O
n Feb 13 Arbitrator Tammy Brynie issued a decision uphold
ning the Union’s position on a dispute dating back to fall 2006. At that
time Holyoke Community College hired 19 new MCCC members, and 15 of them
were given salaries above what the clas-
sification system specified.
Arbitrator Brynie found that the col-
lege violated contractual provisions for placing new employees on the salary
schedule and ordered that the college
follow specific provisions in the future to
comply with the contract. The decision
was not everything the Union wanted, but
it solidly affirmed the importance of the
classification system.
MCCC Grievance Coordinator Den-
nis Fitzgerald passed out copies of the
decision during his spring report at the
Feb. 20 Board of Directors meeting. He
explained the background and the signifi-
cance of the Arbitrator’s decision.
In order to maintain the integrity of
the classification system, colleges are re-
quired to send the MCCC all of the M002
and M004 forms used to calculate sala-
dary. Some colleges have where there are 12-18 steps and
professional staff salaries. At that time there
were 28-step salary schedule that had no
criteria for determining where a new hire
should be placed, leaving much discre-
tion.
Under the old system there was no
method for members to move up the
salary schedule, so people essentially re-
mained frozen at the step at which they
were hired at. This lead to wide pay
disparities, both within individual col-
leges as well as between colleges, caus-
ing great dissatisfaction among the mem-
bership.
What the Union had wanted was a
system similar to those most K-12 teach-
ers have where there are 12-18 steps and
members regularly move up the steps,
reaching the top in less than 20 years. The
MCCC and the college presidents sub-
mitted to the governor a joint proposal
that detailed the new compacted pay
schedule. This schedule and cost was
reviewed by both sides on different issues, which
resulted in the current, complex
structure with the four pay steps for ad-
justments.
DCE Team Reports Contract Status to Board
The DCE Negotiating Team gave a
formal presentation on the status of nego-
tiations to the Board of Directors at its
February meeting.
The team has been meeting since Feb.
8, 2008, and it has been negotiating with the
Employer’s team since Apr. 15, 2008.
Progress had been slow up to December,
but bargaining meetings have become more
frequent and more productive since then.
Team Chair Diana Yohe, using a pre-
pared Powerpoint presentation, first went
over some background data such as the
members of each team and the previous
as well as scheduled future meeting dates.
She pointed out that overall the team was
working towards parity for adjunct fac-
ulty with full-time faculty.
She covered the few items that have been
tentatively agreed upon so far and
then discussed the several items where
proposals and counter-proposals have
been made. Compromises have been made
by both sides on different issues, which
represents progress, but the teams have
not yet reached the point where both sides are
in agreement on a tentative con-
tact that could be presented to DCE unit
members.
Economic issues were saved for last.
The team shared their calculation of what
would equalize their pay as per course
with full-time faculty. It is a rough calcu-
lation because of the complexity of com-
paring the full-time classification pay
structure with the four pay steps for ad-
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justments. The calculation recognized that
25 percent of the full-time workload is
non-instructional, however, other factors
complicate the calculation.
Continued on Page 2
Continued on Page 2
“All politics is local.” These oft-quoted words of former Speaker of the House, “Tip” O’Neill, are often referenced, but not so often heeded. At crisis time, concerned citizens and constituents are quick to criticize or seek support from legislators, but too often they are not willing to partner with lawmakers to make government work. Nor do residents typically thank or praise lawmakers when government works well. The government of the people, by the people and for the people too often operates without input from the people – until crisis time or the next election. We must change this modus operandi. Educators must be involved.

In these busy and challenging times, all of us can find good reasons for not making time to connect with legislators. We struggle with balancing work, home and other commitments. Many think our civic responsibility begins and ends with electing qualified individuals. Educators would rather focus attention and energy on students and academics than get involved with politics. But get involved we must.

The politicians need our input and our expertise if we want them to understand and respond effectively to the problems and the possibilities on our campuses. It makes no sense to elect legislators and then not let them know what is working and what is not. College operating budgets depend on state funding. State lawmakers and the governor must legislate each year that affects the integrity of our colleges and the quality of our professional lives. We must speak out for public higher education, and we need support from elected officials.

As MTA’s Cathy Fichtner often says, “Politics is a contact sport.” To that end, the MCCC joined the Public Higher Education Network of Massachusetts (PHENOM) in support of a Legislative Call-in Day on February 26. Representatives and the Governor were contacted by educators, students, alumni and administrators from across the state. They discussed the impact of funding cuts on college campuses and the related academic challenges. Legislators need to know that educators cannot do more, and certainly cannot do as well, with fewer resources. Nor should students be paying more to get less at these institutions. Educators and students were engaged in important conversations.

The statewide Call-in Day was a first step towards establishing the political partnerships that we, as educators, must forge. The MCCC Strategic Action Committee will be setting up in-district meetings this spring with legislators, so that educators and their Representatives or Senators can further discuss campus concerns and explore steps towards positive resolution.

Educators should be asking legislators as well how state funding from the American Recovery and Investment Act will be used to support public higher education throughout the Commonwealth.

Our legislators readily agree that support for state colleges and universities is a key priority, but such agreement has failed to provide campuses with sufficient or adequate funding streams for nearly 10 years. As students struggle to afford college and part-time faculty and professional staff replace full-timers in alarming numbers, the fallout from such chronic underfunding is apparent on every campus.

Unfortunately, budget policy decisions for more than a decade have forced legislators to be reactive instead of proactive in their yearly budget balancing acts. Plagued by structural deficits, Massachusetts consistently lacks the revenues needed to support infrastructure demands, healthcare costs, aid to cities and towns, and public higher education. Politicians need to address the state’s chronic structural deficit problems as well as the fundamental importance of public higher education to any economic recovery.

Educators must not only hold politicians accountable, but also be willing to partner with them to resolve the challenges our campuses face. Colleges are under severe stress as they struggle to do more with less, yet they are criticized when at-risk students fail to complete their academic goals. When state funding is slashed on college campuses, the critical conversations need to address the state’s chronic structural deficit problems as well as the fundamental importance of public higher education to any economic recovery.

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At first glance, the stimulus law looks great with lots of money coming our way. “Community colleges see stimulus bill as bonanza for their students,” the Chronicle reports. The U.S. Labor Department will soon receive $3.95 billion for job training services. Working closely with local Workforce Investment Boards, community colleges will be allowed to charge the full costs of their services. Hint: this means more than tuition and fees and should provide much-needed dollars for new full-time faculty and support staff.

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act contains more good news:

• Maximum Pell Grants will increase to $5,350 in 2009 and $5,550 in 2010.
• Tuition tax credit will increase to $2,500. Needy students—even those who do not pay taxes—will be eligible to claim up to $1,000. Millions of community college students will benefit.
• Federal Work Study Program funding will increase by $200 million.
• Research universities will reap most of the funds from $8.5 billion for biomedical research, $3 billion for National Science Foundation-related research, $1 billion for climate change projects, and $2 billion for Energy Department grants focusing on energy efficiency.

The law also provides $53.6 billion for a State Fiscal Stabilization Fund. From this account, Massachusetts will receive more than $800 million in general education aid. These millions can be spent to mitigate the effects of the recent and prospective cuts in state support to public higher education.

This budget relief may arrive just in time. The Governor and Legislature have already cut public higher education by $35 million in FY 09. For next year, the Governor’s House 1 budget proposes to cut it again to $142 million below FY 08 levels. If our operating budgets aren’t restored to at least our FY 09 levels (before this year’s 9C cuts), we’ll be forced to do more with less. Our colleges will act with student fee increases and layoffs to follow.

Last year, the legislature enacted a $2 billion higher education bond bill providing the biggest boost to our system’s infrastructure we’ve seen in decades. The new buildings and labs will be grand, of course, but new facilities do little good if they are understaffed or staffed with inappropriately high levels of part-time employees and adjunct faculty.

On opening day in January, several of my American Literature students said they had recently transferred from four-year institutions. One said he likes it better at Northern Essex CC and wishes it were a four-year college. “I’m receiving an excellent education at a fraction of the cost,” he said.

His kind words are appreciated, but these days our faculty and professional staff are fearful that more bad news is coming and layoffs are a certainty. Governor Patrick, we’ve taken enough. We’re asking you to restore our operating budgets. In the end, new facilities are nice, but it’s our faculty and staff that serve our students and make a difference.

Joe LeBlanc, MCCC President

In Solidarity

New Buildings Are Nice, But Our People Make The Difference

Joe LeBlanc, MCCC President

Day Negotiations Committee members celebrate finishing their work in support of the Day Bargaining Team. The committee drafted the bargaining survey, examined the results from more than 1,100 respondents and forwarded recommendations for the demand package. The team is drafting its package and expects to begin bargaining after Spring Break.

Pictured here (front row from left), Paulette Howarth (Bristol), Jean Nicholas (QCC), MaryJane O’Connor (HCC), Katie D’Utrac; (second row) Sarazan Van Wert (NECC), Laura Horgan (Middlesex), Jim Dutcher (HCC), Ellen Madigan Pratt (MWCC); (third row) Charlotte Belezos (RCC), Tom Kearns (Massasoit), and Robert Rogers (STCC). Not pictured Rosemarie Freeland (GCC), Mike D’Entremont (BHCC), Norene Gachignard (NSCC). (Photo by Joe LeBlanc)

MTA organizer George Luse (top left) and Director of Affiliate Services Richard Sanders met with the Adjunct Ad Hoc Committee for training in organizing the DCE Unit for achieving short-term and long-term goals from effecting an improved contract this year to achieving the objectives of the “Reversing Course” study. The committee is comprised of adjunct faculty members from each chapter and is changed with bringing adjunct faculty issues forward and for bringing ideas back to their chapters.

Day Grievance Coordinator Dennis Fitzgerald goes over the Holyoke arbitration decision for the Board of Directors. (photo by Don Williams)

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DIRECTORS NOTES

At the February 20 meeting of the MCCC Board of Directors the following actions were taken:

- The Board approved a Finance Committee recommendation to capitalize equipment with a three or more year life expectancy and a cost of $3,000 or more.
- The Board voted to donate $2,500 to the MCCC PAC.
- The Board voted to authorize an ad hoc committee to develop and present a proposal on teleconferencing/video conferencing equipment for the Curley Boardroom. The committee will do its work in the spring of 2009. [Note: volunteers are needed. If interested, contact President LeBlanc.]
- The Board voted to authorize an ad hoc committee of the MCCC Board of Directors and chapter leadership with representation from the Finance Committee and the Personnel Committee to review the job descriptions and salaries of the statewide officers. This review should include recommendations on the webmaster duties. [Note: volunteers are needed. If interested, contact President LeBlanc.] ■

Know Your Day Contract

March 2009
March 5 Request leave of absence recommendations due (p.26)
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.70)
March 30 Preferred schedules and course submitted (p.32)
March 31 Department chair vacancies announced (p.55)

April 2009
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 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.22)
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. ■

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
One Ferncroft Road
Danvers, MA 01923

Or email:
Communications
mccc-union.org

Candidate Statements

The activist sensibility I learned at Brandeis in the late sixties provided me both a psychological and a sociological lens on the world, and on my place in it. My working-class roots have given me two special focuses. My father had worked in the coal mines of western Pennsylvania prior to that war, and labored in steel mills after it. Seeing how such hard and demanding work shaped the possibilities afforded my parents and so many others of their generation has given me a lifelong class-conscious, union-centered standpoint and worldview. My graduate work, both at UCLA and at UMass Amherst (Ed.D., 2008), has served to give me a better understanding of issues of equity and equality that continue to inhibit genuine social justice here and abroad. This sensibility links neatly to my goals for myself as an MCCC Adjunct rep.

I hope to be able to continue to push for needed changes in the unfortunate trajectory the system of public higher education is taking, locally, regionally, and nationally. I know that the opportunities that were, decades ago, provided me no longer widely available to young people today. It is one thing to know of these unfair (and insufficiently publicized) shifts in practice. It is quite another to act on the collective, and ethical stewardship of public education. As we community college educators are well positioned to have substantive impact on public policy to address the glaring disparities that are eroding the academic quality of our students, we are also well positioned to have substantive impact on public policy to address the glaring disparities that are eroding the academic quality of our students.

Your PAC Needs Your Help

The MCCC Political Action Committee—MCCC PAC—has been very effective over the past few years in advancing the issues of community college faculty and staff on Beacon Hill. But political stature does not come without cost. Your PAC has made many contributions in the last election cycle, and it is important for all members to give their financial support, so that the PAC can continue to support you. The PAC has been very active and it is important that the resources are kept. Your PAC Needs Your Help.

To be able to continue to push for needed changes in the unfortunate trajectory the system of public higher education is taking, locally, regionally, and nationally. I know that the opportunities that were, decades ago, provided me no longer widely available to young people today. It is one thing to know of these unfair (and insufficiently publicized) shifts in practice. It is quite another to act on the collective, and ethical stewardship of public education. As we community college educators are well positioned to have substantive impact on public policy to address the glaring disparities that are eroding the academic quality of our students, we are also well positioned to have substantive impact on public policy to address the glaring disparities that are eroding the academic quality of our students.