

Stronger union, better future

Dues FAQs

Rulisa Galloway-Perry
Higher Education Officer
John Jay



Why are PSC members voting to increase our dues?

Our union is strong, but it should be even stronger. Protecting our rights and benefits takes resources, and the union must adapt to mounting threats and the rising costs of doing this critical work. The proposed dues increase will provide the tools to win at the bargaining table and in our workplaces in the years to come.

What specifically will the dues increase go toward?

The dues increase will help the union to:

- Enhance organizing in support of stronger contracts and defense of our rights and benefits
- Strengthen contract enforcement, legal support, and member representation
- Expand health and pension benefit advisement
- Upgrade data management to improve grievance and legal procedures and better support bargaining teams
- Recruit new members and improve responsiveness and outreach to current members
- Fortify our local while supporting critical state and national campaigns of our labor affiliates
- Build our financial reserves to prepare for the fights ahead

How do we currently use our dues money?

The PSC spends dues on salaries and benefits for union staff, member services, contract enforcement, rent and operating costs, and campaigns to win funding for CUNY. PSC principal officers' salaries are paid by CUNY. Every dues dollar goes to improve member salaries, benefits and work lives, to enforce our rights, amplify our voices, and defend public education and the public good. Dues cannot be used for electoral politics; the voluntary PSC/CUNY Action Fund supports that work.

"Let's make our union stronger now and in the future, so we can win better raises, more resources for professional development, better benefits to help our families, and more."

What would the dues increase mean for my paycheck?

A union with the resources to win stronger contracts will mean increases to all of our paychecks. Across-the-board raises, additional equity raises, pension contribution reductions, and other gains have already more than offset the proposed increase. We can fight for, and win, even more with expanded capacity.

Our progressive dues structure won't change; those who earn more pay more. For full-timers, the dues increase would be from 1.05% to 1.30%, about the cost of a fancy coffee or a sandwich per pay period, depending on title and salary step. For a HEO Assistant on the fourth step, it would be \$7 per pay check. For a full Professor on the top step, it would be \$16. The increase would be smaller for adjuncts and part-timers, from 1.00% to 1.15%, just \$11 per course/semester for an Adjunct Lecturer and \$13 per course/semester for an Adjunct Professor. Multiply the gross pay on your pay stub by 0.0025 to get the amount for a full-timer. Multiply it by 0.0015 for an adjunct.

Who can vote in the dues rate increase referendum?

Members of the PSC/CUNY unit, retiree chapter, and the central office and field units of the Research Foundation will be eligible to vote if, pursuant to the PSC constitution, they have been dues payers in good standing for at least four months prior to the start of the referendum.

PSC
CUNY

VOTE YES
Build a union that does even more

How does the proposed dues rate compare to other unions?

PSC dues rates are currently lower than many comparable unions – and with the proposed increase would remain lower – including, for example, those representing NYC DOE teachers, NYU faculty, and California State University faculty. Building workers and health care workers who make far less than most full-time PSC members pay higher percentages than PSC members, as do adjuncts at Columbia, Rutgers, and Cal State U. See the PSC flyer, *Stronger Union, Better Future* for a table of selected comparisons.

UUP members at SUNY's four-year colleges pay a slightly lower dues than our current rate. But UUP doesn't represent community college workers, their contract does not provide annual salary steps for full-timers, their adjuncts earn less per course than CUNY adjuncts, and their membership includes a large number of highly paid medical doctors.

What if I'm on a tight budget and worry about the rising cost of dues?

Member dues make it possible to organize and win stronger salaries, benefits, and job security – the things that improve our working conditions and our lives. Raises of 13.4% across the board, additional equity increases for the lowest paid full-time and part-time titles, and \$2500 for Lecturers who earn a CCE – all are features of the current contract won through collective union power. Adjunct lecturer pay has doubled over the last two contracts. Our union put money back in members' pockets by enhancing employer contributions to the Welfare Fund and helping secure reduced employee pension contributions for thousands of full- and part-time faculty and staff. PSC members deserve even more, and that takes resources.

What would an increase in union capacity mean for retirees?

The cost for a full-time retiree will go from \$7 to \$10 per month; part-time retiree dues will go from \$3.33 to

\$5 per month. Our union has helped lead the fight to preserve the social safety net and avert privatization of retiree health insurance, while engaging thousands of CUNY retirees socially and politically in campaigns to defend research, support climate justice and healthy workplaces, uphold academic freedom, and combat authoritarianism. Threats to health care, social security are on the rise. We need a strong union to defend our retiree benefits and to ensure that in-service workers have good pensions and healthcare and a vibrant retiree chapter when it's their time to retire.

Do my dues go to AFT and NYSUT and other affiliates?

Yes. A portion of our dues go to our state and national affiliates. NYSUT and AFT are powerful unions that have supported our legal and political efforts, helped improve CUNY funding, secured Tier 6 pension improvements, and reversed some of the worst attacks on research funding and free speech. They've expanded public-sector loan forgiveness to include many more adjuncts and have helped to protect the institutions on which democracy depends. Our contributions to NYSUT and AFT have increased recently, but our need for strong, far-reaching affiliates has never been greater. The economic gains our affiliates have helped us to achieve offset the proposed dues increase, even before you account for the additional benefits and savings to which all dues-paying PSC members have access.

Will a dues increase mean we have the power to strike?

A dues increase will not negate New York's anti-strike Taylor Law, which outlaws public-sector strikes and penalizes unions and their members for violations. But additional resources and organizing capacity would help the PSC mount a credible strike threat or win reforms to the law. A dues increase will expand what is possible for our union to achieve. Ultimately, it will be up to the members to organize and decide – together – how we want to build our union and what risks are worth taking.

A photograph of Karen Miller, a woman with short dark hair and glasses, wearing a dark blue polo shirt. She is standing in front of a whiteboard with some faint writing on it. A large red diagonal line is drawn across the image from the top left to the bottom right.

Karen Miller
Professor
LaGuardia
Community College

"Just because we have a contract doesn't mean that CUNY will always honor it. We need a strong, well-funded union to fight for us when the administration violates our rights."