

# MCCC NEWS

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The Official Publication of the *Massachusetts Community College Council* / Volume 6, Issue 11 / October 2005

## Presidents Appeal to the Union

In an historic move, three college presidents came to the Sept. 16 MCCC Board of Directors meeting to make an appeal for the union to rescind the ongoing work to rule action.

The presidents were Daniel Asquino of Mt. Wachusett, chair of their Negotiations Committee, Terence Gomes of Roxbury, and Robert Pura of Greenfield who is the current president of the Presidents' Council. They were accompanied by Jan Motta, Executive Officer of their group, the Massachusetts Community College Association.

The presidents expressed their understanding of the plight the Union finds itself in. They pointed out their own frustration at the status of bargaining, both the unfunded 2002-2003 contract extension and the current ratified 2003-2006 agreement that is awaiting funding.

They noted that they had worked hard in getting the BHE to settle the negotiations with as favorable an agreement as possible under the current political and fiscal constraints. The presidents also expressed their desire to be more involved in negotiating contracts than the BHE currently permits.

Work to rule, they explained, makes it difficult for them to conduct business and to advance the missions of the colleges. President Asquino pointed out that while there is an inherent adversarial labor/management relationship, work to rule creates a more adversarial climate than is necessary—especially with an agreement now reached and ratified. The presidents said that they and the union have far more common interests than issues that separate them.

MCCC Directors, officers and a number of chapter presidents who were able to attend had an opportunity to ask questions and make comments. Questions were pri-



Presidents Robert Pura, Greenfield, left, Daniel Asquino, Mt. Wachusett and Terence Gomes, Roxbury, make a presentation to the MCCC Board of Directors.

marily about the status of the current contract and whether Gov. Romney would submit it to the legislature and sign the subsequent appropriation.

Most of the comments focused on the extreme frustration that members feel over the lack of raises. Greenfield Director Michael Bathory noted that over the 28-year contract history there have been 17 years with no raises.

Others expressed the feeling that the state does not bargain in good faith, and that work to rule is the only tool union members have to effect an agreement and to hold the BHE to its commitments. The rhetorical question was asked, "How do we know that this contract will be honored given the experience of the 2002-2003 Agreement?" And "Why should members go off work to rule until they are assured that this contract is truly settled?"

In response to complaints about flaws in the collective bargaining process, President Pura said that he would put the issue of reforming the collective bargaining law, Chapter 150E, on the agenda for the Presidents' Council.

The presidents expressed confidence that the contract would be submitted to the legislature and funded. Motta shared BHE Chairman Stephen Tocco's prediction that, for the first time, all higher ed contracts will be processed on time. President Asquino pointed out that Peter Tsaffaras of the BHE had made good on his promise to deliver the contract to the governor this past week.

MCCC President Rick Doud thanked the presidents for coming and for their positive sentiments. He pointed out that the MCCC Board can only make recommen-

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## Doud to Step Down

As the MCCC prepares for the election of officers in March, 2006, President Rick Doud has announced that he will not seek reelection.

As he is completing his second term, Doud told the MCCC Board of Directors, "Four years is long enough, it's time to give someone else a chance."

Before becoming president Doud served one, 2-year term as vice president under then president, Phil Mahler. Before that he had been chapter president and director from Middlesex CC. He has been on two Day Contract negotiating teams.

Doud, a native of Illinois, had taught full time at the University of Minnesota at Duluth and University of Wisconsin at Oshkosh before coming to teach Economics at Middlesex in the fall of 1987. He

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## Leadership Event A Success

The Annual Leadership event on Sept. 26 was a great success. Approximately 50 members attended to hear presentations that primarily focused on union revitalization.

In the keynote address, Dr. Elaine Bernard Director of the Harvard Trade Union Project began by explaining the problems facing labor unions today. First is the declining membership in labor unions. The number of union members has declined from a high of 21 million members in 1981 to 15.4 million today. More importantly, she noted that the density of union membership has declines from 22 percent of the workforce to 12.5 percent.

This decline in union density has coincided with the stagnation of wages. On a strong union vs weak union state comparison she pointed out that states with high union density spend more on education,

have higher rates of health insurance coverage, higher wages and a significantly higher percentage of workers with pensions.

The burden for unions today, she said, is not just to increase membership but to also increase union capacity. That is to broaden the appeal and level of union participation.

Dr. Bernard noted the problems the MTA and MCCC face of crises in state and local government, increasing employer hostility towards unions, decline in tenure rights and increase in part-time faculty,

She went on to say that a larger problem is the attitude many members have come of age in an era of wide spread anti-union environment. They have little knowledge of history of the labor movement, and they see the union as "Contracts-R-Us." In this view the union is a fee for service provider rather than a mutual support network.

This condition leads to a union becoming more Staff/officer Centered rather than Member Centered. Dr. Bernard finished her presentation by focusing on the differences between Staff/officer and Member Centered unions.

In a Staff/officer Centered organization members expect service, and staff and officers deliver services such as negotiating contracts and processing grievances. It is a reactive unionism on the basis of members' complaints or requests. In this situation there is a centralized and top-heavy organizational structure with closed channels of communication. The membership is passive.

In a Member Centered organization members see themselves as the union with the staff and officers assisting them in solving problems, not limited to the bargaining

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MCCC Newsletter  
27 Mechanic Street, Suite 104  
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## Challenges Confront All Of Us In Public Higher Education



Joe LeBlanc,  
MCCC Vice President

An open letter to legislators, especially to Higher Education Chairs Senator Robert O'Leary, Rep. Kevin Murphy, and the following committee members: Senators Panagiotakos, Moore,

Nuciforo, Rosenberg and Tarr and Representatives Naughton, Kennedy, Atkins, Blumer, Callahan, Donelan, Peisch, Pignatelli, Humason and Peterson.

The Massachusetts Community College Council is a union of 1,850 full-time and more than 3,818 part-time faculty and professional staff. We welcome the opportunity to discuss the present state of our system and our vision for its future.

### I. Funding

All of you are aware of the drastic funding cuts and early retirement incentives enacted over the last few years. As a result, we have seen a decrease in the number of full-time tenure track faculty positions and an increase of hundreds of adjunct/part-time faculty. According to MCCC research, about half of all community college courses are now being taught by part-time faculty.

The MCCC supports closing the funding gap sooner rather than later. We support hiring additional full-time faculty to meet a goal of having 75 percent of courses taught by full-time faculty. We

cannot afford to delay, postpone or procrastinate. Let's set benchmarks for increased funding and reach them in five years.

### II. Affordability & Access

"If there is no struggle, there is no progress," said Frederick Douglass in 1857. Our students can certainly relate to struggle as they work with their teachers to answer the question all of us face each day: "How then shall we live?" My experiences tell me that our students are just scraping by. They struggle daily on many fronts to balance college, job and family responsibilities. They start out with the best of intentions and are too often forced to drop courses because work must come first. The rent has to be paid. The children have to be fed. In truth, there should be no cost to attend a community college. Even then, many of our students face tough odds, but their stories of success are inspiring and our responsibilities to them are enormous.

The MCCC supports SB780. We also support providing financial aid for part-time students. We think the plan to "meet 100 percent of the student need for qualified students attending public higher education institutions" will help to make the dream of higher education a reality for all the Commonwealth's citizens.

### III. Educational Quality & Use of Adjuncts

Our members are committed to our students. In addition to our teaching load of five courses, faculty hold office hours and serve as student advisers and mentors. They serve on hundreds of college committees across the state, writing new curricula and creating new programs in

an ever-changing academic environment.

The overuse of adjunct faculty caused in part by recent budget cuts is increasingly exploiting our colleagues and compromising the quality of instruction, however. Let me share some facts about this situation:

- From 1999 to fall 2003 community college enrollments increased from 43,230 to 49,059

- During the same period, full-time positions dropped from 1,614 to 1,418.

- Adjunct numbers increased from 2,848 to 3,397.

- Adjuncts are paid on a four-step salary scale maxing out at \$2,724 per course. Under enrolled courses often pay less than \$2,000 per course.

- Adjuncts are not required to hold office hours nor to serve on committees, though some do it voluntarily.

While many adjuncts are hired using a credible hiring process, colleges sometimes must scramble to hire an adjunct a few days before the semester starts. An increasing number of administrators are often needed to supervise and evaluate scores of adjuncts at every college.

Our colleges are trying to include our adjuncts into the life of the college, but it is difficult to strike the right balance between full- and part-time faculty. Clearly, adjuncts are no longer just being used to supplement full-timers or to bring expertise not available elsewhere. Adjunct faculty often work elsewhere and stay for a year or two or a semester. They often work in conditions not conducive to forging connections with stagnant or dwindling numbers of full-time faculty.

The MCCC believes that students learn best from faculty who have the time and knowledge to advise them about

their courses and academic goals. Time is always going to be an issue for adjunct faculty. Adjuncts rarely have time to act as mentors in a frequent and consistent manner.

The MCCC believes that institutions with an inordinate number of part-time faculty are diverted from their educational mission by the need to engage in constant searching for new instructors, imposing more work on the continuing faculty and the administrative staff and disrupting the academic process.

### IV. Member Morale

Since our historic 1999-2002 collective bargaining agreement, the MCCC has made great strides in improving salaries (under a classification system) for our members while providing productivity gains like the five-course load and post-tenure review. Since then we have lost much ground with no salary increases in 1,190 days. In our view, such conditions are a recipe for member discontent. Such discontent erodes productivity and compromises the quality of instruction and all the other essential work of higher education.

In this era of global competition, the Commonwealth is under pressure to maintain and strengthen its historically well-educated workforce. We look forward to working with you, the Board of Higher Education and the college presidents to forge an agenda that is both innovative and forward looking.

"Education is not the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire."

—W.B. Yeats

*Editor's Note: This testimony was given to the Joint Committee on Higher Education on Sept. 22. ■*



MCCC Vice President Joe LeBlanc testifies before a the Public Service Committee about the need to give adjunct faculty health insurance and some meaningful retirement benefit. He is joined by Fred Miller, Northern Essex, seated, along with Shelly Stoll, Bunker Hill, standing left, and Cynthia Duda of Bunker Hill and North Shore. Photo by Jerry Spindel

## College Presidents Appeal...

Continued from Page 1

dations to the chapters, but that the decision to cease work to rule is up to each individual MCCC chapter.

After the presidents departed, the Board resumed its meeting and debated a motion to recommend that chapters suspend work to rule actions. The discussion raised many of the issues expressed to the presidents.

The question was asked, "What would we do if the governor does not honor the contract?" President Doud said that that would require a response far more drastic than work to rule.

In the end the Board voted in favor of the motion to recommend that chapters go off Work to Rule. The sentiment was that the action primarily pressures the college administrations, and at this point the presidents have done about all they can do to. The next steps are entirely in the hands of the BHE and the governor, and those steps

are proceeding in their typical slow fashion. Work to Rule has little effect on them.

As of this writing all chapters have met to reconsider Work to Rule. Four campuses have gone off of Work to Rule: Berkshire, Holyoke, Middlesex and Northern Essex.

The other chapters have decided to continue with various conditions attached regarding when to reconsider. Some will reassess their position when the governor sends the contract to the legislature for funding, others when funding is passed and signed by the governor, and some voted to continue work to rule until raises are reflected in members' pay checks.

That so many chapters continue work to rule and that some have taken an extreme position would seem to indicate the membership's deep distrust in the collective bargaining process and in the state to honor its commitments. ■

## Know Your Day Contract

### October 2005

Oct. 10 Columbus Day holiday observed.

Oct. 30 Last day to opt out of sick bank p.13.

(Note: membership in sick leave bank is automatic upon first October of a member's employment.)

### November 2005

Nov. 11 Veterans Day holiday

Nov. 21 Unit Personnel Practices Committee established p. 30

Nov. 24-25 Thanksgiving Holiday

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. ■



Winners of the \$100 door prizes at the Leadership Event are, from left, Steve Russell, Northern Essex, Margaret Wong, Quinsigamond, Susan Blake, Mt. Wachusett, Lorie Donahue, Mt. Wachusett and Elena Natalizia, Mt. Wachusett.



# President's Message

## October 2005



Rick Doud,  
MCCC President

When I first served on the MCCC Board of Directors in 1989, the MCCC and the college presidents had a very strained relationship, to say the least. Over the course of the last few years, the MCCC

and the presidents have worked together to improve this important relationship. Last year, for the very first time, the MCCC leadership was invited to speak to all fifteen college presidents to discuss concerns about the status of our one-year contract extension.

This past September, again for the very first time, three college presidents were invited to attend the monthly MCCC Directors meeting, to discuss the state of our

unfunded contract. I strongly believe that increasing this direct communication is crucial to the needs of both parties. If college budgets are to improve, and contracts are to be signed and funded in a timely manner, we must continue to work together, and avoid the pitfalls of the past.

Due to some recent legal actions, however, I believe that the presidents are placing at risk much of the good will that has developed over the last few years. The risk stems from their current strategy of ignoring provisions of our collective bargaining Agreement on cases involving the termination of tenured faculty members. The contract language of our Agreement is quite clear. Tenured faculty may not be terminated without just cause.

Yet the attorneys representing the presidents continue to pursue in court the claim that we do not have a just cause provision in our contract. On two different occasions in the past year, two independent arbitrators ruled that our contract does indeed contain just cause language. In a binding decision, an arbitrator ruled that the college

did not have just cause in terminating a tenured faculty member, and that the decision was arbitrary, capricious, and/or unreasonable. The arbitrator voided the termination and ordered the college to reinstate the faculty member with back pay. Given that our contract provides for binding arbitration in such matters, the college should have reinstated the unit member.

Instead, things got worse. Upon receiving the arbitrator's decision, the college, presumably following advice from counsel, refused to accept the award of the arbitrator. Rather, the college decided to take the case to Superior Court, arguing that the decision to terminate a tenured faculty member is a "non-delegable decision" that cannot be overturned by an arbitrator.

Basically the college's position is that it can fire anyone at anytime without cause, because hiring and firing are management rights. On September 14, 2005, the Superior Court upheld the arbitrator's decision. The court ordered the college to reinstate the faculty member and also award back pay. What's next? Will the college now

ignore the court decision and appeal to the Supreme Judicial Court? I sincerely hope not. We have a collective bargaining Agreement on this matter.

Two arbitrators have upheld the just cause provision of our contract when tenured faculty members are terminated. The MCCC makes every attempt to abide by the provisions of our contract. We have always accepted the results of a binding arbitration decision—win or lose. I ask that the college presidents do the same, that they live by the rules of our collective bargaining Agreement and accept the fact that just cause and binding arbitration exist.

They should stop going to court every time an arbitrator's decision does not go their way. As we continue to work to improve our relationship with one another, we need to stop this ill-conceived agenda that ignores our contract. By not honoring the provisions of our contract, we all risk returning to a more adversarial position, which will not serve any of our collective needs.

In Solidarity,  
Rick

## MCCC Spring 2006 Elections

### All Candidates

Nominations are open for MCCC elections for officers and delegates to the MTA Annual Meeting and the NEA Representative Assembly. The MTA Annual Meeting is in Boston on May 5 and 6, 2006. The NEA Representative Assembly is in Orlando, Florida, from June 30 to July 5, 2006. The nomination form will appear in the November and December newsletters and is available on the MCCC website, as of October 17. Nominees must be members of the Massachusetts Community College Council at the time of nomination and during the time period for which they are elected as officers or delegates.

The schedule for the election is as follows:

- Nominations will close at 4 p.m. on Thursday, February 2, 2006.
- Ballots will be mailed to all MCCC members on Friday, March 3, 2006.
- The deadline for returning ballots is at 4 p.m. on Thursday, March 30, 2006.
- Election results will be announced on Friday, April 7, 2006.

Write-in candidates should contact the MCCC office by the deadline for ballot returns to establish their willingness to serve and to verify contact information.

### Candidates for Office

Candidates for statewide office (President, Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer) must submit at least 50 signatures of active MCCC members in support of their candidacy. The form for signature collection is available from the MCCC office or the MCCC website. Association membership lists, home addresses, and colleges appropriate to the office being sought may be provided equally to all candidates. Up to two sets of lists and labels or a CD containing the same information may be provided to candidates without cost upon request. Additional lists and labels will be provided at cost to the candidates.

Candidates for office will be permitted a statement of no more than 250 words in the March 2006 newsletter. The statement and a recent good quality photo must be submitted to the MCCC Communications Coordinator by the time nominations close to qualify for printing in the newsletter. ■

## Recruitment for Day Bargaining Team

Applications are now being accepted for the MCCC Negotiating Team for the 2006-2009 day contract.

### Team Composition and Responsibilities

The negotiating team is composed of the President and Vice-President of the Council, ex-officio, and a minimum of five members of the appropriate unit, appointed by the Board of Directors. Each team shall have the responsibility to negotiate with the employer on behalf of the Council and the unit on all matters relating to hours, wages, and conditions of work. The team's term of office shall end upon the expiration date of an agreement.

### Commitment

Applicants should understand that membership on a team constitutes a large time and energy commitment, a commitment to training, a commitment to serving the team as required as spokesperson, chair, vice chair, secretary or member at large, and in any other related way as required to serve MCCC members.

### To Apply

Unit members interested in applying for the team should submit a cover letter and résumé to the MCCC office. The following information should be addressed in these materials.

1. Union experience at chapter level, state-wide level, or in other systems
2. Academic background
3. Bargaining experience
4. Knowledge and understanding of labor relations
5. Reasons for wishing to serve

Applications for team submitted. Applications must be received at the MCCC Office by 4:00 PM Oct. 28, 2005, and mailed to:

Day Negotiating Team  
Application  
MCCC  
27 Mechanic St. Suite 104  
Worcester MA 01608-2402

The team will be appointed at the November 18, 2005 Board of Directors meeting. ■

## Leadership Event...

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Richard Sanders of MTA presents the process of revitalizing a chapter at the Leadership Event. He is joined by Quinsigamond Chapter President Marilyn Martin and Director Margaret Wong.

and grievance process. It is proactive unionism with staff/officers stimulating and involving members in problem solving through collective action. The organizational structure is decentralized with information sharing and open communication channels. The membership is active.

Dr. Bernard urged the MCCC to move towards the Member Centered model. Chapters need to be empowered by building leadership teams that have depth, diversity, experience and inclusion. They should work for more member participation and membership mobilization capacity through communications, community, and political activity.

She stressed that the priority of the organization must be on developing leaders at all levels of the organization.

Of the three breakout sessions, by far the best attended was the one on Chapter Revitalization. This was conducted by Richard Sanders, who had worked with the Quinsigamond chapter to successfully transform their organization.

Sanders presented a more nuts and bolts approach to energizing a chapter, but his ideas neatly dovetailed and complemented Dr. Bernard's. He went through the steps used at Quinsigamond with assistance from Chapter President Marilyn Martin and Director Margaret Wong.

The first step was for the chapter leaders to do an assessment of the internal and external challenges facing them and the chapter's strengths and weaknesses. Then they determine where they would like the chapter to be in three and five years. Next they develop a strategic plan with objectives and strategies to overcome obstacles.

The next phase is to involve the entire membership in planning and get them to commit to the plan. This starts by identifying members who are potential leaders, not necessarily people who would serve as officers, but people with a variety of leadership potential in different areas. Margaret Wong stressed the importance of reaching out to individuals and personally inviting them to get involved in compatible activities.

Sanders had been working for MTA as a consultant on organizing, but he has since been appointed as regional manager for the western part of the state. However he is still available to work with chapters on a limited basis to help revitalize their organizations.

The general consensus was that it was a very valuable evening. Attendees left with a sense of energy and a lot of new ideas. Leaders at all levels of the Union were given a challenge for taking the MCCC into a brighter future. ■



## Directors' Notes

At the September meeting of the MCCC Board of Directors the following actions were taken.

- The Board adopted the 2006 election dates as proposed by the Nominations and Elections Committee.

- The Board endorsed Senate Bill 764 allowing in-state tuition to state colleges and universities for immigrant students who have attended a Massachusetts high school for at least three years as recommended by the Strategic Action Committee.

- The Board accepted two policy proposals from the Finance Committee to be voted on at the October Board meeting:

MCCC reimbursement for travel of chapter officers who are invited by the president to attend Executive Committee and Board of Directors meetings.

An election waiver if the number of candidates for MTA delegates is less than or equal to the number allotted. A ballot process for write-in candidates will be conducted.

- After a presentation by college presidents Asquino, Gomes and Pura, the Board voted to recommend that chapters go off Work to Rule immediately. ■

## Correction

The lead article in the September issue had a misprint in the headline and article. The topic was "credible" rather than "creditable" service. We apologize for the error. ■



**MCCC News**  
<http://mccc-union.org>

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# Teaching in the Kingdom of Bahrain

By: Colin S. Cavell, Ph.D., University of Bahrain

**September 12, 2005**—I arrived in the Kingdom of Bahrain in late August of 2002, having been hired as an assistant professor in the American Studies Center earlier that summer.

For a single man such as myself at that time, teaching in a foreign country looked appealing, especially one between 30 degrees North and 30 degrees South of the Equator, as I had had my fill of New England winters living in Massachusetts for 14 years, and my south Louisiana roots were pulling me towards a warmer climate.

With a doctorate in political science, I would be teaching political science and history courses in the newly-established American Studies Center at the University of Bahrain, the first American Studies Center established in the entire Middle East-North Africa region (i.e. the region of Arab-speaking peoples). I soon found out that the Center had been dedicated the year before, indeed, on the morning of September 11, 2001!

The 33-island archipelago nation of Bahrain, situated in the Arabian Gulf about halfway between the Strait of Hormuz near Oman to the south and the mouth of the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers in Iraq to the north, and buttressed between the much larger nations of Saudi Arabia to the West and Iran across the Gulf to the East, is host to the US Navy's Fifth Fleet, which maintains the Kingdom's monarchy while acting as a forward deployed base, or in Pentagonese "Forward Operating Location (FOL)."

With only about 400,000 citizens and over 200,000 expatriate workers the latter who hold over 63% of all jobs in Bahrain, the felt-need by the US to legitimize the Al-Khalifa family and its rule—by whose authority the Americans park their ships in Bahrain—was satisfied when the Kingdom held its first parliamentary elections in 27 years in 2002.

However, the election was marred by the boycott of many of the Shiite Muslim parties who are outspoken against the 40-seat Shura council (upper chamber) whose members are appointed by the King. The Shiites wanted the members of newly-established bicameral legislature to be elected by the citizenry and saw little need for the presumed advantages said to result from "experienced and professional members to give advice" in the appointed upper chamber.

In effect, the construction of Bahraini democracy is taking a page from the US model, in that the members of the US Senate were also appointed, albeit by state legislatures, for over 125 years until the adoption of the 17<sup>th</sup> Amendment in 1913 which instituted the direct election of the US upper house.

The ruling Al-Khalifa family—which has ruled in Bahrain for over 200 years, even during the years when Bahrain was a formal British protectorate from 1916 to 1971—are Sunni Muslims, and Sunnis constitute only about 30% of the population of Bahrain

As in the political realm, so too in the academic realm is there an underlying tension along the Sunni-Shiite religious divide; however, there is unity amongst the native population in their identity as Arabs, especially in their pronounced opposition to the current US-occupation of Iraq. This anti-Americanism at times flares up at marches and rallies at the University as well.

The University of Bahrain, itself, has over 20,000 students at two campuses, with its main campus in Sakhir sporting a fairly modern architectural style and stocked with modern teaching facilities, computers, high-speed internet, library, etc. Like most universities, there are plenty of eager students willing to learn and improve themselves with most looking down the road for good-paying jobs.

Many of the structures of the university appear similar to their US counterparts, with a division into colleges and departments and administrative sections, etc. Faculty, however, are hired on a two-year term contract basis with renewal contingent upon mutual agreement. And, unlike their US counterparts, there is no faculty participation in the governance of the institution as a whole, though there is a semblance of faculty participation in the gover-

allowed to debate and voice their own opinions. Individual expression of opinion, they say, is forbidden in all other areas of the university.

In fact, it is because of the Center's openness to diverse views—which is perhaps no more than that existing in most US colleges and universities—that our program is thriving, despite the level of anti-Americanism arising out of current US actions in the Middle East. Indeed, the



Colin Cavell, who continues to teach distance courses at Holyoke Community College, with his students Yusra and Hafeedh in Bahrain.

nance of the departments. Also, there are no faculty unions. In fact, in Bahrain, there are only a few unions, mostly in the few dominant industries and closely tied to the management of those industries.

What is it like teaching at an Arab university in Bahrain? Well, aside from the language difficulties one might encounter who is not conversant in Arabic, there are also cultural differences which may appear strange to many Americans. For example, imagine entering a classroom with all of the female students dressed in black abiyas (dress designed to hide the female form) and hijabs (scarf head coverings) and with some having their entire faces covered by a burqa with only the students' eyes visible.

As for the males, imagine many of them dressed in blazing white thobes (similar to a cassock worn by a priest) with a headdress called a guttrah which is fastened to the head by a black rope-like hoopcoil called an agal. Such a sight might initially be disconcerting unless, like me, you grew up in a heavily Catholic region of the country and went to Catholic schools, were taught by nuns, lectured to by priests, and served many a mass as an altar boy, and thus are used to strange sights.

Also, imagine extending your hand so as to greet a female student or colleague and she refuses, for it is against her religion to shake hands with a man. Or imagine getting into an elevator and, because of your male presence, all the females empty out before the doors close, because it is "haraam" (i.e. forbidden) for females to be in such a tight enclosed space with a male to which one is not married to. And, finally, imagine walking into a classroom and all the males sit on one side of the classroom and all the females sit on the other, each and every class.

With regards to academics in particular, one should note that the university has no political science program nor philosophy program, for, it is said by officials, in all earnestness, these topics are already covered by the Department of Arabic and Islamic Studies. Students tell me that ONLY in American Studies courses are students

American Studies Center is able to attract some of the brightest and most capable students at the university.

I believe it is the one place on campus where students feel they can speak their minds without fear of reprisal which accentuates the Center's appeal.

In sum, teaching as an American in the Middle East has been a new experience, both exciting and educational. Also, having some distance between one's self and one's native country allows one to simultaneously be both more critical of one's government—especially one like the US which is involved all over the world—and more appreciative of some of the rights we oftentimes take for granted. As well, I have gained new insight and appreciation of the Arab peoples, their world and struggles, and their worldview.

And Bahrain—also known as the ancient land of Dilmun to which King Gilgamesh traveled seeking immortality as told in *The Epic of Gilgamesh* (the oldest extant work in literature)—while not paradise, is definitely full of life. Indeed, where else in the world can one enjoy nearly 365 days of blue skies and sunshine with no tsunamis, hurricanes, tornadoes, or earthquakes? For a Louisiana native such as myself, you might understand why I might believe it is the closest thing to it on Earth. ■

## Doud Steps Down...

*Continued from Page 1*

became active in the MCCC shortly after his hiring, notably participating in the 1990 DCE strike.

Doud will return to full teaching duties at Middlesex. His departure will lead to some reshuffling of the MCCC leadership, and will create an opportunity for new people to move into the leadership team. Members who are interested in running should see the elections article elsewhere in this issue. ■