

MCCC News

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Higher Ed. Advocates Hit The State House

On March 21, well over 100 students, faculty and staff assembled at the Massachusetts State House to rally for the MTA sponsored Fund Our Future Campaign and to get a lesson in civic action by calling on their legislators to support the *Cherish Act* for higher education.

MTA has been sponsoring Higher Education Advocacy Day for many years. This year they were able to secure the impressive Great Hall. March is an ideal time both because the legislature has settled on bills filed and colleges

are on spring break when students can go to Boston without missing classes. Well over 100 people participated.

PHENOM, the Public Higher Education Network of Massachusetts, was a key sponsor of the event also. Students are a large part of this group, and the issues of increasing tuition and fees producing skyrocketing debt were foremost among their issues.

There were a number of speakers at the rally. Among them was Rep. Jeffrey Roy, House Chair on the Joint Committee for Higher Education. He

thanked the students for their advocacy and pledged his support for increasing funding.

Rep. Natalie Higgins, who is a former president of PHENOM, spoke in strong support of the *Cherish Act* from experience. As a UMass Amherst and Northeastern University Law School graduate, she knows the issue of student debt well. Serving in the state legislature in her second term, she still drives the car she had in college with 180,000 miles on it because her student debt prevents

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**Mark Your Calendar
MCCC Delegate
Assembly
Saturday, April 27, 2019**

**New Venue:
Harrington Learning Center
Quinsigamond
Community College
Worcester campus.**

Holyoke CC Works to Fund Our Future

The Holyoke Community College chapter on March 18, hosted a forum on the MTA sponsored Fund Our Future Campaign. Made up of two bills in the legislature, the campaign seeks to increase funding for both K-12 and public higher education.

The higher ed. bill is called the *Cherish Act*, and it calls for an additional \$580 million in funding for the colleges and universities. The *Promise Act* addresses shortcomings in K-12 funding with a focus on addressing inequities. Legislative sponsors of both bills attended the forum and spoke in support of the campaign.

Sen. Joanne Comerford sponsored the *Cherish Act* in the senate. She pointed out that there has been a 31 percent drop in per student investment in higher ed. since 2001, and her bill would bring up funding to 2001 levels, adjusted for inflation. "The share of costs has shifted dramatically," she said, adding "Massachusetts has the second fastest student debt growth in the nation."

Rep. Aaron Vega is the house sponsor of the bill. A Holyoke native, Vega attended Holyoke Community College and served as a college trustee. His bill would address the differences in per student expenditures between school districts. Wealthy communities can provide significant additional finding above the state support level, but low-income communities, like Holyoke, whose students face significant challenges do not have the additional money to address their needs.

With Holyoke mayor, Alex Morse beside him, Vega said the *Promise Act* would provide the city's schools an additional \$26 million. This would benefit HCC by the city schools having the resources to better prepare students for college.

College president Christina Royal spoke in strong favor of both bills. She said, "Community colleges were an innovation in higher ed. to provide quality education to people who couldn't access it otherwise."

HCC has kept fees at the lowest level of the 15 community colleges, but it has been a struggle, she said. All of the colleges have had to pass on costs to students through fees. At a system average of \$6,100 per year to



Holyoke Community College hosted Fund Our Future forum on March 18. Standing with a symbolic check representing what passage of the *Cherish Act* would mean to Holyoke are (from left) Rep. Aaron Vega, MCCC Chapter President Stephanie Marcotte, Sen. Joanne Comerford, Holyoke Mayor Alex Morse, and HCC President Christina Royal.

(Photo by Don Williams)

attend, the cost is prohibitive to many students. She said, "It's not a higher ed. issue, it's an equity issue."

Royal shared data from an economic impact study the college commissioned that showed the how much it contributes to the local economy. For every dollar spent by taxpayers on the college, they gain \$1.80. Students gain \$3.20 in lifetime earnings for every dollar they spend. And both because of the students' contribution to the community, and the reduction in unemployment and reduced crime that education brings about, for every dollar spent, society gains \$6.30.

Questions from the audience addressed the issue of funding. Rep. Vega said that the source of funding is not contained in the bills, and that is one reason for phasing

them in over a few years. Money will have to be found. He also said that provisions in the bills would prevent shifting other funding away from education if this new funding comes about, so that there is a net increase.

Chapter president Stephanie Marcotte thanked everyone for attending. Noting that this is just the beginning of a long process, she said, "Another future is possible for higher ed."

There are separate bills filed in both chambers; the *Cherish Act* is S.740 and H.1214. As they move through the process, committees will review the bills, amendments will be made, and, if all works out well, a final joint compromise bill will be passed by both chambers. Then it would still need the governor's approval. ■

NEW BRIEFS

Day Contract at Critical Point

MCCC Day negotiating team Chair Claudine Barnes reported at the March board of Directors meeting that negotiations are down to a few critical issues relating to professional staff vacation time conversions and required faculty use of LMS and advising software.

She said that besides management being absolutely rigid on limiting annual raises to 2 percent, they have also been stonewalling over these language issues as well. Negotiating sessions scheduled for the last week of March will be critical. If management doesn't soften its positions, then concerted member actions will be ramped up.

The MCCC day contract is the last outstanding higher ed. contract in this cycle.

Middlesex Chapter Votes No Confidence

In January, the Middlesex Community College Chapter of the MCCC presented the college's Board of Trustees with the results of a Campus Climate Survey that reflected serious morale problems and placed significant blame on college President James Mabry.

As reported in *The Lowell Sun*, the Trustees voted at their Feb. 28 meeting "to support the leadership of President Mabry and request he work collaboratively with the (Faculty and Staff Association) and MCCC union to address the issues and concerns raised."

The same day as the Trustees' action, the chapter voted no confidence in President Mabry. Chapter president Joanna DelMonaco said the motion passed overwhelmingly. Chapter Vice President David Kalivas said the action was unprecedented at the college.

But, "People felt that they're [MCC management] not representing the interests of the college well."

Salem State University Faculty Sit-in

On March 5, after settling a long delayed contract, faculty at Salem State took over the office of President Keegan. As reported in *The Salem News*, they were protesting, "how disrespectfully management behaved during the entire bargaining season."

The prime sticking point that held up the contract for months had been over the issue of "equivalencies" between pay for lab/clinical/studio teaching time and lecture time. The initial contract that was negotiated last May included a pay differential for those types of sections. Because that provision exceeded Gov. Baker's 2 percent limit on raises.

"Our goal was to share concerns about the contract negotiation process and to make clear that we expect better in the next round of negotiations for our 2020-2022 contract," said a message on the local union's website.

MTA Consultants Realigned

MTA provides the MCCC with two field representatives who provide support for the two MCCC contracts: Day and DCE.

Traditionally, the consultants were each assigned one of the contracts. The new policy will have each consultant support both contracts on an east/west regional basis.

Maura Sweeney covers the eastern most campuses (BHCC, BrCC, CCCC, MBCC, NECC, NSCC, RCC) and Catherine Santiago cover the other campuses (BkCC, GCC, HCC, MaCC, MxCC, MWCC, QCC, STCC). ■



Greenfield Community College students, faculty and staff made the trip to Boston for Higher Education Advocacy Day.

(Photo by Don Williams)



Bristol Community College alumna, Amy Blanchette, who is the current president of PHENOM, addressed the assembled participants at the State House on Advocacy Day. She shared the difficulties of financing higher education as an adult student and the need to lower tuition and fees.

(Photo by Don Williams)

Higher Ed. Advocates...

Continued from front page
her buying a new one. Now assigned to the powerful Ways and Means Committee she is in a position to make the issues of students heard.

Current PHENOM President, Amy Blanchette, a Bristol Community College alumna, told of her struggles as a single mother student trying to manage the rising costs of attending college, and the debt she carries.

After the speeches, groups assembled at tables designated to state senate districts with the senators' name and then a list of state representatives within those districts. Participants were provided with packets containing talking points and other supporting information.

Led MTA President Merrie Na-

jimy and Vice President Max Page behind a banner saying, "What Kind of Future— A Debt Free Future" the groups marched out of the Great Hall and dispersed to the various legislative offices. People wearing the bright red Fund Our Future t-shirts could be seen throughout the building making their presence known.

People reconvened in the afternoon for a bag lunch provided by the organizers and had a chance to compare their experiences with legislators. Zac Bears, PHENOM Executive Director, gave closing remarks and pointed to upcoming events including a Fund Our Future March on the State House May 16. For more information go to phenomonline.org.

Visit The MCCC Online!

mccc-union.org

The MCCC website is the best and most up-to-date source for late breaking developments important to Day and DCE Unit members in addition to being a valuable resource for MCCC contact information, bargaining and legislative updates, contracts, committee assignments, bylaws, local chapter leadership, calendar of meetings and events, and the MCCC News newsletters (current and past).

Find links to NEA, MTA and MCCC on Twitter and Facebook.

Bookmark the site for frequent referral.

There is a "Members Only" area with additional information. You log on to that with the same credentials as your MTA Members account. Don't have an account? Create one using your membership card info at MassTeacher.org.

Community College As A Pathway to Lower Student Loan Debt

Student loan debt was on the mind of nearly everyone I chatted with the morning of March 21, 2019 (Higher Education Advocacy Day) at the Statehouse as I headed to the offices of my State Representatives to speak about the need for increased funding to public higher education. One student in her second year at UMass Amherst told me she was already carrying \$20K in loans, and had just signed on to \$15K more. Another student at Fitchburg State University was going to graduate in May with \$35K in student loans. Even the Chief-of-Staff of my State Representative said her student load debt was such that her dream of going on to graduate school is all but at an end because she cannot incur any more debt.

Then at lunch I happened to sit at a table with two Journalism students from Cape Cod Community College. After we all listened to a speaker talk about her \$60K student loan, one of the young woman said, "I'm so glad I'm going to a community college. I'm not going to have any debt when I graduate before I transfer to UMass." Her friend concurred and said that she wondered why more people didn't go to community college. She feels she has gotten an excellent education at CCCC and was ready to become an ambassador advocate for community

colleges in the high schools to help others lower their student load burden.

Completing a degree at one of the 15 community colleges before transferring to a state university or UMass was something I had brought up with the young man graduating from FSU as a way he could have cut his debt in half or even eliminated altogether because there was so much funding support for community college transfer students that is not available to those coming straight from high school. I thought he was going to say something in response like, "I didn't really want to go to a community college." Instead he said, "I never thought of doing that. No one ever told me it was a possibility."

Amazingly, community college transfer is still a secret. In the world of ever-increasing student loan debt, it is a secret with not only economic, but moral and social justice, implications as well. Many of the Commonwealth's young people can right now cut their debt in half or more if they begin their 4-year undergraduate degree in one of the community colleges of Massachusetts. They don't have to wait for that day in the hopeful future, after they have incurred their debt, when legislation is passed to make public higher education debt free. To be sure, debt-free higher education

is a worthy goal but, for now, it is still a pie-in-the-sky dream when measured against the nightmare of loan statements detailing a 20-year plan of loan repayment before one have even settled into one's first post-college job.

So why has community college as a pathway to lower student debt been such a secret? Two reasons: ignorance and snobbery. Parents, counselors, even people within the community colleges themselves are unaware of the existence of high quality programs such as, to hear the students tell it, Journalism at CCCC. They are unaware of the agreements that exist between the Community Colleges and the public four-year universities that allow students to transfer seamlessly into the four-year institutions. And they are unaware of the myriad merit- and need-based funding opportunities that exist for community college students that are not available to students coming directly from high school.

Then there is the snobbery, which is constantly reinforced by the punchline politics of higher education: some public figure does not understand something? They must have gone to a community college. It is this superficial perception of cachet, or the lack thereof, that is at the heart of the college admissions bribery scandal that has shaken the world of higher



Margaret Wong, MCCC President

education. Parents apparently will go to criminal lengths to have their children connected to a "prestigious" higher education institution.

Things need to change now. Continuing to indulge our pretentious leanings while we burden young people with crushing debt is unsustainable. We need to persistently counter the jokes and erroneous narratives that contribute to the negative perception of our community colleges. High school counselors and parents need to be better educated about the transfer options and funding opportunities at our community colleges. For the sake of our future it is time to become truly proud of our community's two-year public colleges.



Rep. Jeffrey Roy, House Chair of the Joint Committee on Higher Education told Advocacy Day attendees that he and his committee are committed to increasing higher ed. funding. (Photo by Don Williams)

CORRECTION:

In the February issue the amount of money going to community colleges should have been \$125 million. It has been corrected in the archive edition

MOVING?



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MCCC President Margaret Wong discussed the Cherish Act and how it would impact tuition and fees with students at the State House on Higher Ed. Advocacy Day. They are at a table with names and room numbers for legislators in the Merrimac Valley Essex County district of Sen. Diane DiZoglio.

(Photo by Don Williams)



MCCC News

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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. email: Communications@mccc-union.org



Write Us

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:

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Know Your Day Contract

April 2019

April 6 Dean's leave of absence recommendations due (p. 30).

April 15 Dean's tenure recommendations due (p. 44).

April 15 Title changes announced (p. 65).

April 15 Patriots Day holiday (p. 23).

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. 24).

May 2019

May 1 President's tenure recommendations and sabbatical notification due (pp. 44 & 27).

May 1 **Last Day of classes.** Faculty submit college service and student advisement form (p. 57).

May 21 Tenure decisions due (p. 45).

May 27 Memorial Day observed.

May 30 Professional staff College service and student advisement forms (p. 59).

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.

