

APRIL 2025 E-NEWS ISSUE

MCCC Hub
<https://bit.ly/m/fairpaymccc>

QCCPA Stands with BIPOC Unit Professional Staff

by Margaret Wong

At the March 13, 2025 Quinsigamond Community College Professional Association (QCCPA) chapter meeting, nearly 100 members gathered in solidarity to confront a disturbing pattern: the non-reappointment of three (3) BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) Unit Professional Staff members. The three full-time BIPOC staff employees who were non-reappointed on Feb. 28, attended and courageously shared their experiences of racial microaggressions, unclear expectations, and overwhelming workloads that left them set up to fail.

"I was never told what I was doing wrong," one member said. Another revealed their evaluation in a group chat, showing exaggerated criticisms and unrealistic demands. "I gave my heart and soul to this job and to the students, only to be treated as disposable," they added.

This follows a larger trend—two BIPOC professionals were non-reappointed in 2023, and now three more in 2025. During this same period, no white full-time unit professionals were let go. The pattern has sparked outrage and calls for accountability. In response, a faculty member introduced a motion of no confidence in QCC President Luis Pedraja. The motion, seconded at the meeting, was formally debated and approved at the April 10, 2025 chapter meeting with an overwhelming majority (75% out of 106 votes). The Chapter took the next step and immediately voted to go on work-to-rule until the 3 members are reappointed or until President Pedraja resigns. The vote on work-to-rule passed with an 89% majority.

While President Pedraja has publicly expressed support for diversity and equity, the motion argues he has failed to act when those values were violated on his watch. Specifically, the motion points to: (1) A pattern of racial disparity in non-reappointments, (2) Immediate suspension and loss of email access for BIPOC staff—an unprecedented move, (3) Unfair evaluations and lack of support from supervisors, and (4) Failure by the college to uphold its own commitment to diversity and inclusion.

"If this isn't systemic racism, I don't know what is," one union member posted in the group chat. Another added, "They talk about equity, but when it's time to support staff of color, the silence is deafening. Union members voiced strong support for their colleagues and collective action, with one member declaring, "If leadership won't stand up for racial justice, we will."

The no-confidence vote at the April 10 chapter meeting is a pivotal moment, which sends a clear message: QCCPA members will not stand by while patterns of racial bias go unaddressed.

The union is committed to fighting for a fair, equitable workplace. The message from members is loud and clear: QCC must live up to its values—or be held accountable.



Quinsig Stand Out November '24

A Brief History of Classification and the Grit We Will Need to Win Our Campaign

by MCCC VP Joe Nardoni

My Colleagues,

I was pleased to see over one hundred of you respond to our information sessions about our coordinated campaign, and I heard from a number of you that you are concerned about talking about a one-year contract extension with management.

I understood your concerns to be that the General Court will claim there isn't enough money in the budget to cover such a wage equity adjustment, because of the funding cuts ordered by the fool's pen in Washington; that taking a one-year extension might cause us to lose some leverage in getting a wage equity adjustment; that our Day Bargaining Team is giving in; that this will cause our own members to give in and accept a one-year dose of governor's parameters as enough; (continued on p. 2)

TOP NEWS

- [DESIGN THE NEW MCCC LOGO!](#)
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MCCC CALENDAR



17 APRIL - HIGHER ED NATIONAL DAY OF ACTION
26 APRIL - MCCC DELEGATE ASSEMBLY (CONTACT CHAPTER PRESIDENT)
30 APRIL - ZOOM RALLY (DETAILS COMING SOON)
1 MAY - MAY DAY STATEWIDE DAY OF ACTION (DETAILS COMING SOON)
2-3 MAY - MTA ANNUAL MEETING
3-5 JULY - NEA REPRESENTATIVE ASSEMBLY
27-30 JULY - MTA SUMMER CONFERENCE UMASS AMHERST



A CUP OF JOE



**MCCC VP
Joe Nardoni**

A Brief History of Classification and the Grit We Will Need to Win Our Campaign

(continued from p. 1)

These are reasonable concerns, born out of past experience and perhaps a level of learned helplessness when it comes to how we cannot, by law, actually bargain over wages. However, I do not believe these concerns match the commitment and grit of your Day Bargaining Team, your Organizing Committee (OC), and your Strategic Action Committee (SAC) at this point in our campaign, many of whom were down at the State House on April 8, dropping off our full presentation to legislators and testifying at the Joint Ways and Means Committee, where we made a strong public case for a wage equity adjustment and were able to get packets of information to most of the members of the Joint Committees on both Ways and Means and also Higher Education. I especially wish to commend Stacie Hargis, Emery Spooner, and Carmen Rondash for their powerful testimony before the Committee.

We've set a high bar in our ask, and I cannot guarantee that we will reach it. What I can say is that this bar is justified and was the goal of the Classification Study. I have been reading the history of our campaign to win Classification for our members and will share some of that history with you here. I am taking the following information from the Classification FAQ sheet the MCCC distributed to our members in I believe, late 1999, based on the data sources reported in that document. By the way, if you'd like to see these documents, you may read them at the MCCC office.

The MCCC was engaged in tough negotiations with the Board of Higher Education (BHE) during our negotiation of the 1995-1998 contract. We presented evidence that showed faculty and staff here in MA were grossly underpaid in comparison to other states, and that our pay had not kept up with the cost of living in our Commonwealth. I suspect this sounds familiar to you.

That was when Charlie Baker, then the head of the Office of Administration and Finance, proposed a Classification Study, and wrote this in a letter to each member of the Commonwealth Senate, dated December 1, 1995: "We have agreed to finance the cost of doing a professional classification study for Community College faculty, as well as paying for the results of such an analysis."

It took 13 months from that time for the Commonwealth to publish a Request for Proposals (RFP), seeking bidders to perform the Classification Study. The MCCC's FAQ sheet about the classification study points out that the goal of the Commonwealth's RFP in January of 1997 was to design a system "to address existing and internal and external inequities which currently exist, and to provide a mechanism by which inequities do not reoccur," based on the following criteria, as taken from the RFP's, on pages 9 & 10.

"Study Scope

"The vendor is required to develop a fair and equitable classification system among the 15 different colleges of the Massachusetts Community College System. The Classification Study must:

- Develop a new classification structure
- Move each individual currently in a position into the new classification structure
- Maintain the structure for new hires, promotions, and salary adjustments

"The Classification Study must address internal equity among the existing positions and provide a national adjustment based on similarly situated states. Once existing positions are placed within an equitable classification system, new hires, promotions, and **salary adjustments must be maintained within the classification system with stated criteria.**" [my emphasis]

(continued on p. 3)

*From the desk of
resident Claudine Barnes*



MCCC Members,

This is a very challenging and exciting time for the MCCC. I am still watching the news with a sense of dread and unease but have been working to focus on what our members and our students need most: wage and workload equity, and the supports they need and deserve.

I ask that you remain vigilant and report any changes regarding federal grants, DEI, immigration, and other areas that the current administration is targeting. We will do everything within our power to help preserve our jobs, working conditions, and curriculum and help protect our students.

On wage and workload equity, I have been working hard on the Commission on Quality and Affordability in Higher Education and at our last meeting we reviewed presentations from several MTA members about higher education wages in Massachusetts and the impact on faculty and staff. The wage study that EY Parthenon did for the commission backed up most of our findings, Mass Bay President David Podell also supported our position by discussing recruitment and retention issues, as well as the particular inequities faced by our adjunct faculty, and commission members appeared to grasp the depth of the problems. MTA is developing a list of recommendations for the commission as the final report of the commission is to be submitted later this month. If you want more information, please go to <https://www.mass.edu/strategic/cheqa.asp>.

We have gone to the State House multiple times to meet with Senate President Spilka and members of Administration and Finance, the Office of Employee Relations, and budget and policy advisors in the governor's office. Joining us in those meetings were Middlesex Community College President Phil Sisson and the director of the Massachusetts Association of Community Colleges, Nate MacKinnon. Presenting a united front to both the administration and the legislature along with the stories many of you have shared was compelling and everyone offered support. We still have much work to do to get movement on equity but there has been substantial progress in getting key players invested in our cause. Next week, I will testify before the legislature on the MTA wage equity bill.

Please keep up all of your work on this campaign and as always, please reach out with any questions or concerns you may have.

Claudine



**Join the
Organizing
Committee!**

**MCCC
Call to
Action**

**15 Colleges
Prepare to
Mobilize!**



MASSACHUSETTS COMMUNITY COLLEGE COUNCIL

(continued from p. 2)

During the process of bargaining where we should be put on the Classification Study in comparison to the other states, then-Commissioner of Higher Ed Stanley Koplik proposed the 75th percentile, which we ultimately agreed to, in spite of arguing that we should be placed even higher on the scale of the comparable states, because at that time, only New Jersey had a higher cost of living than Massachusetts. (As the MCCC has reported elsewhere, now Massachusetts has the highest cost of living in the continental United States.) I have read Commissioner Koplik's letter verifying this elsewhere in the documentation of the bargain.

What this means is that we have documentation that demonstrates the intent of the Study was to put us at the 75th percentile of the comparable states in the study and that these adjustments were designed to be maintained over time. The sad truth is as we have been saying, that not once in subsequent contracts have we received parameters from a governor that actually paid out all of the points due to us under the Classification study.

It's also important to note that even though A&F Secretary Baker said that the state would "finance the cost of doing a professional classification study for the Community College faculty, as well as paying for the results of such an analysis," what happened was this: because the governor did not authorize the additional cost of this analysis, in order to get the Classification Study funded from that bargain we had to take a zero year in the 1995-1998 contract to partially fund the study. We got that money back included as part of the Classification Study payout, but it took two years before we received it, as the DAY Team reported out in a Bargaining Update of February 14, 2000, right before the contract with Classification settled. As an aside, it took more money than the classification pool established by our delayed year to fund the study and the governor's administration had to submit a supplemental budget to the legislature to cover the additional funding, just as the Governor had to submit a supplemental budget to the legislature to cover the costs of implementing the study as noted in Secretary Baker's letter. Finally, all of this took 4 years to accomplish. That's just too long for the present time.

This history is important because it demonstrates that we are in a better place with our current bargain than we were back then if we take the one-year deal, because we will get money during the year between now and the establishment of a new wage equity adjustment that we are working on getting done with both A&F and Senator Spilka's office. This has happened because of the hard work of your Leadership Team and Executive Committee members through our meetings in Joint Study and the hard work of your DAY Team in establishing a different kind of working relationship with the Presidents, one based on finding common ground rather than engaging in adversarial bargaining as we were during the Classification Study. This approach in finding common ground absolutely contributed to the Presidents' determination to have Nate Mackinnon broker the meetings with both A&F and Senator Spilka's office. The Presidents and the MCCC are in agreement on this point: there has to be a wage equity adjustment so we can recruit and retain the faculty and staff the community colleges need to Elevate MassEducate. This does not mean that we will find agreement in everything during this and any subsequent bargain, nor should we expect this.

Still, we are in a better place now than we were then because the timing is right. The success of MassEducate is contingent in large part upon the colleges' ability to hire the high-quality faculty and professional staff to run the courses and provide the wraparound services our students need to succeed. The BHE knows it, the members of CHEQA (Commission on Higher Education Quality and Affordability) know it, and A&F and Senator Spilka are also aware. There is also a time-sensitive element here as well, because the longer it takes for the state to act in establishing a wage equity adjustment for our members, the longer it will take the colleges to provide the additional services. This will result in some of our newest students giving up, because we won't be able to address their needs in a timely manner, as one of our members - a success coach at Springfield Tech Community College - pointed out with a poignant story at our virtual press conference last November. Read more about this in the "Community Blog" segment on p. 7.

I am grateful for this cooperation, but I will not oversell it—we could find this common ground because of the various historical factors that have created the situation we find ourselves in. That's why we cannot wait, but rather must commit to remaining active in our drive to win a fair salary structure for our members. It's going to take grit.



Bristol folks, Beth Whitehead, Alison Brewer, Colleen Avedikian and Rebecca Benya-Soderbom at Lobby Day April 8th.

Grit has four qualities. First, you need Interest, a compelling reason to act. For that, I ask you to remember what a wage equity adjustment could mean for you and your FT colleagues; no need to teach additional classes to make ends meet; more time to spend with your students and your families and friends; no worrying about having to use your college's food bank to provide healthy meals for your children; paying off student loans or your mortgage before you retire; reduced stress and better health because you're not living a frazzled life from being overworked and underpaid.

And for your part-time colleagues there will likely be a great opportunity to teach more classes each semester, because reducing the number of FT faculty needing to teach DCE courses to something near zero will provide nearly 80% more courses available for people teaching only DCE courses to take on, according to information I have received from Hilaire Jean-Gilles, the MCCC research coordinator.

The next quality in grit is Practice. Grit comes from acting on your interest and trying to do things better every time, even when they get harder. We've been slowly building our practice by encouraging our members to participate in the activities planned by our Organizing Committee in the statewide standout last November, the virtual Press Conference, and in our current Love Community Colleges campaign. I suspect we will have to surmount significant challenges to win the funding we need this year because of legislative worry over revenues. We will keep building up our capacity to be ready to take on these challenges.

The third quality of grit is Purpose. This purpose cannot be based on individual interest—it has to be a larger purpose, one that recognizes that our compelling reason to win a wage equity adjustment for our members is a cause of long-term justice delayed, and therefore denied to us. Think of your colleagues who are teaching 10 classes per semester; your colleagues who have to have 2 or more additional jobs in order to make ends meet; your colleagues who have to take food from your campus's food bank; and your colleagues who are losing out on time spent with their children and partners; your colleagues so far in debt they will never be able to retire. Our purpose is to make sure we win this for them.

The fourth quality is Hope. Hope is what you hang onto when things get challenging. For me, that happens generally when I am alone at night, unable to sleep, worrying about whether or not we will be successful in our campaign. I turn to inspiring music then. I recall Springsteen singing, "keep pushing till it's understood, and these badlands start treating us good," when I confront the minefield of worthy causes we have to navigate through in order to convince the legislature to put our need higher on their list to address; I recall Joe Strummer singing, "No man born with a living soul/Can be working for the clampdown," when I think about the fascist drift in our country; when things seem so unsurmountable, so unfixable I feel like giving up, I bless my Marine Corps sergeant parents for giving me the confidence and cadence to walk strongly forward and sing with Tom Petty, "You could stand me up at the gates of Hell/but I won't back down;" and when I think about all of the damage being done to our government of, by, and for the people by the man who would be King, I am lifted up by remembering the words of Patti Smith, who sings, "I believe everything we dream/can come to pass through our union. . . The people have the power, /The power to dream, to rule/to wrestle the world from fools."

Here are the four songs I just quoted from. I ask you to download the songs onto your office computer/college device and your personal device.

"Badlands," by Bruce Springsteen

"Clampdown," by The Clash

"I Won't Back Down," by Tom Petty

"People Have the Power," by Patti Smith

LIVE LINKS

MASSACHUSETTS COMMUNITY COLLEGE COUNCIL

(continued from p. 3)

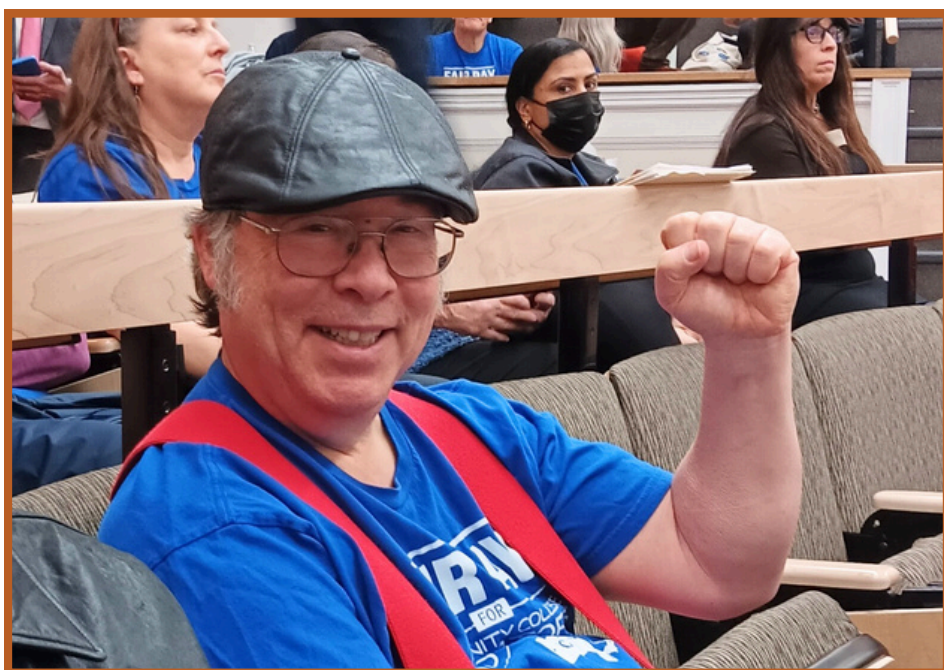
When you're feeling down or dispirited, listen to one of them. Listen to it loud and share it with your colleagues. Talk it up; maybe you can agree to all play the same song during a passing period; at the beginning of your activity hour; at the beginning of your Chapter meeting or Department or Division Meeting, or even an All-College Meeting; or, if you don't like these songs, find songs you do like and download them; learn to like the songs your colleagues want to have played; say yes, to one another, "I can play a song. I have time to listen to a song." If you have a halfway decent voice, you could even sing along—I know, that might be a reach. You could even flashmob a song on your campus. Don't let these suggestions be the only ideas.

So, here's a really easy thing you can do right now to help us win. Find links to songs you find inspiring when the mountain seems too high or the lahar is rushing towards you, toppling trees and stopping up your personal Spirit Lake; maybe it's the first movement of Beethoven's Fifth, or "Johannesburg," by Gil-Scot Herron. Let the music pump you up, then go out and pump up the spirits of one of your colleagues. Share those links.

Grit adds up, my wonderful colleagues, provides the friction to gain a purchase on the slippery rocks of uncertainty, warms the icy reception of legislators, friends or family who don't understand why accepting the status quo is unacceptable.

Conceive it, Believe it, Achieve it! We will not be denied!

Joe Nardoni
MCCC VP



VP Joe Nardoni ready to testify at the Ways & Means hearing on April 8th.

Prez Calls for Delegates May 2-3

As you know, we recently held MCCC elections for delegates to the MTA Annual Meeting which will be held in Springfield May 2-3 but with a virtual option as well. In that election, the MCCC only filled 23 of our 72 delegate slots leaving 49 vacancies.

After consultation with our parliamentarian, it became clear that we do have the ability to fill those vacancies without having another statewide election. So the MCCC Executive Committee met today and devised a plan that is in line with our parliamentary guidance. This plan allows for the MCCC President to appoint additional delegates with the final approval of the Board of Directors.

So, if there are any MCCC members who still wish to serve as delegates to the MTA Annual Meeting, they can submit their names in nomination to me at mcccpresbarnes@gmail.com before April 16 at 4pm. After confirmation of their membership, those names will be presented to the Board for approval on April 18. Then I will report the names of additional delegates to the MTA in advance of the April 25 final deadline. Delegates must report their preference to attend in person or remotely by April 25 as well so if I submit names to the MTA on the 18th, there would still be time for delegates to submit their attendance preference.

We hope that additional members will participate in this annual meeting as this meeting of delegates approves the MTA budget and dues, the dues for Public Relations and Organizing, as well as bylaws and policies that impact our members.

If anyone has any questions, please direct them to me.
mcccpresbarnes@gmail.com

Thank you.
Claudine Barnes



After a Special Meeting on 3/25, members decided to wear red, stay silent, and maintain collegiality at Massasoit's Professional Day. In the foreground l to r: Lauren Dalton, Aviva Rich-Shea, Lisa Coole and Eve Jankey are part of collective action taken by the Chapter on 3/27.

STAYING SILENT ON PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT DAY By Mark Walsh

On March 27th, members of the Massasoit chapter engaged in targeted protest towards programming of the college's Professional Development Day. Union members silently protested by wearing red articles of clothing, MCCC union buttons, scarves and hats, sat quietly during opening speeches and did not participate in discussions that centered around the accreditation-related workshops (NECHE) that had been planned for that day. In addition, over thirty union members opted out of the lunch hour session, forgoing a presentation on institutional research. As a result, Professional Day had a subdued tone overall, and noticeably minimal participation in the break-out sessions.

Traditionally, the Professional Development Day at Massasoit has offered a variety of workshops and break-out sessions dedicated to best teaching practices, student needs-based discussion and related agenda items geared towards improving teaching and better serving Massasoit students.

This semester, against the wishes of many union members, administrators were entirely focused on the college's upcoming accreditation. Several believed this went against the original promise of Professional Development Day. Union leadership met with the administration to express member concerns. After the meeting it was noted that the name of the day had been changed from Professional Development Day to Professional Day, but the accreditation agenda remained unchanged.

Not only did members disagree with the shift in programming, but many also felt strongly that such accreditation-based sessions only served to interrupt and sideline on-going work taking place in the subcommittees. Several subcommittees are still in the fact-finding part of their work and were not ready to report out on their findings by the time Professional Day was to take place.

Frustration over Professional Day is a symptom of larger concerns the Union has worried about for the last few years. "There comes a point, after repeated attempts to explain, request, and advocate on behalf of members that action is the logical next step," said chapter president, Angelina Avedano. "The members have the right to make their voices heard." During a Special Meeting called to review union survey results regarding Professional Day, members called for a collective response to the administration's disregard for Union concerns. Simply put, members felt that new ways to communicate had to be enacted.

Faculty members and Unit Professionals who were running workgroups on Professional Day were made aware of plans for collective action, acknowledged them, and restructured their workgroups to accommodate both active non-participants and members of the college community who chose to participate in the workgroups. As a result, all positions were honored, and while it was much less active than previous Professional Development Days, everyone treated each other with respect.

MASSACHUSETTS COMMUNITY COLLEGE COUNCIL

OC Buzz

**Just call us
the OC Busy Bees!**

Approximately 15 members attend biweekly, Organizing Committee (OC) meetings. HUGE thank you's to them for jumping in & showing up! Contact the OC point person from your chapter to learn more!



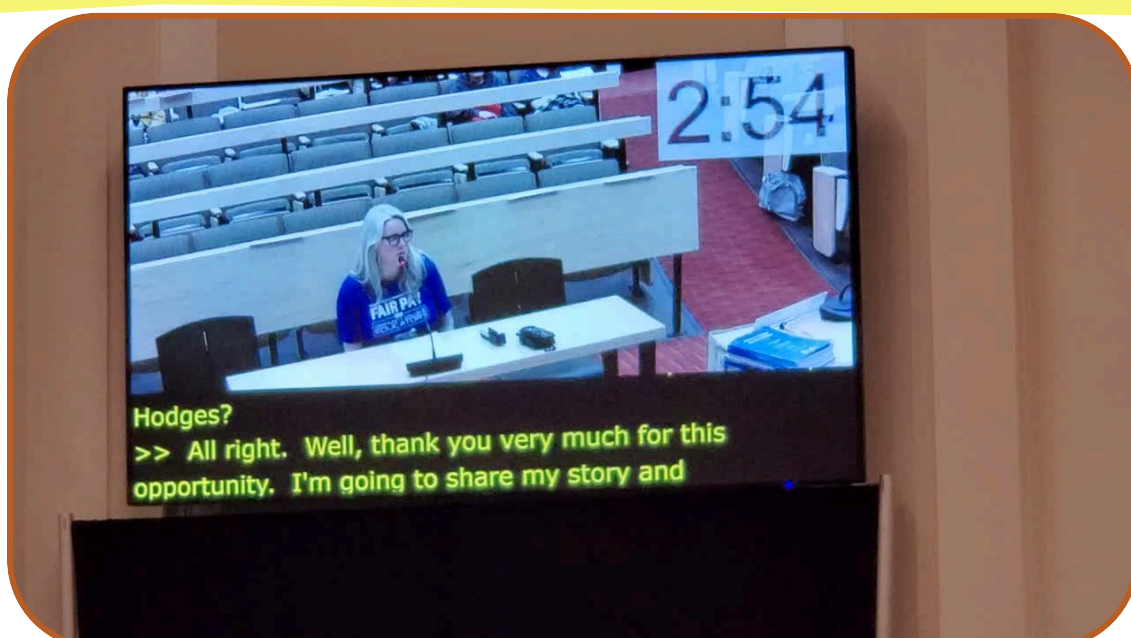
So far

- We had 2 successful Zoom info/training sessions about the Fair Pay Campaign in March with 100 members in overall attendance.
- Over 30 stories from members have been submitted, which highlight the realities of being under-funded & under-resourced at our colleges. Submit your story here: <https://bit.ly/m/fairpaymccc>
- Closing in on 2K signatures on the petition. Our goal by the end of the school year is 5,000 signatures: <https://actionnetwork.org/petitions/lovemccc>
- We "love blitzed" over 555 postcards to campus representatives and plan to send out at least 1 to every legislator - make sure to send a postcard to your rep too!
- 19 members traveled to the State House on Tues April 8th with 6 prepared to give testimony and 9 lobbying & handing out information to legislators.

What's ahead?

- Attending the MCCC Delegate Assembly 4/26? The OC will host a training so you can learn more and help mobilize our 15 community colleges behind the "big ask" and make it a reality.
- Get Ready to Rally! A Zoom Rally will be held April 30th in preparation for May Day actions.
- May Day Action Day - MCCC statewide efforts in conjunction with MTA will include an MCCC social media blitz. (Stay tuned for details).
- Commencement billboard - Using the ALL-IN grant through MTA, billboards will be up during commencement weeks near all campuses.
- Commencement roses for students will be delivered with the "Love Community Colleges" message and QR code.

ORGANIZING COMMITTEE CO-CHAIR TESTIFIES AT APRIL 8TH WAYS AND MEANS HEARING LISTEN BELOW



Bristol Profs of English JP Nadeau, Tom Grady (front) & Anthony Ucci, Prof of Engineering attend Lobby Day at the State House 4/8/25.

MCCC Hub

<https://bit.ly/m/fairpaymccc>

MCCC SPRING LEGISLATIVE ACTIONS



MCCC Secretary/Bristol Professor, Colleen Avedikian (center) with Reps. Hendricks and Moakley, and staff member from Rep Cabral's office, as well as some ESPs from New Bedford High School (AFT).

Community colleges around the Commonwealth are connecting with legislators in order to educate them on MCCC's "Big Ask" for a 70% wage equity adjustment in addition to more manageable workloads. While members celebrate MassEducate and MassReconnect, which has dramatically increased enrollment, it is incumbent upon legislators to follow through on the promise of free community college by funding living wages for educators so we can recruit and retain much-needed faculty and professional staff who support our students. A massive outreach campaign using coalition strategies is currently underway.

On Saturday, March 22nd the Southeastern Mass. Labor Council held a Legislative Breakfast at UMass Dartmouth with a coalition of unions including the MCCC, AFT, SEIU, AFL-CIO and Teamsters. In attendance were Rep Steve Ouellette (8th Bristol), Rep Mark Sylvia (10th Bristol), Rep. Kip Diggs (2nd Barnstable, and Assistant Vice Chair of the House Ways and Means committee), Rep. Chris Hendricks (11th Bristol), Rep. Thomas Moakley (Barnstable, Dukes and Nantucket), Rep. Jim Hawkins (2nd Bristol and MTA member!), and Rep. Steven Xiarhos (5th Barnstable).

Colleen Avedikian, who described the event as "speed dating" with legislators, was able to champion MCCC's cause, reporting that each legislator she spoke with was surprised by the extent of low wages for community college educators, and they were eager to take information including statistics and the estimated cost for an equity adjustment.

Middlesex Community College was involved in several legislative roundtables in collaboration with the Middlesex President's Office to speak with campus representatives about Middlesex stories and reasons to Elevate MassEducate! Legislators asked great follow up questions and seemed to have an understanding of just how difficult being underfunded and under resourced really is during the recent uptick in student enrollment.

SEE MORE LEGISLATIVE ACTIONS ON PAGE 7



L to R: Virak Uy, MCC's Director, Program for Asian American Student Advancement, Michael Williamson, Math Faculty, Stacie Hargis, Entrepreneurship Faculty, Senator Ed Kennedy, Vice Chair, Joint Committee on Higher Education, Phil Sisson, President of MCC, Dominik Lay, District Director for Senator Kennedy and Lowell School Committee

Spotlight

on
Donnie McGee



League of Women Voters RI lobbyists standing with *The Independent Man*, RI State House, 2023. L-R: Donnie McGee, Jane Koster, Mary Chace, Sandy Johnson

THE POWER OF COLLECTIVE ACTION: REFLECTIONS ON ADVOCACY AND THE FUTURE OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Donnie McGee, former Vice President of the Massachusetts Community College Council (MCCC) and retired professor of English from Bristol Community College, reflects on her tenure and the critical role of union advocacy in securing legislative victories and protecting public higher education. Throughout her career, McGee has been deeply involved in legislative efforts, demonstrating that political engagement is essential for faculty and staff to safeguard their rights and improve working conditions.

LEGISLATIVE VICTORIES: THE O3 BUYBACK LAW AND THE ORP TRANSFER LEGISLATION

Among the notable legislative achievements during McGee's tenure were the enactment of the O3 Buyback Law and the Optional Retirement Plan (ORP) transfer legislation. These bills significantly improved retirement security for thousands of educators in Massachusetts.

The O3 Buyback Law, passed in 2006, allowed full-time state employees to purchase up to four years of service credit for previous employment (in part-time) as "O3" hires in non-benefited positions. This legislation was particularly crucial for many educators who began their careers as temporary employees without access to a pension or Social Security. Despite performing the same work alongside other fully-benefited teaching assistants for the same period of time, "O3" educators were denied any benefits, yet rehired year after year. The passage of this law was the result of years of advocacy, coalition-building, and direct engagement with legislators.

Similarly, the ORP transfer legislation addressed longstanding concerns for educators placed into a defined-contribution retirement plan with no guarantees. Many had enrolled in the ORP without fully understanding its limitations, only to find themselves locked out of the state pension system. The road to passing the ORP transfer bill was lengthy, with numerous obstacles along the way. However, through coordinated union efforts—including faculty representatives, legislative engagement, and grassroots mobilization—the bill was finally enacted in 2011. These victories were only possible because union members united, recognized their collective power, and took action.

CHALLENGES FACING HIGHER EDUCATION TODAY

Despite these past successes, McGee acknowledges that higher education faculty and staff face significant challenges today, particularly within the community college system. One of the most

pressing concerns is funding. Federal and state budgets remain under threat, with ongoing efforts to privatize education and redirect resources away from public institutions. Community colleges, which serve diverse student populations, including many from historically marginalized communities, are particularly vulnerable. Cuts to programs such as TRIO grants, Head Start, and special education services could severely impact students who rely on these resources for academic success.

Another major issue is the attack on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) initiatives. Efforts to recruit and retain educators who understand the lived experiences of marginalized students are being undermined. If these policies continue to be dismantled, institutions will struggle to provide an inclusive educational environment that reflects the realities of their student populations. Additionally, faculty may face increased restrictions on academic content and teaching methodologies, threatening both academic freedom and the integrity of higher education.

The struggle to negotiate fair contracts also remains a significant hurdle. With uncertain funding for public education, faculty and staff may be expected to do more with fewer resources. Without strong union advocacy, educators risk being overworked and underpaid while students suffer from reduced academic support services.

ADVOCACY BEYOND RETIREMENT: DEFENDING DEMOCRACY

Even in retirement, McGee remains actively engaged in defending democracy. She is a dedicated member of the League of Women Voters of Rhode Island, an organization committed to empowering voters and protecting democratic institutions.

Serving on the League's Board and co-chairing the Legislative Advocacy Committee, McGee has taken on leadership roles in climate and education policy. Her work includes monitoring legislative bills, issuing action alerts, and lobbying for critical legislation. Education remains a primary focus, particularly in ensuring equitable access for students in low-income communities. The League consistently supports legislation that provides public schools with the resources necessary for student success. One recent initiative, the "Freedom to Read in Rhode Island" bill, seeks to combat book bans and censorship in schools and community libraries, safeguarding intellectual freedom and comprehensive education.

Climate change advocacy is also a priority for McGee, especially in her new home state. Rhode Island is currently experiencing severe coastal erosion, flooding, and other climate-related consequences. Through legislative efforts, McGee and her colleagues have worked to pass laws that mitigate environmental damage and hold polluters accountable. In the previous year alone, four out of five climate bills prioritized by the League were enacted, showcasing the effectiveness of organized advocacy.

THE SOCIAL SECURITY FAIRNESS ACT: A LONG-OVERDUE VICTORY

One of the most significant recent victories for educators and public employees nationwide has been the passage of the Social Security Fairness Act. This legislation corrects an injustice that denied many retirees their earned benefits due to the Government Pension Offset (GPO) and Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP). For over 40 years, these provisions unfairly reduced Social Security benefits for public sector retirees, leaving many in financial uncertainty. Thanks to the persistent activism of union leaders, educators, and advocates like McGee, this longstanding issue has finally been addressed, providing much-needed retirement security to over 3 million public workers nationwide.

THE ONGOING FIGHT FOR PUBLIC EDUCATION AND DEMOCRACY

Given the current political climate, McGee stresses that the most important action public employees can take is to speak out in defense of democracy. The nation faces ongoing challenges, including book banning, historical revisionism, and restrictions on a free press. These developments threaten the free exchange of ideas and the foundation of democracy itself. Educators and concerned citizens must mobilize to counteract these dangerous trends.

Additionally, threats to Social Security and pension programs continue to loom. Collective action will be necessary to protect retirement security for future generations. Public faculty, staff, and citizens must make their voices heard through union advocacy, legislative engagement, and grassroots organizing.

Donnie McGee's career exemplifies the power of unions to educate, organize, and activate members. Whether fighting for fair retirement policies, protecting public education funding, or defending democracy itself, collective action remains the most powerful tool. The fight continues, and it is imperative to remain engaged in shaping a future that ensures equal representation and opportunity for all.

Spotlight is researched and written by Colleen Avedikian, MCCC Secretary and Professor at Bristol Community College.

COMMUNITY BLOG

Member Voices



Aaron, Staff
from Springfield Tech
Community College

"We have seen a massive influx of students returning to school with the implementation of the Mass Reconnect and MassEducate programs. With only myself and our coordinator working in the center, we simply do not have the time or resources to work with the number of students who need support."

My name is Aaron, and I am a full-time staff member at STCC. I have been working here for almost 3 years now, and have seen my department staffing cut in half. Within my first 6 months, I watched one colleague go on parental leave, another move to a different office, and our coordinator retire. I was left to oversee the center for an entire semester with no additional compensation, unless I worked extra hours for comp time. My colleague recently went on parental leave again, and while we were more prepared this time around, we are not putting our best foot forward and our students are suffering.

As a success coach and community outreach counselor, I primarily work with students who are on Academic Warning and Suspension, to help them improve their academic skills and transition back to classes. My caseload of students this semester is 345 students, plus an additional 129 while my colleague is away, bringing us to a total of 535. I'm unable to answer students' messages in a timely manner, not able to spend as long working with them, or not able to meet with them as often as needed to ensure their success. On top of this, I have other responsibilities with the Success Center and making sure our daily operations are running smoothly.

To share some examples, I recently had many students who I met with after midterm grades were released. I have to book these students out for 1-2 weeks at a time, as they need help with things such as organizing their assignments, understanding their professor's expectations, catching up on missed work, and managing their time. By the time I meet with them, their assignments are overdue and they are more overwhelmed than ever. It becomes that much more difficult to help them get back on track, especially when their academic standing and financial aid is at risk.

We have seen a massive influx of students returning to school with the implementation of the MassReconnect and MassEducate programs. With only me and our coordinator working in the center, we simply do not have the time or resources to work with the number of students who need support. Our salaries and campus resources have not gone up with this drastic increase in students and workload. This is not a middle management issue, but a matter of budgets, resources, and staffing. I drive an hour from across the state in Connecticut because I cannot afford to live here in Massachusetts. I rely on my telework days in order to save money on gas and to be able to afford other bills. My personal situation impedes my ability to be flexible with students or with my schedule, and I'm not able to allow for more evening appointments. I know there are students I am not reaching, as many students do not answer our messages or calls after finding out how hard it is to get in to see us.

Media Hub Link

<https://bit.ly/m/fairpaymccc>

MASSASOIT COMMUNITY COLLEGE LEGISLATIVE BREAKFAST

by Julie McNeill-Kenerson (Massasoit Canton Building Rep, New Member Liaison, and MTA Senate District Coordinator)



MCCC members, college administrators, students, trustees, and legislators discuss the need to support living wages and reasonable workloads for educators at Massasoit's March Legislative breakfast.

Many times, the interests of College Administration and MCCC members are at odds with one another. It's no secret that our ongoing fight for fair pay and working conditions, here at Massasoit, has at times led to frustration and strained relationships with administrators. When our interests align, however, it means that what we are working toward is something bigger than all involved; bigger than our administration, our workforce, our students, our facilities, even bigger than our institution. What we are talking about at this moment is a system recognition that we need to create something better.

As Senate District Coordinator for the Massachusetts Teachers Association (MTA) Grassroots Higher Education Division, I am tasked with planning and hosting in-district legislative meetings during certain points in the legislative season. This means inviting local legislators to discuss MTA's Legislative Agenda.

For '25-'26, twenty three bills have been prioritized by the MTA Government Relations Committee. These bills fall into 4 key categories: Funding Schools to Meet the Needs of All Students, Policies to Create Schools our Students Deserve, Ensuring a Dignified Retirement, and High-Quality Debt-Free Public Higher Education.

March 3rd was a key opportunity to join administration and to make clear to legislators that, at least in this moment, we were standing in solidarity for a better future for Massasoit, not just for its students but for its workforce. Several local legislators visited our Brockton campus for a brunch hosted by President Bill Mitchell, members of his cabinet, and trustees. Four MCCC members: Angelina Avedano, Sawson Zahara, Brian Schilling and I were invited to represent the MCCC by sharing our experiences.

Legislators also shared their inspiring personal experiences with public higher ed and professional stories of their work with constituents and state committees. Their commitment to engaging in meaningful dialogue and actions is encouraging. We appreciate their support for community colleges, as well as their service to the public good.

Legislators in attendance (but not all in the photo) were Rep. Joan Meschino, Sen. Michael Brady, Sen. Paul Feeney, Rep. David DeCoste, Rep. Michelle DuBois, Rep. Dennis Gallagher, Rep. Rita Mendes, Rep. Edward Phillips, Rep. Bridget Plouffe, Rep. Alyson Sullivan-Almeida, Rep. Kenneth Sweeney, and Sen. John Keenan.

Thank you to the President's Office for organizing this event. And thanks to my colleagues, Brian Schilling, Angelina Avedano, Sawson Zahara, and Colleen Fitzpatrick (MTA Field Rep) for attending and calling for fully funded community colleges in Massachusetts

Now is our time to create a public higher education system that is not only sustainable and properly funded, but one that serves as a model for the rest of the country. Join us in this fight!

Design the New MCCC Logo CHALLENGE !

Submit your design
angelina@mccceducators.org



Earn a Pizza Party for your Chapter, MCCC swag, a feature story in the May issue of the MCCC Advocate, and of course... bragging rights!

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The MCCC Advocate is prepared by
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Below L to R: Stacie Hargis, Entrepreneurship Faculty, Virak Uy, MCC's Director, Program for Asian American Student Advancement, Michael Williamson, Math Faculty, Phil Sisson, President of MCC, Representative Vanna Howard, member of Joint Committee on Higher Education Representative Tara Hong, member of Joint Committee on Higher Education Pat Cook, Vice President of MCC



MTA powerhouses support MCCC at the State House on April 8th (l to r) Tyler Rocco-Chaffee, Colleen Fitzpatrick, and Stephanie Marcotte.

PREVIEW FOR MAY: SOCIAL MEDIA BLITZ, MAY DAY STANDOUTS, AND COMMENCEMENT BILLBOARDS