

Pasadena City College Faculty Association (PCCFA)
Newsletter
Winter 2009

From the PCCFA President

Roger Marheine

Thank you all for your patience as I recover from knee surgery. I am back on campus and will respond to your phone messages (#7421) and emails (rmarheine@hotmail.com) in a timely fashion. Happy New Year!

State of the Economy

The Nation: With the election of President Obama, economic expectations may exceed results. As word spread of the proposed federal bailout of the states, it was quickly followed by a call for restrained optimism. Despite talk of an \$850 billion stimulus package, analysts have argued \$2 trillion would be needed. Symbolism trumps substance as financial analyst Gus Gaucher of Moody's Economy.com claimed the federal stimulus package "is as much psychological to get people to think that even if we're in a recession, it's going to be temporary....[The federal package] is designed to provide a psychological boost" (LA Times 1-27-09). Make no mistake, however, a massive shift in wealth to ever fewer elites has already been accomplished with \$350 billion going immediately to the largest investment banks. Goldman Sachs and Morgan Stanley will emerge far richer than before because of the federal bailouts. AIG, Bank of America, and the Big Three auto companies continue to seek bailout funds. Meanwhile Countrywide, Lehman Bros., Bear Sterns, Merrill Lynch and Wachovia have been taken over. In the case of Merrill Lynch the Ohio State Teachers Retirement fund was affected. Funny how the \$620 billion annual budget for wars has been overlooked in recent weeks...

The State: Job losses are staggering as some counties in California are officially at 10%, the worst unemployment rate in 15 years. Quite frankly, real unemployment—counting those who do not apply for unemployment compensation, those with part time jobs who want full time work, those in the military for economic reasons, and prisoners—is closer to 20%. The old adage that during an economic downturn people return to school, particularly community colleges, may be tempered by fees increases; one plan was to raise fees from the current \$20/unit to \$30 by July 1, 2009. On the other hand, the two-tier system has UCs cutting freshmen enrollment by several thousand and CSUs downsizing by 10%; a good portion of those students will come to us.

We are part of the \$42 billion (California's deficit) question: What is to become of us? Will the community college system of 2.7 million students, the backbone of California's post high school education, be downsized? Sacramento's budget infighting reflects a genuine philosophical and political question. Should this crisis mark the end of community colleges as we know them--relatively inexpensive access for working class students? Will CCs be gutted with severe downsizing because there are so few jobs awaiting qualified students anyway? Or, should they be retained even as California's K-12 funding is 47th (!) out of 50 states? Obviously California's dismal K-12 educational funding precludes an academically prepared work force.

In other words, CCs are the cheap compromise to providing a genuine public education for all, but useful for training enough skilled workers, particularly in a sluggish economy. CCs also provide a narrow and precarious bridge to the higher educational tiers (UCs and CSUs). A front page *Los Angeles Times* article (2/3/09) cites the Public Policy Institute's claim that "only

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about 25% of the students who are focused on transferring actually make it.” That is, CCs provide a kind of safety valve for working class discontent. The ‘lifelong learning’ mantra has a dark side in that CC students are often really on the five to ten year plan, effectively in a holding pattern that provides the hope/illusion of upward mobility. Just as California’s draconian prison system is a warehousing of massive numbers of lower class, largely young men of color, CCs provide a useful place to escape or forestall the painful economic realities for thousands of our students. These and other matters we must ponder.

Your Money is Safe

PCCFA does not invest money in any risk account of any kind. Our current total assets are approximately \$260,000. We have been advised by other major independent unions (e.g. Santa Monica and Foothill DeAnza) to retain a ‘self-insurance’ account of approximately \$500,000. We will make every attempt to achieve that financial goal. Now having said that, you should know that PCCFA leaders will be providing depositions at the end of February as part of the CTA lawsuit against us. We believe CTA’s suit that seeks over \$600,000 is totally frivolous and that we will prevail. We have excellent legal support from Anderson and Associates.

Part Timer Update

The college has offered PCCFA a Memo of Understanding that effectively raises Part Time Faculty’s load from 60% to 67%. We agree in principle to this change, which will mostly affect teachers with five-hour classes (Math, Languages and Sciences Divisions). Those teachers have generally been limited to one class per semester, but with the 67% rule they would be eligible for two classes. We are also urging the college to implement a seniority ‘Hire Back’ policy that would promote some job security in these uncertain times as well as provide the college with a stable and consistent work force. As is, with no guarantee of a class for the next semester, PCC’s senior Part Time Teachers suffer from a practice akin to that of Wal-Mart, fast food restaurants, and sweatshops.

CEC News:

PCCFA Grievance Officers, CEC FT faculty and PCCFA attorneys have met twice with VP Jackie Jacobs regarding the college’s arbitrary pay reduction imposed upon CEC FT teachers this past fall. CEC faculty seek back pay for the overload worked that the college withheld arbitrarily. The amount per faculty is for approximately three hours per week, thus a sizeable sum for the semester. Despite, the college’s initial response that back pay would be restored, nothing has happened. Stay tuned...

Negotiations: Because of the budget uncertainties, many community colleges in our area have only just begun negotiations or like us will begin soon. Our Lead Negotiators will be Preston Rose and Suzanne Anderson. We will have more on substantive issues in our next newsletter. Some issues that we would like your feedback on include: Full Time senior faculty Golden Handshake, load issues, contractual language, Part Time benefits, other?

Monthly Membership Meetings Scheduled for 2009 (Rooms TBA)

March 19, April 16, May 21, June 11

Contact PCCFA

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Remarkable info from the Chronicle Ed article. Petitions response have been astounded. While Leadership Board believed that fters would support the pter off ice hrs we have been astounded at the response.

A word on solidarity and collegiality...A union of employees, whether auto workers, nurses, or community college teachers, is only as strong as its local solidarity. That is why we broke from CTA. We felt our strength locally was sound. However, in some divisions there seems to be discord not with administration per se but within the ranks. Teachers seem in some cases to be battling each other, Can we find a way to settle disputes and manage our differences in a collegial fashion. We are on the same bus going in the same direction, and quite frankly the state budget is trying to knock the wheels off. Thus PCCFA leadership proposes small group meetings when faculty are unhappy with each other.

Calf bans torture. We think this kind of political statement is a vital part of local democracy