

# CUNY's school of labor: a training ground for *activism*

The CUNY School of Labor and Urban Studies (SLU) educates student activists on how to become the next generation of union leaders and enables them to advance their careers as part of a partnership between DC 37 and the school.

Eligible DC 37 members can receive tuition coverage for up to four courses (up to 16 credits where applicable) at CUNY SLU, funded by the DC 37 Education Fund. Students can apply for an Undergraduate Certificate in Labor Relations, Bachelor of Arts in Labor Studies, Advanced Certificate in Labor Relations, and a Master of Arts in Labor Studies.

"We believe in the mission of CUNY SLU because it provides important educational opportunities for union members and other working professionals to further their career prospects in the public sector," said Stephen Johnson, DC 37 Education Fund Administrator.

SLU's courses help students gain the practical skills and knowledge necessary for effective leadership in collective bargaining, organizing, union administration, and labor law. The agreement builds on DC 37's existing education and workforce training programs that provide city

workers with basic job skills, technical training, and leadership development, providing members with partial tuition reimbursement for college courses.

"What moves me most is the spirit our students bring—people who, like DC 37's members, keep New York City running every day," said Gregory Mantsios, founding dean of the School. "SLU's mission has always been to educate and empower the workers who make this city run, and to support the social and economic movements they lead. Our students and DC 37 members share the same drive to strengthen their communities and advance justice. That's why our partnership with DC 37 is so important."

June Lei, a member of Brooklyn Museum Local 1502, is active in her union and serves as the local's secretary. She has participated in the SLU program for the last four years.

"Because I'm the secretary, I do a lot of day-to-day communications work," Lei said. "But then when I go to SLU, I get to think about vision and strategy and things that are long-term labor history. And that is such a special place, because then I can bring that to the work that I'm doing. I can see that there's a bigger picture to all the work that we do."

Lei became involved in the fightback campaign against sudden layoffs at Brooklyn Museum earlier this year. She credits SLU for its influence on her political activism.

"Why go to SLU? This is your school, it's your place to envision and dream outside of the day-to-day work of running a local or a union," Lei said. "SLU is the place where you think about how the world can be better. When you have that vision of what the world can look like for workers, then it informs you when you're leading an action in the local or galvanizing members to participate in a campaign."

## Want to make a *difference* in your workplace?

CUNY's School of Labor and Urban Studies (SLU) is currently accepting applications for its certificate and degree programs. Scan the QR code to find out more about what these programs offer and how to apply.



CUNY School of Labor Studies Assistant Professor Cameron Black speaking to students at orientation. Photo Courtesy CUNY SLU



Brooklyn Museum Local 1502 Secretary June Lei prepares to speak onstage at Zohran Mamdani's New York is Not For Sale Rally on Oct. 26. Photo by Donald Nesbit