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MCCC News

The Official Publication of the *Massachusetts Community College Council* / Vol. 25, Issue 1 / September 2024

Enrollments Surge with Free Community College



While the state legislature often doesn't seem to care about community colleges, and has come under criticism from many sources for delay and inaction, it showed remarkable efficiency in passing the MassEducate bill to make community colleges free.

Last fall the MassReconnect legislation went into effect that gave students who were 25 and had no degree free tuition and fees. At that time a study committee was formed to essentially extend the policy to all community college students. The committee made recommendations late in the spring, and a bill was written and passed before the end of formal sessions.

After years of declining enrollments community colleges have struggled to cope with low enrollments. Given only a couple of months to prepare for MassEducate, the colleges are flooded with new applicants and policies. Staff members in the admissions and financial aid areas are overloaded, new sections of courses are being opened and the colleges are struggling to find faculty to teach them.

The enrollment increases vary from campus to campus with 12.45 percent being the lowest increase and 50 percent as the highest. The table below shows the head count numbers from most of the colleges. Some are not reporting percentage increases, so it's been difficult to translate their data into that statistic.

Berkshire	26%
Bristol	12.45%
Bunker Hill	12.71%
Cape Cod	34%
Greenfield	NA
Holyoke	18.2%
Massasoit	16.1%
Mass Bay	27.5%
Middlesex	17.9%
Mt. Wachusett	26%
North Shore	21%
Northern Essex	16.7%
Quinsigamond	NA
Roxbury	50%
Springfield Tech	22%

As this is the first year of a program that was only enacted at the end of the school year, many high school students and guidance counselors were not aware of this new situation. So next year the numbers of new students is likely to increase further.

The legislation and surge of enrollment had also

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Breaking News: Governor signed supplemental budget with MCCC raises as this newsletter was being finalized. *(See VP report page 2.)*

MTA Summer Conference Adds Humor

In a slight shift from tradition, the MTA Summer Conference was held the last of days of July instead of the first week of August. Otherwise, the program at UMass Amherst was similar to previous years.

Given that the predominate membership of MTA is K-12 educators, most of the workshops and programs were focused on that level of education. Some of the sessions awarded professional development points (PDP) for teacher certification, but many had applicability to higher ed. as well, such as sessions on bargaining or communication skills for union leaders.

However, as always, there was a dedicated Higher Ed. Day on Tues. July 30 with a program of specific to college faculty and staff issues that brought together members from community colleges, state universities and UMass to address mutual issues.

Higher Ed. specific sessions included one on "Building a Higher Education Activist Network to Win Higher Ed. for All," which involved people who had led campaign organizing efforts and discussion of strategies for strong member access teams. Another focused on fighting the increasing privatization of public colleges. And another workshop looked at how union activism at Salem State University addressed severe financial cuts that threatened workers jobs with furloughs in 2020. Participants shared strategies and actions that were successful in bringing the administration around to seek more funding from the state.

One workshop stood out for its refreshing humorous approach to address a serious topic. Using the conceit of a big time professional wrestling match, the presentation titled "Battle Royal: Legal Eagle vs The Organizing Kid or Can the Lawyers Save Us?" pitted two approaches to solving problems that unions face. MTA Field Rep/Organizer Miles Stern (who has a law degree) played the role of the Legal Eagle who advocates taking management to court over violations of labor law to solve problems. Maria Hegbloom from Bridgewater State University played the role of the Organizing Kid who advocates for rallying the union membership to group actions.

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IN SOLIDARITY

SUPP'S DONE – NOW LET'S GET GOING!



Joe Nardoni, MCCC VP

The Governor Signed the Supplemental Budget on September 17. That it did is a victory earned by your activism in writing personal emails and calling your reps and senators, along with behind-the-scenes efforts of the MTA and the College Presidents, all urging the General Court to do the right thing. The MCCC has it in writing that A&F will release the funds immediately to the colleges for payout, so our members do not have to wait any longer to be made whole according to our contract.

I have asked your Chapter Presidents to ask your College Presidents to urge their payroll offices to get the money out to you by the next payroll period in September, and to have payroll adjustments notices sent to all members by the time we receive the retroactive pay. Nate Mackinnon, Executive Director of MACC, has told me that we should expect some variations in payout timing among the colleges. But they should have the money by the time you read this and they should be preparing to pay you.

In the meantime, it is gratifying to see that our much more pressing issue – the generational economic exploitation of both our FT and PT faculty and staff – is finally getting the notice it deserves in the media. The Strategic Action Committee met on Tuesday, September 17 at 4:30 to discuss our plan on how to rectify that through a Legislative override. The Legislative Agenda that arose from those discussions will be recommended to the Board at the September meeting.

This will take a lot of work–lobbying the Governor and her staff, talking directly with A&F, using our cultivated relationships with our senators and representatives to get enough people on board to give our asks momentum at the State House. We need to focus on those legislators who can and have shown they are willing to help us as we move it through the process. We have to do it this way to ensure that our proposals go forward with approvals at each stage of a funding bill as it makes its way through the State House. While I would love to be able to fast track such a bill through the General Court and will do everything I can to ensure this happens, it is more important that we win passage of the bill.

I ask all MCCC members to prepare yourselves to help in this initiative every way you can. The plan will ask you to act on campus; it will ask you to act in public; it will ask you to motivate your colleagues who don't believe anything good can happen to have enough hope to act in solidarity with us. It will ask you to lobby the MTA to include our asks in their Legislative Agenda and to make them separate asks, for us, and work to help our MTA lobbyists articulate our needs when it is time. It will ask you to help recruit new members to our union in both the DAY and DCE unit, so we can speak with a louder and more diverse voice. I know that far too many of you are overworked and that this damages your ability to participate in our initiatives, but this is a once-in-a-generation opportunity for us. **We need to make our case about how our low wages make it difficult to maintain the academic integrity of our programs and our campuses in the face of the increased enrollments coming to us from MassReconnect and MassEducate.**

Thank you to all of the members who responded to me during my last ask about what it is like to be overworked and underpaid. I have saved those stories. None of the press coverage we have received would have been possible without your stories. We have the facts on our side; the Legislature needs to understand what those facts mean in human terms. I need you to keep on sending me those stories and to share them with your colleagues on campus and your legislators. Your need to have a job that provides you with a real living wage is dire, and ***fair.***

I pledge to work on that with you throughout the upcoming session of the Legislature. I ask you to pledge to work with me. ■

MTA Summer Conference…

Continued from front page

The legal eagle presented a time line of labor laws from the 1916 Keating-Owen Child Labor Act to the 2019 Freedom to Join Act. The scrappy Organizing Kid added a number of laws from the 1890 Sherman Anti-Trust Act to the 2018 Janus Decision that weakened unions.

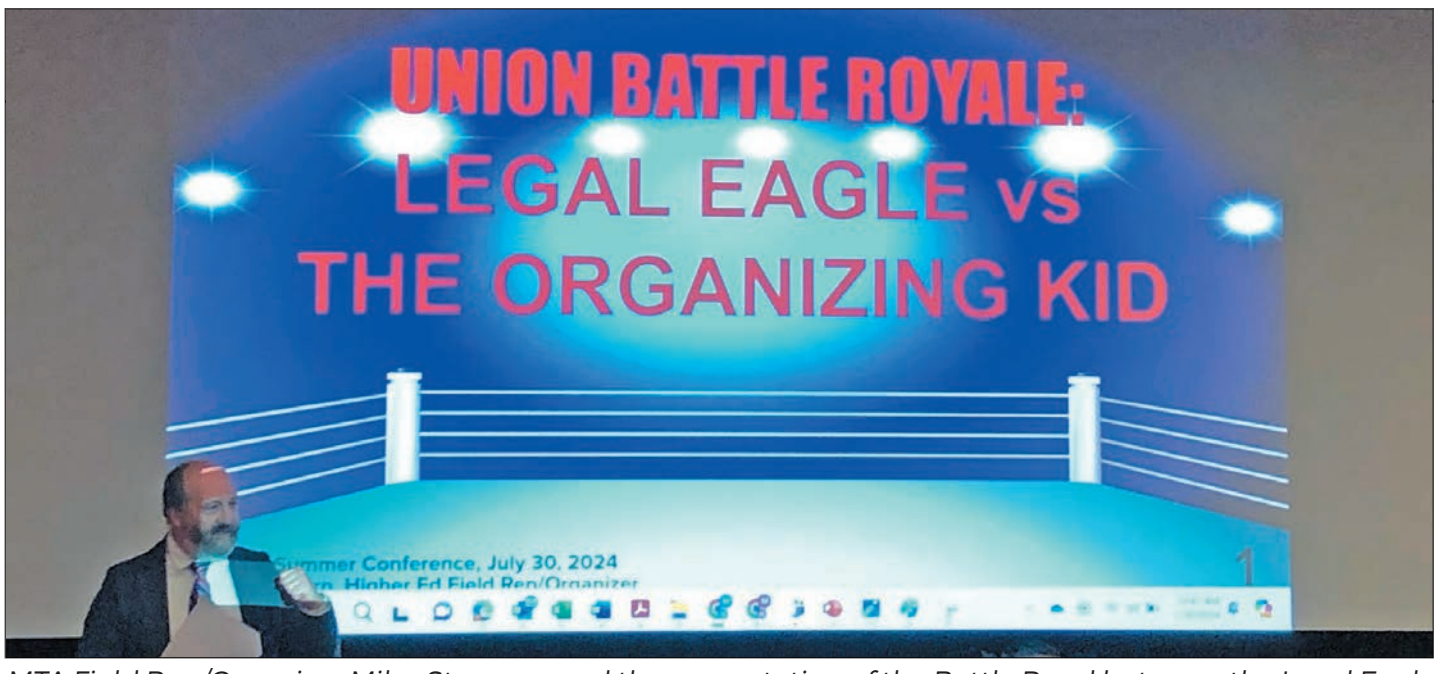
Their Round 1 example was the real situation of people employed in the UMass development department being told that the fund-raising functions that they had been doing as state employees was going to be transferred to a non-state entity. They could keep their jobs, but would no longer be in the state pension system or be covered by a union.

Group discussion looked at what responses had been made and also what other actions might be taken. There were some obvious legal avenues over transfer of union work out of the unit, but court cases take time, and meanwhile the transfers could continue. Ultimately a binding decision could be issued, but there's no guarantee the decision would be in favor of the union.

Meanwhile protests over the obvious unfairness of depriving employees from the benefits that they previously had is compelling. And bringing that unfairness to public light may bring pressure from the public, alumni, and most especially the state legislature.

While the premise was that the two approaches were at odds with each other, but at the end of the round Stern peeled off his suit to expose worker clothing and Hegbloom donned a necktie to demonstrate that it's a tie match. Both approaches need to work together to protect employee rights. At the end MTA Organizer Sean Barrett said, "It's important that we publicize legal victories as an aid to organizing."

Another event for higher ed participants was a luncheon on the top floor of the Campus Center that featured speaker Al Davidoff, author of "Unionizing the Ivory Tower" that chronicles the struggle to unionize food service workers at Cornell University. Lunch was the one social event place where just higher ed. participants across all segments could mix and interact. ■



MTA Field Rep/Organizer Miles Stern opened the presentation of the Battle Royal between the Legal Eagle vs The Organizing Kid to compare the different approaches to solving problems faced by unions.

(Photo by Don Williams)

IN SOLIDARITY

MCCC Member Spotlight: **Mike Geary**

by Colleen Avedikian

Mike Geary's journey from adjunct faculty member to President of the Bristol Community College Chapter is a testament to leadership driven by empathy and dedication. As he enters his 25th year at Bristol Community College, Mike's impact reaches far beyond the classroom. With an MA in British Literature from Rhode Island College, he has always been a passionate educator, but his commitment to fostering a strong, inclusive union is what truly stands out.

Mike's first major involvement in the union came when he stepped into the role of Chapter President. Initially put off by the internal conflicts he witnessed in union meetings, Mike was determined to make the union a space where all voices could be heard without fear or frustration: "I wanted to make these meetings safe spaces where members could be heard."

Building on his experience as Vice President of Bristol's Faculty and Professional Staff Senate, Mike prioritized one-on-one meetings with members to ensure everyone felt comfortable expressing their concerns. This personalized approach has fostered a sense of trust and camaraderie within the union, making it clear that every member's voice matters.

Mike believes that leadership requires balancing guidance and empowering others to form their own opinions. While he isn't afraid to share his stance on important issues, he does so thoughtfully. He encourages members to take ownership of the union's direction, emphasizing that it belongs to them.

Under Mike's leadership, the Bristol Chapter has experienced some progress. In the most recent election cycle, his consistent message about active involvement resonated with members, leading to an influx of new candidates for leadership roles, such as DCE Representative. His advocacy for greater professional staff participation has also paid off, with half of the union's elected offices now filled by professional staff, and every Bristol campus represented through appointed positions.

One of the chapter's most notable victories under Mike's leadership was the implementation of a new telework policy. Addressing concerns raised by professional staff about the administration's one-size-fits-all approach, Mike helped to secure a policy that better reflects the needs of staff and boosts campus morale. "Having that good rapport allows you to get things done," he says, highlighting the importance of collaboration with management to solve problems facing members.

Despite these successes, Mike remains acutely aware of the challenges ahead, particularly low salaries and understaffing. He is especially concerned about the impact of Mass Educate on professional staff. One of his goals is to serve on an MCCC contract bargaining team. To that end, he is working to complete the MTA's Bargaining Certificate Program.

Beyond his professional goals, Mike is committed to being a role model for his five-year-old son. He hopes to inspire the next generation to carry on the fight for workers' rights. "Whether it's my son or my students, they've got to see the greater good of unions and get involved." Mike Geary's leadership is grounded in a profound sense of responsibility–to his colleagues, students, and the future of the labor movement. ■



Bristol Chapter President Mike Geary with his family.

VISIT THE MCCC ONLINE!

www.mccc-union.org

The MCCC website is the best and most up-to-date source for late breaking developments important to Day and DCE Unit members in addition to being a valuable resource for MCCC contact information, bargaining and legislative updates, contracts, committee assignments, bylaws, local chapter leadership, calendar of meetings and events, and the MCCC News newsletters (current and past).

Find links to NEA, MTA and MCCC on Twitter and Facebook.

Bookmark the site for frequent referral.

There is a "Members Only" area with additional information. You log on to that with the same credentials as your MTA Members account. Don't have an account? Create one using your membership card info at MassTeacher.org.

NEWS BRIEFS

MCCC Accounting Savings

Accountants from AA F-CPA, who have been conducting annual audits for the MCCC for many years, gave a presentation to the MCCC Board of Directors in August suggesting a change that would save the Union $6,000 annually. The firm had been conducting a full Audit every year, where they looked deeply into the financial policies and practices. This process dates back to when the MCCC restructured and moved into the Worcester Office. Finding no problems for several cycles, the accountants recommended the Union switch to a simpler Review process that is less time consuming and therefore lower in price. The Board, that has fiduciary responsibilities, debated making the change, and, with the provision that they might revert to the Audit process in a few years, they passed the policy to use the Review process.

Distance Education Negotiations Collapse

After months of fruitless negotiations over the provisions of the decades-old Distance Ed. Agreement failed to reach a settlement and closed in May. The Union contends that the management team dragged its feet, and towards the end of bargaining, withdrew provisions previously agreed to. DeAnna Putnam, who led that MCCC team, said that Distance Ed. conditions will be negotiated separately by the Day and DCE contract teams.

Contract Negotiations Begin

As reported to the board of directors in August, both the Day and DCE negotiating teams have begun meeting. The Day team had its first meeting planned for Aug. 28 and is intending to push for a settlement in time to be in the main state budget rather than a supplemental budget like the current contract. The DCE team had been meeting weekly over the summer, but had not yet met with management.

Basic GIC Life Insurance Benefit Increased

The legislature passed a measure that increases the basic, free life insurance for all active, benefitted employees and retirees, doubling the coverage from $5,000 to $10,000. The legislation was pushed by the *State Retirees* association, that is also pursuing changes to the basis for retiree COLAs. Currently when a cost-of-living increase is approved, it is only applied to the first $13,000 of the retirees' pension earnings. Legislation also authorized a COLA Commission that would study making changes to the COLA process including increasing the basis to match what some municipal pensions have that are $1,000-3,000 higher.

Enrollments Surge...

Continued from front page

gotten community colleges some much needed attention. Two different articles in the Boston Globe (which has not often been supportive) detailed the low pay of faculty and staff at our colleges. One article had glaring comparisons of pay (using MTA research-corrected for the states' cost of living index) at other high cost of living states showing Massachusetts at the bottom. At an average pay of $68,324 Mass is $15,288 below Vermont, the next lowest pay state and $67,000 below Illinois, the highest. Members from around the state were interviewed on how low the pay is put in personal terms. The articles are on the MCCC Facebook page.

This kind of public attention helps the union make its case for serious pay adjustments to the Healey administration and the legislature to address the inequities.

MCCC News

http://mccc-union.org

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The MCCC News is a publication of the Massachusetts Community College Council. The Newsletter is intended to be an information source for the members of the MCCC and for other interested parties. Members' letters up to 200 words and guest columns up to 400 words will be accepted and published on a space-available basis. The material in this publication may be reprinted with the acknowledgment of its source. For further information on issues discussed in this publication, contact Donald Williams, North Shore Community College, One Ferncroft Road, Danvers, MA 01923. email:Communications@mccc-union.org

MCCC Meetings Calendar 2024-2025

Meetings will be conducted virtually in most cases. Members who wish to attend a meeting, but are not regular meeting attendees, should request access from President Barnes in advance of meeting. Two months will have the possibility of face-to-face Board of Directors meetings: November and June.

YEAR	MONTH	EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE	BOARD OF DIRECTORS	OTHER EVENTS
2024	AUGUST	9	23	
2024	SEPTEMBER	6	20	
2024	OCTOBER	4	18	
2024	NOVEMBER	1	15	
2024	DECEMBER	6		
2025	JANUARY	3	17	
2025	FEBRUARY	7	21	Nominations Due 2/1(tentative)
2025	MARCH	7	21	3/1 Bylaws Proposals Due
2025	APRIL	5	21	4/26 MCCC Delegate Assembly
2025	MAY	9		5/2-5/3 MTA Annual Meeting Springfield, MA
2025	JUNE	6	11*(Wed) May be in person	
2025	JULY			7/3–7/7 NEA-RA

Know Your Day Contract

October 2024

October 1 Tenure eligibility list distributed (p. 49).

October 1 Sick leave bank open (p. 23).

October 1 Sabbatical applications for July 1/Fall semester due (p. 29).

October 2 Furnish employer with dues to be deducted per employee (p. 20).

October 6 Supervisor shall return Course Materials to faculty members by end of fifth week of semester. Members have 14 calendar days to respond to supervisor's concerns (p. 59).

October 14 Columbus Day holiday observed (p. 27).

October 15 Notice of termination at end of fifth year or later (p. 48).

October 15 Sabbatical leave applications for July 1/Fall sent to Sabbatical Leave Committee (p. 29).

October 30 Last day to opt out of sick bank (p. 23).
(Note: membership in sick leave bank is automatic upon first October of a member's employment.)

NOTE: *Page numbers are from the 2021–2023 contract that is on the MCCC Website MCCC-union.org. The 2024 contract is not on line, but all of the provisions are the same as the 2021-20213, except pay. Most of these dates are "last date" standards and vary with the first day of classes. In many cases the action can be accomplished before the date indicated.*

Free Life Insurance for Union Members

Members of the MCCC are also members of the National Education Association, and as an NEA member you are automatically covered by the NEA Complimentary Life Insurance (formerly known as NEA DUES-TAB) term life insurance. It is a guaranteed benefit for Active and Life members. All you need to do is register your beneficiary.

The free program offers $1,000 of term life insurance, up to $5,000 (depending on years of membership) of accidental death and dismemberment coverage, and up to $50,000 of AD&D insurance for any covered accident that occurs while on the job or serving as an association leader.

To register your beneficiary or to obtain more information:

Call 1-800-637-4636, or go to http://www.neamb.com/insurance/nea-complimentary-life-insurance.htm ■

Write Us

Letters to the Editor

Only submissions by MCCC unit members will be accepted. Letters should be no more than 200 words in length. The author must include name and chapter affiliation, which will be published with the letter. Authors must provide the editor with contact information in the form of either email address, mailing address or telephone number. Letters will be published on a space available basis and may be edited for length and appropriateness. Not all submissions can be published.

Guest Columns

Guest Columns should be no more than 400 words in length. Columns by authors who are not MCCC members may be accepted. The author's name and affiliation will be published with the column.

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