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CUNY Adjunct Alert

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ADJUNCTS USE UNION GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES

What do you do when you're asked to teach a course for only 60% of your usual pay on the grounds that it's a summer workshop? This just happened to adjuncts teaching the summer immersion program at BMCC. Though the course in question was the same one they teach during the academic year, they were asked to take a cut. While some turned down the courses offered and others accepted them, assuming they had to accept the pay offered, one called the grievance office at the PSC. A call from that office to the college, reminding the labor designee about the contractual obligation to pay standard rates, won full pay for the adjunct who had complained and all the other adjuncts working in the program.

The right to bring a grievance over pay, non-reappointment, observations and evaluations, or any matter laid out in the contract, is one of the crucial rights the union offers. A problem may be resolved by an informal discussion among a complainant, grievance counselor (each campus has one), and supervisor, or by a formal three-step procedure. A grievance must be filed within 30 work days after the grievant becomes aware of the problem, except in cases of non-reappointment, which require filing 30 days from the date of notification. If the problem is not resolved it goes to the second step. The grievance officer presents the matter to the Chancellor's designee. If the matter is still not resolved it may go to arbitration. The resolution may be quick or it may take years.

Another important grievance the union recently brought on behalf on adjuncts stemmed from a problem at Baruch College three years ago. The administration decided to pay the teachers of entry level ESL students through the School of Continuing Education, though the course they taught was supervised by the English Department, as it had been in the past. This shift meant that teachers were paid at 80% of their usual rate and lost their eligibility for health insurance. The union has pursued this grievance since then and we await its resolution.

Although a powerful tool, every abuse is not redressed (see Mary Hudson's letter to the editor). If you have questions concerning a possible grievance, call the PSC at 354-1252.

REFERENDUM UPDATE

Last March CAU submitted over a thousand signatures on a petition calling for the first formal referendum since the inception of the PSC in 1972—that the union enforce automatic deduction of the agency fee for all adjuncts in the collective bargaining unit. This has always been done for full-timers. The PSC has checked all signatures and challenged some (signators had to be members of the union). CAU! has validated enough signatures to meet the required 10% of membership. We are now awaiting the PSC confirmation of our count.

ONLY UNION MEMBERS CAN VOTE

For the referendum, for union officers, for the new contract **YOU HAVE TO BE A MEMBER FOR FOUR MONTHS BEFORE YOU CAN VOTE.** This April, the PSC membership will elect CUNY-wide officers who will negotiate the contract for all adjuncts and full-timers, whether or not members of the union. **SEND YOUR YELLOW CARD** to the union by November 15th (keep a xerox) to make the December 1 deadline. Get a card from your PSC Chapter Chair. If you have any difficulties, call CAU! contacts (see reverse page) or our hot line (212) 642-2143. If you think you are a member already and no Prof-U deduction appears on the bottom left of your paycheck, call the PSC 354-1252 right away.

This issue of Adjunct Alert was produced by the Newsletter Committee. Back issues may be found at our website

HEALTH INSURANCE UPDATE

Last spring CAU! led the fight to protest the PSC Welfare Fund's decision to reduce adjunct health care options from three choices to no choice. Blue Cross/Blue Shield HMO was declared the only option, thus cutting out HIP, SIGNA and U.S. Healthcare and the reimbursement plan for adjuncts who used a health plan of their choice. Eric Marshall, an adjunct delegate from Queens College introduced a motion at the May Delegate Assembly Meeting to maintain the status quo. A majority of the delegates from both caucuses voted in support but the Welfare Fund did not change its basic position, claiming financial responsibility. What adjuncts and sympathizers' agitation did accomplish was to extend the deadline for switching from June 1 to June 30, and provide a PPO option (where the PSC pays \$100 per month and the adjunct pays \$60 per month until June 2000, after which the cost to the adjunct is \$160 per month). The cash option reimbursement for those who wanted to choose their own health plan and receive a \$2000 per year reimbursement from the PSC was extended to August 31 and open to all. Until the next contract is negotiated (when adjuncts' insurance could be renegotiated) adjuncts who become eligible for health benefits (those teaching six credits in their third semester) will be with the Blue Cross/Blue Shield HMO or PPO. The PSC Welfare fund director Norma Frey says she wants to know how the provider is functioning. Please call her with any questions, compliments and/or complaints 354-1252.

Join the union by December 1 so YOU CAN INFLUENCE THE UNION LEADERSHIP on insurance coverage and other issues that affect your life and well-being! Send in your yellow card by November 15 and keep a xerox copy!!

CONNECT

ADJ-L (adjunct issues listserv for the latest news and discussions of issues pertinent to adjuncts at CUNY and nation-wide.) Send message to vtirelli@email.gc.cuny.edu asking to include you on the list.

COME TO CAU! MEETINGS

Sept. 24 Fri. 4 p.m. Rm. 5417

Oct. 7th Thur. 6 p.m. Rm 5417

CUNY GRAD CENTER

34th Street & Fifth Ave.

Letters to the editor may cover any subject germane to CUNY adjuncts. All letters must be typewritten, signed, and between 100-250 words; they may be edited to fit space.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

On March 30, 1999, Professor Giuseppe Di Scipio of Hunter College Romance Languages informed me that my contract will not be renewed next semester because I now have my PhD. This excuse is flimsy (not to mention absurd in an institution of higher education) but the only one available given the fact that in my four years at Hunter College I have had a perfect attendance record and an exceptionally good performance record. In my opinion the real reason is my activism in CUNY Adjuncts Unite! I also believe that this will only be the beginning of draconian measures taken against adjuncts who try to fight for our rights unless we act now against this egregious injustice. I would ask all colleagues and fellow union members to do whatever they can to join us in our struggle to protect ourselves and improve our notoriously poor and unfair working conditions.

-Mary Hudson

[Ed. note: The first step of Hudson's grievance went against her, and the union has decided not to appeal to the next level.]

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