

MCCC



News

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Fall Conference: Taxing and Awards

The annual MCCC Fall Conference on Oct. 6 was a rousing success. Approximately 90 members from across the state gathered at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Worcester to learn, to network, and to honor legislators who have been friends of public higher education.

TAXES

The keynote speaker was Noah Berger, Executive Director of the Massachusetts Budget and Policy Center, a non-partisan think tank. His presentation titled "Education, Taxes, and the State Budget" looked at the various taxes levied by the state, who they affect and how the changes in tax policies affected the state budget.

He explained the difference between progressive and regressive taxes and that in the overall mix how Massachusetts taxes are somewhat regressive. The sales tax and property taxes are more regressive because the lowest economic groups pay a proportionally higher percentage of their income on these taxes.

Although the Massachusetts income tax is not graduated, because of the personal exemptions built in, people in the bottom economic groups pay little or no income tax. Cuts in the income tax, such as the drop from 5.95 percent to 5.3 percent provided a minimal advantage for the most economically challenged citizens.

Berger pointed out that since 1991 Massachusetts has cut taxes more aggressively than any other state. One slide of his presentation showed the levels of tax reduction over that period.

Income tax to 5.3%	\$1.4 billion
Cut for Dividends	\$800 million
Higher Personal Exemption	\$400 million
Corporate Tax Avoidance	\$500 million

He showed a graph that plotted the inverse relationship between reduced tax revenues and community college tuition and fees. As tax receipts went down, tuition and fees went up. Another graph showed that if there had not been the tax reductions over the last decade and a half, there would not be a budget crisis now.

While Berger did not speak about Question 1, the audience clearly saw the ramifications of the elimination of the income tax.

LEGISLATIVE AWARDS

Three legislators were presented with a Friend of the Community Colleges award by Vice President Donnie McGee in the form of an inscribed crystal bowl with the MCCC logo. The recipients were Sen. Robert O'Leary (D-Barnstable) and Rep. Kevin J. Murphy (D-Lowell) who co-chair the Joint Committee on Higher Education, and Rep. Martin Walsh (D-Dorchester).

As chairs of the relatively new Higher

Education Committee, O'Leary and Murphy have been powerful advocates for the system. Both have community colleges in their districts: Murphy has the Middlesex Lowell campus and O'Leary has Cape Cod. In fact O'Leary has a Ph.D. in History and had to leave the meeting early because he was teaching a course at Cape Cod that evening.

Rep. Marty Walsh was honored at the

MTA Annual Meeting in May for his strong support to preserve health insurance contribution levels for public employees in the last budget cycle. In his comments, Walsh reflected on the current budget crisis and joked that he might not be able to do the same next year.

All three of the legislators affirmed the importance of public higher educa-

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Friends of Community Colleges Award were presented to Sen. Rob O'Leary, Rep. Kevin Murphy and Rep. Marty Walsh. Pictured here from left MCCC Legislative Strategist Brooks Smith, Rep. Murphy, Rep. Walsh, MCCC President Joe LeBlanc and Vice President Donnie McGee. Sen. O'Leary had to leave early to teach a course at Cape Cod Community College. (Photo by Don Williams)

Vote No on Question 1: It's a Reckless Idea

By far the most important item on this fall's state ballot is Question 1 that would eliminate the state's income tax. It will take \$12 billion out of the state's finances, about 40 percent.

A similar proposal nearly passed six years ago, and this time even opponents expect it will get at least 40 percent support. People are feeling stressed economically, and it is hard to predict what might happen that would push another 10 percent to support it.

The financial crisis that started with a housing market bust is rippling around the world and is now hitting the state budget. Over the summer it was clear that the state was in for difficult times, but the current situation is far bleaker than any one projected.

Huge budget cuts have already been imposed on our colleges. There is discussion of student fee increases, building shutdowns, and employee furloughs going on as this article is being composed. One can only imagine the fiscal mayhem that will ensue if Question 1 passes.

Every member needs to do what they can to stop this disastrous proposal. Talk to your friends, neighbors and family



members. Let them know that this is not about sending a message, it is very serious. Go to the website <http://votenoquestion1.com> for more information and how you can count. ■

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**VOTE
November 4**

Be sure to vote for
candidates who support
your professional interests.

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Vote: Stand Up for College, Country and Community



Donnie McGee,
SAC Chair &
MCCC Vice President

Campuses and classrooms across this country observed Constitution Day on September 17. The date commemorates the signing of our nation's Constitution in 1787. Armed soldiers stood guard in Philadelphia while 39 men signed this secret document behind closed doors. The entire world watched with awe and skepticism as this fledgling democracy soon declared itself. None thought such an imperfect union with its bold actions and novel government could prevail. For more than two centuries, though, this nation has managed to do just that – and perfect its democracy in the process.

Such strides towards a more perfect union have not come easily. Slavery and rampant discrimination against Native Americans, women, and the poor troubled this nation from its inception. A Civil War nearly destroyed this union while many died to preserve it. The leadership, courage, and determination of extraordinary individuals paved the way for the freedoms that so many of

us know today. Our Constitution now guarantees that neither race, nor creed, nor gender, nor poverty should restrict a citizen's right to vote. A constitution that once ensured the rights of only a few now safeguards the freedoms of many.

Constitution Day programs at our colleges not only honored our founders' vision, but also paid tribute to those who fought hard to perfect that union. Students and educators were reminded of the words, deeds and dreams that have shaped the democracy we now embrace. Statements from our Constitution's grand preamble as well as those of Abraham Lincoln, Susan B. Anthony, and Martin Luther King were heard and applauded once again.

It is not enough for us to hear the words and applaud such leadership, though. We must participate in democracy if we wish to honor their struggles and preserve those rights that took so many decades to secure. Without such participation and vigilance, the freedoms we hold dear will not endure. The right to vote is the cornerstone of our democracy. It is a right that we must exercise on November 4.

Now, more than ever, our voices must be heard. Our nation is struggling with economic, environmental, and political conflicts of epic proportions. Constitutional rights gained at such great sacrifice are being seriously challenged by the current administra-

tion. We must act to preserve our Constitution and protect our hard-won privileges for the generations to come. Only by voting can we change our nation's troubled course.

Colleges and communities in this state are further challenged by a ballot initiative that would deplete state revenues by 40 percent and decimate our cities and towns. The community college dream of access to affordable, quality higher education is in danger of being eradicated. Public higher education needs more resources – not less, if it is to effectively serve students and communities. And our nation needs a president who will provide resources to ensure all residents have access to a quality education, regardless of the poverty that surrounds them.

We cannot sit home on Election Day and leave the fate of our country and our state to chance. VOTE – and get everyone you know to do the same. Vote NO on Question 1 – if you want to keep the community college dream alive. Vote YES to Barack Obama – if you want to unite this nation, reverse the politics and policies of the last eight years, and give public education a real chance. Above all, go to the polls and vote as if your life and college and community depend on it.

...Because, of course, they do. ■

Annual MCCC Fall Conference . . .

Continued from Page 1

tion and their commitment to it. They also praised the MCCC for the sophistication of its outreach to the legislature and the way it has been building relationships.

RETIREMENT SESSION

One of the most popular breakout sessions was a retirement presentation lead by Ed McCourt. Ed teaches at Mass Bay Community College and does retirement counseling for MTA. He

was joined by Kevin Caira from the State Retirement Board.

Caira was very helpful in explaining the system and how the board operates. He went over the three standard retirement options A, B, and C and their various provisions. He also explained the little known Option D. This is not a choice on the standard beneficiary form, and if someone is interested they need to request the special form from the Retirement Board.

Option D allows an employee to designate a beneficiary other than their spouse to receive the full Option C benefit. As an example, Caira said a couple might designate their child (of any age) as beneficiary. If the couple were to die in a plane crash, the child could get the pension for life. It would be much reduced because of the beneficiary's age, but other benefits like health insurance could continue.

If the spouse were to survive the plane crash, he or she would have first rights to the pension and could choose to take the pension benefit over the named child. Caira said the board was urging people to consider taking Option D.

They passed out several information sheets including one that can calculate your retirement benefit. McCourt advised people to begin planning for retirement well in advance, and reminded that he was available to work with individuals or to give presentations to groups. Caira also said people from the Retirement Board were willing to come out to campuses to give group presentations.

OTHER SESSIONS

MCCC Day Grievance Coordinator Dennis Fitzgerald gave a presentation on contract basics for new members, although senior members found it useful also. MCCC DCE Grievance Coordinator Joe Rizzo facilitated a panel discussion on Distance Learning. DCE Negotiating Team Chair Diana Yohe lead a discussion of the DCE contract. Vice President Donnie McGee held a session on Strategic Action. The Professional Staff Committee held a session for staff members. And President Joe LeBlanc had a round table for chapter presidents.

PRIZES

As the conference concluded there was a raffle for five, \$100 door prizes provided by MTA Benefits, the branch of MTA that offers discounts on car and homeowners insurance along with credit cards, mortgages and other money saving products. The prize winners were Rob Rodgers, STCC; Norene Gachinard, NSCC; Christopher Hoeth, BrCC; David Houle, NSCC; and Betsy Smith, CCCC. ■



Diana Yohe dressed as Susan B. Anthony on Constitution Day at Bristol Community College. (Photo by Sally Cameron)



Noah Berger of the Massachusetts Budget and Policy Center explained the state's tax structure and its implications at the MCCC Fall Conference. (Photo by Don Williams)

In Solidarity

During Tough Times, Any Budget Cut Is Excessive



Joe LeBlanc,
MCCC President

During tough times, any budget cut is excessive.

As this issue goes to press, the economic news is dreadful. The Governor says hundreds of millions in budget cuts are necessary more than 3 months into this fiscal year. A \$1 billion deficit must be addressed while the Commonwealth and nation move into what is predicted to be the worst recession since The Great Depression. The news

can't get much worse than we received in the last few days.

State tax collections for September dropped by 4.9 percent compared to September, 2007. Revenues from withholding taxes, corporate taxes, sales taxes, fuel taxes, motor vehicle and deed excise taxes are all down significantly. To date FY '09 tax revenues are up by only 0.06 percent with more bad news expected for October.

Cuts to all areas of state government are certain. Though enrollments have increased in all segments of our system, the Governor will cut state support to public

higher education. This will affect the University system and its 48,523 students (3.4 percent increase over 2007), the state college system and its 38,608 students (2.9 percent increase) and the community college system with 89,184 students (5.3 percent increase).

If the Governor is given expanded 9c budget cutting powers, as expected, local aid may also be cut, forcing midyear cuts to local services, including K-12 education.

Cutting education in tough times is unwise and short sighted. The education and health care sectors continue to create jobs in this lousy economy. Massachusetts' unemployment rate of 5.3 percent in August beats the national average of 6.1 percent.

In recent months, the state has set a visionary agenda for education. It has committed to investing in its higher education infrastructure with the \$2.2 billion higher education bond bill. In the next decade, we will see expansions of our classrooms, labs, libraries and allied health centers along with long-awaited maintenance of our older buildings.

The Governor's Readiness Project pledges to reinvigorate our public higher education system with the commitment to "include full access to community college to anyone who seeks it."

Of course, our community colleges provide much of this access already. Community colleges already serve as the backbone of our public higher education system. We already accept and serve nearly everyone who arrives at our doors. If a new community or business need is identified, we do everything in our power to help.

Maybe we should learn to say "no". Without adequate state support, we can't create that new program. With state budget cuts, we just can't hold the line on our fees and accept new students, run additional courses at the last minute and create new programs to meet ever-changing community and business needs.

In tough times, more students attend community college. While the Governor has promised to minimize budget cuts to education, in an environment of increasing enrollments, any budget cut is excessive.

We will be hit hard in coming months. College presidents will drain reserves. Colleges will increase fees. Non-unit personnel may be asked to take furloughs. Programs and jobs may be cut.

We will weather this storm. While it will be impossible to entirely escape the budget cuts, we will fight layoffs to our faculty and professional staff and battle for what is right for our members, our students, our colleges and the Commonwealth. ■



Winners of the \$100 door prizes provided by MTA Benefits at the MCCC Fall Conference, from left, Rob Rodgers, STCC; Norene Gachinard, NSCC; Chris Hoeth, BrCC; David Houle, NSCC; and Betsy Smith, CCCC. (Photo by Don Williams)



MCCC member Ed McCourt, left, and Kevin Cairn of the State Retirement Board conducted a retirement seminar at the Fall Conference. (Photo by Don Williams)

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 current election cycle, and it is important for all members to give their financial support, so that the PAC can continue to support you.

In this election year, the PAC has been very active and it is important that the resources are kept at a level sufficient to fulfill its mission.

Upcoming legislative issues of importance include:

- Securing increased funding for community colleges
- Reforming Optional Retirement Plan for full-time faculty
- Preserving health insurance contribution level
- Passing part-time employee pension benefits
- Passing part-time employee health insurance benefits

Individual members and MCCC chapters can contribute up to \$500 annually.

Thank You,

PAC Co-chairs Thelma Halberstadt and Frank Leary.

Send your checks payable to the "MCCC PAC" to
Meg Kennedy
MCCC Political Action Committee,
27 Mechanic Street, Suite 104, Worcester, MA 01608

Know Your Day Contract

October 2008

- Oct. 15** Professional Staff in 5th year receive notice of reappointment p.37.
- Oct. 26** Accrued professional staff vacation time in excess of 64 days (480 hours) converts to sick time. This now occurs twice per year, falling on the end of the last pay period of April and October p.22.
- Oct. 30** Last day to opt out of sick bank p.20.
(Note; membership in sick leave bank is automatic upon first October of a member's employment.)

November 2008

- Nov. 11** Veterans Day holiday.
- Nov. 21** Unit Personnel Practices Committee established p.38.
- Nov. 27-**
- Nov. 28** Thanksgiving Holiday.
- Nov. 28** Professional Staff must use one of the three off campus days p. 46.
- 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. All cited page numbers are from the 2006-2009 Agreement. ■*

At-Large Directors Join DCE Board

Two, new directors representing part-time/DCE members have joined the MCCC Board of Directors. They join the 15 chapter directors who each represent a specific college chapter.

The new directors are John Cipora who has been teaching psychology at Holyoke Community College for eight years and John Farrenkopf who has been teaching mathematics at Bunker Hill Community College since the college opened.

While the two Johns primarily teach at individual colleges, they represent the approximately 4000 part-time MCCC members across the state. These new director positions were added to the MCCC Bylaws at the Delegate Assembly in April of this year.

In the future these positions will be elected annually by the part-time members during the regular MCCC elections in March. This year the appointments were made by the MCCC Board because the positions were established after the elections had occurred.

Both of the new directors have served on the DCE Ad Hoc committee that was established to give part-time members an organized forum for discussing the issues facing those members and providing an avenue to solve problems. So they have had some contact with adjunct faculty across the state.

How to represent the diverse and dispersed part-time membership is a significant challenge facing the MCCC, and it will be a primary concern for the new directors. As the first to serve in these positions Cipora and Farrenkopf will be setting the examples for future at-large directors. ■



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

MCCC Adjunct Members Attend COCAL Conference

By Don Williams
Reported by John Cipora and Betsy Smith

At the beginning of August, the MCCC sent adjunct faculty members John Cipora and Betsy Smith to a conference of COCAL, the Coalition of Contingent Academic Labor in California. Participants came from all across the U.S. and both French- and English-speaking Canada, along with a small contingent from Mexico, so it was a truly international group. Some came from schools that are NEA, AFT, or AAUP affiliates, while others are from states where union activity is either discouraged or illegal.

COCAL is a movement put together by lecturers for lecturers. The term "lecturer" encompasses all contingent faculty, both full- and part-time, who are not in tenure track positions. In California, the contingent faculty movement has been influential and instrumental in guiding the organizing of full time faculty as well.

Dennis Van Roekel, NEA President, noted during his keynote address that the current situation throughout higher education, in which adjunct faculty account for approximately 70% of instructors, is neither accidental nor short-term; it's not new, and it's not just taking place in education. In fact, it demonstrates the ongoing corporatization of the academy, and the slow, insidious, and widespread array of incursions into faculty autonomy and prerogatives.

Full time faculty need to be fully informed as to the significant risks to their status and their academic freedom as more and more courses are turned over to contingent faculty, who have comparable education and do the same work, but are paid approximately one-third of what their full-time colleagues earn and receive few if any benefits. In Van Roekel's view, the way lecturers are now being treated foretells the way all academic professionals will soon be treated, i.e., within a generation.

This points to the importance of strengthening the working and activism relationships between part-time and full-time groups. There are many examples of the effectiveness of such strongly linked forward motion: the "Rising tide lifts all boats" metaphor is perfectly apt here. We need to move beyond the incorrect but widely held perception that any additional benefits accrued to one group will of necessity negatively impact the other group. In point of fact, advances in equity and parity consistently correlate across part-time and full-time segments.

Cipora and Smith attended sessions on various aspects about the conditions of contingent faculty across North America as well as sessions on objectives for improv-

ing the conditions and for organizing faculty to achieve these ends.

Some of the suggested actions included working for longer-term contracts with continuing appointments after a set number of years or semesters or credits taught protect adjuncts.

In addition to lobbying elected officials at the State House, we should meet with our legislators in their district offices or invite them to campus. We should include faculty, students, alumni, and parents in the discussions. We can offer to help our representatives with their issues and ask them to lobby management for our issues.

We should use publicity by calling reporters, writing op-eds, and letters to the editor. We can find allies among members of non-academic unions such as the AFL-CIO or SEIU.

In both Oregon and Connecticut, community college instructors who teach at least at a fifty percent level of a full-time load are eligible for health care coverage, with the majority of the premium paid for by the employer. In a related matter, in CT all teaching counts towards this status, in aggregate, whether one teaches at a single college or at multiple venues.

If we aren't eligible for benefits, we can ask for payment in lieu of health insurance or retirement.

One of the panelists, Keith Hoeller, said that "asking for equality is not radical, impractical, or extravagant." There was consensus, however, that asking is usually not enough. Participants from schools from California to Canada stressed that, without a credible threat to strike, and the occasional actual strike, the advances that they have gained in salary and benefits and job security would never have been possible. One souvenir Smith brought back was a sticker that said, "I Don't Want to Strike, but I Will."

Cipora pointed out that all contingent faculty issues are *quality-of-undergraduate-education* issues. Remember, *equality in teaching* leads to *quality in education*. Each of us has the obligation to support critical citizenship capacity-building.

There are nearly 4,500 potential activists in the MCCC ranks; we need to make a compelling case to each of them to become deeply involved, and involved for the long term. Without unifying our members, we can't build our power.

Cipora and Smith came home excited by all that they learned and eager to have the membership respond to these suggestions. Both are members of the Adjunct Ad Hoc Committee, which meets a couple of times a semester, and noted that more adjunct faculty need to participate. ■



John Cipora (left) and John Farrenkopf join the MCCC Board of Directors as the first at-large directors representing part-time/adjunct members.

(Photo by Don Williams)



Angela Perno is the newest addition to the MCCC office staff in Worcester. She will be working on membership records, especially for DCE. Angela is a graduate of Quinsigamond Community College and Assumption College. Previously she worked in the biotech industry in office management and project management positions.

(Photo by Don Williams)