

The ADVOCATE

for the City University of New York Graduate Center

March/April 2000

Students Negotiate With Administration for Graduate Center Improvements

By Susanna Jones & Charles Price

On March 3, 2000, a group of students met with Graduate Center administrators to continue negotiation of a list of demands presented a week earlier by an ad hoc group of students, with the support of the Co-Chairs of the Doctoral Students Council. First we provide some context before presenting a condensed transcript of notes taken by Susanna Jones, former Co-Chair of the Doctoral Students Council. Charles Price, an anthropology student, assisted with the introduction.

Beginning in November 1999, ad-hoc student groups began meeting to discuss the abysmally inadequate level of services here at the Graduate Center, the tortoise-like pace at which problems were being addressed (not even solved!), and the apparent lack of awareness by administration that students, staff, and faculty were fed up with things not working!

Through informal canvassing, students determined that the general consensus among students, faculty and staff was that the move to the new building was a step backward, not forward. We might be better off in the future, but

no one could say when the future would arrive. The differences in opinion about the state of affairs at the Graduate Center tended to be linked to how much time one spent in the building. Those who come only for class tended to be less aware of the Graduate Center's dysfunctional condition, while those who work here on a regular basis were acutely aware.

Equally important to us students was the fact that our leadership was not taking responsibility for the state of affairs, but rather displacing blame onto private vendors, the Dormitory Authority, and others. Displacing blame does not solve problems - action does. Hence our efforts to get the administration to confront and tackle the major problems and inconveniences facing staff, students and faculty.

Eventually the Doctoral Students Council brought its presence to the table, joining the Chartered Students Organization Action Committee, which was later replaced by G-SUCK. Sarcastically, the students said their aim was to get the "SUCK" out of the Graduate Center. Almost immediately after bringing some of the most annoying inconveniences and follies to the attention of the entire Graduate Center community, President Horowitz called for a town meeting. It may have been a coincidence, but this is exactly what students were asking for.

The town meetings, held February 24 and 25, 2000, brought together students, staff, faculty and administration to discuss the state of the Graduate Center. The February 24 meeting was especially animated as participants voiced their complaints directly toward those in charge. The G-SUCK group submitted a list of problems and demands, some of which were discussed in the meeting. As time ran out, the students asked that the negotiations continue in a separate meeting. The administration cooperatively agreed, and students and administration met in a marathon meeting, early Friday evening.

We ask that faculty and staff assist us in helping the administration create a democratic institution of higher education right here at the Graduate Center. There is much we can do together to make this happen.

A condensed account of the meetings follows.

continued page 10

CONTENTS

Editorials: 2

Poetry /Horrorscope: 5

Adjunct Beat: 6

New Student Movement: 7



Town meeting, February 24, 2000. Students, staff, and faculty confront the CUNY administration.



A Great Move Forward

By Mark Noonan

On Thursday, February 24th and Friday, February 25th, President Frances Degen Horowitz and other key Administrators held open town meetings for all CUNY students, faculty, and staff to discuss the road to a fully functional, fully accessible university. With palpable concern for the alarming problems and many nuisances that currently plague the Graduate Center at its new location, President Horowitz addressed the current crisis for a total of four hours (over two days) to over 200 concerned members of the CUNY community.

President Horowitz began the meeting by explaining that the Graduate Center had requested \$4.1 million from Albany in the last budget proceedings, money that was necessary in order to increase staffing and to provide the level of services needed in a move to a building 1/3 larger in size than our former location at 42nd Street. This request did not succeed. "The effort was not lost, however," she explained. "The request currently appears in the Governor's Executive Budget and we fully hope it will pass." She urged all students, staff, and faculty to write letters to their legislative representatives in Albany by mid-March to push for this allocation which would also provide for new full-time faculty, money for doctoral fellowships, and tuition remission for all graduate students. The money would

also enable the building to extend its hours from 8 a.m. to 12 p.m. (M-F) and 8 a.m.-10 p.m. (Sat./Sun.). Library hours would also be extended, a matter the Administration would discuss with the entire student body.

President Horowitz also candidly admitted that "we are an institution under stress." She explained what was apparent to all in the room, namely that many of the facilities and services our university depends on are either not finished, not furnished, or not yet fully functional. Of course, in a move of such magnitude and complexity such as ours, one would expect the transition to be neither instantaneous, nor unproblematic. Unfortunately, as our president elucidated, problems associated with the move were exacerbated by certain vendors, contractors, and sub-contractors that failed to deliver in timely fashion or correctly implement what was promised. Highly troublesome was the "state of the art" computer network, which the company NEC failed to build and install to proper specifications. Another company, Cisco Systems, has been brought in to rectify the situation, but as of now the system remains "unstable." President Horowitz assured the audience that the problem is of central concern to the Administration and, though they could not guarantee immediate resolution of all computer-related snafus, they would better communicate to the university community the ongoing status of their "relentless

continued page 8

editorials

Corporate Art STILL Sucks



By Dave Gerardi

Alan Moore recently wrote a response to my review of the Brooklyn Museum's "Sensation" exhibit. Much of it was full of ad hominem and straw man attacks. As such it warrants very little of our time. I will, however, return a few volleys.

The title of this informative little blurb is a play on a sticker made by SST Records. SST was founded by Greg Ginn, the guitarist of the legendary punk/hardcore band Black Flag. His sticker reads, "Corporate Rock STILL Sucks." Ginn has been a tireless opponent of corporate influence on the sale, promotion, and distribution in the music industry. The sentiment of his sticker applies here because the art world suffers from the same influence. Talent takes a back seat to profit. "Sensation" is no different. This was clear in my review. Moore, apparently, was too busy violating the choicest rules in the Handbook of Informal Logical Fallacies to notice.

Moore charges me with "fling[ing] sexist gibes" at one of the exhibit's female artists. Hey! This is libel. It is baseless and utterly without merit.

Moore also accuses me of using the term 'postmodernism.' He's right, I did use it. But from that alone it doesn't follow that, well . . . anything! I'll try to be charitable here. What's missing from Moore's complaint is a hidden premise to the effect that: "postmodernism is dumb,

and if someone uses the term in any sense other than negative, then that person is likewise dumb." Again, Moore is lobbing his arrows at the wrong castle. I clearly distinguished my use of postmodernism from the type that publishes articles by Alan Sokal. My use is much more limited in scope. I treat 'postmodernism' akin to 'baroque' as I would in the following humdrum sentence, 'Bach and Vivaldi are my favorite composers of the baroque period.'

What's Moore so ornery about? He says my standards are too high. Christ, if I were home-schooling my first-grader and quizzing him on Descartes in the original Latin, then maybe he'd have a point (just an example, I don't have a kid). But I've spent the last four years producing and directing films, crewing on other people's films, studying (and doing) both photography and cinematography, writing film and music criticism, typing satirical police blotters, and so on. Safe to say, I've met my fair share of artists in a wide range of fields, and if there's anything they DO need it's standards. Standards by the bucketful. I've seen and/or read more ignorant, baseless tripe than I care to share with you, dear bored reader. I have a four-year documented, critical history (in countless insignificant publications) attacking lazy and/or corporate garbage. Our cultural media are filled with STUFF. It's time pick up a pin and burst some of these helium balloons. Post haste.

Los Pollitos Dicen. Pío, Pío, Pío Cuando Tienen Hambre, Cuando Tienen Frio

By Celia Perez-Ventura

Querido pollito Funky Rubber:
I loved your tour through our new henhouse-building, written and illustrated with an elegant feather, in the last issue of our cheep-cheep newspaper The Advocate.

I decided to comment on your chicken-cartoons taking into consideration two things: a) Short stories have a leitmotif, that is to say, repetition of a phrase, an image or a situation. b) Things in this world were in the human imagination before they are in reality, according to Gabriel Garcia Marquez.

In the real world all chickens like us have a mother, known as Mamá Gallina or Mother Hen, who usually takes care of her little chickens even when they have problems related to un-plucked computers, faxes, library, etc. But, in our chickens imagination, she makes us warm with her huge feathers when we are cold or she runs after us when we are close to dying in the pond of our campus-farm, located in the upper part of our luxury-Fifth-Avenue-henhouse (she never forgets that we are chickens and not ducks, who can swim very well.) Also, she kindly feeds us with her big bill when Papa Gallo or Daddy Rooster has no budget to buy chicken-baskets or chick-peas or for keeping our chicken coop open.

Anyone who reads your birdie story and the whole issue of The Advocate (January 2000) can notice that recurrent ideas are those relating to words like locked, broken, waiting, un-logging, un-open, un-finished, un-financial aid, un-housing, un-responsibility, and un-concerned. (Whoever believes that my chicken dialect is not proper, please, ask our dear and very much missed former Big Rooster, Robert Hollander, what he thinks about it. He knows very well that I am an ESL-non-native chicken(a).) Well, I think that these words are expected and not sufficiently exaggerated for the sake of humor, if they wanted to show a repeating situation (old home) and what it is in our chicken real-imagination:

Once upon a time our Mama Gallina, Papa Gallo, and The Arc-Poultry-Dealers promised us that we, the GSUC-bird-family (hens, roosters and chickens), were

continued on page 5

The ADVOCATE
The Graduate School and University Center
365 5th Ave., 5th Floor, room 5396
New York, NY 10036
Tel: (212) 807-7882 Fax: (212) 807-7883

Published 6 times annually. Subsidized by the Doctoral Students Council

<p>Editor: Mark Petras Managing Editor: Mark Noonan Layout: Miriam Greenberg</p>	<p>Contributors: Funky Rubber Chicken, Jennifer Leigh Disney, Dave Gerardi, Fernando Janet, Susanna Jones, Ferhat Kutlucan, Kristin Lawler, Mark Noonan, Costas Panayotakis, Celia Perez-Ventura, Mark Petras, Charles Reavis Price</p>
------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Letters to Editor must be 500 words or less, submitted on diskette, accompanied by a signed hard copy. All written work must be submitted in MS Word 5.1.
Opinions expressed in the ADVOCATE don't necessarily reflect DSC or ADVOCATE staff.