

# MCCC News

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## Retirement Health Insurance Changes

In the face of a \$46 billion projected shortfall the state has formed a commission to propose changes in the health benefits for public retirees. Of that liability, \$16.7 is attributed to state employees and the rest to municipal employees. Coming on the heels of 2011's Pension Reform this is the next step in balancing the state's budget. The Commission's acronym OPEB stands for Other Post-Employment Benefits, and its current proposal will be going to the legislature as the basis for more change.

MTA President Paul Toner came to the MCCC Board of Directors' February meeting to explain MTA's perspective on the proposal. He was joined by Sean King from Governmental Services and Joey Hansen, Higher Ed. Director.

Public employees would prefer to

maintain retirement benefits as they are now, but Toner pointed out that because of the increasing cost of healthcare and increasing life expectancy of retirees, these levels are un-sustainable. MTA hired its own actuaries to verify the defi-

cit and they agreed with the state's figures calling it, "a ticking time bomb."

Members of the Commission include former MTA President Ann Wass, who is co-chair, along with another labor representative, a representative from the state

retirees association, five representatives of state and municipal government administrations, and four legislators: Sen. John Hart, Sen. Michael Knapik, Rep. Jay Barrows and Rep. John Scibek.

Toner pointed out that currently state employees can get the maximum benefit of 80 percent coverage of their health insurance upon retirement at age 55 after only 10 years of service. This could apply to someone who had 10 years working for the state, and left state service many years before and went to work in the private sector, but then put in for state retirement upon reaching 55 years of age. So the state would be responsible for 80 percent of that person's health insurance until the member became eligible for Medicare at age 65, and for the GIC Medicare Part B coverage thereafter.

According to the study, the cost of retiree health care in Massachusetts is among the highest in the nation, and the benefit is in the top 15 of 64 public plans studied. The Commission's proposal recommends changes in three areas: Minimum age, Minimum years of service, and Pro-rating of benefits.

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MTA President Paul Toner (center) discussed the proposed changes in retiree health insurance with the MCCC Board of Directors at the February meeting. He was joined by Sean King (left) from MTA Governmental Services. (Photo by Don Williams)

## MTA Supports Reverse the Course

For several months MTA's Center for Education Policy and Practice has been working on a study of the overuse of adjunct faculty in the Massachusetts community college system and the dysfunctional funding system that encourages it. The MCCC has been working on a related project to increase the numbers of

full-time faculty called Reverse the Course.

The Center has prepared a white paper to present their findings. Kathie Skinner who directs the Center and Beth Shevlin, principal researcher, presented a preliminary draft to the MCCC Executive Committee in February for final re-

view before preparing the report for graphic design and printing.

The study looks at a variety of data from tuition and fees at each college, the percentage of adjunct faculty and numbers of courses they teach, and student program completion rates, among other data.

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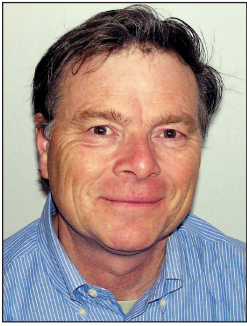


Kathie Skinner (left) and her colleague Beth Shevlin (far right) from MTA gave a presentation to the MCCC Executive Committee to go over the white paper on the use of part-time faculty in the community college system. MCCC President Joe LeBlanc and Secretary Claudine Barnes look on. (Photo by Don Williams)

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Don Williams, MCCC  
Communications  
Coordinator

# Don't Call Me Professor

A recent article in the online publication *Inside Higher Ed* recounted the actions of Karen Gregory, an adjunct faculty member at Queens College, City College of New York, who puts a statement on her course syllabus to not call her “professor.” The syllabus contains information about the relative numbers of full- and part-time faculty at the college and the differences in pay and benefits between the two classes of faculty.

To our students and the public at large everyone who teaches at a college is a generic professor. Of course we know that there is a system of ranks from Instructor at the bottom rung, through Assistant Professor and Associate Professor, to full Professor.

Webster's defines “professor” as the highest academic at an institution of higher education. When I started teaching thirty years ago colleagues made a distinction between the titles of the variously ranked faculty members. At that time the term “adjunct” was never mentioned.

But what should the part-time faculty that teach over 70 percent of courses at community colleges be called? “Part-time faculty” is seen as demeaning as if these faculty members didn't intend to do this as a career. “Adjunct” has been the MCCC's preferred term, but some members feel that this word means loosely attached and subordinate. “Contingent” is preferred by some members. This is a term used internationally for faculty on non-tenure track positions that are on short-term contracts but who could be full-time.

At Massachusetts State Universities, adjunct faculty have titles like Visiting Lecturer, Senior Visiting Lecturer, up to Visiting Professor. These are levels that are determined by seniority and academic credential components and carry differing pay levels. But like our MCCC adjuncts they are not benefitted and their assignments are less than full-time.

What's in a name? These titles carry the status of the people they signify. MCCC adjunct faculty certainly do not have the same status as full time professors. They get no health benefits and only a minimal pension savings plan that may jeopardize any Social Security benefits they might be entitled to. Even if they have the rights of reappointment from three years of seniority, they only have a right to one course, which can lead to widely variable earnings from semester to semester.

Adjuncts get nothing like the support from the colleges that full-time faculty receive. There may be a shared office that they have access to, but that is rare.

They usually supply their own computers, internet access, and even paper and other basic supplies.

Gregory's syllabus was adapted from a template that the CUNY Adjunct Project put together as part of an effort to educate students about the plight of part-time/contingent faculty. Some individual adjunct faculty in other institutions are adding such statements to their syllabi, but *Inside Higher Ed* found no evidence of similar college-wide efforts.

Imagine students' response if all of our MCCC adjunct faculty did something like this—if they put it in their syllabi that they had no reassurance of teaching again, that they are paid a fraction of their full-time colleagues' pay, that they have no office space to meet, not even a requirement for set office hours even if they had a place to meet. Yet the students are paying the same tuition and fees for an adjunct class as for a full-time faculty taught class.

It's understandable why adjuncts would not want to do this. First, despite the adversities they face, adjuncts work hard to give students the same quality of instruction as full-time faculty. And they wouldn't want students to think otherwise. But secondly, if students knew their instructors' status, they could also exploit the tenuousness of adjuncts' employment.

The current conditions of adjunct employment are not good for the faculty and are not good for the students. The increasing reliance on part-time, non-benefitted faculty over the past 30 years is not because it improves education; it is strictly to cut costs. Costs that the state used to provide. There are many good reasons to employ some faculty on an other-than-full-time basis, but there should be fewer, and they should be more strongly supported. How to make those changes happen is a huge challenge. ■

## Dental Insurance Problems?



Contact Rick Ponticelli, the MCCC representative to the Health and Welfare Trust, at [rpontice@northshore.edu](mailto:rpontice@northshore.edu) to report any problems with the Met Life Dental Plan.

## Reverse the Course . . .

*Continued from front page*

Here are some of the significant statistics presented: as few as 22 percent of courses at one college are taught by full-time faculty; while tuition is set at \$780 at all campuses, fees range from \$3,300 to \$4,700; the percentage of courses taught by adjunct faculty system wide increased in just the last five years from 66 to 72 percent.

The data show that adjunct faculty do a good job teaching courses, with high course completion rates. The system breaks down in student program completion where the mentoring and advisement that are part of full-time faculty responsibilities suffers because of the low numbers of full-time faculty.

The white paper will be released in the next few weeks, coinciding with legislative budget discussions. It will back up two pieces of MTA supported legislation. “An Act Establishing a Commission on the Funding Needs for Quality Public Higher Education,” sponsored by Sen. Michael Moore (Millbury) would study the current funding process and make recommendations for improving it. “An Act Restoring Faculty and College Excellence,” sponsored by Rep. David Sullivan (Fall River) seeks to increase the percentage of courses taught by full-time tenured and tenure-track faculty. This bill would also require health and pension benefits for adjunct faculty. ■

## Retirement Health Insurance Changes . . .

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The Commission recommends that the minimum age at which former employees would be eligible would increase to age 60. This would be consistent with the new retirement age. The minimum years of service for former employees to be eligible for health care coverage would increase from 10 to 20 years. These changes are intended to create savings in order to preserve the system for career state employees.

The Pro-rating of benefits is the proposal that would most apply to current long-term state employees. Retirees with a minimum of 20 years of state service would be eligible to receive a 50 percent employer contribution and this would increase to the full 80 percent employer contribution after 30 years of service. The employer contribution would increase incrementally for employees between 20 and 30 years of service.

### Affected Population

Because retirement benefits are legislated in Massachusetts, and not negotiated, the legislature can change benefits without input from the affected employees. So the proposed changes can affect current state employees. Nonetheless the state has respected the promises it has made to people as they approach retirement and the planning that they have made. So the following groups would be exempted from the changes:

- First, current retirees will see no change in the health benefits they receive.
- Current employees within five years of retirement (50 or older in our Pension Group 1) with 20 or more years of service.
- Current employees within five years of Medicare

age and 12 months of vesting as of the effective date of the legislation.

- Current employees who are aged 50 with 15 or more years of service, or aged 55 with 10 or more years of service would receive a minimum employer premium contribution of 50 percent.

MTA Director of Higher Education Joey Hansen said that MTA has age and service records for about 1553 MCCC members (the current full-time membership is over 2200) and that an analysis shows that 664, or 43 percent, would be grandfathered in the proposed plan. The typical MCCC member is 53 years old with 14 years of service, and that member would have to work to age 69 in order to receive the full 80 percent employer health contribution.

Members should be aware that this is just the OPEB Commission's recommendation to the legislature. So there could be changes to the specifics, but much of the proposal could become law. MTA lobbyist Sean King told the MCCC Board of Directors that, “Watching legislation is like watching weather forecasts, they say ‘a blizzard is coming, a blizzard is coming,’ and then on the day of the event they say, ‘there will just be flurries.’” So changes may occur. But given the nature of the fiscal crisis, much of the Commissions' proposal will probably be adopted.

Toner said that very few people in the private sector receive benefits like we receive these days, and that the public would not be favorable to keeping state employee benefits as they are now. So any kind of public protest would not be helpful.

Members can find the full OPEB Commission's report by going to <http://mass.gov/OPEB>.



# Doing Nothing – An Especially Bad Option in 2013

To paraphrase Benjamin Franklin, people who achieve anything make many mistakes, but they seldom make the biggest mistake of all—doing nothing.



Joe LeBlanc,  
MCCC President

We need you to do something in coming weeks. We need your help to fight for new state revenues. We need your help to lobby for more funding for early education, K-12 education, public higher education, transportation and infrastructure. We need your help to nurture two new projects created to empower our DCE bargaining team and professional staff. Here's how you can make a difference:

- March 5: Attend Public Higher

Education Advocacy Day at the State House. Gov. Deval Patrick will kick off our campaign at 11 a.m. The Governor's budget includes new monies for our colleges and yes, new taxes. Don't miss what is likely to be the biggest event ever in support of public higher education. Your presence in Gardner Auditorium and lobbying afterwards are critical to our success. Follow this link to register today: <http://www.mtasurveys.org/se.ashx?s=0B87CA7D0E0B2517>

Note: If you are unable to attend, look for an MTA mailing to arrive soon. The postcards send a powerful message to legislators only if you USE THEM. Please mail them immediately and act on other action requests in coming weeks.

- **March 12:** Join the Campaign for Our Communities at a big State House rally. Supporters will be pushing for House bill 2687 and Senate bill 1313, legislation that would raise \$2 million in new revenues with a minimum impact on low- and middle-income citizens. The day begins in Gardner

Auditorium at 11 a.m. Look for a focus on progressive revenue reforms to fund education, roads and bridges, public transportation, public safety and other programs critical to promoting a better quality of life in the Commonwealth.

- **Today:** We are seeking volunteers to support our DCE Bargaining Team. Our new Full Capacity Local Project aims to build stronger, denser relationships with our union brothers and sisters. Local team leaders will engage in regular face-to-face conversations with 15-20 colleagues to promote a strong response to our bargaining survey and support other monthly actions. Modest stipends are available for 15 local team leaders and a statewide grassroots organizer. Contact me for details at [mccc\\_president@me.com](mailto:mccc_president@me.com)

- **March, April, May:** Attend a professional staff meeting. Our Prof. Staff Committee is working to facilitate better communications and contract enforcement, including the inconsistent use of the E-7 form.

Regional meetings will run from 1-3 p.m. and refreshments will be served: March 28 – Greenfield CC, Main Building, C208; April 12 - North Shore, Danvers campus, Health Professions and Student Services Building, room 227; April 26 - Massasoit, Brockton Campus, SC Bldg, Louison Board Room; and May 2 - Mass Bay, Framingham campus, conference room 323.

Conversations will continue in a new listserve moderated by Committee Chair Karen Carreras-Hubbard, Berkshire CC librarian. Watch for a launch later this month.

Our agenda is ambitious, but we're not alone. The Governor is pushing hard. In a recent press conference to push his education budget, he spoke about taking the fight directly to legislators: "The public knows and I know we can't reform our way to a new road. We turn to taxes because roads and schools are the kinds of things we do together. We all have a stake in this."

Indeed. Together we can make a difference. ■



## Q&A with Richard M. Freeland, Massachusetts Commissioner of Higher Education

2006 and yet we currently rank 30<sup>th</sup> in the nation on spending for public higher education. So, investments in education not only help students. They help all of us who pay taxes. We all benefit when business and industry decide to locate in Massachusetts to take advantage of our extraordinary brainpower. And the reverse is also true. The assets and investments of taxpayers will be adversely affected if businesses opt to move elsewhere because they can't find the skilled workforce they need. We're already seeing shortages of workers in STEM and other high-demand fields.

**Will additional funding be used to support teaching and learning at our campuses?**

Massachusetts needs the best educated citizenry and workforce in the nation if we are to compete for jobs, industry and talent – our civic and economic well-being depends upon the success of our work with students. My guess is that one key thing campuses will want to do is reduce the reliance on adjunct faculty by hiring more full time professors. I also think we will want to strengthen the support services that are so vital to assisting students who often face major complications and barriers as they pursue their academic work.

**The Governor has made what you believe to be a historic proposal for investments in public higher education. What makes it so?**

I've been in higher education for four and a half decades. Never in all of that time have I seen a Massachusetts governor propose such a sweeping series of investments in public colleges and universities.

The Governor is calling for these essential investments now because he recognizes that education is our calling card in the global marketplace. Within five years, Massachusetts will lead the nation in the percentage of jobs – 70% - that will require at least some college education. Where is that college-educated workforce going to come from? Increasingly, the public campuses will be called upon to educate Massachusetts' future leaders, citizens and workers. We know that nine out of ten of our students remain in state one year after graduation, raising families, holding down jobs, furthering their studies. As your members well know, our public campuses have grown 21% since

The Governor has made it clear that the new revenues he is seeking will come to higher education with some strings attached regarding performance. For example, the \$20 million in new FY14 dollars targeted for the community colleges will be distributed using a new formula that allocates a portion of state funding to individual campuses based on their achievements with respect to a variety of high priority educational outcomes. Similarly, the \$12.5 million targeted for the state universities would be distributed to support activities linked to Vision Project goals. So the Governor is not just giving us more money; he plans to hold us accountable for delivering on the goals and aspirations we have defined for ourselves.

**What about financial aid?**

The Governor is also proposing a significant increase in funding for financial aid. Right now the financial aid program for our neediest students, MASSGrant, covers just 8% of the average student charges at a public college or university, down from 80% in 1988. The additional funding would help more students across the state to reach their goal of attending college.

**What can MCCC members do to**

*Continued on page 4*

## McGee for NEA Director



MCCC Vice President Donnie McGee is running for NEA Director from Massachusetts. She has been endorsed by the MCCC Board of Directors. The election will be conducted by mail in March. Members are urged to vote for McGee to ensure that Massachusetts higher education, and the MCCC specifically, gets a strong voice at the national level. ■



# Professional Staff Regional Meetings Scheduled

The MCCC's Professional Staff State-wide Committee will hold four regional meetings this spring. Professional Staff (both full- and part-time) members can attend any session they are able to join and refreshments will be served.

The meetings are from 1:00 to 3:00 pm on:

- March 28 (Thursday) at Greenfield CC, Main Building Room C208
- April 12 (Friday) at North Shore CC, Danvers campus-Health Professions and Student Services Building, Room 227
- April 26 (Friday) at Massasoit CC, Brockton Campus, SC Bldg., Louison Board Room.
- May 2 (Thursday) at Mass Bay CC's Framingham campus, Conference Room 323.

MCCC Coordinator Dennis Fitzgerald or MTA Consultant Katie D'Urso will attend to provide information.

The sessions are to review and update language in the E-7 and address issues related to workload, evaluation, and classification and to discuss any problems presented by members. The Committee hopes to collect examples of E-7s to compare with those on other campuses. Other contract questions will also be welcome.

For more information, contact Professional Staff Committee Chair Karen Carreras-Hubbard at Berkshire Community College by email [khubbard@berkshirecc.edu](mailto:khubbard@berkshirecc.edu) or telephone 413 236 2153. ■

## Q&A with Richard M. Freeland . . .

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**support the cause of public higher education in the legislature?**

One immediate step we can all take is to attend the Public Higher Education Advocacy Day at the Massachusetts State House on March 5. Governor Patrick will address the kick-off rally in Gardner Auditorium prior to a

full day of lobbying by students, faculty and other supporters of our campuses.

Faculty may want to write op-eds, or letters to the editor, or organize "third-party advocates," such as parents or business leaders, to speak out on behalf of public higher education. The legislature needs to hear from all of us that we are an active, vocal, united constituency. They need to know that we are working together, that we are willing to hold ourselves accountable for results, and that we are committed to seeking academic excellence and affordability for our students because of the essential role that they will play in determining the future of the state. ■



**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. e-mail: [Communications@mccc-union.org](mailto:Communications@mccc-union.org)*

**Write Us**

**The MCCC News Welcomes Contributions.**

### 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.

### Mail to:

Donald Williams  
North Shore Community College  
1 Ferncroft Rd., Danvers, MA 01923

### Or email:

[Communications@mccc-union.org](mailto:Communications@mccc-union.org)

## Know Your Day Contract

### March 2013

- March 15** Dean's recommendations for Title change due (p.59)
- March 15** Unit Personnel Practices recommendations for tenure due (p.38)
- March 30** Department Chair evaluations (p.68)
- March 30** Preferred schedules and course submitted (p.40 )
- March 31** Department chair vacancies announced (p.67)
- March 31** Fall assignments to faculty, fulltime schedules to chapter (p.41)

### April 2013

- April 6** Dean's leave of absence recommendations due (p.26)
- April 15** Dean's tenure recommendations due (p.38)
- April 15** Title changes announced (p.59)
- April 15** Patriots Day holiday (p.21)
- April 25** Professional Staff unused vacation days in excess of 480 hours (64 days) converted to sick leave at end of last pay period in April. (p. 21)

*N.B. Dates may vary depending on the first day of classes. Most of these dates are "last date" standards. In many instances the action can be accomplished before the date indicated. ■*



Carol Gray, MCCC DCE Negotiating Team Chair (right) along with Vice Chair Linda Grochowalski distributed the bargaining survey the team developed to the MCCC Board of Directors. All unit members who teach courses under the DCE contract will receive a mailing in the next few weeks giving them directions on how to complete the online survey.

(Photo by Don Williams)

**Visit The MCCC Online!**  
**<http://mccc-union.org>**

**Toll Free Phone:**  
**877-442-MCCC**

The MCCC website is the best and most up-to-date source for late breaking developments. Additional documents of interest and import to Day and DCE unit members have been added.

The MCCC webpage is a valuable resource for MCCC updates, job opportunities and linkage to the NEA and MTA resources available to MCCC unit members.

Calendars of MCCC meetings, and committee assignments may be found there.

Additionally, MCCC events and news are available, as well as "old news" in the form of archived newsletters. Bookmark the site for frequent referral.