

# Campus Equity Week highlights adjuncts' contributions to CUNY

By **MARCIA NEWFIELD**  
PSC Vice President for Part-Time Personnel

**October 31 to November 4**

There are a million part-time and adjunct faculty, graduate employees, full-time non-tenure-track faculty and continuing education teachers throughout the US. This number grew 41% in a 10-year period, according to Department of Education data for 2003. As of Spring 2005, CUNY had 9,600 part-timers teaching more than 50 percent of its courses.

## BI-ANNUAL EVENT

Campus Equity Week (CEW), October 31 to November 4, is a bi-annual event that aims to educate universities, the public and policy-makers on the inequities of contingent work in academia. Participating groups in the US, Canada and Mexico design their own events for the week, with the common theme of the need for equitable labor policies and standards that encourage fairness and dignity for all members of the campus community.

Inaugurated in 2001, CEW grew rapidly and in 2003 over 250 campuses in North America took part. The logo for this year's tri-part theme – fair employment, campus unity and quality education – is built around the equality symbol that has accompanied CEW since its inception.

The PSC Committee on Part-time Personnel (also known as the First Friday Group) has come up with plans to commemorate the week at CUNY. A "Seniority Scroll," indicating the names and number of years that long-serving part-time faculty have worked at CUNY, will be unfurled.

Holly Clarke, who has taught economics and public administration at John Jay for 17 years, came up with the idea for the scroll. "The seniority scroll represents years of dedicated service given to CUNY and its students," Clarke explains, "by adjuncts and other part-time faculty who are not given the most minimal job protections: job security, accumulated sick days, reasons for dismissal and disability insurance."

## THE FUTURE

Other plans for CEW include a forum at the Graduate Center on "The Future of Academic Labor," a book party, and lunchtime "teach-

out" – lectures for the New York public, to showcase the work that adjuncts do.

Details of these and other events will be posted on the PSC website, [www.psc-cuny.org](http://www.psc-cuny.org), along with the resolution of support for Campus Equity Week passed at the union's September Delegate Assembly. The website will also have information on the PSC's legislative agenda for 2005-06, including a renewed campaign to change New York labor law to allow adjuncts to collect unemployment insurance during periods when they are not working.

Campus Equity Week (called Fair Employment Week in Canada) was conceived at the fourth Coalition of Contingent Academic Labor (COCAL) conference in San Jose, California in 2001. COCAL has no regular staff, and a shifting steering committee of volunteers. The bi-annual conference is coordinated by the host committee (COCAL VI is slated for Vancouver, British

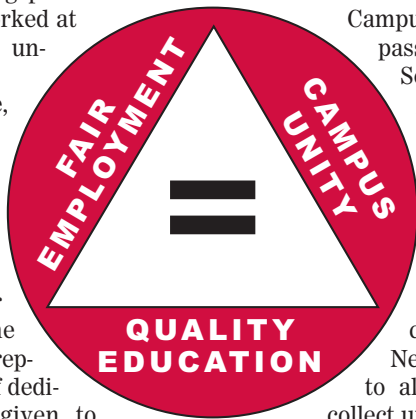
Columbia, in August 2006). National labor organizations – including the AFT, NEA, AAUP, National Writers' Union and the AFL-CIO – have endorsed and contributed to COCAL and CEW, as have the PSC and other local unions.

NAFFE, the North American Alliance for Fair Employment, is coordinating the activities and website for CEW 2005 ([www.campusequityweek.org](http://www.campusequityweek.org)). NAFFE is an alliance of organizations across a broad range of constituencies affected by problems associated with nonstandard work, such as part-time, temporary and contract employment. Its goal is to ensure the well-being of all workers and communities. (For more information on NAFFE, see [www.fairjobs.org](http://www.fairjobs.org).)

## CONTINGENT LABOR

Joe Berry, author of the newly published book *Reclaiming the Ivory Tower: Organizing Adjuncts to Change Higher Education*, the first comprehensive analysis of the contingent organizing movement, argues that winning broad public support will be key to its success.

"A national strategy," he maintains, "must understand that contingent faculty are part of a casualized workforce and must be organized as a whole workforce, on the job and in the community." CEW 2005 aims to be one step in that direction.



## HIGHER ED IN BRIEF

### Hesitation on the hatchet?

Congress is considering a \$36 billion budget bill that would authorize deep cuts in student aid and other critical federal safety net programs. The combination of Bush's tax cuts, the war in Iraq and Hurricane Katrina has led to an explosion in the federal deficit, and the Republican leadership has announced that higher education spending is on the chopping block as a result. But according to the AFT, some Republicans in both House and Senate are reluctant to pass a bill that hurts low- and middle-income students in the wake of the hurricane disaster. House action on the budget is expected soon.

### Go tell the Spartans

M. Peter McPherson will be the next president of the National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges. President of Michigan State University for over a decade, McPherson was also a Bank of America executive, deputy secretary of the Treasury Department and administrator of the US Agency for International Development. During 2003 he was director of economic policy for the Coalition Provisional Authority in Iraq.

McPherson will become the leader of the association on January 1; he currently serves as co-chair of the Partnership to Cut Hunger and Poverty in Africa, which he helped found five years ago.

# EOC faculty demand fair play with pensions

By **CHRISTINA INGOGLIA**

PSC members at the four Educational Opportunity Centers (EOC) in New York City have submitted a petition to SUNY demanding an end to problems with their pension payments and other deductions, which have occurred repeatedly since 2001.

Four years ago, faculty at the Queens EOC opened letters that left them in shock: TIAA-CREF had sent each a notice stating that their accounts were about to be shut down because no payments had been made to either their pension accounts or their voluntary 403(b) annuities.

## FUNDS MISSING

Facia White, then PSC chapter chair at the Queens EOC, investigated and discovered that even though pension contributions had been subtracted from her paycheck every two weeks, the Queens EOC had not forwarded any funds to TIAA-CREF. Ms. White and other PSC members at the Queens EOC wanted this mess straightened out immediately, and they confronted the Center's director.

## Sick of SUNY missing payments

The director told the employees that the problem was that the EOCs had not been receiving regular funding payments from SUNY. "We thought this was ridiculous," White told *Clarion*, "because the money was taken regularly from our paychecks."

## SUNY PROGRAM

The EOCs are a SUNY program operated under a contract between SUNY and CUNY, providing a combination of job-skills courses and preparation for college. CUNY colleges provide administrative and academic oversight, while funding is provided under the SUNY budget directly to each Center.

EOC employees at the Queens, Brooklyn, Bronx and Manhattan centers all receive their salary bi-weekly, and employee pension contributions along with voluntary 403(b) contributions are deducted from each paycheck. This money

should be immediately transmitted to TIAA-CREF – but it turned out that the Queens EOC was improperly holding on to the funds for several months at a time. While the money was eventually paid, EOC employees lost whatever financial gains would have accrued from interest if the payments had been made on time.

Funding for the EOCs in NYC is part of the overall SUNY budget, and monies are forwarded to the Centers by SUNY in lump-sum payments. When approval of the State budget is delayed, the lump-sum payments are delayed as well and the Centers have to scramble for cash.

But such problems do not relieve management of its obligation to pay workers' wages and benefits, emphasized the PSC. "These delays are the equivalent of not paying our members' wages on time," said PSC Executive Director Deborah Bell.

When EOC chapter chairs met last year to discuss the contract campaign, they realized that it was not only the Queens EOC that had problems with timely transmittal of employee deductions. The Bronx and Brooklyn EOCs had experienced this also, if not to such a dramatic extent. In addition, the PSC/CUNY Welfare Fund reports that the EOCs' employer contributions are routinely several months behind schedule.

## LEGAL RESPONSIBILITY

After this discussion, PSC negotiators raised the subject at the bargaining table on behalf of the EOCs. Bell reminded CUNY and SUNY EOC representatives that it was their legal responsibility to ensure that employee deductions for pension contributions and annuity funds were made fully and on time – even if they had to walk the money to TIAA-CREF themselves. Management promised that that

the problem would be fixed. But despite these assurances, the delays have recurred.

## INVESTMENT VALUE LOST

After meeting with PSC Secretary Cecelia McCall, all four EOC union chapters decided to circulate a petition, and members have eagerly signed it. The union decided that the highest levels of SUNY management need to be made aware of what is going on, so the petition was addressed to SUNY Senior Associate Provost Rick Steiner and was sent out on August 17. The union has asked that members be made whole according to a TIAA-CREF calculation for investment value they lost.

"It's never a problem to convince anyone to sign the petition," said Sherwin Hunte, a PSC member at the Queens EOC. "People are very, very upset at the way this has been handled over the last few years. We're taking this action to make sure that payments are on time, and that we get the compensation to which we are entitled."

**Shocking letters exposed pension problems.**