

Professional Staff Committee Issues Report

After a year and a half of meeting, the joint BHE/MCCC Committee on the Appropriateness of the Classification Study for Professional Staff completed its work in February.

Reports were sent to Chancellor Judith Gill. Unfortunately, there was not a joint report as no agreement could be reached. The union report included extensive analysis of contracts from the Classification Study's comparison states and other analysis from JBL Associates.

The study was called for in the 2002-2003 contract extension and was specified to be completed by April 1, 2003. The intention was that the committee findings would inform negotiations for a successor agreement. However, the committee did not commence meetings until November 2003.

The MCCC members were Michael Bathory, Senior Academic Counselor from Greenfield CC; Russ Milham, Senior Academic Counselor from Bristol CC; Mary Nelson, Librarian from Massasoit CC; and Mary Jane O'Connor, Senior Academic Counselor from Holyoke CC. MCCC Vice president Joe LeBlanc also participated.

Initially there was cooperation between the union and management sides, including equally sharing in the \$10,000 fee for JBL Associates' work. "There were a few bright moments where it looked like we might actually accomplish something as a committee," said Russ Milham of Bristol CC.

But this spirit collapsed with the arrival of an observer from the Presidents' Office of Community College Counsel. According to Mike Bathory of Greenfield CC, this legal counsel "did everything he could to sabotage the group process and narrow the Committee's focus." Bathory believes that when the potential costs became apparent, a campaign to discredit JBL began.

While the union members and JBL did extensive analysis and made a number of recommendations in their report, the management report essentially says that the

Classification Study is appropriate for professional staff.

The MCCC members poured over 170 contracts from 11 comparison states to develop their recommendations.

A key finding of their research was that some staff positions, particularly librarians and academic counselors, are considered "non-teaching faculty." Out of 58 contracts that JBL Associates analyzed, counselors were in faculty contracts at 50 colleges and librarians were in 46 colleges. Other job titles with significant numbers in faculty contracts were 10 for coordinators, 6 for advisors, nurses, and specialists, and 5 for technicians.

JBL looked into the Archer Job Evaluation System that was used by the classification consultants, DMG/Maximus, to establish the seven classification categories for professional staff. The Archer System was originally developed for industrial workers, and JBL found a number of aspects of the system that could be modified to make it more appropriate for college professional staff.

One weakness found in the system was that it did not adequately account for responsibility factors in determining the classification of positions. In the detailed descriptions of positions, work requirements and aptitude requirements are clearly quantified, but responsibility requirements are not. Responsibility is a "pervasive multiplier" in the Archer formula, and increasing its value could make significant improvement.

The union report made several recommendations to address the inequities of classification for professional staff.

- Classify some staff positions as "non-teaching faculty," and put them on the same schedule as teaching faculty.
- Adjust the Archer System to make it reflect the nature of professional staff jobs particularly as regards responsibility levels.
- Add a premium to annual compensa-

tion for professional staff on 12 month contracts.

- Award additional annual points to reflect the longer work year compared to faculty.
- Assign points in the initial placement process for prior part-time work (as is done for faculty).

The report sent to Chancellor Gill included hundreds of pages of supporting documentation. It also included mention of the difficulties the Committee faced.

"Our committee members spent many hours examining the appropriateness of the classification system as it applies to the

MCCC's unit professional staff," said Vice President Joe LeBlanc. "It is a travesty that the Joint Management-Labor committee was unable to even agree that the system needs fixing. We know better.

"Our members were outraged that management was unwilling to suggest even minimal tweaking to a system which in some ways treats our unit professionals as second class citizens. We cannot and will not agree to such nonsense."

The Committee recommendations will be taken into consideration as the union proceeds with negotiations for a new contract. ■



Professional Staff Classification Committee members Michael Bathory, Greenfield, (seated left) and Russ Milham, Bristol, along with MTA Consultant Michelle Gallagher and MCCC Vice President Joe LeBlanc. Not present are Committee members Mary Nelson, Massasoit, and Mary Jane O'Connor, Holyoke.