

# Clarion

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



APRIL 2025



**CAMPUS QC**  
**defends its rights**

An attempt to curtail campus gatherings.

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Paul Frangipane

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# Faculty action in the face of Trump 2.0

By the AAUP

This statement, which originally appeared on the American Association of University Professors' website, was prepared by a joint subcommittee of the AAUP's Committee on College and University Governance and Committee A on Academic Freedom and Tenure, and was approved for publication by the parent committees in December 2024 and adopted by the Council in January 2025.

As Donald Trump assumes the presidency for a second time, the outlook for higher education is dire. The new administration's agenda for higher education has been thoroughly prepared by a series of statewide legal assaults on public colleges and universities in North Carolina, Florida, Texas and elsewhere, as well as by the high-profile congressional witch hunt that within the past year brought down the presidents of three Ivy League institutions.

How should we respond? The University of Chicago's 1967 Kalven Report, often cited as the source of calls for "institutional neutrality," declares, "From time to time instances will arise in which the society, or segments of it, threaten the very mission of the university and its values of free inquiry. In such a crisis, it becomes the obligation of the university as an institution to oppose such measures and actively to defend its interests and its values." This is undoubtedly such a time.

## COURAGE

It will take courage and stamina to resist efforts, already well underway, to undermine tenure and academic freedom protections, eviscerate shared governance, diminish the faculty's control over the curriculum and redefine higher education to benefit private interests over the public good. There is good reason to fear that many college and university leaders – trustees, chancellors, presidents, provosts, deans and more than a few faculty members – will seek to accommodate, if not capitulate to, these unwarranted incursions into higher education, especially when they come in the form of new laws. Some may even welcome another Trump administration as offering an opportunity to implement "reforms" they have long sought. In the 1950s, when the second Red Scare led to a purge of faculty members for their (sometimes only former) political affiliations, few educational leaders spoke up against it; fewer still followed words with actions. And faculty members were far too frequently complicit in attacks on their colleagues, especially those unprotected by tenure. Even the AAUP dragged its feet. One might sympathize with administrators who are pressured by politicians and, in some cases, monied donors. The power of the purse is strong. It is, perhaps, too much to ask that governing boards and administrations, much less faculty members, defy the edicts of those who fund their

## AAUP statement on the new era

institutions, especially when attacks on higher education may occur under the cover of law. But resistance is necessary, and it can take many forms. Unfortunately, troubling recent events suggest that some administrations are not only acquiescing to attacks on fundamental principles but engaging in what scholars of authoritarianism call *anticipatory obedience* – that is, they are acting to comply in advance of any pressure to do so. One case in point is the recent review of all course content for "antisemitism or anti-Israel bias" in the Florida state university system, initiated by its chancellor at the urging of a member of the state house of representatives. Courses flagged by the review for further scrutiny included Percussion Ensemble, Global Hip Hop, General Parasitology and Painting Workshop.

## BANNING THOUGHT

Similarly, the University of North Texas administration recently censored the content of more than 200 academic courses, including by mandating the removal of words such as

*race, gender, class and equity* from undergraduate and graduate course titles and descriptions. These actions were allegedly taken in response to state legislation banning certain diversity, equity and inclusion programs and practices, even though the legislation specifically exempted academic course content. While university administrators and faculty members may be compelled to comply with legislation and court orders, even where these run counter to professional and constitutional principles, they remain free to register their disagreement. And under no circumstances should an institution go further than the law demands. Yet the examples above depict an eagerness to obey on the part of administrative officers, portending a bleak future for higher education.

## HISTORY

The AAUP's 1956 special investigative report on the anticommunist scare concluded:

We cannot censure the justified public interest in colleges

and universities, or be unmindful of the extremely difficult task confronting academic administrations that seek to preserve educational and research opportunities in order to serve the general welfare in spite of the suspicions of a public which, at

times, has been confused by complicated issues or led astray by demagogic appeals. The temptation to yield a little in order to preserve a great deal is strong. . . . Yet to yield a little is, in such matters, to run the risk of sacrificing all. . . .

We cannot accept an educational system that is subject to the irresponsible push and pull of contemporary controversies; and we deem it to be the duty of all elements in the academic community – faculty, trustees, officials and, as far as possible, students – to stand their ground firmly even while they seek, with patient understanding, to enlarge and deepen popular comprehension of the nature of academic institutions and of society's dependence upon unimpaired intellectual freedom.

## Historic time for academia

The Trump administration and many Republican-led state governments appear poised to accelerate attacks on academic freedom, shared governance and higher education as a public good. They will attack the curricular authority of the faculty on a number of fronts, including professors' ability to undertake "teaching, research and service that respond to the needs of a diverse global public." It is the higher education community's responsibility not to surrender to such attacks – and not to surrender in anticipation of them. Instead, we must vigorously and loudly oppose them.

## VITAL ACTION

It will be vital, then, that we ensure our ability to resist the onslaught. We encourage AAUP chapters and conferences, unions and faculty senates across the nation to take the following actions:

1. Review handbooks and contracts to strengthen and reinforce faculty rights in the areas of curricular reform and course approval; academic program discontinuance; and faculty appointments, reappointments, promotions and dismissals.

2. Review and reform policies to strengthen faculty oversight in areas currently being used to exercise excessive and undue discipline against faculty, staff and students. These include Title IX and Title VI policies and procedures, acceptable-use policies regarding institutional resources, events and outside speakers policies, and campus free speech and protest policies, among others.

3. Organize locally, regionally and nationally. The erosion of faculty rights goes hand in hand with attacks on tenure, faculty unions and academic governance.

4. Strengthen local capacity to protect tenure and academic freedom by establishing or staffing a Committee A on Academic Freedom and Tenure in every chapter and state conference.

5. Strengthen local capacity to protect faculty governance by promoting AAUP resources on governance, including the Statement on Government of Colleges and Universities, within chapters, to faculty senates, and across institutions. Ensure the inclusion of protections for faculty members' intramural speech concerning the governance of their institutions.

Now is not the time to be complacent. Now is the time to act.



Members and supporters demonstrate against the new Trump administration.

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# Protecting immigrants

By ARI PAUL

With Donald Trump back in the White House, communities all over the country are reeling from reports of agencies like Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) aggressively stepping up detentions and deportations of undocumented immigrants.

The CUNY community is among those affected. PSC members wasted little time after Trump was elected in organizing a new committee to strategize about how to respond in this environment. This year, the union's Immigrant Solidarity Working Group was born.

During the group's second meeting in February, more than 50 members gathered at the union's headquarters to discuss how different campuses were responding to law enforcement pressure, and how members could respond to protect students who might be targeted.

## KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

Members discussed the rights of undocumented students and the importance of know-your-rights education on our campuses. They also participated in a role-play activity to prepare faculty and professional staff to legally delay and deter ICE agents by chanting and recording their actions and insisting that they do not enter private areas on campuses without a judicial warrant, but rather stay on the fringes of the grounds.

During a presentation, Barbara Bowen, former PSC president and a professor of English at Queens College, said the goal of such exercises is to "make it so ICE can't apprehend students," but that faculty and pro-

## Union action defending campuses

fessional staff were also engaged in an exercise to "puncture the ideology that supports mass deportation."

The event's guest speaker, Arianna Schindle, an extension associate in training and organizational development at Cornell University's School of Industrial and Labor Relations, underscored the timeliness of this kind of organizing. "We're at a deeply, deeply critical moment," she said, noting the proliferation of propaganda that feeds a "false narrative and dichotomy" that undocumented immigrants are criminals.

Bowen stressed that campus administrations should not let ICE agents walk freely around campus. "CUNY should have a policy that federal agents should not be on campus without a judicial warrant," she said, stressing that ICE agents often only carry administrative warrants, which are not signed by a judge.

Bowen and others emphasized the importance of staying quiet and not signing any documents if approached by federal agents.

Joe Lowndes, a distinguished lecturer in political science at Hunter College, said that when reporting possible immigration enforcement activity, it was important to gather information and make sure an ICE raid is actually happening. Oftentimes, people can see the letters "I-C-E" on a regular police car or mistake a city Department of Homeless Services police car for a Department of Homeland Security car. "Rumors spread like wildfires,"

he said. "It's important to get the information right."

These types of trainings have occurred on other campuses and in online meetings since the inauguration, and PSC members are already taking action. On February 25, PSC members joined with students outside of John Jay College to protest the presence of several immigration enforcement agencies, including the U.S.

Department of Homeland Security and the Border Patrol, at a career fair. More than 100 students, PSC members and community supporters chanted "ICE out of our schools, ICE out of New York." (While ICE, the agency that detains and arrests immigrants inside the country, reportedly did not have its own table, the agency is connected to DHS.)

## NO TO AGENTS

"The agents of deportation have no place on our campuses," said Sam Griffith, a Hunter College undergraduate, in a speech at the rally. "If you're disgusted with that, you're in the right place."

In a fiery speech at the rally, Mike Fabricant, former PSC first vice president and a professor of social work at Hunter College, said that the intensification of deportations under Trump was an attack on all marginalized communities, and he warned against people and institutions participating in "anticipatory obedience" to authoritarianism.

"It's more important than ever that we resist," he said. "We're resisting



Sándor John of Hunter College speaks at a rally against DHS recruitment at John Jay College.

for our children and future generations and for what we leave behind."

Fabricant emphasized that the PSC was committed to working in solidarity with immigrant communities on campuses. "The PSC is our union, it's your union," he said. "Solidarity extends beyond our family to our community."

In the same spirit, Sarah Chinn, a professor of English at Hunter College and professor of liberal studies at the Graduate Center, told the students in the crowd that faculty members "are scared for you," and encouraged them to seek help from PSC members. "We support you," she said. "Please do not hesitate, come and seek us out."

The demonstration was lively and was meant to discourage other campuses from inviting immigration enforcement officials to recruit on

CUNY campuses. So far, this student and union alliance is having some success on that front.

## FOLLOWING UP

Sándor John, an adjunct lecturer at Hunter College who helped organize the John Jay demonstration, reported that two days after the protest, federal immigration enforcement authorities planned to have an information session for interested recruits. Students and faculty planned for another demonstration, but John was happy to report that the session was canceled.

For John, this was an important step forward in an intense struggle taking place at CUNY.

"They're trying to make incursions on our campuses and we're going to stop them," he said.

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

# Confronting the crisis

By JAMES DAVIS  
PSC President

*Editor's Note: The PSC called an emergency mass meeting, In Defense of Our Institutions and Communities, on March 18 on Zoom, attended by nearly 850 PSC members. The following is a modified version of the president's remarks. In addition to the union's principal officers, members heard from one another, including prepared comments from Jesus Pérez, Director of the Brooklyn College Immigrant Student Success Office; Cynthia Carvajal, Director of the CUNY Immigrant and Undocumented Student Programs; Denis Nash, Distinguished Professor at the CUNY School of Public Health; and Ramzi Kassem, Professor at the CUNY School of Law and Director of the CLEAR Project.*

Any assessment of our situation nationally and at CUNY starts with a recognition that we are experiencing a concerted attempt to institute autocracy, dismantle the federal government and force a constitutional crisis. That is no lon-

ger an uncertain future prospect, and it is our responsibility as a union and as a labor movement to respond. The severity of the crisis and the intentions of its perpetrators cannot be understated, but let us also understand that this is the kind of moment that labor unions were made for. We must meet it collectively and decisively.

## ATTACKING SERVICES

To deliver huge tax breaks to the wealthiest Americans, the Trump administration launched an extensive effort to slash Medicaid and Social Security, dismantle the federal Department of Education, defund the Veterans Administration and gut many other federal programs and services. It is a direct attack on working families, students and vulnerable communities. The effort to dismantle the Department of Education is especially pernicious; it would impact the formula funding for public schools, Pell Grants, student loan programs, special education funding, grants to public schools and universities, and the school lunch program. In other words, fewer resources for students with disabilities, fewer benefits for families and fewer oppor-

tunities for first-generation college students.

The cruelty of the administration's broader effort is exemplified by the proposed cuts to Medicaid and Pell Grants. Medicaid provides health coverage to around one in five people living in the U.S. (over 72 million), including low-income adults, working families, children, vulnerable seniors and people with disabilities. Pell Grants go to more than one-third of undergraduate students nationally, and more than half go to students with families with annual incomes under \$20,000.

PSC members have expressed concern about the implications of potentially destabilized New York State and City budgets for our recently negotiated contract and job security. Please know that the raises, retroactive pay and ratification bonuses that the PSC negotiated in the 2023-2027 contract will be paid. We are awaiting an exact timeline from CUNY management, but have no reason to believe it has been affected by actions from the Trump administration. PSC leaders con-

tinue to press CUNY and are in contact with the Office of the State Comptroller. There is also an understandable concern about job security and layoffs. There is currently no reason to believe that large-scale layoffs at CUNY are imminent, and if proposed, they can be fought, as the PSC has done effectively before. Retrenchment is also a concern that some members have expressed. At CUNY, retrenchment must follow a formal procedure, including a declaration of financial exigency, pursuant to NYS Education Law §6212.8 and CUNY Manual of General Policy 5.19. This procedure includes opportunities for the PSC and governance bodies to intervene. These are all valid concerns and apprehensions in this period of chaos in Washington, but please know that our union rights are intact and our collective power is formidable.

## NO ACCIDENT

It's no accident that the Trump administration is targeting education, and higher education in particular. They are threatened by what we do, and they seek to control the sector. It is one of the few in our society that enjoys partial autonomy from politicians and the market. The playbook resembles Christopher Rufo's takeover of Florida's universities under Governor DeSantis. Withhold

Continued on page 8

## Opposing Trump's destruction

## STATE BUDGET

# Albany can transform higher ed

By JAMES DAVIS  
PSC President

*Editor's note: The following is an edited version of testimony delivered on behalf of the PSC to the State Senate's Finance Committee and the Assembly's Ways and Means Committee, as the legislature and governor negotiate a state budget settlement, which could include major contributions to CUNY.*

We are grateful that the legislature has supported CUNY, especially during Governor Hochul's administration. The legislature has built upon the governor's investments to accelerate funding for the University after decades of disinvestment. With its help, CUNY now has \$53 million in recurring funding for new faculty hires. Thanks to its tough negotiations, CUNY has an additional \$40 million in new operating aid this year. That was a much-needed increase above the previous year's budget. We know it was challenging to increase CUNY funding when the needs were great for the P-12 funding formula, for housing and for health care – but lawmakers heard the needs of PSC members and CUNY students.

Additionally, the recent expansion of TAP, including to part-time students and to the minimum award, has helped open new doors to students.

These advances lead us closer to realizing our goal of a New Deal for CUNY. This campaign has galvanized our 30,000-member union and many CUNY students. We thank Senator Andrew Gounardes and Assembly Member Karines Reyes for their leadership on this legislation; it deserves to be fully funded and passed.

## FED PROBLEM

We can't discuss the CUNY budget without talking about the effort in DC to dismantle federal agencies and services, including the programs on which our members and students rely. The Trump administration is using higher education as a wedge to divide Americans on everything from free speech to diversity in teaching and the student body to what our members can research. Medical research is in jeopardy, and universities are targeted for cuts. Our students have a target on their backs. Our mayor's open door to Immigration and Customs Enforcement, allowing access to campuses and other sensitive locations, has amplified the anxiety. You must draw a line. ICE cannot have free rein in our city and in our classrooms. CUNY students must be safe in their academic and career pursuits.

First, we are happy to report that last month our members voted overwhelmingly to ratify a new collective bargaining agreement. We are grateful that the governor has included expenses associated with the contract in her budget. The CUNY administration is asking for an additional \$34 million in operating aid to cover its full cost. Our contract encompasses dozens of job titles, full- and part-time. It's a complicated agreement that was completed just as the executive budget was finalized. Providing the remaining \$34 million will fulfill the state's recent practice of fully funding labor contracts.

The governor's proposed New York Opportunity Promise Scholarship will provide free tuition to New Yorkers ages 25 to 55 in associate's degree programs in high-



State lawmakers gathered with PSC members in Albany in support of full funding for CUNY.

demand fields. That investment will help meet the increasing demand for health-care professionals, teachers and qualified graduates in technology and renewable energy industries. The PSC is excited to support this program, and we hope that it's a foundation on which we can build a New Deal for Higher Education in New York State.

To that end, we urge you to support the Opportunity Promise Scholarship and join us in advocating to:

1. Eliminate the age restrictions that exclude students coming directly from high school.
2. Permit students to complete 60 credits for free at any CUNY or SUNY college, not just community colleges.
3. Include those who have already completed a degree.

## WELCOME NEWS

Other areas of the governor's budget we welcome include \$131 million in new operating aid for CUNY. We appreciate that the governor maintains the funding floor for community colleges, but believe that the floor was set too low. Enrollment in the academic year 2019-2020 should be the set point for the community college funding floor. Restorations are also needed for programs like SEEK, the Black Male Initiative and the Rangel Infrastructure Workforce Training Initiative.

Additionally, we urge lawmakers to support supplemental allocations of the Environmental Bond Act, and to expand the

vision and plans of the New York Power Authority to quickly advance decarbonization at CUNY, SUNY and the public schools. This will protect our communities and serve as a model for what progressive states can do to safeguard our climate and health.

## DANGEROUS ATTACK

The attacks from Washington are alarming and dangerous. We cannot jeopardize the gains this legislature has worked so hard to achieve. Enrollment continues to rise. Now is not the time to remain still. It is time to make a commitment to a New Deal for CUNY.

As enrollment trends up, Albany must increase investment in the faculty and staff CUNY needs to improve retention and student success. Our six-year graduation rate at senior colleges of 62% is well below the national average; our community college three-year graduation rate of 23% also trails the national average.

Too many of our campuses are vastly understaffed, dependent on a patchwork of adjunct faculty and overworked professional staff. Students need more academic advisers and mental health counselors to help keep them on track to graduation. Students who return to CUNY with an Opportunity Promise scholarship will be in particular need of advisement and support. And we cannot improve students' progress to completion without the full-time faculty staffing the courses students need to graduate. CUNY is short 5,000 full-time faculty. The legislature should demand investments in

faculty and staff this year and embrace the New Deal for CUNY five-year plan to end CUNY's staffing crisis. Assistance with the cost of books and transportation will also improve graduation rates.

There are many aspects of CUNY's \$3.4 billion budget request that the union is pleased to support. Highlights include:

- \$7.3 million to expand its nursing and health-care programs.
- \$4.7 million to hire academic and career advisers.
- \$10.3 million for the University's Student Well-Being Initiative.
- \$4.1 million to increase staff in Access, Success and Inclusion services.
- \$3.1 million to help facilitate transfers.

Income inequality is an acute issue that can't be remedied without equitable, redistributive policies. We know that investing in CUNY graduates makes our economy strong. Research is clear that CUNY's return on its investments is significant, bringing billions of dollars to the state. Investing in students, and propelling them into the middle class, is what makes our state strong. We urge you to support the proposals of the Share Our Wealth revenue campaign:

- Increase the top tax rates for those earning over \$5 million and \$25 million by 0.5%. This raises approximately \$1 billion annually.
- Increase the corporate tax rate by 1.75%. The current rate is 7.25%. The new rate would be 9%. This raises approximately \$2 billion a year.
- Make these changes permanent. These taxes at their current rates are about to expire due to sunset provisions. If they end, the state will lose an additional \$6 billion annually. The governor proposes to extend the temporary personal income tax (PIT) high-income surcharge in its current form through 2032.

The Senate and Assembly included these proposals in their one-house budgets last year. They would generate up to \$3 billion annually – funding essential services like childcare, education, health care, transportation and housing, services our students and members rely on.

Related to fiscal equity, we are proud to support Senator John Liu and Assembly Member Zohran Mamdani for sponsoring the REPAIR Act. This visionary legislation would allow NYC to collect revenue from private universities that enjoy more than \$100 million in annual property tax exemptions, and direct these resources to CUNY, which educates hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers.

## UNPRECEDENTED

It is not an exaggeration to say the challenges the University faces from Washington are unprecedented. But you can take action to ensure our state's great public universities not only survive but thrive. CUNY's enrollment continues to climb. This legislature and Governor Hochul have worked to turn back years of austerity budgets; this year's executive budget addresses critical needs in the workforce and sets the stage for 60 tuition-free credits of college.

Students, faculty and staff at CUNY need you to stand with us. Stand with us to defend public higher education from threats from Washington and ensure that CUNY grows, continuing to support the state economy and the contributions that it brings to New York.

## State should stand up for CUNY

# PSC pushes a 'people's budget' for city

By ARI PAUL

Standing on the steps of the Tweed Courthouse in Lower Manhattan with other progressive activists on the frigid morning of February 19, PSC First Vice President Jen Gaboury explained to the crowd that last year's budget fight at the city level was a tough one. Mayor Eric Adams demanded austerity cuts, and while the pushback forced the mayor to restore funding for some agencies, funding for CUNY was not restored.

"He abandoned CUNY," Gaboury said.

## COMMUNITY COLLEGES

While CUNY receives the lion's share of its funding from the state budget, CUNY's community colleges rely heavily on city funding. Mayor Adams's austerity has been devastating for students who rely on these institutions. As the PSC explained in a statement last year, the budget agreement included "a restoration of \$15 million in operating support for community colleges," but did not "offset the mayor's \$95 million previous cuts." According to Gaboury, this has meant there are critical vacancies where staff and faculty positions are not being filled. PSC members have had their workloads explode in some cases; they are doing the work of two or three people. "That's unacceptable," she said.

During a City Council preliminary budget hearing on March 13, PSC President James Davis stressed the need for city investment into CUNY, noting that "since November 2024 enrollment has risen 3%," including "a 6% increase at the community colleges and 4% in new graduate students." Davis demanded a \$140 million city investment in CUNY that would fund vital programs like ASAP, hire more advisors, give stu-

## Movement comes at a pivotal time



PSC First Vice President Jen Gaboury speaks during a rally with community activists.

dents free Metrocards and develop more programs to train health-care professionals.

## SURVIVE AND THRIVE

"This council can take action to ensure our great public university not only survives, but thrives. CUNY's enrollment continues to climb toward pre-pandemic figures; this council has worked to turn back years of austerity budgets and we

still need you," Davis said. "Students, faculty and staff at CUNY need you to stand with us."

Gaboury was participating in a demonstration for the "People's Budget," a coalition of community groups and activists (including the PSC) that demands the mayor agree to a city budget plan later this year that funds education, social services and affordable housing. Zara

Nasir, the executive director of The People's Plan NYC, said that the coalition demands "fully funded education from 3-K to CUNY." Comptroller Brad Lander, the city's second-highest elected official and a candidate for mayor this year, said that the next budget must restore funding to CUNY because "it is our pipeline for social mobility."

Nasir also said that "this is not a normal budget process." The demonstration, which served as a kickoff for the coalition's budget campaign, was held at a chaotic time for Mayor Adams. The Trump administration has fought to have the serious felony charges against him dropped, in exchange for his cooperation with the White House's anti-immigrant crackdown. City Council Speaker Adrienne Adams and State Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins have called for his resignation, and four of his deputy mayors, including his top deputy, have already resigned. Governor Kathy Hochul has been under pressure to use her executive power to remove him as mayor. "We have endured enough scandal, selfishness and embarrassment, all of which distract from the leadership that New Yorkers deserve," said Speaker Adams, who is not related to the mayor, in her call for his resignation. "This is the opposite of public service."

## PRESSURE ON MAYOR

Mayor Adams, who is determined to keep the Trump administration on his side, has resisted this pressure. However, the pending legal case and the understanding that he has offered himself as a lackey to the reactionary Trump administration have drained him of support and friendship in the halls of power. Activists like those in this coalition hope that this will create an opening to press for a progressive budget agreement by this summer.

Shahana Hanif, a city council member from Brooklyn, voiced hope that the coalition could counter the austerity imposed on the city by both the mayor and his allies in the White House. "We're fighting against the Adams/Trump agenda," she said.

# Mayoral candidates come to PSC, address CUNY issues



CUNY Rising Alliance hosted a mayoral forum where candidates in the Democratic Party primary addressed concerns in the CUNY community.

From left to right: Comptroller Brad Lander, Assembly Member Zohran Mamdani, former Comptroller Scott Stringer, State Senator Zellnor Myrie, State Senator Jessica Ramos and former Assembly Member Michael Blake.



# QC members defend right to protest

By CLARION STAFF

More than 100 PSC members and students gathered on February 3 to protest the Queens College administration's interim policy that limits the time, place and number of campus demonstrations, which the union has called a violation of free expression. The new policy, handed down suddenly, forbids indoor demonstrations and requires a request for permission with at least three days' advance notice. The policy also limits protest to five locations on campus.

The new order means business: The administration said violation of these policies was grounds for disciplinary action.

"The interim guidelines violate the spirit of Queens College's oft-repeated motto, *Discimus ut serviamus*: We learn so that we may serve," said Karen Sullivan, co-chair of the Queens College PSC chapter. "They violate Queens College's well-known tradition of fighting injustice and serving our communities – on campus, in Queens, in NYC, nationwide and internationally. Now, more than ever, the Queens College community – students, faculty, staff and administration, must continue to resist forcefully against restrictions on our ability to speak out in support of the most vulnerable among us."

## ORGANIZING

The protest showed that the Queens College community is organizing to defend academic freedom and freedom of expression. The Queens demonstration comes after months of the PSC fighting, and often winning, against administration decisions that have violated free speech and academic freedom on several campuses.

Below are letters from the chapter to and from Anthony Alessandrini, the chair of the union's academic freedom committee, to QC President Frank Wu.

## From the QC Chapter:

We write to ask that you immediately withdraw the "Interim Queens College Guidance Regarding Time, Place, and Manner Regulations for Demonstrations on Campus." As an initial matter, this guidance is unnecessary, as the City University of New York's Henderson Rules already govern the campus conduct it addresses. Indeed, it is debatable whether these restrictions are even permissible under the Henderson Rules.

The interim guidance impermissibly and arbitrarily constrains free speech rights on our campus by requiring advance approval, thus stifling spontaneous demonstrations by Queens College community members, limiting the locations of protests, thus isolating protests from their audiences, and excluding community voices from the decision-making process. Regardless of intent, its provisions would likely have a discriminatory impact, limiting the ability of already marginalized in-

## Admin overreaches with rules



David Gerwin, chair of the secondary education and youth services department at Queens College.

dividuals and groups to make their voices heard. Our campus should be a haven of peaceful expression and academic freedom, not an unwelcoming, repressive institution that dedicates its resources to silencing dissent.

The following addresses just a few of the "time, place and manner regulations" to which we object.

- "Organizers of Demonstrations must . . . complete the Campus Events Request Form, and submit it . . . at least three business days before the planned Demonstration date for consideration."

This requirement for advance approval is antithetical to First Amendment rights and principles of academic freedom. A key component of free speech in general, and as historically exercised at CUNY, is the ability to engage in spontaneous expression, to immediately respond to breaking news and developing events. Requirements for advance permission not only constitute an unacceptable restriction on our First Amendment rights, but also undermine our mission, as they would disempower our students and erode, rather than build, a sense of community. (We also note that the campus events request form link leads to a login page on the City College website.)

- "No Demonstrations are allowed inside College buildings."

The Henderson rules already establish that "a member of the academic community shall not intentionally obstruct or forcibly prevent others from the exercise of their rights. Nor shall s/he interfere with the institution's educational processes or facilities." The added constraint presents a more restrictive limitation and assumes bad faith on the part of the demonstrators.

- "Demonstrators may be requested to remove masks or face coverings, other than those

required as accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act."

This provision is highly problematic and has a high likelihood of having a discriminatory and chilling impact.

Among other things, many individuals have non-ADA, yet equally valid, reasons (including health concerns and religious practices) for covering their faces. These

individuals may be justifiably hesitant to participate in demonstrations for fear of having their other rights (including their First Amendment right to freely practice their religious beliefs) violated.

- "Demonstrations shall not exceed three hours in duration."

This provision could similarly deny protesters a reasonable opportunity to reach their intended audience, as when a demonstration concerns a campus event that lasts more than three hours. Additionally, this rule could be used to deny interested individuals the opportunity to participate in the demonstration. On a diverse and vibrant campus such as ours, different members of our community move through the college at different times, and a demonstration should have the right to reach a wide audience and allow all who wish to join an opportunity to do so.

- "No Demonstrations during the Reading Period or Final Exam Period."

Again, the guidelines impermissibly restrict the ability to engage in spontaneous expression and to respond in a timely manner to breaking news and developing events, if these events happen to occur during the proscribed period. This is particularly problematic, as the Reading Period and Final Exam Period are generally the last opportunity many community members have to act collectively on campus before a lengthy break in which many are absent from campus.

- "The College permits approved Demonstrations at the following locations . . . : Student Union Field 1 Parking Lot, Eastern Quad, Central Quad, Western Quad, Dining Hall Plaza. The College may authorize Demonstrations at other locations on Campus only upon written approval of the Vice President of Student Affairs and Enrollment Management."

This policy contains protests to limited spaces that are isolated from the rest of the campus and would again potentially prevent demonstrators from reaching their intended audience. The Henderson Rules already bar demonstrations from blocking access to college facilities, rendering this further restriction on free speech an excessive overreach.

The interim guidelines are also problematic in that, inter alia, much of the language is excessively vague, which could readily result in unpredictable, inconsistent, inequitable and discriminatory enforcement of these guidelines.

## NOT NEUTRAL

While the guidelines are drafted to appear "content-neutral" on their face, their application is likely to be anything but neutral, disproportionately impacting the very people most likely to demonstrate on campus – those who express viewpoints that the college administration opposes. Moreover, the very process of creating these guidelines runs counter to ensuring an inclusive environment, as key segments of the community (including students, faculty, staff and unions) were excluded from the drafting process.

We also note that your administration introduced this overly broad, restrictive and unnecessary interim policy over winter break, when few community members are on campus and many are not focused on campus developments. This continues a disappointing pattern, similar to the actions last January surrounding the "non-reappointment" of 24 full-time faculty members. However, we remain vigilant.

The interim guidance purports that it is: "intended to ensure a welcoming, safe and inclusive environment that supports academic and social activities at Queens College." In fact, it does the opposite. As noted above, these guidelines not only chill free speech, but also discourage a sense of community on our campus and go against Queens College's long history as a center for activism – a history symbolized by the Chaney-Goodman-Schwerner Clock Tower and celebrated this month at an event honoring the legacy of Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. Across generations, we have created a legacy of peaceful and impactful activism on our campus, and we should all be proud of this history. We recognize that there may be instances where reasonable restrictions on First Amendment rights could be considered necessary to serve an important government purpose. The restrictions set forth in these interim guidelines are neither reasonable nor necessary, and do not serve any legitimate government purpose.

We therefore again demand immediate withdrawal of this interim policy. Any changes to guidance governing expression on campus should be crafted to impose as few limitations as possible, and in consultation with students, faculty, and staff, to ensure that they reflect the college's values of equity and inclusivity, principles of academic freedom and proud legacy of activism.

## From Alessandrini:

I am writing on behalf of the Professional Staff Congress Academic Freedom Committee. Our charge is to defend academic freedom as a professional and contractual right of all CUNY professional staff. Academic freedom is grounded in the faculty or staff member's qualifications for the position as reviewed by his/her peers. It consists of the freedom to teach, research, write and to speak in our capacity as citizens without restraint by the administration.

We join with the Queens College PSC Chapter and other PSC mem-



Faculty, staff and students protest restrictions on campus protests.

bers to demand that you immediately withdraw the “Interim Queens College Guidance Regarding Time, Place and Manner Regulations for Demonstrations on Campus.” As the recent letter from PSC members notes, this guidance is unnecessary, since the City University of New York’s Henderson Rules already govern the campus conduct it addresses. Indeed, it is debatable whether these restrictions are even permissible under the Henderson Rules.

### REPRESSION

Furthermore, given that the opening paragraph states “The Guidance applies to all persons at Queens College, regardless of their affiliation,” it will very clearly have the effect of repressing the contractual academic freedom rights of PSC members, and indeed all members of the Queens College community. We particularly object to the fact that members of the Queens College PSC Chapter were not consulted in the drafting of these guidelines, nor were students and other members of the community whose rights will be affected by these guidelines. These new policies represent a chill on academic freedom, free speech and freedom of assembly that undermines the basic mission of Queens College, and of CUNY as a whole, as an academic institution.

Among other concerns, the interim guidance impermissibly and arbitrarily constrains free speech rights on campus by stifling spontaneous demonstrations by Queens College community members – including PSC members – and by isolating protests from their audiences, thus excluding community voices from the decision-making process. Regardless of intent, its provisions would likely have a discriminatory impact, limiting the ability of individuals and groups to make their voices heard.

In tandem with other PSC members, we offer the following objections in particular to the “time, place and manner regulations”:

- *In the most general sense, a key component of free speech and academic freedom is the ability to engage in spontaneous expression, to immediately respond to breaking news and developing events. Requirements for advance permission constitute an unacceptable restriction on PSC members’ First Amendment and academic freedom rights.*

- *“No Demonstrations are allowed inside College buildings.” This provision could in many instances deny protesters a reasonable opportunity to reach their intended audience, who may be indoors. Moreover, this policy is impermissibly discriminatory against individuals who, for a variety of reasons, cannot fully participate in an event that is held exclusively outdoors. During inclement weather, this provision could stop demonstrations entirely. Additionally, the vague description of “demonstrations” precludes any number of activities that PSC members may deem to be of academic and intellectual value, thus in effect precluding them from doing our work as public educators.*



Paul Frangipane

Media from around the city covered the campus protest.

- *“Demonstrations shall not exceed three hours in duration.” This provision could similarly deny protesters a reasonable opportunity to reach their intended audience, as when a demonstration concerns a campus event that lasts more than three hours. Additionally, this rule could be used to deny interested individuals the opportunity to participate in the demonstration. A demonstration should have the right to reach a wide audience and allow all who wish to join an opportunity to do so.*

- *“The College permits approved Demonstrations at the following locations, unless another party has previously reserved the space: Student Union Field 1 Parking Lot, Eastern Quad, Central Quad, Western Quad, Dining Hall Plaza. The College may authorize Demonstrations at other locations on Campus on-*

*ly upon written approval of the Vice President of Student Affairs and Enrollment Management.” The Henderson Rules already bar demonstrations from blocking access to college facilities, rendering this further restriction on free speech completely unnecessary. Moreover, this policy contains protests within small spaces that are isolated from the rest of the campus and would again potentially prevent demonstrators from reaching their intended audience.*

### MASKING ISSUE

Our committee also objects to the ban on protests during finals week, and to asking people to remove a face mask unless they have approved accommodations. The latter point is particularly important, given the PSC’s insistence upon making certain that members who have health

conditions be able to work in a safe environment that allows them to protect their health. Additionally, the interim policy’s language around incitement, lawless action, defamation, harassment, threats, damage to college property and “unauthorized markings or attachments” is excessively vague, open to interpretation and invites overreach by CUNY management.

While all of these restrictions are drafted to appear “content-neutral” on their face, their application is likely to be anything but neutral, disproportionately impacting the very people, including PSC members, who are most likely to demonstrate on campus – those who express viewpoints that the college administration opposes. Moreover, the very process of creating these guidelines runs counter to ensuring an inclusive environment, as key segments of the college community

(including students, faculty, staff and unions) were excluded from the drafting process.

The interim guidance purports that it is “intended to ensure a welcoming, safe and inclusive environment that supports academic and social activities at Queens College.” In fact, it does the opposite. As noted above, these guidelines chill academic freedom and free speech in a manner that undermines both the academic mission of Queens College and the contractual academic freedom rights of PSC members. We therefore demand the immediate withdrawal of this interim policy. Any subsequent changes to guidance governing expression on campus, if and when these are deemed by the Queens College community to be necessary, should be crafted in the least restrictive way possible, and in consultation with students, faculty and staff – and, in particular, with members of the Queens College PSC Chapter.

**PSC leads vital protest**

### INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE

# A local thinking globally

By IMMANUEL NESS, CORINNA MULLIN, JEANNETTE GRAULAU and ZHUN XU

Readers of the Clarion may not know of the existence of the International Committee. Formed in 2000 as an anti-war committee, for years it has sought to inform our members about issues facing workers around the world. The committee consists of PSC members with expertise in various areas of the world, from Latin America to China to the Middle East and Africa. But why would a union representing the faculty and staff of CUNY need an international committee?

Now more than ever the union needs to see its work in the context of a complex international situation which affects us as academic workers, New Yorkers and as people living in the United States. The current US-backed genocide in Gaza, expanding quickly into a broader war on West Asia, the war in Ukraine, ecological devastation caused in large part by Global North industrialization and unjust economic

policies impacting communities across the Americas, Asia and Africa, are global developments that impact global South workers. They also have a direct impact upon our CUNY community, as many of our students, faculty and staff come from the most impacted regions. Additionally, solidarity is at the heart of trade unionism, so an attack on Global South workers is an attack on all workers. We have a duty to educate ourselves and advocate in solidarity with Global South workers.

### RESOLUTIONS

The IC has successfully introduced resolutions – often with other union committees – to the Delegate Assembly, from demanding an end to the war in Iraq (2005) to defending trade unions in Haiti (2010), from standing in solidarity with the Palestinian people (2021) and demanding an end to the deadly blockade on Cuba (2022), to holding a major retirement fund, TIAA-CREF, responsible for its role in destroying the Brazilian rainforest (2016).

We have also drafted letters of solidarity sent by our union leadership to our union siblings

facing repression in places like Colombia, the Philippines and Turkey.

We are obligated to consider and critique the foreign policy of the national union that we belong to and financially support, the American Federation of Teachers, which has too often supported U.S. interventions and militarism. We see it as our obligation, and our privilege, to educate ourselves and raise awareness among our fellow union members of pressing global issues. Through monthly meetings and occasional forums we bring to bear our respective experience and knowledge on the international issues confronting us as a union. We hope you will consider joining us.

*Immanuel Ness is a professor of political science at Brooklyn College, Corinna Mullin is an adjunct assistant professor of political science at John Jay College, Jeannette Graulau is an associate professor of political science at Lehman College and Zhun Xu is an associate professor of economics at John Jay College. They are the steering committee members of the PSC International Committee.*

# Demanding 'fair share'

By ARI PAUL

Erin Lawson, the campaign director for New Yorkers for Higher Education Justice, often asks New York City undergraduate students who they think are some of the biggest landowners in the city. They might say “the Catholic Church, Donald Trump or Goldman Sachs,” she said, but she always tells them that on the top 10 list are New York University and Columbia University. That news is often met, she said, with “a look of betrayal on their faces, as if they are saying, ‘How could this possibly happen?’”

Lawson was speaking at an event at the CUNY School of Law last November to promote the REPAIR Act (Repeal Egregious Property Accumulation and Invest it Right), a state bill backed by the PSC that would, according to a program from the event, “end property tax exemptions for two of the biggest landowners in the city: Columbia University and NYU” and reinvest that money into CUNY, in order to repair campuses, lower or even eliminate tuition and hire more faculty and staff. The event was put on by the CUNY Law and Political Economy Collective and the NYC Union of Students.

## BIG MONEY

The PSC and its allies estimate that the tax-exempt status of these real-estate giants results in \$300 million in unrealized revenue to the state every year. The pamphlet went on: “Columbia (which, with a \$13.64 billion endowment, is basically just a hedge fund with a university attached) re-

## Key PSC legislation



Susan Kang, associate professor of political science at John Jay College.

ceives \$182 million in yearly tax exemptions...NYU, meanwhile, receives \$145 million each year in property tax exemptions.”

The bill is coauthored by Assembly Member Zohran Mamdani and Senator John Liu, both of Queens. At the School of Law event, panelists including Mamdani said that the push for this bill is more than just a campaign for a particular piece of legislation, but about building a broad-based, grassroots movement of students, union members and community allies who are urging the city and state to rethink tax equity.

For Johanna Von Maack, a REPAIR Act organizer and undergraduate at Hunter College who spoke at the event, this means creating a movement with students at the helm. “We need to show students that they have a say in this movement,” she said. “We need a mass movement of students.”

Mamdani, who has also announced his candidacy for mayor in 2025, agreed that winning the bill’s passage in Albany was only part of the solution, which he believed was changing the political narrative. “Our theory of this campaign

is by winning it in public,” he said. “The status quo, it is truly untenable and unbelievable.”

Susan Kang, an associate professor of political science at John Jay College and a member of the PSC’s executive council, said that the movement behind the bill aims to frame CUNY not just as a school that would reap the benefits of this legislation, but a public good that all New Yorkers benefit from, despite it being historically underfunded by the city and state. “It’s the same as public infrastructure,” Kang said, adding of the real-estate-rich private universities: “It’s their obligation to pay into this.”

## WORKING CLASS

The fact is, panelists said, CUNY is the university for the city’s working class. We all benefit from a fully-funded public university, as graduates go on to become teachers, nurses and other public servants whom the entire city needs. Public institutions depend on progressive taxation, and, as Lawson pointed out, Columbia’s endowment is almost as big as the GDP of Moldova. The city expects Tishman Speyer and Related Companies to share the wealth of their real-estate revenue, and REPAIR Act organizers want to add Columbia and NYU to that list.

The event comes after weeks of training programs led by Lawson and other student organizers, where dozens of students from CUNY, NYU and Columbia met to strategize on ways to promote the REPAIR Act. Energy for the movement is high at all three universities, organizers said. Sebastian Leon Martinez, a REPAIR Act organizer and undergraduate at NYU, said that living in Harlem as a child, he saw firsthand how Columbia expanded its footprint in upper Manhattan, showing

how much lifting the tax exemption was needed. Von Maack noted that CUNY students see every day how austerity is shortchanging and underserving students, from “broken-down classrooms” to the sight of overworked “professors running from one classroom to another.”

Passage of the bill is not without its challenges. Because the tax exemption for these schools is enshrined in the state constitution, panelists noted, removing it and funneling the money into CUNY would need more than a simple vote and the signature of the governor: It would require a process of multiple rounds of legislative approval in order to change the constitution.

And the movement for the REPAIR Act expects resistance. For example, Mamdani said that he expects opponents to make “an attempt to paint this as an attack on nonprofits at large,” which he said would be a “bad-faith argument.”

## RESPONSE

In fact, in response to the introduction of the REPAIR Act, NYU spokesman John Beckman said that “to choose two charitable, nonprofit organizations out of the thousands in the state and compel them to be treated like for-profit entities certainly strikes us as misguided and unfair.”

But REPAIR Act organizers note that the bill’s entire purpose is to create some sort of balance between the haves in the city’s higher education world – private universities with real-estate wealth and tuition prices that are prohibitively expensive for the working class – and the have-nots: underfunded CUNY campuses. The panelists at the School of Law event believed that this vision would win over the miserly voices of opposition.

# Confronting the crisis

Continued from page 3

government support as leverage to extract a political price: DEI attacks, Title VI threats, endowment taxes, accreditation tampering.

## DANGEROUS

The cuts to funding for science, health and medical research endanger us all and must be understood as an attack on knowledge itself. They are an affront to the extraordinary legacy of university and hospital research in this country, the reason so many scholars and students want to come to the U.S. Capping the NIH indirect cost reimbursement at 15 percent, for example, means many universities and hospitals will lose hundreds of millions of dollars. Our CUNY colleges are not exempt. CUNY administrators reported in March that 24 “stop work” orders had been issued for federal grants, placing \$21.7 million at risk. The CUNY Research Foundation (RF) could also be affected, even as PSC members in the RF Field Unit chapters are seeking to complete negotiations on a new contract. Moreover, the threats to DEI programming and messaging are intended to roll back progress on civil rights and delegitimize entire areas of research and study. The rejoinder that the attorneys general of Illinois, Massachusetts and New York issued to the February 14 “Dear Colleague” letter from the Department of Education main-

tained that DEI programming is not illegal and can continue. But the impact is already underway, even at CUNY, where, for example, the Queens College Inclusive Excellence Initiative was recently canceled, choking off a multi-year, half-million dollar grant to improve outcomes for underrepresented students in STEM fields.

## COUNTER-NARRATIVE

Our counter-narrative must be unapologetic. We must provide a clear account of what we do and why, and reassert the role of higher education in creating an informed public, advancing new knowledge and skills, and fostering social mobility. The fundamental goals of higher education are not elitist; the right uses resentment over skyrocketing tuition and talking points about campus radicalism to control teaching, learning, and research and stoke a culture war. This counter-narrative must also be forcefully articulated by our administrators. They should also insist that students deserve space to explore the truth of the history of our country and institutions; the impact of structural racism, colonialism, misogyny and other inequities that continue to shape our present; and room to create knowledge that does not sugarcoat or celebrate the U.S. unequivocally, the litmus test applied by the Trump administration.

What can PSC members do? To be effec-

tive, we should begin by building PSC membership and activism in our local chapters, engaging new and long-serving colleagues alike. PSC members can also participate in one of several working groups and union committees. You can hold teach-ins on your campuses to amplify not only the threats being posed by the Trump administration, but also the vital work contribution that our students, faculty and staff make to the community. You can contact federal and state legislators, including during What We Want Wednesdays, the PSC’s new weekly lunch-time phone zap action. You can tell your individual and collective stories, including in

op-eds and on social media. And you can help the PSC build our coalitions by bringing the issues we confront at CUNY into your conversations with friends, coworkers and members of other unions.

## WORKING

The importance of this final point about coalition-building cannot be overstated. Alone, our union can only do so much. Together with affiliates at the state and national level, our power and voice are amplified. But the nature and extent of the current threat is such that only a broad, sustained network of aligned unions and committed organizations will confront it effectively and be able to go on offense, too. The new regime of techno-fascism that Trump and Musk have enabled is not invulnerable. Taking on the elites that they represent will require strategic application of collective power and overcoming our aversion to risks. The networks we build need to be “capable of arresting and reversing the unfolding destruction of both our democracy and our movement,” as organizer Stephen Lerner recently wrote. “Because the full consequences of the current decimation of the federal government’s most vital services will not be felt for months or even years, those who will be adversely impacted – the vast majority of the country – have not yet been drawn into the fight. We must reach them and begin to organize them around a program of active resistance.” First, however, we must organize ourselves! I believe we can do it.



PSC at a rally against federal cuts.

# Resisting the attack on academic freedom

By ARI PAUL

The governor and the CUNY chancellor have used a hammer against academic freedom at CUNY. The union is fighting back, and it's part of a broader campaign to preserve academic freedom at the university.

On February 25, Governor Kathy Hochul demanded that Hunter College remove a job posting for a faculty member in Palestine studies. "Hochul said the posting's use of the words 'settler colonialism,' 'genocide' and 'apartheid' amounted to antisemitic attacks and ordered CUNY to 'immediately remove' the posting," reported Inside Higher Ed, which added that a "few hours later, CUNY complied, and system chancellor Félix Matos Rodríguez echoed Hochul's criticisms of the posting."

There's a lot of insanity going on here: Imagine if a posting for a Tibetan studies faculty member had to be removed because discussion of the takeover of Tibet was "anti-Chinese," or any Armenian scholarship that mentioned the Armenian genocide was "anti-Turkish." In 2013, when anti-academic-freedom activists wanted to boot a panel discussing an economic boycott of Israel from Brooklyn College, then-mayor Michael Bloomberg, hardly a critic of Israel, said, "If you want to go to a university where the government decides what kind of subjects are fit for discussion, I suggest you apply to a school in North Korea."

The University's and state's current leaders aren't quite as enlightened as the former Republican mayor. The executive committee of the Hunter College PSC chapter wrote a strongly worded letter to the governor and chancellor in response.

## CUNY MISSION

It said, "Governor Hochul, while Hunter is financially under the purview of New York State, there are important differences between the role of a public institution of higher education and other state agencies. Unlike those other agencies, CUNY's mission is not to enact the political priorities of the state legislature or the governor's office. Our mandate is to educate our students in the disciplines in which we have training and expertise. Research and teaching must be independent of governmental interference in order to expand understanding of our world, even if that understanding is controversial or uncomfortable, or runs counter to the political preferences of those in power."

The letter continued, "Chancellor Matos Rodríguez, your support of the governor's decision is equally alarming. Your charge as chancellor is to advocate for the University and the various colleges. As a university administrator and as a scholar yourself, you should be the guardian of

## Don't turn New York into Florida: PSC



A PSC "know your rights" panel on academic freedom.

our academic freedom. Instead you praised the move to pull these two job announcements. We are especially dismayed by your statement that the CUNY administration "find[s] this language divisive, polarizing and inappropriate." As a scholar of Puerto Rico's colonial history, a former member of Hunter's faculty and former director of the Hunter College Center for Puerto Rican Studies (Centro), you surely know how crucial the study and teaching of underrepresented voices is."

This story made headlines around the country because it's part of a broader problem. Since October of 2023, the PSC has fought against pressure from college administrations and others to cancel scholarly

events about Palestinian issues that are critical of Israel. Universities are meant to host a wide range of viewpoints, and the PSC fights to preserve that openness at CUNY. Job postings at CUNY are also squarely the purview of the shared governance process by which academic departments and college administrators identify priority hiring areas. That commitment to shared governance cannot be maintained if elected officials interfere.

For years, academic unionists have looked in horror at the attack on higher education in red states like Florida, where anti-diversity management has taken a sledgehammer to the curriculum. Other states have removed tenure from their university systems.

## Hunter College and beyond

## Protecting our faculty members

campuses to intimidate faculty members.

In his message, Davis advised that: "If your college administration requests a meeting to discuss a complaint lodged against you through the CUNY Discrimination and Retaliation Reporting Portal, you have rights under the law and CUNY policy.

- If you are a faculty member or a member of the instructional staff engaged in teaching, research, or the selection of instructional materials, you have academic freedom.
- The University's Policy on Equal Opportunity and Non-Discrimination affirms, "This policy shall not be interpreted so as to constitute interference with academic freedom" (Section III).

CUNY faculty have often felt that New York, a reliably blue state, wouldn't succumb to right-wing pressure. But the governor's attack and other related attempts to silence academic thought on campuses indicate the influence of this country's McCarthyist sentiment on our governor.

The upheaval at Hunter has come as universities around the country are battling the Trump administration's campaign against campus dissent against U.S. foreign policy. The Trump administration canceled \$400 million in grants and contracts with Columbia University in retaliation for last year's protests against Israel's military assault on Gaza. The administration has said that more federal attacks against educational institutions should be

expected and listed 60 universities to target.

In his own letter to the governor and chancellor about the Hunter job posting, Davis said, "The 'divisive concepts' standard for universities is something devised in Florida that shouldn't be exported to New York."

"CUNY faculty are being investigated when a student objects to a classroom topic or a choice of words," he said. "What will be next on the list of unacceptable topics?"

He added, "Students, faculty and staff have a right to feel safe, welcome and respected at CUNY, regardless of their religion, ethnicity or identity. Rigorous education means sometimes engaging with uncomfortable ideas and having disagreements. One of CUNY's great strengths is its diversity – of peoples, cultures and ideas. We are all here to be challenged and interact with people who may not share our backgrounds or opinions."

## UNIVERSITY ACTION

Faculty from around the University have written in solidarity with Hunter faculty. A letter to the chancellor and governor from the Queensborough Community College academic freedom committee, faculty executive committee and PSC chapter executive committee blasted the cancellation of the post.

"As educators, we take exception to Governor Hochul's characterization of the announcement of these hires as examples of antisemitism," the letter said. "Such a characterization exemplifies what CUNY is in part dedicated to mitigate against, as it appears to rest on assumptions that the study of history is in part directed to address. The assumption that studying the history, culture and arts of Palestine from a Palestinian perspective is by definition antisemitic reduces Palestinian experience only to its relationship to Israel. Most damaging, it equates critical assessment of Israeli policy towards Palestine with antisemitism."

The *Nation* reported that faculty were determined to have a modified version of the job posting relisted.

# Davis to faculty: Know your rights

By CLARION STAFF

PSC President James Davis is urging faculty members to know their rights when it comes to defending themselves against complaints lodged against them through the discrimination and retaliation reporting portal.

"The CUNY Portal is publicly available and complaints may be submitted anonymously or even orchestrated through outside actors, making it susceptible to abuse," he said in a message to members. "Despite the stated intention to protect members of our academic community from harassment and a hostile work and learning environment, portal complaints can operate to chill constitutionally protected speech."

The Trump administration, he said, is using the same tools meant to preserve inclusivity to create a repressive sense of fear on college

## A repressive wave of fear

- The Preamble to the PSC-CUNY collective bargaining agreement expresses the shared commitment of the parties to academic freedom.
- The CUNY administration and Board of Trustees have upheld the AAUP principles of academic freedom on multiple occasions, starting in 1946.
- You are entitled to receive a summary of a complaint filed against you prior to a meeting with the administration about the complaint.
- New York State public employees have "Weingarten rights" – that is the right to representation by the union whenever it reasonably appears that the employee may be the subject of a potential disciplinary action.
- This includes formal disciplinary proceedings, as well as any

other meeting, such as a fact-finding or investigatory meeting, where the result of such a meeting could be the issuance of discipline.

- This includes when any supervisor asks you questions to obtain information which could be used as a basis for discipline; or asks an employee to defend or explain her or his conduct. You are advised to request union representation.
- You are responsible for asserting your right to union representation. Management is under no legal requirement to inform you of your rights or to provide notice to the PSC without you asking.
- Not every complaint submitted through the CUNY Discrimination and Retaliation Reporting Portal is investigated as a violation of Title VI (or of another provision of the Civil Rights Act). The fact of a complaint does not in itself substantiate an alleged Title VI violation."

# Science faculty rally to defend funding

By ARI PAUL

Lucas Parra, a professor of biomedical engineering at City College, looked out over the more than 1,000 demonstrators in Washington Square Park on March 7, demanding a reversal of the Trump administration cuts and proposed cuts to federal agencies and National Institutes of Health funding to universities. The drivers of innovation in the United States, Parra told the crowd, were not in pharmaceutical company laboratories or in other for-profit corporations.

“The magic happens at teaching hospitals and research institutions,” he said to the crowd’s applause, adding that these institutions allow scientists and researchers “the space and time to do more things.”

## LAYOFFS

Parra was one of many CUNY science faculty and PSC members who came to the demonstration, rallying with scientists, academics and supporters from universities, hospitals and other institutions around the city. The Trump administration, through its newly created Department of Government Efficiency, has laid off staff at vital scientific and environmental agencies.

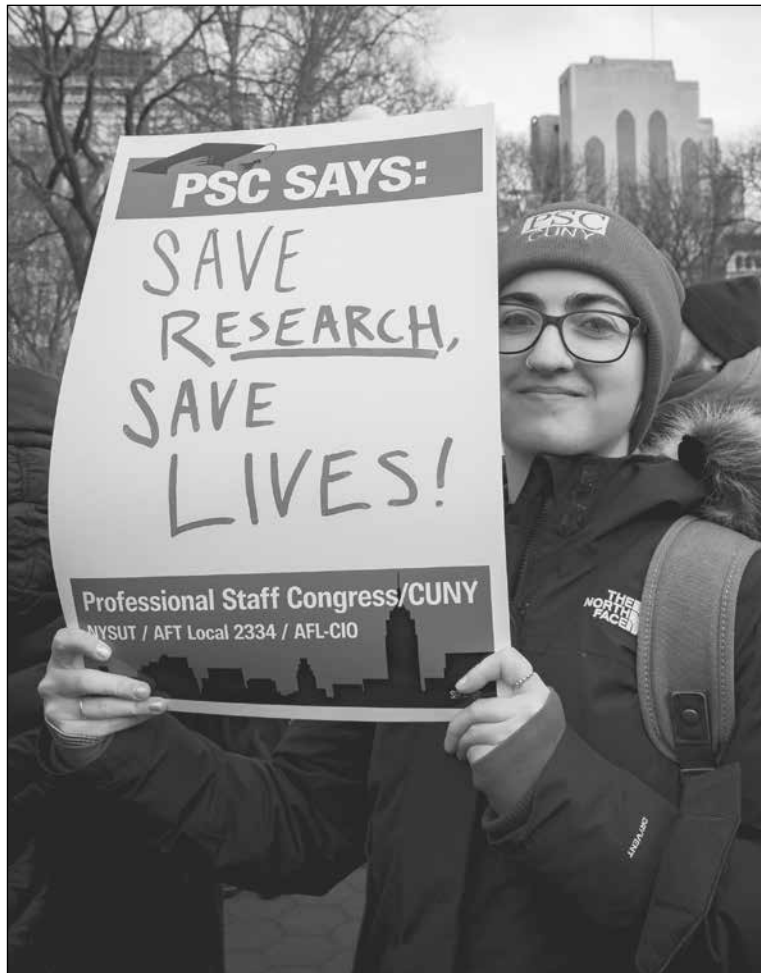
The resistance to the destruction has been constant and has had some success. A day before the rally a federal judge had “blocked the Trump administration from drastically cutting medical research funding that many scientists say will endanger patients and cost jobs,” the Associated Press reported, noting that “a new National Institutes of Health policy would strip research groups of hundreds of millions of dollars to cover so-called indirect expenses of studying Alzheimer’s, cancer, heart disease and a host of other illnesses – anything from clinical trials of new treatments to basic lab research that is the foundation for discoveries.”

But despite this judicial reprieve, the attack on scientific research has been unending, as the administration has promised deep cuts. “Almost immediately after being sworn in as president... Trump put his signature to piles of executive orders canceling or freezing tens of billions of dollars in funding for research and international assistance, and putting the seal on thousands of layoffs,” reported *Nature*. “Orwellian restrictions have been placed on research, including bans on studies that mention particular words relating to sex and gender, race, disability and other protected characteristics.”

## CUNY IMPACTED

This is the environment PSC members are fighting against. “They’re not just coming for efficiency,” PSC President James Davis told the crowd in Washington Square Park. “They’re coming after tens of millions of dollars that go to the City University of New York, that help to fund the science research that our graduate students are leading, that

## Public health, research at risk



PSC members support federal science funding.

our undergraduate students are studying.”

For Srishti Bose, a PhD student at the Graduate Center studying neuroscience, all scientific disciplines are connected to one another. Funding for her work could help psychological and sociological research into drug addiction, which could alleviate inequality and general social suffering, she said. “The attacks on research affect everyone: This is public health. This spreads out to other areas of science. All science is for the public good.”

## PUBLIC SERVICE

Kyle McDonald, a professor of earth and atmospheric sciences at City College, said that a student in his program worked years to attain a PhD, eventually became a consultant at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and was only recently brought on as a full employee. Then the new Trump administration fired her for no reason other than its desire to cut federal spending, McDonald said.

“That is just one story,” he said. “These people are there because they believe in the work. It’s public service.”

He also worried that these cuts would result in a “brain drain” in American society, noting that a colleague in Montreal told him that his Canadian institution is seeing a sudden increase in the number of job applications from American scientists. He also worried that a lack of scientific funding would impede

new medical advances, a fear he took personally. “I’m a cancer survivor because of science,” McDonald said.

Denis Nash, a distinguished professor at the Graduate School of Public Health & Health Policy and the executive director of the CUNY Institute for Implementation Science in Population Health, said, “The cuts and funding stagnation at NIH are already having a chilling effect on research at CUNY. As a public university, we rely heavily on federal grants to support our research, train students and generate new scientific knowledge. With existing grants from NIH, CDC and USAID threatened, critical research gets disrupted, studies that thousands of volunteers have signed up for will be paused or worse, and CUNY researchers will have more difficulty winning and sustaining long-term projects. This disproportionately affects early-career scholars, who have fewer alternative funding sources, and those studying health disparities – an area where CUNY researchers and scholars have historically made significant contributions. If these cuts continue, it will mean fewer opportunities for students to engage in cutting-edge research projects, studies and datasets, and it will also mean fewer scientific breakthroughs and a diminished ability to address pressing public health challenges.”

Nash noted that funding cuts to CUNY scholars negatively impact the community in general, saying, “When research funding declines, we lose the ability to study and re-

spond to public health crises, from infectious diseases to environmental health threats. NIH- and CDC-supported studies at CUNY have directly informed policy and health-care interventions, particularly for marginalized communities. Cuts to research funding mean fewer studies on health disparities, less innovation in health-care delivery and lost opportunities to train the next generation of public health scientists and health-care leaders. Ultimately, these cuts don’t just hurt CUNY – they hurt the public who rely on evidence-based solutions to pressing health challenges.”

Nash lamented that while his institution has been supportive of faculty at this critical time, CUNY’s top leadership has not been a part of the pushback.

“Unfortunately, this silence is not unique to CUNY – it reflects a broader pattern across U.S. universities, including university leadership, administrators and even faculty. Some may believe staying quiet will allow them to ‘fly under the radar,’ but that is a miscalculation. Academia is under siege, and if we do not band together to speak out and defend the role of science and scholarship, we risk irreparable damage,” he said. “CUNY leadership, including Central administration, college presidents and faculty, would ideally step into thought leadership roles, raise awareness and create space for meaningful discussions across NYC. To lead the way. If CUNY doesn’t take a stand, who will? This moment requires all hands on deck.”

Other speakers addressed the fact that these grants do incredible good for the public in New York beyond just scientific work. For example, Josh Dubnau, a professor of neurobiology and behavior at Stony

Brook University, said, “My own lab is funded by grants from the NIH to support our research into causes of ALS and Alzheimer’s. These grants support the salaries and training of five PhD candidates, three postdoctoral scientists, one technician and two undergraduates. The additional so-called ‘indirect costs’ that the NIH

## CUNY depends on research funding

and other federal agencies provide to support the overhead of research supports the jobs of plumbers, electricians, carpenters, HVAC experts, admin assistants, janitors and others. Funding from just the NIH to New York creates 20,000 jobs.”

Kelly Karst, a library faculty member at Brooklyn College, attended the rally because she believed that any cuts in funding would hurt BC’s student body. “Our students rely on research,” she said. “What will our students do? How will they continue the scholarly conversation?”

## DEFENDING KNOWLEDGE

While scientists from private institutions spoke eloquently about the need for federal investment in scientific and medical research, Karst believed the cuts would be devastating to a place like CUNY, which is meant to serve New York City’s working class. “It’s just further gatekeeping,” she said, noting that the system has been systematically underfunded over the decades. “We can’t take one more cut.”

Bose, speaking to the crowd, noted that the scientists rallying in Washington Square Park weren’t just defending funding for their jobs or their institutions, but were rallying for investments in public health and for advancements that could help society as a whole.

“You’re showing up for the United States of America,” she said.



Srishti Bose, who studies neuroscience at the Graduate Center.

# Union Designed Child Care Subsidy Program for Working Parents in NYC

**PSC members** may be eligible for a subsidized childcare benefit that is provided through the Child Care Facilitated Enrollment Project. This funding can be used to help pay for various types of childcare providers and can save parents an average of \$15,000-\$18,000 per year (per child) in childcare expenses.

The program, developed by New York Union Child Care Coalition, a committee of the NYC Central Labor Council (NYCLC), aims to make quality childcare more affordable for families in New York City with children up to 13 years of age.

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Parents must be working, live in New York City and meet income restrictions (e.g., under \$108,636 for a family of four).

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To learn more about the subsidy, visit:  
[nycclc.org/news/new-york-union-child-care-coalition-enrollment](https://nycclc.org/news/new-york-union-child-care-coalition-enrollment).



## 15-MINUTE ACTIVIST

### “What We Want” Wednesdays

Each Wednesday, the PSC is making a coordinated effort to join our voices together in advocacy for what we want. We'll offer fast, simple opportunities to take impactful political action together.

While calling legislators, signing petitions and speaking out online may feel like small actions, research and experience shows they can have big impacts. By engaging with these easy actions collectively, through our union, you can multiply your impact significantly.

Check in at the PSC's website, on social media and in your email inboxes each week for our calls to action, and get involved.

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# New contract in effect, major gains for all

By CLARION STAFF

In January, PSC members ratified a new collective bargaining agreement with management that won 90% approval of those voting. The contract was overwhelmingly advanced to a membership ratification vote by the delegates in December.

What is exceptional about this contract—in addition to it being the result of a hard-fought struggle involving numerous protests against CUNY management's intransigence – is that it includes not just economic gains for all PSC members, but provides new economic gains, professional development and new rights for lecturers, non-teaching members and CLIP and CUNY Start.

#### ECONOMIC GAINS

- Across-the-board salary increases of 13.4% over the course of the contract, with higher increases for several titles
  - 3.0% on 3/1/23
  - 3.0% on 4/1/24
  - 3.25% on 9/1/25
  - 3.5% on 9/1/26
- Retroactive pay beginning from March 1, 2023, day one of the contract
- A ratification bonus for all full-time employees (\$3,000) and part-time employees (pro rata) who are on payroll
- Additional equity raises above and beyond across-the-board raises for faculty and professional staff in the College Laboratory Technician series, Assistants to HEO, and CLIP and CUNY Start Instructors
- Teaching adjunct salary increase to a minimum of \$7,100 per 3-contact-hour course and \$9,467 per 4-contact-hour course, professionalization of teaching adjunct role and increases to the non-teaching adjunct hourly rate
- Graduate Assistant minimum salary increases totaling 29.2% for Grad A and 43.6% for Grad B, along with significant raises for the C and D titles

## A historic agreement for the PSC



Paul Frangipane

The Delegate Assembly voting to send the agreement to the full membership, which ratified the contract.

- Additional \$1,250 salary increases for members who are on the top step of a salary schedule who are not already receiving an equity raise greater than \$1,250, effective March 1, 2027

#### RIGHTS AND BENEFITS

Member rights and benefits have been enhanced in the proposed contract. They include:

- With every promotion and reclassification, a raise of at least one step on the new salary schedule
- Paid parental leave program expanded from 8 weeks to 12 weeks, and inclusion of foster parents, effective March 1, 2025
- A dedicated Health & Safety labor-management committee at every CUNY college
- Workload credit for adjuncts teaching “jumbo” classes equivalent to that of full-time faculty in the department or college
- CLIP and CUNY Start instructor benefit enhancements and pilot 2-year job security program for

long-serving instructors starting Fall 2025

- SEEK Directors and College Discovery Directors will join the PSC bargaining unit
- Department Chairs may carry over up to \$6,000 of unused contractual research funds for up to four years after returning to the department faculty
- Outsourcing of teaching faculty/instructors of record to individuals outside of the instructional staff or to artificial intelligence is prohibited
- For the first time, HEO-series titles who have accumulated compensatory time may, through a defined process, either utilize the time or, by mutual agreement, receive pay for the extra hours worked
- The remote work program continues pursuant to the Remote Work Agreement, but additional Remote Work provisions were not possible in the contract
- \$4 million additional annual contribution to the PSC-CUNY

Welfare Fund to maintain and enhance participants' supplemental benefits

#### PROFESSIONAL ADVANCEMENT

Professional advancement was a priority that members expressed, and we made progress:

- A promotional path for full-time Lecturers (including Doctoral schedule) to become Senior Lecturers, and, effective September 1, 2026, a \$2,500 payment upon attaining Certificate of Continuous Employment
- PSC-CUNY Awards maximum award increased to \$7,000 and \$15,000, depending on category of application
- Post-tenure reassigned time pilot program for tenured Assistant and Associate Professors to pursue scholarship
- CLT and Senior CLT at the top salary step will be eligible for a \$2,500 Salary Assignment Differential
- HEO Assistants will be eligible for Advanced Degree Differentials, effective March 1, 2027
- HEOs who request reclassification will know that there is a PSC-appointed HEO on their college's HEO Committee and that their request will get a response within 90 days
- A labor-management commit-

tee will consult on amending the Instructional Staff Code of Practice to clarify the CLT promotion procedure

- Hunter College Campus Schools sabbaticals policy and Service Credit policy improved

#### LABOR-MANAGEMENT COMMITTEES FOR CONTINUED DISCUSSION

There are several issues around which we did not find agreement with CUNY administration, but instead secured a commitment to continue discussions under the new contract. These include:

- Graduate Assistant terms and conditions of employment
- Educational Opportunity Center workload
- Medical school faculty terms and conditions of employment
- Educational Technology
- Including adjuncts on paid parental leave
- Procedures around job abandonment and unpaid leave of over a year
- Library faculty reassigned time
- Clinical professor and distinguished lecturer terms and conditions of employment
- Enhanced opportunities for members in the CLT and Senior CLT titles to receive promotions



Paul Frangipane

Members speak out in favor of the new collective bargaining agreement.