

# MCCC News



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## Cherish – the Legislature’s Commitment to Higher Ed

**F**unding for higher education could see major improvements if the provisions of the MTA supported Cherish Act are passed by the legislature. Introduced by Sen. Jo Comerford and Rep. Sean Garballey, this omnibus bill addresses a range of needs from for student support and debt elimination, to building funding, to addressing salary funding and inequities. There are 13 sections to the bill.

With the formal name An Act Committing to Higher Education the Resources to Insure a Strong and Healthy Public Higher Education System the bill aspires to build a world-class system of higher education.

It seeks to restore the cuts that, adjusting for inflation and student enrollment, equal over 30 percent since 2001. The bill aspires to create a world class public higher education system. Over a five-year period, it seeks to redress the budget cuts that since 2001, accounting for inflation and enrollments, ran over 30 percent.

Increasingly it appears that it will not be taken up by the House of Representatives in this session, but that doesn’t mean that pieces of the large bill could be taken up this year. Joe Nardoni believes that the full Cherish bill will be filed next year if it isn’t funded this year.

At its Feb. 20 meeting, the MCCC Strategic Action Committee (SAC) discussed what positions the

union should take on the bill as well as strategies for lobbying.

On-campus legislative meetings such as legislative breakfasts are one of the options, and this is something that the college presidents do. Sometimes the chapter can piggyback on that. An advantage of these is few legislators can be gathered in one location and more member constituents can also attend.

Another strategy discussed was in-district meetings where a few member constituents meet with a senator or representative in their district offices. SAC chair Joe Nardoni shared a draft version of a PowerPoint he has created that members can take to these meetings to explain the MCCC’s positions on the various provisions of the Cherish Act.

A series of in-district legislative meetings have been scheduled for late March and early April with a hearing at the State House on March 26.

If the whole Act isn’t brought up for a vote, as many suspect, there are sections that have stronger support than others and could be passed on their own. The SAC Committee endorsed a motion to recommend that the MCCC Executive Committee and Board support a set of the ACT’s sections that are priorities for the MCCC.

Five of the 13 sections are priorities. Section 1

establishes the intent of the act, and includes \$2,000 additional funding for at-risk students and mandates pay equity for part-time faculty and staff while promoting full-time employment.

Section 5 mandates the funding for all years of any collective bargaining agreement and keeps this money as separate line items from the Colleges’ operating budgets.

Section 6 mandates that part-time faculty and staff who work at least half-time are entitled to benefits, in-

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## ✓ Mark Your Calendar

**MCCC Delegate Assembly  
Via Zoom —April 20, 2024**

Chapters need to elect their delegates and report them by April 15 so that there is time to verify membership of delegates and Zoom invitation email addresses.

Here are the chapter entitlements and the target numbers to insure a quorum is reached.

Chapter	Goal	Entitlement
BkCC	3	7
BrCC	9	23
BHCC	12	29
CCCC	4	11
GCC	3	8
HCC	7	17
MaCC	8	19
MBCC	5	12
MxCC	10	24
MtWCC	6	16
NSCC	8	19
NECC	6	15
QCC	10	26
RCC	3	7
STCC	6	16
TOT	100	249

## NSCC Takes No Confidence Vote

In response to the firing of a popular administrator, the North Shore Community College Professional Association called an emergency meeting on Feb. 13 when the college was closed for a snow day, in order to take a vote of no confidence in the senior management.

The vote of 94 to 0 with only three abstentions was principally focused on Provost Jennifer Mezquita, but also named President Bill Heinemann for his inaction on a series of complaints about the performance of the provost. The action was covered by the *Salem News* and *Gloucester Times*.

A growing list of complaints over management actions came to a head with the abrupt firing of the assistant provost, the highest-ranking academic officer at the college. The assistant provost had been in the position for several years and was loved and respected after guiding the faculty and staff through the challenges of COVID along with the change of college president and other administrative positions.

President Heinemann had brought about a significant change in the management structure in his second year at the college that changed from separate vice presidents for the academic affairs side and the student affairs sides of the house. He created the position of provost that

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North Shore Chapter President Torrey Dukes.



## MCCC Member Spotlight: Alfonso Herrera-Neal (Holyoke CC)

By Colleen Avedikian

Alfonso Herrera-Neal is a dedicated advocate, educator, and community leader committed to empowering Latinx and Spanish-speaking students and workers. As the Student Success Counselor at El Centro, located within Holyoke Community College, he provides culturally responsive guidance and support to foster academic success and a sense of belonging among Hispanic students. Alfonso's passion for education extends to his role as a teacher of Latinx Studies and Community Leadership at HCC. He currently serves as the Vice President, Day and DCE Grievance Coordinator of the Holyoke Chapter of MCCC. He also represents his chapter members on the Day and DCE MACER teams.

With a background in union organizing, Alfonso has worked extensively with organizations such as the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) and the Painters District Council 58, Local 148 of the Operating Engineers. He played a pivotal role as Deputy Director in the Fight for \$15 campaign in St. Louis, advocating for fair wages for fast food workers and earning national recognition for their cause. Additionally, he has contributed to healthcare union efforts across Missouri, Kansas, and Illinois. One recent success under his leadership was negotiating the Amherst Cinema Workers Union's first contract, achieved through a rotating bargaining team to ensure member participation and prevent management's divide-and-conquer tactics.

Alfonso has been involved with the MCCC union for several years, becoming more active after a new slate of chapter officers committed to reform were elected. Currently, his focus is on building members' knowledge of their contract rights and advocating for their interests. His leadership style is participative, emphasizing rank-and-file democracy and transparency in decision-making.

To ensure all members feel included, he prioritizes responsiveness and problem-solving within a 48-hour time frame. Consistency is key in engaging and mobilizing members for collective action, while transparency is maintained by making all decisions open to members. He fosters solidarity through open communication and reframing conflicts as opportunities for progress. His longer-term goals include growing active membership, filling leadership positions, and establishing a continuous cycle of leadership development to ensure the union's sustainability and efficacy.

Beyond his union work, Alfonso served as the Executive Director of the Pioneer Valley Workers Center, where he continued his advocacy for labor rights. He also collaborates with the LAVA Center as a project co-director for the indIVISIBLE oral history and documentary project, which aims to amplify the voices and experiences of agricultural workers in Franklin County, MA, and beyond.

As an accomplished writer and visual artist, Alfonso has authored "England's Farm Belt: Views of 21st-century Sussex" and exhibited his work, including "No Somos Máquinas (We Are Not Machines): Farmworker Resistance in the Connecticut River Valley," which sheds light on the challenges faced by local farmworkers. His dedication to highlighting the experiences of agricultural workers is further evidenced by his involvement in the touring exhibit "indIVISIBLE: Seeing and Celebrating Indispensable Agricultural Workers." (<https://indivisiblegreenfield.org/>).

Alfonso Herrera-Neal's commitment to social justice, education, and the empowerment of marginalized communities shines through his multifaceted roles as an educator, organizer, artist, and advocate. ■



Alfonso Herrera-Neal from Holyoke Community College wears many hats.

## NSCC No Confidence Vote...

*Continued from front page*

would oversee both sides, which was touted as a way to eliminate some of the conflicts that can occur when the vice presidents clashed over policies.

Faculty and staff were concerned that, depending on which domain the new provost came from, one side might suffer. Dr. Mezquita came from the student affairs realm, and to allay concerns about representation, the former dean of liberal studies was moved into the position of assistant provost that would oversee the academic component.

A statement issued by the union said, "In the recent reorganization, the academic life of the college has been neglected. Non-unit personnel (NUPs) and executive roles created and filled, while academic and academic success areas remain woefully understaffed, have been unable to fill essential student facing unit professional and faculty roles."

Representation of the academic divisions was diminished last fall when the assistant provost position was removed from the president's cabinet, which sent a message to the faculty and staff that "the academic life of the institution was not a priority of the executive

leadership." With the assistant provost's dismissal, there is no academic representation in the cabinet.

Over the course of the last year, faculty, staff and union leaders have brought concerns to the president and provost but the response to the complaints had been met with "at times, outright hostility or more often empty words of agreement and understanding only to be followed with inaction."

Chapter President Torrey Dukes met with the NSCC faculty emeriti group on Mar. 4 and told them that there was, "An atmosphere of fear and distrust here, with people afraid to speak up... Academics have been marginalized." But she held out hope that she has been meeting with the president, and he is willing discuss solutions. "Administration is now trying to please us."

At this point, the current dean of liberal studies, a former faculty member, has agreed to temporarily fill the assistant provost role with no interest in the permanent position. NSCC Director Brian Falter told the MCCC Board of Directors at the Mar. 15 meeting that progress is being made. "We like our president on a fundamental level." And he added, "We have faith in the acting assistant provost." ■



## 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:

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

### Or email:

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



# Rizzo Delivers DCE Grievance Report

DCE Grievance Coordinator Joe Rizzo gave his annual report at the March meeting of the MCCC Board of Directors, which focused on the trends in cases for the recent past.

As a general trend the number of grievances is down, but the number of members affected by them is larger. Two areas were the focus of this report: Department of Unemployment Assistance (DUA) cases, and grievances over the Distance Education Agreement (DEA) courses.

DCE members with no other employment often file unemployment claims between semesters. Rizzo has seen a sharp drop in these cases recently.

Contingent higher education faculty are eligible for unemployment benefits between terms if there is a lack of reasonable assurance of future employment. And the COVID crisis certainly showed that contingent faculty have little assurance that their courses will run.

The grievance issues regarding distance education are becoming less common as many of the pending grievances are in arbitration or resolved. As in the past, the most common grievance issues continue to be disciplinary actions, rescinding assignments, reappointment rights, salary, and non-reappointment.

Rizzo pointed out that we are having less success at Mediation step than we did 10 years ago, but many are still resolved. There are 29 grievances currently pending at that stage.

Many of the grievances concerning distance education are now reaching arbitration. Most of these are Chapter cases which involve separate Day and DCE grievances and were filed in the fall 2021 and spring 2022 semesters.

Arbitrations have had mixed results. There were Day and DCE unit grievances filed by a Chapter, often on the same day and by the same Chapter officers. However, Day and DCE arbitration decisions yielded varying results on the same alleged violation of the Distance Education Agreement and on the same campus.

Many of the cases dealt with the question of what constitutes a distance education course, with different perceptions at different colleges. Rizzo showed five situations with four of them having differing decisions between the Day and DCE contracts.

He reminded everyone of the contractual definition of distance education:

***For the purposes of this Agreement, distance education is defined as instruction, education, and training conducted at sites separated by space or time, which may utilize technology to facilitate learning.***

He summarized the DEA grievances at seven colleges and also went over some related state-wide grievances.

A troubling trend he noted regarded how payments are processed when grievants are given financial settlements. Formerly they would be paid promptly by the colleges. But now they are required to be issued by the State Comptroller out of a fund that covers all state worker settlements. No payments have been issued since November 2023.

Rizzo was not sure of the reasons, but he speculated that it is caused by insufficient legislative funding, which seems to be getting addressed. But he said, "This system is seriously flawed and raises questions of bad faith bargaining."

Reappointment rights issues under

Article 10.03 were the final topic covered. The contract says, a tentative appointment for one course shall be assigned first to those Unit members with the longest seniority in the work area(s). Current contract provisions do not allow arbitration for 10.03 questions.

And management has been trying to equate a variety of questions under that article to avoid arbitration. An example he cited would be any failure to reappoint because of non-compliance with the vaccine mandate.

This situation raises the question of whether the community colleges have repudiated the terms of the collective bargaining agreement which would be a violation of MGL ch. 150E. Given the mixed results of recent DEA arbitrations, demonstrate that arbitration decisions are not precedential, the MCCC could consider bringing the seniority/reappointment question to arbitration again.

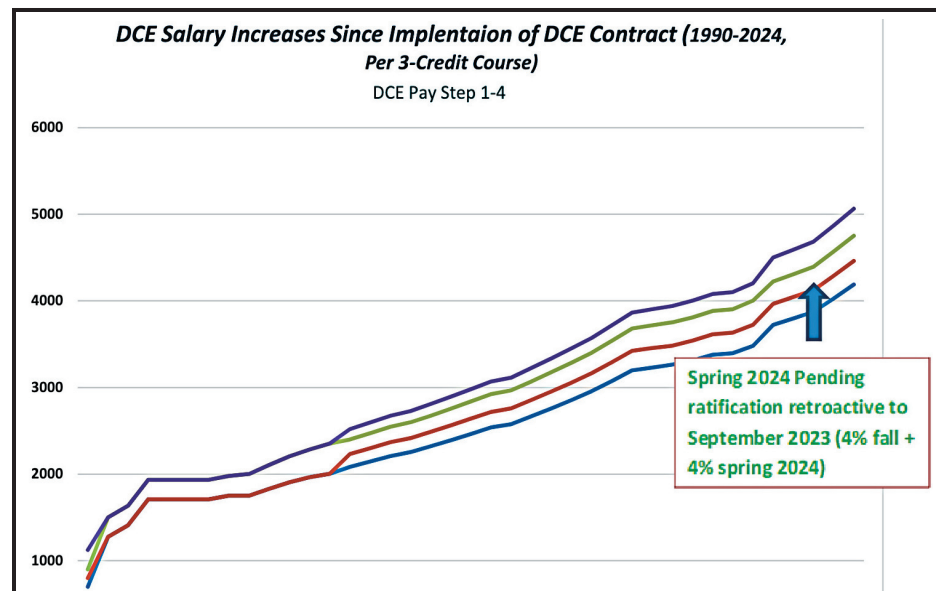
Not all non-reappointment cases are clear cut, and many involve other grievance which are arbitrable or legal issues outside of the collective bargaining agreement that can be pursued. A striking example of this is when there were two non-reappointment grievances on the same campus within the same general



MCCC DCE Grievance Coordinator Joe Rizzo gave his annual report to the Board of Directors.

time frame. One also involved a serious and viable discrimination matter. The case with the discrimination case in a separate venue was resolved with a financial settlement exceeding \$90,000. The other case had no financial settlement offered.

As a final note Rizzo shared a line graph of DCE raises since the first contract. In 1990, before the first contract, the colleges were paying between \$700 and \$1,100 per DCE 3-credit course. Adjusted for inflation the 1990 \$900 would now be 2,109.23. The recently negotiated contract will be paying between \$4,189–5,065 per 3-credit course. Way better than inflation. ■



This graph from Joe Rizzo's report shows the trend of raises over the life of the DCE Unit, well outstripping the cost of living.

## Cherish – Legislation...

*Continued from front page*

cluding health insurance and pensions.

Section 7 establishes a Public Higher Education Wage Equity and Working Conditions Commission and the MCCC will ask to have the section modified to allow the union to choose our representative on that Commission. The current wording lists the representation of the higher ed. segments stipulating that the community college presidents get a representative and MTA gets three representatives including one for a community college member.

Section 9 mandates that the costs of fringe benefits for our employees, including but not limited to, health insurance and pensions be paid by the Commonwealth.

Section 12 calls for the debt-free portion of the act be implemented first at the community colleges. Nardoni added

that we would like to add the proviso that it follows the recommendations of the Advisory Committee of Free Community College to use the middle-dollar plan for funding community colleges, so it can be free to all students.

While the community college presidents are largely supportive of the Cherish Act, they have expressed concern about Section 13 that they believe will disadvantage community colleges relative to the 4-year institutions. The MCCC shares this concern and is evaluating its response on that part of the bill.

Lobbying will be essential in getting any of these provisions enacted. The COVID funding bubble has ended and the state is no longer flush with funds. State tax receipts are down, and there are many competing constituencies with their own funding needs. ■

## VISIT THE MCCC ONLINE!

[www.mccc-union.org](http://www.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.

# WooSox



## FREE 2024 WooSox Tickets!



## MCCC News

<http://mccc-union.org>

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For the fourth year in a row, Margaret Wong has generously donated two (2) season tickets to see the WooSox play at Polar Park in Worcester! This year the seats are closer to home plate (Section 11, Row 15, Seats 1 & 2, on the aisle).

To reserve a game go to: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/2024WooSox>

The ballpark, which opened in 2021, is just a mile from the MCCC office. If you would like to attend one or more games, please indicate your preferences below; tickets will be assigned on a first-come-first-served basis, with preference given to people who have not yet been given tickets. Please choose more than one game, as your first choice might no longer be available; any game listed as "TAKEN" is unavailable. Your only requirement is

to discuss an education-related topic at some point during the game.

I will email your tickets in advance of the game. For more information, go to <https://www.milb.com/worcester>. If you have any questions, please contact Paul Johansen (Berkshire)/[iguanaphoto@gmail.com](mailto:iguanaphoto@gmail.com)/413-212-6132.

The 2023 promotion schedule was:

- Tuesdays – Taco/Tequila (3 tacos & a margarita for \$12)

- Wednesdays – Woof Woof (bring your furry pets)
- Thursdays – Throwback (meet sports legends)
- Fridays – Fireworks
- Saturdays – Sunset catch (on the field after the game)
- Sundays – Kids run the bases (on the field after the game)

## Play ball!

## Know Your Day Contract April 2024

**April 1** Applications must be submitted by this date for sabbaticals beginning January 1 for professional staff or beginning in the Spring semester for faculty (p. 29).

**April 15** Dean's tenure recommendations for spring due to Sabbatical Leave Committee (p. 30).

**April 15** Title changes announced (p. 73).

**April 16** Patriots Day holiday (p. 27).

## May 2024

**May 1** President's tenure recommendations and due (p. 49).

**May 15** Recommendations of the Sabbatical Leave Committee in rank order shall be concurrently submitted to the Dean(s) and the applicants Spring semester or January 1, (p. 30).

**May 21** Tenure decisions due (p. 46).

**May 27** Memorial Day observed (p. 25).

**May 30** Professional staff College service and student advisement forms (p. 63).

**May Last Day of classes** Faculty submit college service and student advisement form (p. 60).

**NOTE:** Cited page numbers are from the 2021-2023 contract that is available on the MCCC website. 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. ■

## Contract Ratification

The Day Contract covering 2023-2025 was ratified by union members on Feb. 23.

The vote tally is as follows:

763 votes cast  
742 Yes 97.3%  
21 No 2.7%

The two-year agreement contained no language changes, but provided for salary increases over its term. There are still some negotiations going on about how to disperse the \$500 per FTE for equity adjustments. The union hopes to get the funding into a March supplemental budget.

The DCE contract still has some minor corrections being made but is expected to come up for ratification in late April. ■