

## Letter: Community college faculty, staff make reasonable demands

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To the editor:

Members of the Massachusetts Community College Council (MCCC), the union representing faculty and professional staff at the 15 community colleges across Massachusetts, are engaged in contract negotiations which have dragged on now for months. As the director representing BCC on the union's statewide board, I feel it's important to share our concerns with the broader community.

First and foremost, our working conditions are our students' learning conditions. Community college employees are the yeomen of the higher education system. Working in open admission institutions requires us to develop a broad range of instructional and other professional skills to meet the needs of our students who present with academic abilities that are highly refined for some and emerging in others. Our students often have multi-dimensional lives that include work and families for whom to care. We are proud of our students' accomplishments and our role in their academic successes. We also believe that we deserve to be compensated fairly.

We in public higher education are often reminded that revenues are a scarce commodity. A taxpayer myself, I am not insensitive to these concerns. MCCC members are at a disadvantage compared to our colleagues who bargained last year. Still, when insurance deductibles and co-pays continually are raised, I would at very least like to think that we will not experience a net loss in income when our contract is settled.

When I purchase things for my family, the merchants understandably do not ask if my salary is keeping pace with their cost increases. My colleagues and I did not choose to work in public higher education to get rich, but neither are we responsible for the year to year vicissitudes in the state economy. We are looking for fairness and respect. When we are fairly compensated, we are able to contribute to our communities.

There is another dimension to negotiations; our contract delineates working conditions. MCCC members demonstrate a commitment to students daily; we are unafraid of doing a fair day's work. We do take umbrage with proposed changes to start time of classes taught, unrealistic caseloads, and the melding of student outcomes with our evaluations.

Evaluation must be based upon factors under our direct control. We are reasonable, responsible professionals who deserve to be treated as such across the 15 campuses of the system. We ask for your support.

Liz Recko-Morrison, Pittsfield

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