

PCCFA Newsletter

April 2009

Economy—the Nation:

“At times like this, Wall Street fully lives up to its image as a vast criminal enterprise. And yet, there isn’t much that’s new in this debacle. It’s just a matter of degree. In any decade the list of financial scandals and despicable behavior goes on for miles. The computer-driven stock crash of 1987, the dot-com bubble, the Enron Corp. collapse—after these, and many more sordid episodes, some investors swore they’d never trust the market again. Why do we keep coming back?” Thus a telling commentary from LA Times business columnist, Tom Petruno, “Seeing Wall Street for what it is” (3-14-09). Can you say Madoff with your money?

Urban geographer, David Harvey, in an online article (“Is This *Really* the End of Neo-liberalism?”) asserts that the solution is up to us: “Whether we can get out of this crisis...depends very much upon the balance of class forces. It depends upon the degree to which the entire population says ‘enough is enough, let’s change the system’. Harvey argues that despite the enormous wealth of our economy, “workers over the last 50 years...have got almost nothing out of this system. But they haven’t risen up in revolt...there has been no mass movement against [elites]” (www.counterpunch.org).

While large demonstrations in London, Paris, and Berlin challenged recent G-20 representatives and their financial schemes that have produced the economic crisis, in the US there has been little overt resistance. Many commentators have observed that organized labor has succumbed to lethargic and corrupt business unionism (e.g.our own nemesis the CTA) such that it is now woefully unprepared, and quite frankly, unwilling to lead the fight against economic injustices. Environmental groups advocated sharply against globalization in the extraordinary Seattle demonstrations (1999), but that was ten years ago. Today too many have separated eco-system discussions from profit driven economics. Anti-war organizations have mushroomed and have articulated ethical criticisms against genocide, torture, and jingoism that characterize the culture of fear. Still the linkages between all of these single-issue efforts and the overall economy need to be made. As educators, that should be a high priority task.

California and Los Angeles:

Our colleagues in the K-12 districts continue to be hit the hardest. The Unified Teachers of Los Angeles (UTLA) faculty and staff have suffered 6000 pink slips! The full brunt of severe cuts has been felt by these workers, and of course, the children and families of the nation’s second largest school system will suffer for years to come.

PCC: Say No to the 12% Cuts for the Summer Session!:

What do we make of an organization that gives its CEO a healthy raise and extended contract, grants its managers sizeable increases in salaries, yet cuts back its program and (quite possibly) lays off workers? AIG? Enron? Citigroup? No—Pasadena City College. The announced slashing of the Summer Session by 12% left many in shock as the college had until recently clung to the mantra of no cuts, no lay-offs only now to go back on its word. The college admits it holds a 10-12% surplus (approximately \$14-15 million in reserve) well in excess of the state’s 5% rule (for PCC, \$7 million). Also the college concedes that its Self-Insurance Fund (SIF) now has

about \$22 million! SIF is always in flux as the Board of Trustees moves money from the General Fund into SIF and declares it untouchable.

Let us not return to the bad old days of the previous administration that hoarded money like Midas and hid cash like squirrels stash nuts. However, we are angered that the PCC administration has chosen to “manage enrollment” to offset rising numbers of students. During these the rainiest of economic days, the college should address student need and make no cuts in program. PCCFA has challenged the college for using insulting euphemisms like the odious term “resizing” stated in a jocular manner on Flex Day, instead of honestly calling the summer cuts for what they are. Is this administration so out of touch with needs of faculty, staff and students who will be victimized by job losses and class reductions that it jokes about it? For those Part Time Faculty and Staff who will have hours cut or lose their jobs entirely, and for those students who will be unable to get their classes, humor will hardly pay their bills especially when the joke is on them.

PUSD High School on PCC Campus?

Is the Board of Trustees out of touch with the educational needs of our campus community? We salute those faculty who have vigorously challenged the hastily contrived plan for a PUSD high school on PCC’s campus. In the original discussions, Full and Part Time faculty would have lost their offices and classrooms to this new entity, as of now woefully undefined yet supposedly to be in place for fall. In principle, such a school may not be a bad idea, but it must be carefully and systematically vetted for comprehensive collegial input. As is, space for offices and classrooms especially for Languages and Engineering & Technology Divisions may constitute a work condition violation and PCCFA is considering filing a formal grievance. We understand that especially while so much construction is going on, there are difficulties, but all faculty must have offices and serviceable on-site classrooms.

Community Education Center (CEC): Many CEC faculty have brought it to PCCFA’s attention that their dean had demanded to know the purpose of faculty taking Personal Necessity Leave (PNL). The dean’s action is a contract violation, and we have advised him of his error. When any faculty member chooses to take PNL leave, PCCFA strongly advises that faculty members not indicate the reason. You are completely within your contractual rights to keep your reason personal and private.

CTA Lawsuit Update:

PCCFA leaders have stood firm in the past four weeks in giving depositions to California Teachers Association (CTA) attorneys from the Wilshire law firm of Schwartz, Steinsapir, Dohrmann & Sommers. Suzanne Anderson, Roger Marheine, Preston Rose, Danny Hamman, and Julie Kiotas all took the oath and declared their extensive criticisms of CTA, emphatically condemning the egregious lawsuit against us. Rich Beyer and Jane Hallinger may still face depositions but as of this writing, CTA has suggested it would be open to a settlement. CTA knows its case is a sham. PCCFA stands firmly in opposition to this frivolous lawsuit in which massive amounts of teachers’ dues have been used to sue us simply because we successfully escaped CTA’s Community College Association (CCA) clutches in our de-certification election in fall, 2007. CTA’s CCA amounts to little more than a puppet which extracts enormous amounts of cash for CTA’s coffers but provides nothing in return. PCCFA’s firm stance has embarrassed CTA, and we are demanding that CTA leaders come to LA to be deposed by our attorneys so that the truth will come out. Stay tuned.

Good for the Students!

The following is an excerpt from a special student presentation to the Accreditation Team during the Accreditation Week Open Session. It was accompanied by over 2000 student signatures that call for compensated conference hours for Part Time Teachers. We have edited the statement for brevity, but its eloquence and intelligence are most impressive! PCCFA salutes these student activists!

“Pasadena City College represents in its Mission and Values Statement that ‘the college provides high-quality, academically rigorous instruction’ and that it is ‘an institution committed to successful student learning.’

“I am a student here at PCC and am speaking on behalf of Students for Social Justice, chartered with the Inter-club Council. I am also here on behalf of the over 2000 students who signed a petition last Fall, 2008 supporting Part Time Teachers to receive paid conference hours. PCC currently employs over 900 Part Time Instructors, who teach approximately 38% of classes on campus. These Part Time Instructors teach in unfavorable conditions; they have no office to meet with us, the students; they have no paid office hours, in which they devote time to interact with students outside the normal class schedule; they do not have an office computer or an office phone in which to be reached; and they do not have paid time to prepare for and evaluate students’ overall development.

“Full Time Instructors are required by contractual agreement to have an office and conference hours in order to meet students’ educational needs. Why aren’t all professors provided with these vital tools? Why aren’t students advised that their professors are professionally handicapped? Students pay the same amount for a Full Time Professor as they do for a Part Time Professor; they aren’t however advised, that in 38% of the situations they are challenged with no office hours for their Instructors.

“If PCC truly is committed to the Mission and Values Statement claim of nurturing successful student learning, this institution MUST follow through with its word. We MUST give Part Time Teachers all of the vial tools we can provide by mandating paid conference hours for Part Time Teachers.

“It is time that PCC re-evaluate current policy on the matter and recognize that as an institution of this stature and prestige, we MUST act promptly and diligently in the best interests of students and employees and stop the educational discrimination against Part Time Teachers.”

Part Timer Update:

Congratulations on another great meeting of PCC Part Timers chaired by PCCFA VP Preston Rose. Approximately forty faculty turned out for the two-hour meeting (March 28th). Agenda items included an array of issues of great concern including the 67% rule, seniority hire-back rights, health care options, compensated conference hours, pay increases and more. Part Time faculty leadership continues to grow and thrive; their voices will not be ignored as we move into this spring’s critical contract negotiations with the college.

Miscellaneous Items of Importance

Special thanks to PCCFA faculty who represent their divisions or carry out responsibilities for the union on various campus committees college wide. Thanks to Martha Bonilla, Diana Francisco, Jim Gonzales, Tony Juge, Alexis Moore, Steve Pell, Paul Price, and Joe Probst for making significant contributions in official PCCFA tasks.

All FACCC members: Vote For Roger Marheine who is running for a FACCC Governor-At-Large Position. Go to www.FACCC.org to join FACCC and/or cast your ballot.

Mark Your Calendars for Special Events of Importance on Campus

****May 9th (Saturday) Winter Soldier--Eye Witness Accounts of the Occupations: Iraq and Afghanistan.** Area members of Iraq Veterans Against the War (IVAW) will host “Winter Soldier,” a series of testimonies of Iraq and Afghanistan war veterans. PCC Harbeson Hall—all are welcome. (www.IVAW.org)

****May 14th (Thursday) Borders of Diversity Annual Conference** of student presenters in panel discussions. Featured Key Note speaker Melina Abdulla, Pan African Studies Professor, CSULA. (English Division, #7371). PCC Harbeson Hall—all are welcome and teachers are encouraged to bring their classes.

****May 15th (Friday) Road Home:** A day long series of presentations and panel discussions on assisting US military veterans who are returning to campus in increasing numbers. (Campus Forum. (contact PCC counselor Patty d’Orange-Martin #7888)

****May 21st (Thursday) PCCFA General Membership Meeting,** noon to 1 PM, C-333.

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Have a Great Spring Break!!!