

PSC Report to the General Faculty, Wednesday, 5/13/2020

Dear Colleagues,

You should have received a letter from PSC President Barbara Bowen outlining a comprehensive set of demands our union has presented to CUNY:

<https://www.psc-cuny.org/psc-impact-bargaining-proposals>

The demands are too numerous to go over in this report, but please feel free to pose questions at Wednesday's (May 13th General Faculty) Meeting. **Additionally we will be holding our next Chapter Meeting on Thursday, May 14, from 3:30-5:00 via Zoom** to discuss the demands and the work we will need to win them.

This report is rather a call to arms. We need everyone in our chapter to join what we're anticipating will be the single most important fight for CUNY's future in most of our lifetimes: for our jobs, our students, our university, and the health and welfare of every member of our community. **Please join us in this fight by signing up on this form:**

<https://forms.gle/1q77mG6LVhpCqaSW8>

As many of you know, we've called upon the administration to include the PSC and all other campus stakeholders in this fight through [a resolution passed at our last chapter meeting calling on the administration to create a truly inclusive planning committee on the budget and campus reopening](#).

The Lehman administration has already refused this request once when posed by the Chapter Executive Committee, telling us that the Senate Budget and Facilities Committees will be the place for participation in decision making. That was troubling and we hope they'll reconsider that decision now that the Chapter has spoken. [In our letter to the administration presenting the resolution](#), we explain why we don't think the usual approach to planning and decision making is one the college should be taking. We need bold leadership at this moment, leadership willing to include all stakeholders at all levels of information gathering, planning and decision-making. Rather than leadership, however, we are seeing managers returning once again to the task of managing austerity.

Where is the voice of leadership, whether at CUNY or Lehman? Where is the leader saying, "No. I will not take more resources away from those most impacted, both in terms of health and economics, by this terrible disease. I will not cut courses, raise class sizes, and make it more difficult for teachers to teach and students to learn. I will not make more cuts to an already underfunded institution. It is not my job to make it more

difficult for those out of work to enroll in school by virtue of my not filling campus vacancies.” Where is this leader? Just imagine if every CUNY administrator took a vocal stand or took even bolder action, as individuals or collectively, to defend CUNY, which we all know is a lifeline to a better economic future.

If history can be our guide, we know we can't count on this leader emerging from within CUNY's administrative ranks. If we could rely on such a champion, we would not need to call on the administration to include all campus stakeholders in every level of planning and decision making. True leaders know they benefit from more perspectives in critical situations--not fewer. Leaders look to have their dogmas challenged and for fresh ideas. [In the absence of such leaders we must organize and do the work ourselves.](#)

The Bronx has suffered enough. Our students and their families have suffered enough. We cannot sit back and watch Lehman's administration and CUNY's administration take the same defeatist attitude that has allowed the University to remain below pre-2008 funding levels over the past 10 years.

Again, we cannot be satisfied with managers returning once again to the task of managing austerity. We note the following:

- The administration has announced that **many College Assistants will not be reappointed this summer and through the next fiscal year.** This is a CUNY-wide directive. Despite the administration's claims that Lehman is in an exceptional budget position, they have followed CUNY's orders. **Letting people go in the midst of a pandemic is unacceptable. We call upon the administration to reverse course.** [We call on you to join us in this fight.](#)
- The administration has **raised class-size caps on summer courses, increased minimum enrollment levels** needed for summer classes to run, and **moved up the cancellation date** by which courses must fill. Adjuncts scheduled to teach in the July 2020 summer session whose courses had not yet reached the enrollment criteria were notified last week that their courses were cancelled. **Unannounced “soft layoffs” in the midst of a pandemic are unacceptable. Creating larger class sizes in online courses in the midst of a pandemic is unacceptable. Cutting back course options for students in communities hardest hit by illness is unacceptable. We call upon the administration to reverse course.** [We call on you to join us in this fight.](#)

- The administration has been **unresponsive to the Chapter Executive Committee's demand that they not challenge adjuncts who apply for unemployment insurance** this summer given that even those with a reappointment letter in hand cannot count on employment based on the messages going out from the administration and CUNY about budget cuts. **Fighting people on unemployment in the midst of a pandemic is unacceptable. We call upon the administration to listen to our demand. [We call on you to join us in this fight.](#)**
- The Chapter passed a resolution, [joining other voices](#), in calling on the administration to collect, compile and release aggregate statistics on coronavirus infections and COVID-19 illnesses and deaths within the Lehman community, adding our voice to a growing call for CUNY to do this University-wide. The administration has refused to do this. **Disappearing the sick and the dead by not collecting data that may factor into planning for a return to the workplace in the midst of a pandemic is unacceptable. We call upon the administration to reverse course. [We call on you to join us in this fight.](#)**

Again, the Bronx has suffered enough. Our students and their families have suffered enough. Instead of accepting and exacerbating our community's suffering, we call on Lehman's administration to resist the illusion that austerity policies are inevitable. **There is another way.** In every major economic downturn, New York's governors have raised taxes on the wealthy.

- Franklin Delano Roosevelt, while Governor of New York in 1931, raised taxes on the wealthy by 50% during the Great Depression.
- Herbert Lehman raised taxes on the wealthy by 2% during the Great Depression.
- Nelson Rockefeller raised taxes on the wealthy by 3% during the "Eisenhower Recession" of 1958-59, and by 4.9% during the recession of 1961.
- George Pataki vetoed tax increases in 2003 during the post-9/11 recession, but legislative leaders passed higher taxes on the wealthy by 1.1% over his vetoes.
- David Paterson raised taxes on the wealthy by 1.1% after the financial collapse in 2009 with the first Millionaires Tax.

We would love to see all CUNY administrators, including those at Lehman, take a public stand, refuse to make cuts to CUNY, and demand that governor Cuomo follow FDR and others and raise the revenue we need as a state to avoid making the lives of those most impacted by COVID-19 even more difficult.

Until then, [join us in our fight](#) for the funding CUNY deserves. [Joins us in our fight](#) to get representatives from all campus stakeholders a seat at the table. [Join us in our fight](#).

We look forward to learning from and working with you. We will be providing more information about why the work ahead is so important and why we are counting on your efforts in the coming days.

In solidarity,

The PSC Lehman Chapter Executive Committee