



# WHERE WE STAND

## Ten Approaches to Academic Unionism

[www.newcaucus.org](http://www.newcaucus.org)

**THE DUTY TO REPRESENT THE INTERESTS OF ALL MEMBERS.** *Management plays the game of divide and conquer. It has implored us to remove retirees and adjuncts from the Welfare Fund and to pay for gains of one constituency by taking from another. At each juncture, we resisted. In the last contract we negotiated gains for every constituency – the first real salary gains in a decade; twelve credits release-time for junior faculty; a paid office hour for adjuncts; a professional development fund for the cross-campus constituency; and more.*

**WIDENING THE CIRCLE OF PARTICIPATION.** *A union's ability to promote and defend the interests of all its members is as strong as its active membership. The New Caucus has multiplied the effectiveness of the union many times over by activating literally hundreds of people to do the work – members recruited by leadership onto scores of PSC/CUNY-wide and chapter committees. Those “working” committees include the voices of senior and junior faculty, professional and instructional staff, full and part-timers, senior and community colleges, and actives and retirees.*

*In addition, constituencies once excluded or under-represented now have a say on the Executive Council – retirees, HEOs, CLTs, and part-timers. Never before have so many senior and junior faculty, professional staff, part-timers and retirees participated in the every-day work of the PSC.*

**ORGANIZING/MOBILIZING.** *Negotiations do not take place in a vacuum. Labor history demonstrates that the unions that win the strongest contracts are those that can mobilize members and win political, labor and community support. These are not the “best of times.” The assaults on public higher education are relentless and the political environment for municipal labor is as hostile as it has ever been. Nonetheless, we have moved management from its more draconian positions by mobilizing members in their thousands at mass-meetings, on picket lines, in letter writing campaigns and in lobbying. A mobilized membership makes a difference.*

**DEFENDING CUNY -- AN ENHANCED LEGISLATIVE AGENDA.** *We cannot defend the interests of our members – their pocketbooks, their professional integrity, their rights and their dedication to educating their students – without defending public higher education, in general, and CUNY, in particular. Whether it is in the legislative bodies in Albany or at City Hall or in the policy deliberations of our affiliates (AFT, AAUP, NYSUT), we have put CUNY and public higher education on the agenda. The results*

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*are real – budget restorations at City Hall and in Albany and major legislative initiatives from pension reforms to transit-checks to increased full-time lines.*

**SOLIDARITY.** *One measure of the union’s power is its ability to build alliances with the labor movement and with students and the communities from which they come. Our solidarity work has paid dividends, making us stronger.*

**RESOLUTENESS.** *Management’s tact in current negotiations is to stall, then stall some more and hope to force a regressive contract on membership by a war of attrition. It did not put its first financial offer (a total of 1.5% over four years) on the table until December 1, 2004, 761 days after the last contract expired. It demanded that departmental chairs be removed from the bargaining unit and that HEOs be stripped of much of their 13.3B job security. After intense bargaining and membership mobilizations, management backed off these draconian demands, signing a draft conceptual framework for an agreement on November 14<sup>th</sup> that represented real gains for the PSC. Then management, the state and the city reneged. But our bargaining team has remained resolute, putting forward an alternative proposal and refusing to sign a contract unless it serves your interests.*

**OPENNESS/ DEBATE.** *Whether it is including dissenting voices in Clarion – or taking tough choices, like the Welfare Fund, to chapters for full discussion – or holding annual hearings on the PSC budget – or deciding policy in the Delegate Assembly -- or challenging the CUNY Alliance to debates across the full university spectrum, we promote informed, democratic discussion.*

*We chose our 2006 slate (as we did in 1997, 2000 and 2003) at an open convention.*

**CONTRACT ENFORCEMENT.** *A contract is only as effective as its enforcement. We pushed smart, creative, pro-active contract enforcement, winning more grievances, arbitrations, PERB decisions and legal cases than ever before.*

**BUILDING CHAPTERS.** *Before winning PSC/CUNY-wide office in 2000, the New Caucus spent ten years at the local level, winning chapter elections and the confidence of colleagues. Today, the fourteen chapters headed by New Caucus leadership meet frequently, engage members in democratic discussion and policy issues and mobilize around both local and CUNY-wide issues.*

**RESEARCH/ ANALYSIS.** *We do our homework, whether it is preparing budget testimony before legislative bodies or presenting voluminous research in support of our bargaining positions at contract negotiations.*

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