722,126
<b>Net assets without donor restrictions</b>	8,140,533	7,779,969
Total liabilities and net assets	\$ 27,709,894	\$ 13,502,095

See accompanying notes to financial statements.

NOTES TO FINANCIAL STATEMENTS  
AUGUST 31, 2023 AND 2022

NOTE 1. ORGANIZATION AND TAX STATUS

The Professional Staff Congress of the City University of New York (PSC/CUNY) was created by a merger of the Legislative Conference of The City University of New York and the United Federation of College Teachers. It was created to be the collective bargaining representative of the instructional staff of the City University of New York (CUNY). The Professional Staff Congress of the City University of New York is a Local (Local 2334) of the American Federation of Teachers (AFT). Through the AFT, PSC/CUNY is affiliated with New York State United Teachers (NYSUT) and The American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO).

The purpose of PSC/CUNY is to advance and secure the professional and economic interest of the instructional staff of the CUNY and other members of the bargaining units of PSC/CUNY. The objectives of PSC/CUNY are to negotiate and administer collective bargaining agreements; to improve the quality of education, research and scholarship at the CUNY; to cooperate with other educational, professional, and labor organizations in order to enhance the quality of education in the nation and to promote the professional and economic interests and the welfare of all workers; to serve as the public representative of the instructional staff of the CUNY and other members of the bargaining units of the Professional Staff Congress; and to cooperate with other CUNY employee and academic organizations and student bodies in order to advance the interests of the faculty, staff and students of the CUNY and the community it serves. The benefits members receive are paid for by contributions from the employer, CUNY, which are negotiated during bargaining as part of member compensation. PSC/CUNY and its affiliated organizations have arranged for various special economic benefits for its members. Supplemental health and welfare benefits are paid from a separate trust fund and are not included in these financial statements.

PSC/CUNY is exempt from Federal income taxes under Section 501(c)(5) of the Internal Revenue Code under a blanket exemption of the AFT.

Accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America require management to evaluate tax positions taken by PSC/CUNY and recognize a tax liability if PSC/CUNY has taken an uncertain position that, more likely than not, would not be sustained upon examination by the U.S. Federal, state, or local taxing authorities. PSC/CUNY is subject to routine audits by taxing jurisdictions; however, there are currently no audits for any tax periods in progress. Typically, tax years will remain open for three years; however, this may differ depending upon the circumstances of PSC/CUNY.

NOTE 2. SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANT ACCOUNTING POLICIES

**Method of Accounting –** The accompanying financial statements are prepared using the accrual basis of accounting in accordance with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America (U.S. GAAP) for non-profit organizations. Net assets are classified as net assets without donor restrictions and with donor restrictions. Net assets are generally reported as net assets without donor restrictions unless assets are received from donors with explicit stipulations that limit the use of the asset. PSC/CUNY does not have any net assets with

donor restrictions. Membership dues and fees are accounted for as exchange transactions.

**Net Assets without Donor Restrictions –** Net assets that are not subject to donor-imposed restrictions and may be expended for any purpose in performing the primary objectives of PSC/CUNY. These net assets may be used at the discretion of PSC/CUNY's management and the Board of Directors. Net assets without donor restrictions totaled \$8,140,533 and \$7,779,969 for the years ended August 31, 2023 and 2022, respectively.

**Cash and Cash Equivalents –** PSC/CUNY considers all cash and highly liquid investments, including certificates of deposit with initial maturities of three months or less, to be cash equivalents.

**Investments –** Investments are carried at fair value which generally represents quoted market prices, or the net asset value of the mutual funds, as of the last business day of the fiscal year as provided by the custodian or investment manager. Certificates of deposit held for investment that are not debt securities are classified as Investments – other and are carried at cost.

**Property and Equipment –** Property and equipment are recorded at cost. Major additions are capitalized while replacements, maintenance and repairs which do not improve or extend the lives of the respective assets are expensed currently. Depreciation is computed over the assets estimated useful lives, three to thirty years, by the straight-line method. Depreciation expense was \$84,260 and \$43,724 for the years ended August 31, 2023 and 2022, respectively.

**Leases –** PSC/CUNY is required to recognize a right-of-use model (ROU) asset and lease liability on the statement of net assets available for benefits for all leases with a term longer than 12 months. ROU assets represent the lessee's right to control the use of the leased asset during the lease. Leases will be classified as finance or operating, with classification affecting the pattern and classification of expense recognition in the consolidated statement of activities. Lease liabilities represent the present value of the future lease payments over the expected lease term. The present value of the lease liability is determined using the incremental borrowing rate at lease inception. Over the lease term, PSC/CUNY uses the effective interest rate method to account for the lease liability as lease payments are made and the ROU asset is amortized into expenses in a manner that results in a straight-line expense recognition in the statement of changes in net assets available for benefits. As of August 31, 2023, PSC/CUNY has determined the lease identified as an operating lease.

**Accrued Compensated Balances –** Future employee absences that have been earned but not yet taken are accrued within the contract limits. The accrued compensated balances were \$557,184 and \$335,861 for the years ended August 31, 2023 and 2022, respectively.

**Membership Dues and Dues Receivable –** Membership dues are recognized as revenue over the membership period. Dues come from members through payroll deductions and direct payments. Dues receivable are recorded as revenues are recognized. PSC/CUNY has determined that no allowance for doubtful accounts for receivables is necessary as of August 31, 2023 and 2022.

**Estimates –** The preparation of financial statements in conformity with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America requires management to make estimates and assumptions that affect reported amounts and disclosures in the financial statements. Actual results could differ from those estimates.

STATEMENTS OF FUNCTIONAL EXPENSES  
YEARS ENDED AUGUST 31, 2023 and 2022

	2023			2022		
	Total	Member Services	Support Services	Total	Member Services	Support Services
Affiliation fees	\$ 9,453,128	\$ 9,453,128	\$ -	\$ 9,470,816	\$ 9,470,816	\$ -
Salaries, employee benefits and payroll taxes	6,801,423	4,447,599	2,353,824	6,800,922	3,013,393	3,787,529
Representational and governance	279,145	279,145	-	120,203	120,203	-
Public relations	105,520	105,520	-	79,497	79,497	-
Building expenses	664,076	434,254	229,822	1,401,111	620,832	780,279
Administrative, office and general	370,496	162,055	208,441	407,698	115,103	292,595
Professional fees	1,207,049	1,207,049	-	926,501	926,501	-
Contract and budget campaigns	451,607	451,607	-	491,789	491,789	-
Stipends and reassigned time	727,955	727,955	-	518,783	518,783	-
Depreciation expense	84,260	-	84,260	43,724	-	43,724
Membership campaign	16,825	16,825	-	15,457	15,457	-
<b>Total expenses</b>	<b>\$ 20,161,484</b>	<b>\$ 17,285,137</b>	<b>\$ 2,876,347</b>	<b>\$ 20,276,501</b>	<b>\$ 15,372,374</b>	<b>\$ 4,904,127</b>

See accompanying notes to financial statements.

STATEMENTS OF ACTIVITIES  
YEARS ENDED AUGUST 31, 2023 and 2022

	2023	2022
<b>Revenue</b>		
Membership dues	\$ 15,841,379	\$ 15,972,850
Organizing assistance	3,315,330	3,363,836
Investment income (loss), net	344,761	(1,521,064)
Rental income	26,432	314,327
Grant income	50,000	99,850
Loss on disposal of assets	-	(169,206)
Other income	128,058	128,058
Total revenue	\$ 19,705,960	\$ 18,188,651
<b>Expenses</b>		
Affiliation fees	9,453,128	9,470,816
Salaries, employee benefits, and payroll taxes	6,801,423	6,800,922
Representational and governance	279,145	120,203
Public relations	105,520	79,497
Building expenses	664,076	1,401,111
Administrative, office and general	370,496	407,698
Professional fees	1,207,049	926,501
Contract and budget campaigns	451,607	491,789
Stipends and reassigned time	727,955	518,783
Depreciation expense	84,260	43,724
Membership campaign	16,825	15,457
Total expenses	20,161,484	20,276,501
<b>Net decrease in net assets before other changes</b>	<b>(455,524)</b>	<b>(2,087,850)</b>
<b>Other changes in net assets</b>		
Unfunded pension benefits obligation adjustments other than net periodic pension service cost	816,088	2,146,909
<b>Net increase in net assets</b>	<b>360,564</b>	<b>59,059</b>
<b>Net assets without donor restrictions</b>		
Beginning of year	\$ 7,779,969	\$ 7,720,910
End of year	\$ 8,140,533	\$ 7,779,969

See accompanying notes to financial statements.

STATEMENTS OF CASH FLOWS  
YEARS ENDED AUGUST 31, 2023 and 2022

	2023	2022
<b>Cash flows from operating activities</b>		
Change in net assets	\$ (455,524)	\$ (2,087,850)
Adjustments to reconcile change in net assets to net cash provided by (used for) operating activities		
Depreciation	84,260	43,724
Net realized and unrealized gains	(73,315)	1,860,357
Unfunded pension benefit obligation adjustments other than net periodic pension service cost	816,088	2,146,909
Loss on disposal of assets	-	169,206
Decrease (increase) in assets:		
Dues receivable	(106,000)	(61,000)
Due from related entities	(114,954)	42,000
Due from other	(18,625)	-
Security deposit	-	(100,056)
Right of use asset	(13,614,789)	-
Prepaid expenses	20,770	(35,929)
Increase (decrease) in liabilities:		
Accrued expenses	87,415	298,042
Accrued compensated absences	221,323	(269,979)
Due to related entities	138,639	(199,259)
Deferred revenue	81,619	(168,438)
Deferred rent	-	(218,242)
Unfunded projected pension benefit obligation	(549,958)	(1,633,200)
Operating lease liability	13,868,197	-
Net cash provided by (used for) operating activities	385,146	(213,715)
<b>Cash flows from investing activities</b>		
Purchase of property and equipment	(2,193,494)	(179,972)
Purchase of certificates of deposit	(99,000)	(200,000)
Liquidation of certificates of deposit	297,000	199,000
Sale of investments	2,180,000	329,740
Purchase of investments	(274,940)	(351,116)
Net cash used for investing activities	(90,434)	(202,348)
<b>Net increase (decrease) in cash</b>	<b>294,712</b>	<b>(416,063)</b>
<b>Cash and cash equivalents</b>		
Beginning of year	909,136	1,325,199
End of year	\$ 1,203,848	\$ 909,136

See accompanying notes to financial statements.



financial instruments within the fair value hierarchy. Changes in economic conditions or model-based valuation techniques may require the transfer of financial instruments from one fair value level to another. In such instances, the transfer is reported at the beginning of the reporting period.

For the years ended August 31, 2023 and 2022, there were no transfers in or out of levels 1, 2, or 3.

The following tables set forth, by level within the fair value hierarchy, the major categories of investments measured at fair value at August 31, 2023 and 2022:

Fair Value Measurements at August 31, 2023				
	Total	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
Mutual funds	\$ 8,949,578	\$ 8,949,578	\$ -	\$ -
Investments at fair value	\$ 8,949,578	\$ 8,949,578	\$ -	\$ -
Fair Value Measurements at August 31, 2022				
	Total	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
Mutual funds	\$ 10,781,323	\$ 10,781,323	\$ -	\$ -
Investments at fair value	\$ 10,781,323	\$ 10,781,323	\$ -	\$ -

### NOTE 6. SINGLE-EMPLOYER PENSION PLAN

PSC/CUNY contributes to the Professional Staff Congress/CUNY Pension Plan (the Plan), a single-employer plan covering professional and management employees who meet age and service requirements. Contributions are actuarially determined.

The Professional Staff Congress of the City University of New York Pension Plan is a defined benefit plan paying 2.2% of Final Average Compensation for each year of service, up to 25 years. Final Average Compensation is the average compensation over the last highest 5 consecutive years (or highest 60 months) of service. Plan assets do not include any securities of the employer or related entities. No amount of future annual benefits of plan participants is covered by insurance contracts. There were no significant transactions between the PSC/CUNY or related parties and the Plan during the years ended August 31, 2023 and 2022.

The following are the balances as of or for the years ended August 31, 2023 and 2022 as provided by the Plan's actuary:

	2023	2022
Projected benefit obligation	(\$ 6,987,556)	(\$ 7,259,267)
Fair value of plan assets	4,150,672	3,872,425
Funded status	(\$ 2,836,884)	(\$ 3,386,842)
Accumulated benefit obligation	(\$ 5,230,401)	(\$ 3,134,721)
Amounts recognized in the statement of financial position: Noncurrent liabilities	(\$ 2,836,884)	(\$ 3,386,842)
Amounts in net assets not recognized as components of net periodic benefit cost: Accumulated net (loss)	601,041	(252,121)

Weighted-average assumptions:	2023	2022
Discount rate (to discount plan benefit obligations)	5.18%	4.57%
Discount rate (to measure net periodic pension cost)	4.57%	2.64%
Expected return on plan assets	7.00%	7.00%
Rate of compensation increase	4.00%	4.00%

	2023	2022
Employer contributions	\$ 406,480	\$ 425,375
Benefits paid	\$ 215,009	\$ 836,868
Net periodic pension cost – service cost	\$ 627,710	\$ 939,084
Other components of net periodic pension cost:		
Interest cost	\$ 316,860	\$ 263,186
Expected return on assets	(279,786)	(362,925)
Recognized actuarial loss	-	63,092
	\$ 37,074	\$ (36,647)

The change in unfunded pension benefit obligations consists of the following:

	2023	2022
Changes in net periodic pension cost – service cost:		
Net periodic pension cost – service cost	\$ 627,710	\$ 939,084
Less: Employer contributions	(406,580)	(425,375)
	\$ 266,130	\$ 513,709

	2023	2022
Changes recognized in unrestricted net assets other than net periodic pension cost – service cost:		
Other components of net periodic pension cost	\$ 37,074	\$ (36,647)
Decrease in unrecognized accumulated net gain or loss	(\$ 853,162)	(\$ 2,110,262)
	(\$ 816,088)	(\$ 2,146,909)
	(\$ 549,958)	(\$ 1,633,200)

In 2023 and 2022, PSC/CUNY has recorded a gain of \$816,088 and \$2,146,909, respectively, to its net assets for the additional change in accrued pension payable beyond the current-year pension expense.

The Plan's expected long-term rate of return on assets assumption is 7.00%. This assumption represents the rate of return on Plan assets reflecting the average rate of earnings expected on the funds invested or to be invested to provide for the benefits included in the benefit obligation. The assumption has been determined by reflecting expectations regarding future rates of return for the investment portfolio, with consideration given to the distribution of investments by asset class and historical rates of return for each individual asset class.

For the years ended August 31, 2023 and 2022, there were no transfers in or out of levels 1, 2 and 3.

The following tables set forth, by level within the fair value hierarchy, the major categories of Plan investments measured at fair value and the allocation of the Plan's net assets available for benefits at August 31, 2023 and 2022:

Fair Value Measurements at August 31, 2022				
	Total	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
Cash & cash equivalents	3.40%	\$ 141,277	\$ 141,277	\$ -
Equities	43.44%	1,803,073	1,803,073	-
U.S. Government & Government Agency obligations	32.26%	1,339,071	1,339,071	-
Mutual funds	20.90%	867,251	867,251	-
	100.00%	\$ 4,150,672	\$ 4,150,672	\$ -

Fair Value Measurements at August 31, 2022				
	Total	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
Cash & cash equivalents	5.84%	\$ 226,356	\$ 226,356	\$ -
Equities	43.18%	1,672,059	1,672,059	-
U.S. Government & Government Agency obligations	29.12%	1,127,509	1,127,509	-
Mutual funds	21.86%	846,501	846,501	-
	100.00%	\$ 3,872,425	\$ 3,872,425	\$ -

The following benefit payments, which reflect expected future service, are expected to be paid as follows:

2024	\$ 220,668
2025	\$ 406,984
2026	\$ 210,603
2027	\$ 208,629
2028	\$ 514,429
2029 – 2033	\$ 3,043,686

### NOTE 7. MULTIEMPLOYER DEFINED BENEFIT PENSION PLAN

PSC/CUNY participates in the Office and Professional Employees International Union, Local 153 Pension Fund, a multiemployer defined benefit pension plan, under the terms of a collective bargaining agreement that covers its union-represented employees who meet age and service requirements. The risks of participating in multiemployer defined benefit pension plans are different from single-employer plans in the following aspects:

- Assets contributed to the multiemployer defined benefit pension plan by one employer may be used to provide benefits to employees of other participating employer.
- If a participating employer stops contributing to the multiemployer defined benefit pension plan, the unfunded obligations of the multiemployer defined benefit pension plan may be borne by the remaining participating employers.
- If the Plan chooses to stop participating in the multi-employer defined benefit pension plan, the Plan may be required to pay the multiemployer defined benefit pension plan an amount based on the underfunded status of the multiemployer defined benefit pension plan, referred to as a withdrawal liability.

PSC/CUNY's participation in the multiemployer defined benefit pension plan for the annual periods ended August 31, 2023 and 2022 is outlined in the table below. The zone status is based on information that PSC/CUNY received from the multiemployer defined benefit pension plan and is certified by the multiemployer defined benefit pension plan's actuary. Among other factors, pension plans in the red zone are generally less than 65 percent funded, pension plans in the yellow zone are less than 80 percent funded, and pension plans in the green zone are at least 80 percent funded.

#### SEE TABLE 2

\* PSC/CUNY participates in the Local 153 Pension Fund through a collective bargaining agreement between PSC/CUNY and the Office & Professional Employees International Union, Local 153 AFL-CIO (Local 153). The collective bargaining agreement has a three-year term of October 1, 2018, through September 30, 2021, and was extended through September 30, 2023.

#### SEE TABLE 3

\* The employer contribution rate of the Pension Plan was \$292 per week per employee effective October 1, 2021.

#### SEE TABLE 4

### NOTE 8. MULTIEMPLOYER PLAN THAT PROVIDES POSTRETIREMENT BENEFITS OTHER THAN PENSIONS

PSC/CUNY contributed to one multiemployer defined benefit health and welfare plan during the years ended August 31, 2023 and 2022 that provides postretirement benefits for its full-time support staff employees. PSC/CUNY's contributions to the welfare plan on behalf of its full-time support staff employees, contribution rates, and number of employees covered were as follows:

#### SEE TABLE 5

\* Under a collective bargaining agreement between Local 153 and PSC/CUNY, PSC/CUNY established coverage through an insured Preferred Provider Organization plan to provide medical, dental and prescription benefits. PSC/CUNY contributed \$66 per month to Local 153 Health Fund per active employee and \$8 per month per retiree under a collective bargaining agreement between Local 153 and PSC/CUNY to provide supplement benefits for life insurance coverage and vision benefits.

### NOTE 9. RELATED PARTY TRANSACTIONS

#### Identification of Related Organizations

PSC/CUNY has the following related entities:

- American Federation of Teachers (AFT)
- Municipal Labor Committee (MLC)
- New York State United Teachers (NYSUT)
- Professional Staff Congress of the City University of New York Welfare Fund
- The American Association of University Professors (AAUP)

The entities listed above share common trustees, officers, or affiliation with PSC/CUNY.

PSC/CUNY is affiliated with New York State United Teachers (NYSUT) and the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) through arrangements whereby PSC/CUNY pays dues to each entity in order for its members to participate in affiliated programs and, in turn, is reimbursed for various expenses, including reimbursements for meetings, organizing, legislative representation, training programs, and arbitration.

Dues paid to NYSUT for the years ended August 31, 2023 and 2022 were \$5,921,808 and \$6,026,117, respectively. As of August 31, 2023 and 2022, PSC/CUNY owed NYSUT \$843,700 and \$779,000, respectively, for dues. Dues paid to AFT for the years ended August 31, 2023 and 2022 were \$3,156,752 and \$3,083,120, respectively. As of August 31, 2023 and 2022, PSC/CUNY owed AFT \$509,600 and \$416,000, respectively, for dues. Dues paid to MLC for the years ended August 31, 2023 and 2022 were \$44,573 and \$45,469, respectively. As of August 31, 2023 and 2022, PSC/CUNY owed MLC \$18,000 and \$22,490, respectively, for dues.

Reimbursements from NYSUT for the years ended August 31, 2023 and 2022 were \$3,036,674 and \$3,012,854, respectively. As of August 31, 2023 and 2022, NYSUT owed PSC/CUNY \$140,864 and \$92,000, respectively. Reimbursements from AFT for the years ended August 31, 2023 and 2022 were \$278,656 and \$350,982, respectively. As of August 31, 2023 and 2022, AFT owed PSC/CUNY \$32,000 and \$39,000, respectively.

PSC/CUNY pays NYSUT a monthly fee for dues processing. Dues processing fees totaled \$78,060 and \$76,695 for the years ended August 31, 2023 and 2022, respectively. As of August 31, 2023, PSC/CUNY owed NYSUT \$15,369 for dues processing and other administrative expenses.

PSC/CUNY reimburses the Welfare Fund for shared computer services. PSC/CUNY's portion of shared computer expenses totaled \$57,012 and \$54,618 for the years ended August 31, 2023 and 2022, respectively. As of August 31, 2023 and 2022, PSC/CUNY owed the Welfare Fund \$25,000 and \$38,354, respectively, for shared computer services. As of August 31, 2023 and 2022, PSC/CUNY owed the Welfare Fund \$5,352 and \$6,889, respectively, for other consulting fees.

As of August 31, 2022, PSC/CUNY was owed \$45,000 from the PSC PAC Fund for a payment made in error from PSC/CUNY's account. The amount was reimbursed as of August 31, 2023.

#### Office Space Leases

PSC/CUNY leased office space from 61 Broadway Owner, LLC through August 31, 2022. On September 30, 2005, PSC/CUNY entered into a sixteen-year lease with 61 Broadway Owner, LLC for Suites 1500 and 1615 of the 61 Broadway building. The lease was amended on August 4, 2009 and May 17, 2012 to include Suites 1630 and 1610, respectively. The leases, all of which expired on August 31, 2022, were classified as operating leases and provided for minimum annual rentals, plus certain additional expense escalations and utility charges. Per the agreement, PSC/CUNY was also responsible for its portion of real estate taxes.

PSC/CUNY leases office space from 25 Broadway Office Properties, LLC (the Realty Corp). On August 10, 2022, PSC/CUNY entered into a fifteen-year lease with the Realty Corp for a portion of the fifteenth (15th) floor of the 25 Broadway building. Rental payments are abated for twelve (12) months following substantial completion of the landlord's work, which occurred on July 7, 2023. Prior to substantial completion of construction of the 15th floor, PSC/CUNY was required to pay fixed rent in the amount of \$27,500 per month for temporary space located on the 9th floor. The Lease Commencement Date was determined to be the move-in date of August 30, 2023.

The lease, which expires on the fifteen (15) year anniversary of the conclusion of the twelve (12) month abatement period following the Lease Commencement Date, is classified as an operating lease and provides for minimum annual rentals, plus certain additional expense escalations and utility charges. Per the agreement, PSC/CUNY was also responsible for its portion of real estate taxes.

PSC/CUNY subleases office space to the Professional Staff Congress of the City University of New York Welfare Fund, a related party. The Welfare Fund paid PSC/CUNY a sum equal to 23.90% of the lease of Suite 1500 of 61 Broadway through the sublease expiration on August 31, 2022. The Welfare Fund will pay PSC/CUNY a sum equal to 21% of the lease of a portion of the 15th floor of 25 Broadway at the conclusion of the abatement period. Until construction of the 15th floor was substantially completed, the Welfare Fund was required to pay fixed rent in the amount of \$1,375 per month for temporary space located on the 9th floor.

Total rental income from the Welfare Fund for the years ended August 31, 2023 and 2022 was \$18,032 and \$290,027, respectively. As of August 31, 2023, the Welfare Fund owed PSC/CUNY \$1,375 for rent. As of August 31, 2022, PSC/CUNY owed the Welfare Fund \$15,649 for an overpayment of rent. Under the sublease agreement, the PSC/CUNY owes the Welfare Fund \$21,012 for deferred first month's rent and \$63,035 for a security deposit, which is refundable upon expiration of the sublease.

The minimum annual future rental income under the current lease agreement is as follows:

Year Ending August 31,	Operating lease
2024	\$ -
2025	\$ 252,140
2026	\$ 252,140
2027	\$ 252,140
2028	\$ 252,140
Thereafter	\$ 3,209,991
	\$ 4,218,551

#### NOTE 10. LITIGATION

Certain claims, suits, and complaints arising in the ordinary course of business have been filed or are pending against PSC/CUNY. In the opinion of PSC/CUNY's management and legal counsel, the ultimate outcome of these claims will not have a material adverse effect on the financial position of PSC/CUNY.

#### NOTE 11. LEASES

PSC/CUNY has an operating lease for their office space. The lease has a remaining lease term of fifteen years. PSC/CUNY has elected to use the incremental borrowing rate as the discount rate for the leases.

The components of lease expense as of August 31, 2023 were as follows:

Operating lease expense	\$ 103,848
Cash flow information related to leases during the year ended August 31, 2023 was as follows:	
Right of use assets obtained in exchange for lease obligations:	
Operating lease	\$ 13,817,303
Statement of net assets available for benefits position information related to leases as of August 31, 2023 was as follows:	
Operating lease	
Right of use assets – gross	\$ 13,667,743
Right of use assets – accumulated	(2,954)
Right of use assets – net	\$ 13,614,789
Operating lease liabilities	\$ 13,868,197

Weighted average remaining lease term	15.92
Weighted average discount rate	4.42%

Maturities of lease liabilities were as follows:

Year Ending August 31,	Operating lease
2024	\$ 100,055
2025	1,200,669
2026	1,200,669
2027	1,200,669
2028	1,200,669
Thereafter	15,185,607
Total undiscounted cash flows	20,088,338
Less: present value discount	(6,220,141)
Total lease liabilities	\$ 13,868,197

#### NOTE 12. NEW ACCOUNTING PRONOUNCEMENT

In 2016, the Financial Accounting Standards

Board (FASB) issued Accounting Standards Update (ASU) 2016-02, Leases, codified in FASB Accounting Standards Codification (FASB ASC) 842, Leases. The standard is effective for nonpublic entities for annual reporting periods beginning after December 15, 2021 and establishes a right-of-use model (ROU) that requires a lessee to recognize a ROU asset and lease liability on the balance sheet for all leases with a term longer than 12 months. Leases will be classified as finance or operating, with classification affecting the pattern and classification of expense recognition in the income statement. A modified retrospective transition approach is required, applying the new standard to all leases existing at the date of initial application. An entity may choose to use either (1) the beginning of the period of adoption (effective date method) or (2) the later of a) the beginning of the earliest comparative period presented in the financial statements and b) the commencement date of the lease (comparative method). PSC/CUNY has adopted the new standard using the effective date method. PSC/CUNY has adjusted the presentation of these statements accordingly. The ASU has been applied to the presentation and has a material effect on the financial statements.

#### NOTE 13. SUBSEQUENT EVENTS

PSC/CUNY has evaluated subsequent events through April 29, 2024, the date the financial statements were available to be issued, and they have been evaluated in accordance with relevant accounting standards.

### SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION SCHEDULES OF EXPENSES BY CATEGORY YEARS ENDED AUGUST 31, 2023 AND 2022

	2023	2022
<b>Affiliation fees</b>		
New York State United Teachers	\$ 5,921,808	\$ 6,026,117
American Federation of Teachers	3,156,752	3,083,120
The American Association of University Professors	288,820	275,960
Municipal Labor Committee	44,573	45,469
Other	41,175	40,150
	9,453,128	9,470,816
<b>Salaries, employee benefits, and payroll taxes</b>		
Salaries	\$ 3,822,845	\$ 3,855,041
Payroll taxes	332,073	320,358
Health benefit expense	1,839,275	1,547,186
Pension benefit expense	760,385	1,049,293
Other	46,845	29,044
	6,801,423	6,800,922
<b>Representational and governance</b>		
Conferences and conventions	\$ 271,153	\$ 105,859
Elections	6,501	14,045
Committees	1,491	299
	279,145	120,203
<b>Public relations</b>		
Mobilization and outreach	\$ 79,320	\$ 45,547
Community relations	26,200	33,950
	105,520	79,497
<b>Building expenses</b>		
Rent and services	\$ 469,351	\$ 1,242,195
Real estate taxes	-	58,734
Repairs and maintenance	90,877	100,182
Amortization expense	103,848	-
	664,076	1,401,111
<b>Administrative, office, and general</b>		
Office	\$ 211,704	\$ 235,945
Postage	28,851	12,504
Insurance	44,616	71,235
Dues processing	78,060	76,695
Other	7,265	11,319
	370,496	407,698
<b>Professional fees</b>		
Legal	\$ 482,860	\$ 357,170
Consulting	382,405	321,952
Accounting and auditing	59,175	36,650
Computer	282,609	210,729
	1,207,049	926,501
<b>Contract and budget campaigns</b>	\$ 451,607	\$ 491,789
<b>Stipends and reassigned time</b>	\$ 727,955	\$ 518,783
<b>Depreciation expense</b>	\$ 84,260	\$ 43,724
<b>Membership campaign</b>	\$ 16,825	\$ 15,457
<b>Total expenses</b>	\$ 20,161,484	\$ 20,276,501

TABLE 2

Legal Name of Pension Plan	Pension Plan's Employer Identification Number	Pension Plan's Plan Number	Pension Protection Act Zone Status				Expiration Date of Collective Bargaining Agreement
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## Vote COPE

Start the Fall semester energized and ready to fight for full funding for CUNY and for a state and city government that serves working people and public higher education.

Through PSC/CUNY COPE, the union can exercise its political muscle – COPE is the union’s political action committee. But it only thrives with your voluntary contributions. And with as many members contributing as possible, the PSC can continue to win support for CUNY funding in the future.

To contribute to the union’s political action fund, go to: <https://psc-cuny.org/issues/issues-cope/>.

# Adjuncts need job security

By VIRGINIA MYERS

Youngmin Seo was barely making ends meet on his adjunct faculty salary at the City University of New York. He and his then wife both worked full-time as they raised two children, and he took an extra job at *The Korea Times* to fill the gaps. For 20 years he commuted to Queens from Edison, N.J., because he couldn’t afford to live closer to work. “Every paycheck we struggled to pay our rent,” he says. “Life was so fragile.”

Seo’s experience is just one of so many like it. That is why the Professional Staff Congress, the faculty-staff union at City University of New York, fights so hard for its adjuncts – some 10,000 of them – who teach approximately half the classes at the University’s 25 campuses. And the PSC has made great strides: Minimum adjunct pay went from \$3,222 per class to \$5,500 in the last union contract, and adjuncts with more experience and/or advanced degrees can get up to \$6,000 per course, considered one of the best rates in the nation.

### STUDY

Another tremendously important win was job security. A recent AFT survey, “*An Army of Temps*,” shows that 74% of adjunct faculty nationally have contracts that cover just one semester at a time. That means many have to wait until the last minute, sometimes just days before the semester begins, before learning whether they’ll have classes to teach – and income to live on. It’s all part of a movement among colleges and universities to hire more and more contingent faculty, who can be hired and fired as enrollments and budgets dip and rise. So when the PSC won three-year appointments in its last two contracts, it was groundbreaking.

CUNY adjuncts who have been teaching six hours a semester for five years are eligible for the three-year appointments. That makes a huge difference for faculty who will now have more job stability and more time and attention to devote to their students.

## A part of the contract fight

“PSC/CUNY has been among the leaders in containing the radical adjunctification of the academic workforce,” PSC President James Davis told the *Queens Ledger* in March.

### ON THE LINE

Now that’s all on the line. CUNY has threatened to drop the three-year appointments, which were part of a pilot program that ends in June. As the PSC negotiates its next contract, CUNY wants to cut the adjunct appointments to two years and increase the number of years required to qualify from 5 to 12 – more than twice the initial requirement. If the changes go through, PSC analyses show that the number of adjuncts eligible for multiyear appointments would drop 87%, from 2,450 to 318, across all campuses.

This not only harms individual adjuncts, it also threatens the quality of education for students: Professors who are stretched thin, trying to teach too many courses on too many

campuses and taking on extra jobs and worrying over financial stability, cannot be as present and engaged with their students, and students won’t get the benefits of continuity among faculty, either.

The change would be harmful “not just to the folks who are in these titles,” Davis told the *Queens Ledger*, “it would also be harmful to students because they don’t benefit when there’s so much churn and turnover in the instructional staff.”

In such a scenario, Seo says, “Students come back if there is a grade dispute or if they need a recommendation, only to find out the professor is gone.” Since he has been at CUNY for so long – 27 years – he knows how important that can be. “They come back 15 years later and say, ‘Do you remember me? You were tough on me, you gave me an F. Thank you. That was the turning point,’” Seo says.

Through the years, Seo has tried to roll with the punches. His dual degree

is in English literature and sociology, but his doctoral study was anthropology. When he started, he taught a night class in beginning anthropology, since that was what was available to teach. He has moved among four different CUNY campuses over the years. Currently, he teaches two anthropology classes and one intro to sociology at

### Advocating for adjunct job security

LaGuardia Community College in the Long Island City section of Queens. He also teaches a sociology class at the Borough of Manhattan Community College, near the river in Lower Manhattan – nearly an hour through New York City traffic, or 12 stops and two 10-minute walks via the E train.

“Adjuncts are very resourceful,” he says wryly – he is among many who cobble together a full teaching load on different campuses. CUNY policy limits them to nine credit hours on one CUNY campus and one additional class at a second CUNY campus, but Seo has one colleague who teaches 15 courses a year by adding Suffolk County Community College,

on Long Island, to his roster so that he can make enough to earn a living.

Seo is working through his third three-year appointment, which has made a huge difference in his sense of job security – especially since he was laid off from *The Korea Times* during the pandemic.

But not everyone is so lucky. “There are so many good faculty members who are totally dedicated to their students but have no choice but to leave,” says Seo, citing the lack of job security, low pay, hours spent commuting and other factors. “This is no way to teach.” He admits that he has considered leaving the profession himself.

It would be a tough move. He is so animated in class, it is clear he cares about the material and his students. Weaving stories with facts, he keeps the content relevant and engaging. His aim is to reach each of his students, who are a mix typical of community college classrooms – an ethnically and racially diverse group including many who are the first in their families to attend college. One day in cultural anthropology, the class included a nun from Kenya and an aspiring journalist who wants to write about her Mexican American grandmother, who moved to the United States as a 16-year-old bride.

If Seo were to leave them, they would lose not only a good teacher but also the kind of continuity that helps students once they leave the college. “That kind of continuing connection is important,” Seo says.

And so he and the rest of the PSC keep fighting.

### TAKING ACTION

In addition to speaking at board meetings and attending bargaining sessions, PSC members and leaders held a press conference and action on May 2 to advocate for job security among adjuncts, full-time lecturers and higher education officers, whose job titles are programmatic and administrative in nature. Contract negotiations continue, and people like Seo, who is on the bargaining committee with Davis and 18 other union leaders, will continue to insist that adjunct faculty get the support they need – that the community needs – to provide the kind of education that changes lives.



Members rally at CUNY headquarters for job security.

Erik McGregor

A version of this article first appeared at AFT Voices.