



ADVOCATE



Summer 2025 E-News Issue

MCCC Hub

<https://bit.ly/m/fairpaymccc>

🔥 MCCC Organizing Committee on Fire 🔥

By Co-chairs Stacie Hargis and Angelina Avedano

Summer means more sunshine and for many of us, a great time to reflect, rejuvenate, and in some cases, rebuild. On June 3rd, the Massachusetts Community College Council's Organizing Committee (MCCC/OC) hosted a statewide Lunch & Learn Retreat for chapters to leverage summer's "quieter" time to refresh and rebuild for an even stronger union in the Fall.

We are at a precipice of something big in the MCCC. And we have made significant movement toward working more efficiently as a statewide union. In November 2024, we had one of our first statewide standouts with turnout at every chapter! [\[View the photo gallery at this live link.\]](#)

Since then, MCCC/OC has been meeting bi-weekly to coordinate chapter and other statewide actions like the billboard campaign, tabling, standouts, and this Spring's Commencement actions. [\[Check out this slide deck roundup of our hard work.\]](#)

The MCCC/OC includes representation from almost every chapter. We thank you for continuing to show up and share ideas!

This summer, we are concentrating on building chapter strength so that the MCCC can continue to advance our campaign for more resources and funding for pay equity for ALL members. We developed our Promise Card (see page 6), which outlines what we are fighting for this year. Cards are available to every chapter, along with buttons and our blue "Fair Pay" t-shirts to prepare for collective action in the coming months.

June 3rd, over twenty members from twelve of our colleges gathered for an all-day training at MTA's Worcester office.

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Over twenty members representing 12 out of 15 community colleges gather for a day-long retreat in Worcester on June 3rd.

Top News

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MCCC Calendar



26 July - MCCC Organizing Committee Check In at this [ZOOM LINK](#)

27-30 July - [MTA Summer Conference UMass Amherst](#)

29 July - [Higher Ed Day at MTA Summer conference](#)

12 August 10am-2pm - Organizing Committee In-Person Part II - Launch/Learn - Worcester MTA Regional Office [REGISTER NOW](#).

22 August 10am-2pm - MCCC Board of Directors meeting on ZOOM.



Soon!

July 2025

I hope that all of you are enjoying your summer and taking some well-earned time off. I have several good news items to report.

Although you may have already heard the news, a salary equity study for the MCCC was included in the approved state budget. As we are stymied by the governor's contract parameters in negotiations, a legislative fix is absolutely necessary, and I am so grateful for all of the actions you have taken as part of the contract campaign and political efforts to impact the legislature. Although we all believe that there is already ample data to prove that MCCC faculty and professional staff, full and part-time, are grossly underpaid, this equity study is a significant form of official recognition from the legislature. We will do everything in our power to make sure this equity study is done well and that its results are implemented by the state.

I also want to report that the Day Negotiations Team has an agreement in principle with management for a 1-year contract. The team is currently working with management on an MOA. Once that is complete, we will share the MOA and new salary grids as part of the ratification process.

PROFESSOR TOM SCHAEFER AND PRESIDENT BARNES FEATURED ON WBUR!

[LISTEN HERE](#)

from the desk of
resident Claudine Barnes



Some highlights of the agreement: improved language in the preamble regarding professional behavior (a step to protecting members from bullying on our campuses); better health and safety language including MCCC in college committees and ensuring accessibility to all emergency preparedness plans; language on a probationary period for part-time professional staff members and notice requirements; student enrollment verification; overtime compensation for professional staff members; written notification of salary changes and language on over and underpayment of salaries; and a 3.5% increase to salaries in January 2026 (in line with the governor's parameters). In addition, we have almost wrapped up the negotiations regarding the \$500 per FTE that the MCCC was to receive in July 2024 for equity, recruitment and retention – any compensation derived from this part of negotiations will be retroactive to July 2024.

Given that we are headed into ratification, it is a good time to remind everyone of the Day Contract funding process which is Massachusetts is lengthy, convoluted, and provides too many opportunities for the governor to weigh in on both content of CBAs and the funding itself. Our MTA Field Representative Organizers have created a Zoom training on this process as well as documents that can be shared with members. After ratification, we will ensure that this information is available again to everyone. It is also a reminder that one of our long-term goals is to amend MGL Chapter 150E which includes this contract funding process.

Finally, we were notified several weeks ago that there will be a restructuring in the assignments of our MTA Field Representative Organizers. I did send a communication out to our Board and all chapter presidents with the basic outline of the plan, but the details still need to be hammered out. As we learn more, this information will be shared with you. In the meantime, I personally want to thank Tyler Rocco-Chaffee and Bret Seferian for the immense amount of support they have provided to the MCCC and wish them well as they transition into other higher ed assignments within the MTA. We will miss you!

As always, please reach out with any questions or concerns.

~Claudine

Commencement Billboard Campaign



Peter Fynn from Northern Essex CC poses with a local MCCC billboard.

Berkshire Professor Karen Hines Gives a Dose of Reality

FACTS

MYTHS



Karen Hines Berkshire CC

I have been a community college faculty member since 2012, starting at Holyoke Community College and transferring to Berkshire Community College in 2019. When I began this career, I took a salary cut because I had grown up on a college campus and understood the value of education. I wanted to support students as they build foundations for their futures.

Teaching can be incredibly rewarding. I love watching students grow and helping them find paths that align with their aspirations. Many of my former students have transferred to prestigious institutions like UMass Amherst's Isenberg School of Business and launched careers they're proud of. Others have started businesses. These success stories remind me why I chose this profession.

When I entered this field, I knew I would never get rich, but I believed the state would support a living wage for a full-time employee. I started in 2012 with an MBA in the low 50's. With normal 2 to 3% annual increases over fourteen years, I am not earning a living wage. Instead, my wages have stagnated while costs have skyrocketed.

The state has experienced steady increases in housing, transportation, and food costs. During COVID, the Berkshires saw housing costs rise dramatically as people moved to rural areas. The pandemic created cumulative price increases of nearly 20% across all goods and services by 2024. While inflation has cooled, prices remain substantially higher than pre-pandemic levels, creating affordability challenges my salary cannot meet.

Before COVID, I began teaching adjunct courses because my institution couldn't find and/or keep a second full-time faculty member in our department. There have been two faculty members hired who lasted a full year before moving to better offers. We have

Continued on page 6.

A CUP OF JOE



**MCCC VP
Joe Nardoni**

Some Independence Day Hope for Our Members

As I think back to July 4, 1776, I am reminded of the audacity of the Declaration of Independence in its clear statement of why our people should be free from the economic and political domination of a distant King. I am gratified to know that the spirit of that audacity is alive and living in the MCCC.

It was your hard work and audacious belief in the possibility of a better life through attaining economic justice in Massachusetts that has led the Legislature to pass a budget that establishes and funds a classification study for our FT DAY members that is supposed to be ready by the time we are negotiating a new contract.

It is time to take that audacity further. We assert that:

We deserve to have pay equity with community college faculty in California, because it costs more to live in MA than in CA, and our professional staff deserve to have equivalent salary advances, because their work is essential to our colleges' success.

We deserve to have jobs that are the first income in our families, and not the second or third.

We deserve to have jobs that provide a future for our children, without having to sacrifice our time with them.

We deserve to have jobs that will allow us to earn a dignified retirement. One job should be enough for all of our full-time DAY members.

We deserve jobs like this not merely because it sounds nice to say, but because we have already earned them by the hard work we have done by changing how we worked on the fly during the COVID crisis; by the hard work we have done in adjusting to significant enrollment increases because of MassReconnect and MassEducate; by the hard work we do every day with our students in class and at home and during the summer months in preparing lesson plans and grading student work; by the hard work of finding the right supports our students need to be successful, whether it be academic tutoring or enrichment opportunities, food security, or housing stability and sometimes, all three.

We deserve justice for hard-working adjunct faculty and part-time professional staff and part-time DAY faculty, many of whom have been stymied in attaining professional advancement, job security or health insurance and retirement benefits, because of situations established by a system of laws and maintained by inevitable practices at our colleges that are designed to keep them where they are, forever underpaid and underappreciated.

It is times to take up the audacious statement of these self-evident truths: that FT faculty and Professional Staff share these common desires with our DCE (adjunct) faculty and PT staff members: equal pay for equal work with our counterparts in the four year universities in MA and across the country, adjusted for the cost of living in our very wealthy state; a safe and dignified workplace with job security; and fair access to benefits like health insurance and retirement.

It is time that we throw off the practices of the past that keep our members separated and unsupported. We can no longer afford to believe that just because we have two contracts, we cannot act in concert to raise up one another to a more secure, more satisfying, and more economically just life.

And let's not forget what this audacity requires moving forward. Just as the colonists had to fight a war to break free of the oppressive yoke of the English king, so too do we have significant obstacles to overcome on the way to winning a wage equity adjustment. We have more work to do, both with our allies and with and for one another, to create the kind of opportunities our members deserve. I will do whatever it takes to get us there.

Continued on page 4.

BRISTOL CHAPTER TAKES MAJOR ACTION

by Chapter President Mike Geary

Bristol Community College Council (BrCCC) has been navigating a major leadership change. In March, we welcomed a new President who arrived at a time of significant unrest.

Over the past academic year, faculty and staff have reported widespread instances of managerial bullying. Many of these incidents involved the Vice President of Academic Affairs and other upper-level administrators. These concerns were detailed in a White Paper shared with the new President. So far, there has been no visible response from the President's Office.

Grievances have increased sharply, and employee morale continues to suffer. This is not a new problem. Morale has been low for nearly a decade, and recent leadership hires have not been able to reverse the trend.

Our colleagues in AFSCME are facing similar challenges. Management has shown poor regard for impact bargaining, routinely ignored employee concerns, and engaged in behavior that many perceive as retaliatory.

Union leadership from BrCCC and AFSCME meet monthly with the President and the President's Leadership Team. Despite this, management continues to dismiss collective concerns and instead encourages individuals to take issues to area managers. MACER meetings have also been disappointing. Attendance from management has been inconsistent, and they rarely contribute agenda items. Most concerns raised by our team have been brushed aside. Meetings have also been disrupted by scheduling conflicts caused by management's failure to follow the posted calendar.

This pattern led to a joint meeting between BrCCC and AFSCME leadership, an unprecedented step in the college's history. Less than a week later, an emergency follow-up meeting was held. The outcome was a vote of no confidence in the Vice President of Academic Affairs, the Chief Officer of Human Resources, and the Vice President of Student Services and Enrollment Management. These votes were supported by a supermajority of members from both unions. The President has yet to respond or even acknowledge that these votes took place.

We are now preparing for a reorganization that will combine the Arts and Humanities division with Behavioral and Social Sciences. At the same time, reassigned time for Department Chairs and Program Coordinators has been cut by at least half. The Program Coordinator title will be eliminated in Fall 2025, and all will be moved into Department Chair roles. Multiple grievances were filed regarding the reassigned time reductions, and all were denied by Human Resources.

BrCCC continues to push back against the idea that management has unlimited authority to restructure the college and redefine employee responsibilities. While we face serious challenges, the strongest development this year has been the solidarity built between BrCCC and AFSCME. That unity is what will carry us forward as we fight for the college we believe in.

Mike Geary is Associate Professor of English at Bristol Community College. He started as an adjunct faculty member at the college in 2000 and was hired as full-time faculty in 2008. He teaches Comp 1, Comp 2, Technical Writing, and a variety of sophomore level classes, including a course he created for the college in Science Fiction Literature. Mike specializes in theme-based courses. He has served in a wide variety of administrative roles, including Chair of the English Department's Portfolio Assessment Project, Writing Center Coordinator, and Vice President of the Faculty and Professional Staff Senate.

Currently, he is in his third year as President of BrCCC MCCC-MTA where he has served as Impact Bargaining Chair as well as Chair of MACER for the chapter. He recently completed the MTA Bargaining Certificate Program and aspires to serve on the Day Bargaining Team in the future.



MASSACHUSETTS COMMUNITY COLLEGE COUNCIL

"Some Independence Day Hope for Our Members" continued from page 3.

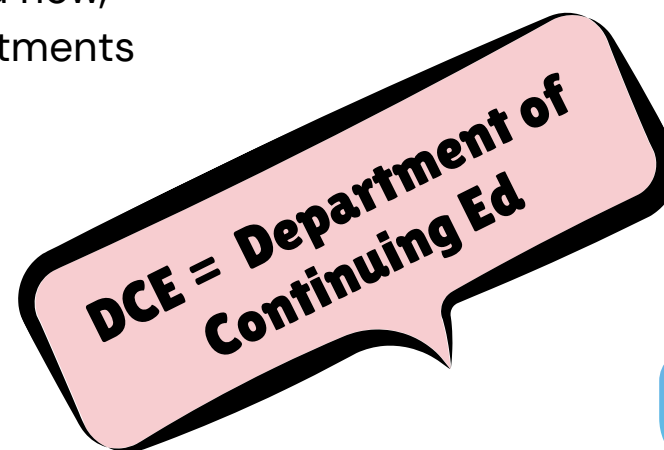
To that end, I am asking all of you to get to know one another even better than you already do. Go out of your way to meet and support both part-time and full-time new hires. Show your colleagues what it means to be a member of our union, and how, together we will be successful in getting wage equity adjustments for all of our members.

Conceive it, believe it, achieve it! We will not be denied!

Joe Nardoni
MCCC Vice President

DCE DROP ZONE

VITAL NEWS FOR ADJUNCT/CONTINGENT FACULTY



DCE BARGAINING WITH MANAGEMENT

by Mark Bashour

This past October, the MCCC DCE Bargaining Committee met with representatives of management concerning the terms of our next DCE contract. Management's representatives act on behalf of the fifteen state community college presidents who serve in Massachusetts.

Soon after our negotiations began, the spokesperson for management informed us that they were not going to offer us a contract extension. A contract extension is the agreement that salary terms of a current contract will remain in place should the current contract expire before a new contract has been negotiated. This was alarming to us since offering a contract extension was something that they had always done before.

When we, the DCE members, asked them why they would take this completely unprecedented action, their responses were quite vague, brief, and unsubstantial. There was no concrete answer that they could give us for this new position.

This first meeting set a negative tone for our subsequent meetings, a tone that has not improved much over the past eight months. During these months, the representatives of management have held us back by their insistence of us adopting ground rules that we did not see as beneficial or necessary. In addition, management has offered us contract terms that are below the parameters set by the state government, specifically the Governor. Our chairperson politely told them this was an insult.

During months of negotiation, management has managed to miss a meeting with us without giving us ample notice. They have gone weeks at a time without responding to our emails. They tried to set a deadline for us to finalize all of our proposals at a time when they had submitted few, if any, of their own.

After we were compelled to file a ULP (unfair labor practice motion) against Management, they requested that we have a mediator for negotiations at a cost that would be split between us. It must be noted that usually mediators are brought in to resolve disputes between Management and labor after months of not being able to agree on proposals. In this case, Management was requesting a mediator before they had submitted any proposals of their own..

Obviously, we are not happy with the way negotiations have gone. However, we will not allow ourselves to become impatient, frustrated, or moved to accept a lesser contract based on lowered expectations.

Contract negotiations do not always operate at a predictable rate. Sometimes smooth rounds of negotiations can abruptly encounter obstacles and stagnation. Conversely, negotiations marked by very little success can suddenly become fast-moving and highly productive.

Hopefully, we will meet this latter description in the coming weeks.

DCE Drop Zone contributor, Mark Bashour, is an adjunct professor at Quinsigamond Community College. He also serves on the DCE Bargaining Team

Spotlight on Paul Johansen

From Adjunct to Advocate: Paul Johansen's Journey to Union Leadership and Beyond



For Paul Johansen, an adjunct professor at Berkshire Community College, union activism is less a choice than a calling.

"I've always had an activist bent," Paul reflects on his path that began as an adjunct representative to the MCCC Board and now stretches to the MTA board. "I knew I'd find 'my people' in the union."

A high school memory of a soft-spoken teacher railing against Kafka-esque contract talks with the Amherst School Board left a lasting mark, and a blueprint for resistance. Today, that same quiet fire fuels Johansen's leadership style, which is rooted in listening, inclusion, and grassroots momentum. "I try to lead from the ground up," he explains. "If I don't know how people feel, I ask."

His favorite form of activism? A camera. "I'm probably best known for organizing people to pose with union signs." One photo he took at Berkshire even landed on an NEA poster. Paul points out, "making it fun helps people feel part of something bigger."

Beyond labor rights, mental health advocacy is central to his work. Inspired by Yale's mishandling of a student suicide, he helped found ElisForRachael.org, a nonprofit that successfully pushed for a landmark class-action settlement reforming Yale's mental health policies. He's also gone public with his own experiences with depression, as part of BCC's Breaking Barriers initiative.

With public education under federal threat, Johansen says, "this is an all-hands-on-deck moment." He's never shied away from showing up and bringing others with him. Paul Johansen's journey blends activism, inclusion, and advocacy, both in the classroom and beyond.

Spotlight is researched and written by Colleen Avedikian, MCCC Secretary and Professor of Sociology at Bristol Community College.



Above: Bookmarks developed by the Organizing Committee were distributed to chapters in May. Below: North Shore Community College chapter distributes bookmarks and roses to graduates to help raise awareness of our campaign. Top right: Berkshire members gather near their billboard before commencement. Bottom right: Middlesex chapter members prepare roses, bookmarks, stickers & candy for graduates at commencement.



Continued from page 1

A huge thank you to our MTA reps, Charlotte Kelly, Thomas Lee, and Colleen Fitzpatrick for leading the training. The room was energized with passionate people working toward the same collective goal to build chapters into strong organizing machines.

We are at that point where the coming year will require us to move quickly when needed to push our campaign ahead. Are you going to be with us?

While the MCCC/OC has put in lots of hard work, it is at the chapter level that an essential infrastructure of members ready to mobilize quickly is needed. If you are not already engaged with your chapter, now is the time to step up. Each chapter has levels of engagement from low key to more involved, from somewhat confrontational with management to not at all.

EVERY CHAPTER needs more support to win better contracts, better working conditions, and better pay for all members.

[START HERE](#) to review excellent resources. If you are interested in learning more, please email angelina@mccceducators.org.

Our Spring organizing efforts included a billboard campaign to raise public awareness to the silent crisis facing community college educators. That was a great kick-off to a summer of reflecting, rejuvenating, and rebuilding. This Fall the MCCC/OC intends to build momentum, take stronger actions, and rally our members to demonstrate coordinated union strength. Join us for exciting times ahead. Every member is a key part of this campaign.



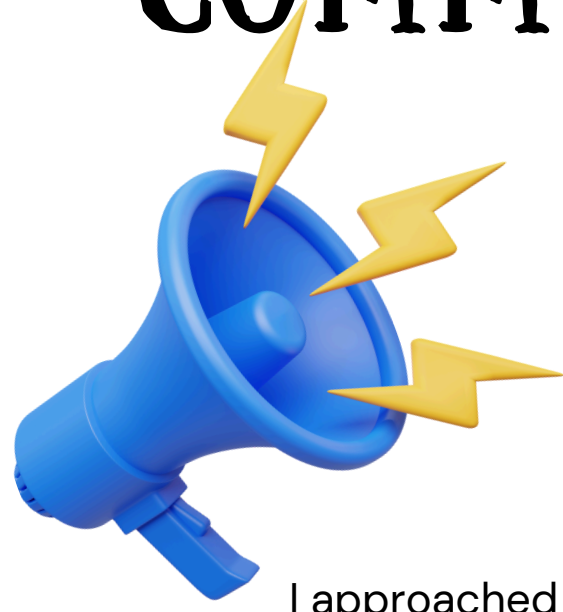
COMMUNITY BLOG

Member Voices

The New Guy

by Stephen DeLello

Instructional Technology Specialist
Massasoit Community College



I approached my first union meeting with trepidation because I was “TNG” – the new guy. My goal was to listen, learn and not say anything so dumb I would be characterized as “TFNG.”

That first meeting was eye-opening. There was a whole new language, and I felt I needed a Navajo code talker to interpret. I was confused about what MACER was. I thought Janus was someone I hadn’t met named Janice. I made the mistake of asking “What does off-grid mean?” And although the rep patiently answered me, she started with a heavy sigh. Nevertheless, I persisted. I took solace in knowing that at some point in the past, everyone else had been the new guy. (It might not have been the recent past since a few members appeared to date back to the Taft Administration.)

Slowly, as they got used to seeing my ugly mug in Zoom chats and standing outside with signs, I was accepted. A breakthrough – I actually understood what the parliamentarian meant when he said, “We’re not voting; we’re voting on whether we will vote.” And I dreamed of the day someone else would replace me as the new guy (taking longer than expected due to the darn hiring freeze.)

And then the day happened. I was at an event at a bowling alley (which also seemed to date to the Taft Administration) and I felt part of the union. There was food and fellowship and even entertaining music (Chappell Roan may have won a Grammy performing “Pink Pony Club,” but I prefer the version by Massasoit’s own, Nick DeLuca.) I sipped a celebratory drink, realizing I was now a respected co-worker, a treasured union colleague and not just “the new guy.”



Above: Stephen and fellow members gather at West Gate Lanes for bowling, billiards, and pizza. Below, Stephen and colleagues participate in Fall Standout at Massasoit Community College.



continued from page 2 “Berkshire Professor Karen Hines.”

been carrying our program with strong adjunct instructors, but they can’t provide the comprehensive support that full-time faculty offer. I repeatedly step up to the plate to accept additional courses in order to provide stability in the program.

After COVID, I started carrying the workload of two full time faculty members - with the second job being created by adjunct courses. By 2024, I added a third flex job with a Boston-based company. I now work three jobs to make some semblance of a reasonable full-time salary. This is a typical example of a faculty member who needs to supplement their job to earn a living wage.

Teaching at community college has become increasingly challenging. We receive fewer college-prepared students, requiring more foundational support with higher student to faculty ratios. While “Free Community College” could address Massachusetts’ workforce needs, it currently adds a heavier workload without addressing the underlying problems.

This year, Commissioner Dr. Noe Ortega spoke at our graduation, touting free education in Massachusetts up to a four year bachelor’s degree with Pell assistance. My business students were confused because many had paid for some or all of their education. The reality is that free education only kicks in when Pell money runs out—after eight semesters, whether or not you’ve completed a degree. For many students, they do not qualify for Pell money until they turn 26 and are no longer associated with their parents income. It sounds wonderful but illustrates how the state promotes a better-educated workforce with free education within a fundamentally broken system that cannot attract and keep qualified faculty.

I am burnt out from carrying three jobs. I’m constantly asked to do more at the same pay “for the students” while administrative positions multiply and their salaries increase. No one should give 120% effort for 70% of a fair wage salary. Faculty were encouraged to support the Fair Share Amendment with promises it would increase our salaries, only to discover most funds went to the MBTA and road systems.

This year, we’re asked to accept the standard 3.5% increase because “next year the state will be prepared to offer more.” I’ve heard “just one more year” throughout my entire career. Community college faculty have become the overlooked stepchildren in higher education, despite having direct daily contact with students and providing education that leads to workforce success.

The system will collapse without recognizing our essential role. We’re a key part of Massachusetts’ workforce development, yet we’re compensated as if our work is secondary. We’re not asking to get rich—we’re asking for a living wage that allows us to focus on teaching instead of scrambling between multiple jobs to pay for groceries and rent.

Students deserve faculty who can dedicate their full energy to education and fostering the growth of the next generation. Massachusetts has an opportunity to lead in community college excellence, but that requires investing in the people who make these institutions work. The time for promises has passed. We need action now, before we lose more talented educators to states and institutions that value their contributions appropriately.

Karen Woltjen Hines is an Associate Professor and Program Advisor in the Business Department at Berkshire Community College and past president of Berkshire’s chapter of Massachusetts Community College Council (MCCC), where she teaches courses in Business, Marketing, Management, Communications, and Entrepreneurship and previously led Open Educational Resources (OER) initiatives at local, state, and national levels. With over a decade of teaching experience across multiple institutions, she combines her extensive business consulting background with innovative pedagogical approaches to help students develop professional skills.



FAIR PAY FOR MASSACHUSETTS COMMUNITY COLLEGE COUNCIL MEMBERS

The MCCC represents faculty and staff at Massachusetts' 15 community colleges. The state's financial support for community colleges must increase to address the crisis created by decades of underfunding. Community colleges suffer from poor wages for educators and lack of resources for students — both undermining MassEducate, the state's free college program. Fair wages are necessary to attract and retain the faculty and staff needed to make MassEducate work.

COMMUNITY COLLEGE EDUCATORS DESERVE A LIVING WAGE

- Community college faculty are paid, on average, \$34,000 less than the living wage in Massachusetts.
- Nearly half of MCCC members struggle with food insecurity.
- Most MCCC members need a second job to pay their bills.

COMMUNITY COLLEGE STUDENTS DESERVE FULL SUPPORT

- Community colleges need the full-time staffing necessary to meet the growing demand for higher education and career training.
- Students deserve access to wraparound support services that promote retention and graduation rates.
- Students need advising, mentoring, and guidance — all provided by full-time staff. Colleges over-relying on part-time and adjunct faculty unfairly limit students' access to academic advisors.

**PROMISE CARDS
AVAILABLE FOR ALL
CHAPTERS!**



COMMUNITY COLLEGE WORKERS DESERVE SUSTAINABLE WORKLOADS

- As enrollment increases, low wages contribute to a severe staffing shortage and increased workloads.
- Our colleges can't fill vacant positions; candidates cite the low pay and the state's high cost of living as reasons for not accepting job offers.
- Full-time community college faculty teach more classes per semester than their peers at state universities and UMass do, leaving less time for advising and student support.

ADJUNCT JUSTICE = COMMUNITY COLLEGE JUSTICE

- Adjunct faculty don't get benefits — no health insurance, no pension, and little job security.
- Adjunct faculty are paid less than full-time faculty for teaching the same courses.
- Adjunct faculty have no pathway to enter full-time positions.

USE THIS CODE TO SHOW THE LOVE!
SUPPORT OUR CAMPAIGN TO FULFILL THE
PROMISE OF FREE COLLEGE.



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