

MCCC ADVOCATE

MASSACHUSETTS COMMUNITY COLLEGE COUNCIL



MARCH 2025 E-NEWS ISSUE



Roxbury members Stand Out on 11/20/24

MCCC Hub

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

TOP NEWS

- [DESIGN THE NEW MCCC LOGO!](#)
- [MCCC LOVES COMMUNITY COLLEGES](#)
- [PRESIDENT'S CALL TO ACTION](#)
- [DON'T AGONIZE, ORGANIZE!](#)
- [SPOTLIGHT: STACIE HARGIS](#)
- [COMMUNITY BLOG: "INSTRUMENTS OF A BEATING HEART"](#)



What you need to know:

Ballots emailed 3/3 - Election ends 4/19

Ballots will come from "MTA Election"

If you don't get a ballot, check SPAM folder

Email jconnelly@massteacher.org to request a ballot if yours does not arrive.

DENNIS FITZGERALD - AN APPRECIATION

Many have devoted countless hours of service to MCCC in the nearly fifty years of its existence. Exceptional among them is Dennis Fitzgerald, who was involuntarily separated because of financial reasons as Grievance Coordinator after 47 years of service at the end of 2024. In that time, Dennis guided thousands of actions, helped many thousands of unit members, and probably answered a million questions from chapter leaders and members who needed specialized help. (continued on page 3)

written by June Sprigg Tooley



Dennis Fitzgerald, MCCC Grievance Coordinator from 1978 through 2024

In the Trenches with Dennis Fitzgerald: What a Rookie Learned [page 5]

by June Sprigg Tooley, Professor Emerita History and Government Berkshire CC

MCCC CALENDAR



26 MARCH - DAY TEAM BARGAINING (WATCH PARTY - DETAILS TBA)

17 APRIL - HIGHER ED NATIONAL DAY OF ACTION

26 APRIL - MCCC DELEGATE ASSEMBLY

2-3 MAY - MTA DELEGATE ASSEMBLY

3-5 JULY - NEA DELEGATE ASSEMBLY

27-30 JULY - MTA SUMMER CONFERENCE UMASS AMHERST

[SP '25 ELECTIONS & NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE REPORT HERE](#)



Soon!

MASSACHUSETTS COMMUNITY COLLEGE COUNCIL

from the desk of
resident Claudine Barnes

MCCC Members,

Welcome to the first edition of our E-newsletter!
We hope you enjoy both the format and content.

This last month has been one of the hardest of my life. As a professor of U.S. History and Political Science whose focus has been on gender and race in U.S. History for over 30 years, watching the new federal administration dismantle or attempt to dismantle so much of what I hold close to my heart and soul has been infuriating and deflating. We are bearing witness to blatant attacks on our democracy, to the attacks on diversity, equity and inclusion, to the complete disregard for immigrants in this nation, to the threats to the LGBTQIA community, to the loss of federal grants impacting not only programs at the community colleges and the remainder of higher education but to science, human trafficking, DEI programs, and more, to the loss of federal jobs, the potential end of the Department of Education, and to the open hatred towards unions. And the list goes on and on. It is frightening and exhausting, I find even watching the news is painful, but we must fight.

We bear witness so that we may survive, speak out, and resist. I assure you that we, the MCCC, will do whatever we can, along with the MTA and NEA, to protect our members, our students and our institutions from these disastrous changes.

We all know that we are not paid what we deserve and that our workloads are significantly higher than at most community colleges nationwide. This is why we have launched a multi-pronged effort at the bargaining tables and with the Governor and Mass General Court to get what we deserve. But, I am concerned that that

the state will use what is happening at the federal level as an excuse to claim austerity; to argue that not knowing how bad things are going to get they will claim they do not have the money to pay us what we deserve, to cover grant losses and save those positions across higher education, or to pull back on programs that currently exist that help our students. They have the money. Your efforts to ensure the passage of Fair Share ensured that they have the money. While we must be vigilant and fight the changes occurring at the national level, we must not lose sight of what we need and deserve, and we must not allow the state to pull back on their responsibilities to us and to our students.

I am asking all of you to dig deep and join in this fight and to join our union. I know that we are all overworked and underpaid, but progress can only be made if we do this work together. Please join our organizing committee engaging in contract actions to achieve higher wages, work on our strategic action efforts, join our committees, run for a chapter office, attend meetings, come to the Delegate Assembly in April, and share information with us about changes you may see happening on your campus. The more we communicate and work together, the better off we will be.

In solidarity,
Claudine



Spotlight on Stacie Hargis



Meet Stacie Hargis, a passionate educator and advocate for entrepreneurship & community engagement. Currently a professor at Middlesex Community College's Business Department, she also coordinates the Entrepreneurship program and the Idea Center —MCC's hub for all things entrepreneurial. With a strong background in business, social development, and public service, Stacie brings a wealth of experience to the classroom and beyond.

Stacie's educational journey began at Broward Community College in South Florida, where she worked full-time to support her studies. Eight years later, she proudly earned a Bachelor of Fine Arts from Florida Atlantic University. Her first professional role was as an art director at a design firm in West Palm Beach, where she also took her first steps into entrepreneurship as a freelance graphic designer.

Stacie pursued further education, earning various certificates and a Master of Arts in Economic and Social Development from UMass Lowell. Her career has spanned multiple sectors, including working for Congress and managing a small business development program with a micro-lending initiative. Her deep passion for entrepreneurship led her to consult for small businesses and spearhead impactful programs at MCC, including the Everyday Entrepreneurs Venture Fund, which awarded nearly \$300,000 in seed grants to students.

For Stacie, entrepreneurship is a transformative approach to solving real-world problems with empathy & innovation. She finds it rewarding to help students realize their potential to effect change through business, social entrepreneurship, or intrapreneurship within organizations.

Stacie has become increasingly involved in union work over the past few years. She began as the Middlesex chapter Secretary before stepping into the role of Director. She now serves as Co-Chair of the MCCC Organizing Committee with Angelina Avedano. Deeply committed to civic engagement and the power of collective action, she champions a leadership philosophy centered on shared responsibility—believing that when every member plays an active role, the union thrives.

To ensure representation and inclusion, Stacie and her chapter engage members through small actions at meetings, regular surveys & open discussions. The success of actions like the November Stand Out, demonstrate the impact of collective action when members rally together.

Stacie sees securing investment in public higher education as a top priority. Underfunding, understaffing, and faculty retention challenges threaten education quality. Addressing these issues requires advocacy and systemic change.

Beyond her professional commitments, Stacie is always looking for new ways to inspire and empower others. Whether in the classroom, through union leadership, or in her community, she remains dedicated to fostering innovation and meaningful change. With a deep love for travel and exploration, she embraces every opportunity to learn and grow, always seeking new experiences that broaden her perspective and fuel her passion for education and entrepreneurship.

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

A CUP OF JOE



**MCCC VP
Joe Nardoni**

Don't Agonize—Organize!

To my wonderful and mighty union brothers and sisters, and our colleagues across the colleges who have not joined the MCCC.

I can see how many of us are justifiably worried about what will happen to our contract and legislative initiatives given the chaos in Washington over the President's hatchet job on our government workers. Hundreds, if not a thousand or more of our fellow higher education workers may lose their jobs because the federal government decides to pull the grant funding that pays for their work.

We need not agonize over that. Let's organize around the issue. At Friday's HELC (Higher Education Leadership Council) meeting, Noah Berger of the MTA made a great suggestion that will allow us to move forward and I share it with you. Every year the Legislature sets aside some reserve funding from Fair Share to cover unexpected needs. We should convince the governor and legislature to leverage some of that money to help preserve as many of our grant-funded positions as possible, on a short-term basis. Be ready to answer this call when and if it comes.

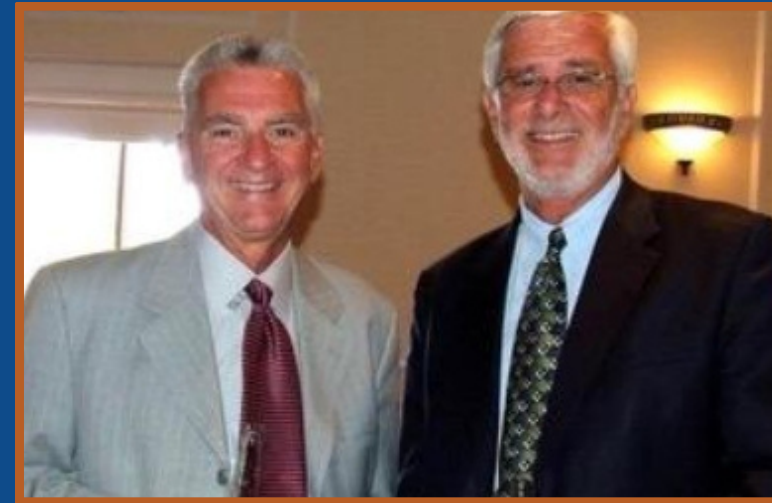
As citizens of the United States and activists for justice, we cannot ignore what is going on in Washington, but even more importantly, we cannot afford to be distracted from our campaign to win economic justice for all of our members, both full and part-time. Whatever damage to higher education the Commonwealth has to counter with a portion of Fair Share funding, or by other investments of time or money, we have to remain focused on the MCCC's legislative agenda and our contract negotiations. Let's not agonize—let's organize!

I know a lot of you are concerned about the delay in our contract negotiations, speculating in some cases about whether these delays indicate a legislative and administrative timidity over how federal funding cuts that will be used by the current administration and congress to pretend they are paying for tax cuts that help billionaires and large corporations will affect our state's bottom line. Don't agonize over this. Organize around it—and this one's easy. We already know what to do. We will support the MCCC and the MTA's Higher Ed Legislative Agendas so we can strengthen every one of our members by making it possible for all of us to earn an equitable wage. We will engage the legislature and the governor in our cause. When we raise up all of our members economically, we will be taking concrete action for our members' cultural freedom, because in a capitalistic society such as ours, everything—including freedom—is mediated through money.

My wonderful brothers and sisters, you are mighty. That might resides in each of you and is multiplied by all of you, union members or not, who makes this one decision: let me help. Let me be the one who makes the call, talks to my neighbor, signs the petition, sends a postcard, commits to doing whatever it takes to lift up my despairing colleagues into the light of right action in support of our cause, and we will raise a cascading wave of activism that cannot be stopped.

The first thing you can do right now to start that wave is to make sure you sign one of the postcards that our Organizing Committee has sent out and return it to the collection place(s) on your campus, asking legislators to sign our petition. The second thing you can do to raise the crest of the wave is sign the petition yourself. The third thing you can do is follow the MCCC Facebook page and forward our petition ask to all of your friends and family in the Commonwealth. When you keep saying yes, it will simply be a matter of time before the crest of our wave towers over the forces that stand against us. We will prevail if we stay the course.

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



*Dennis Fitzgerald and his brother Tim Fitzgerald,
first MCCC President*

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Dennis Fitzgerald was born and brought up in East Boston, Massachusetts. After earning a BA in Mathematics while working jobs at Jordan Marsh and Radio Shack, he taught at Revere High School for two years. With an MEd in Teaching of Mathematics, he taught in the Mathematics Department at Massasoit Community College from 1969 until 2010.

Dennis worked to help organize the first system-wide union in 1976, culminating in the formation of MCCC, the Massachusetts Community College Council. He was inspired by his brother and mentor Tim Fitzgerald, also a math professor at Massasoit, who served there as chapter president in 1970 and as an organizer who formed the statewide MCCC in 1976 and served as the first MCCC President.

By 1978, Dennis was serving as MCCC Day Grievance Coordinator and as Research Coordinator. In addition to that prodigious service, he served in many capacities on eight Day Unit Negotiating Teams. During those years, he was one of the statisticians who developed a system-wide regression analysis detailing salary inequities for women faculty and professional staff in the community college system. The lawsuit was initiated by the Berkshire Five with former Berkshire Chapter President Karen Canfield Border as the initial plaintiff. The lawsuit filed in Federal Court resulted in a Sex Equity Settlement and Judgment Payment of \$10,183,710 in 1986.

After the 1986 settlement, Dennis continued his research in developing Equity Studies both on the chapter levels and system-wide that led to hundreds of salary equity grievances filed with additional salary adjustments for faculty and professional staff. Those Salary Equity Studies were the incentives for the employer and the union to develop a Classification Study with the goal of implementing a fair and equitable classification system for the fifteen community colleges. Dennis was the Chairperson of the Negotiating Team that jointly developed a Request for Proposals to hire an agency to conduct the study that resulted in salary increases totaling \$16,901,219 in 2000.

When questioned about the state of the MCCC and unions in general during his years of service, Dennis identified one of the best changes statewide as the American National Labor Relations Board and the Massachusetts Division of Labor Relations and Chapter 150E.

With respect to the MCCC and processing over 4500 grievances, he considers the most important decision and change the MCCC has made was the elimination of the one-sided Step Two Hearing process. In 1996, there were close to 100 arbitrations pending. As a result, in the 1996 negotiations, the parties recognized that a change was needed. In collaboration with the employer's chief spokesperson Attorney Henry Stewart, Dennis developed a new process – a dispute resolution process – mediation. The mediation process was a success. Since 1998, Dennis had prepared, presented, and negotiated over 800 mediation resolutions acceptable to both the grievant, the MCCC, and the employer. Not only was the mediation process a successful dispute resolution process with a 94% success rate, but it saved the MCCC thousands of dollars in arbitration fees.

The worst change in his opinion is the 2018 Supreme Court decision in the Janus case, the third and final act in a trilogy of cases aimed at eliminating what are called "fair share fees" or "agency fees" within public sector unions.

In conclusion, Dennis expressed his gratitude for the privilege of representing and standing alongside the MCCC membership. He said it has been an extraordinary journey and serving in this capacity has been a deeply meaningful experience. Dennis concluded he is truly honored to have been entrusted with the responsibility of helping to enforce the MCCC Contract and ensure fair treatment for all.



LOVE COMMUNITY COLLEGES

ACT NOW!

FAIR PAY

SUPPORT Students

Show Your Support!

MCCC BARGAINING HQ
ENTER HERE



Are you working multiple jobs?
Can't afford to retire?
Frustrated that you can't support students in
the ways they deserve?

We need your stories. To learn more about
how your story can help our campaign for a
wage equity adjustment.

COMPLETE THIS FORM

TRIAGE 2025 ~ RESOURCES +

These links reflect NEA and MTA content;
views expressed therein, do not
necessarily reflect the positions of the
MCCC.



- [Labor4HigherEd](#)
- [Healey/Campbell Joint Guidance](#)
- [Raise Up Massachusetts](#)
- [Protecting Students & Public Education](#)
- [Guidance on Immigration Issues | NEA](#)
- [MIRA: MA Immigrant & Refugee Advocacy](#)
- [Tracking Executive Orders](#)
- [Litigation Tracker](#)

MCCC Hub

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



MCCC had a strong showing at the MTA Higher Ed Conference in Worcester Saturday, March 1st.

MCCC's Organizing Committee (OC) is building momentum with our "Love Community Colleges" campaign. Co-chairs Angelina Avedano & Stacie Hargis discuss this sea change for members, and the importance of solidarity for all 15 colleges.

Our statewide efforts are growing, with members sending over 300 postcards to legislators (so far) for our Valentine-themed postcard blitz. That's just the beginning as we launch our comprehensive action plan. The Organizing Committee's focus is to educate members, legislators, student allies, and the public on why a wage equity adjustment is critical to the success of our colleges and MassEducate. It's essential if we are to meet the ever-growing needs of our students.

It's an exciting time to be a part of higher ed unions! Coalitions are building across the nation, and community colleges are center-stage in our State as a result of MassEducate and MassReconnect. We must take advantage of this opportunity to make long overdue gains for our members.

- **What is the Organizing Committee (OC), and what's the plan?**

The OC's motto is "educate to activate." We are targeting key audiences around MCCC's larger Fair Pay campaign and strengthening solidarity amongst our chapters. We plan to include members, nonmembers, students, the public, legislators, and the Governor in our education plan.

Stakeholders must first learn about the issue, and then hear our stories. This is why we created a petition, and engaged in a postcard blitz. Next, we'll collect member stories, send letters to legislators, and organize tabling and information pickets on our campuses. Unless we tell our stories, unless we make lots of noise and put a real face on the struggle, how will anyone know about our silent crisis? Our strategy is to educate AND instigate. With enough voices, with enough hands making light work, we can build a movement together.

So many of our members have powerful stories to tell about how they are impacted by the increased workload due to MassEducate, as well as the struggles they face trying to earn a living in the State of Massachusetts. These stories are central to our goal of gaining public support for our cause.

(Please consider sharing your story [HERE](#).)

- **What do you say to members who say we'll NEVER get a 70% pay equity adjustment?**

Let's be real! YES, this is about a pay raise. But it's so much more than that. If we believe that it's impossible to right this wrong, then we're defeated before we begin. Fixating on the 70% figure is missing the point. A silent crisis has been in the making for 25 years, which was when the last wage equity adjustment for Community College educators occurred. Decades of underfunding, inflation, higher costs of living, and outrageous housing costs have created a crisis. We are unable to recruit and retain valuable and talented professional staff and faculty to meet the demands of an increasing student population. Numbers of employees are fleeing higher ed for better paying jobs. Those who remain are overburdened in departments that are understaffed.

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COMMUNITY BLOG

Member Voices



Andrea Henry
Massasoit Community College

When you think of inspiring union movies, *Norma Rae* often springs to mind. I'd like to add another entry – one about Japanese first graders. Hang with me. It's called *Instruments of a Beating Heart*. It's a short film, nominated for an Oscar, and is one of the most motivating films I've seen in recent years. It tells the story of a first grade class coming together to put on a rendition of "Ode to Joy." Why are they doing this? To welcome and honor the new incoming first grade class.

Think about that for a minute. They're not performing to show off their musical skills or gain social media followers or some form of power or influence. The purpose of this performance is to demonstrate appreciation and honor for these new students. Essentially, welcoming new-comers by thoughtfully and respectfully embracing them as a new and valued part of this school. And they're not just going to have one talented musician up front, it's going to be a class performance with many different musicians playing many different parts.

The next part of the film details the audition process. The first graders support each other through this process – through the heartbreak and the triumph. At one point the music teacher says something to the effect, "For those of you selected, your new responsibility is to do a good job in order to honor everyone else who tried out and was not selected."

Whoa, what?

Talk about a coalition building strategy. Rather than dividing everyone into winners and losers, we're all working together to achieve an end goal. That being – blowing the socks off those visiting kindergarteners with the best rendition of "Ode to Joy" they've ever heard.

The last part of the film details the work and frustration that goes into preparing for the performance. Not everyone is a natural musician and that's okay. There are setbacks, some tough love and tears along the way but *Spoiler Alert* like all inspiring movies, the good guys win in the end, and it is indeed the best performance of "Ode to Joy" you'll probably ever hear. It wouldn't have happened without the students supporting, strategizing and working together.

This film is a good reminder for any organization, but especially our union that our strength does indeed come from the support that individuals provide both to each other and the group. Reach out, help out and please know you most definitely have a part to play.

Instruments of a Beating Heart can be viewed on YouTube [HERE](#).



from *Instruments of a Beating Heart*

Andrea Henry serves her local chapter as a Contract Rights and Grievance Advisor for Professional Staff. She facilitates "Around the Water Cooler" info sessions for members on topics such as E7s, retirement strategies & the grievance process. Andrea works as an Access & Disabilities Counselor at Massasoit Community College.

IN THE TRENCHES WITH DENNIS FITZGERALD: WHAT A ROOKIE LEARNED

by June Sprigg Tooley

My personal experience with Dennis reveals a lot about how his work helped unit members. I worked closely with Dennis when I served as chapter president/grievance officer at Berkshire Community College in my last two years before retiring. I had served as chapter secretary and vice president. When I was asked to run for president, I said, "But I don't know anything!" It turns out that all this rookie needed to know was how to reach Dennis.

For many years, Berkshire Community College was remarkable in the system because we had so few grievances. For a long time, this was due to unusually cordial and cooperative relations between union and management. As time passed, however, and as personnel changed, the habit of filing grievances was not well established.

When I stepped into my role, hoping for a quiet entry period, I was faced immediately with a sick building issue that was harming the health of unit members and others. Brand new in my role and just weeks into my term, I turned to Dennis and asked for advice. He said, naturally, "File a grievance," and after some hesitation, I did. When we had our first conversation, I told Dennis I was a bit of a fighter. He laughed and it was the beginning of a period of aggressive and successful grievance filing with gratifying results for the chapter.

Dennis fielded question after question. Early on, I felt apologetic about calling on him so often, but when he assured me that this was his job, I took full advantage of his experience. I'm proud of what our chapter was able to do with his help. We saved people's jobs, defending them from abusive supervisors. We helped people get adjustments to their workloads when they became unfairly burdened.

The highlight of my time working with Dennis was correcting a Human Resources oversight that had ignored the grid increases that were implemented in 2017 and failed to pay dozens of unit members what they had earned from 2017 to 2023. In the end, a six-figure amount was paid out to ensure that all members were properly compensated.

Dennis Fitzgerald made a lot of difference for a lot of people in my chapter. Working with him was one of the best experiences of my community college career, 1993–2023.



Northern Essex CC members Stand Out on 11/20/2024

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!

MCCC Executive Committee

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mcccpresbarnes@gmail.com

Vice President: Joe Nardoni

jnardoni692@gmail.com

Secretary: Colleen Avedikian

colleen@mccceducators.org

At Large Members:

Dr. Jalal Ghaemghami

Brian Falter

Mark Linde

Candace Shivers

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Joe Maciaszek (STCC)

Mark Linde (DCE-Pt Rep) (from MaCC)

Elizabeth Rapoza (DCE-Pt Rep) (from CCCC)

The MCCC Advocate is prepared by

Angelina Avedano, MCCC Media Content Coordinator

Email your op eds, suggestions & photos to:

angelina@mccceducators.org

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We are suffering. Many of us have to take on multiple jobs to make ends meet.

In Middlesex County, the average faculty salary is \$68K, but the living wage for a 2-adult household with 2 kids is \$87K **for each adult**. This almost \$20K difference requires a second job just to cover the basics.

Ultimately, our campaign is about students and campuses. MassEducate is a tremendous opportunity for our students, but the implementation has been underfunded & rushed. It lacks the critical support needed to ensure student success.

Our ask for fair pay is not about being greedy, it's about being fully-resourced so we can continue to serve our communities. A wage equity adjustment would be a game-changer for community college educators AND students. It will ensure the success of MassEducate.

Community colleges represent economic and social justice firmly rooted in our communities. We must unite around these common values. Our unique role is even more critical as our nation faces uncertainty. Our colleges empower diverse communities most at risk in a world that often protects the rich at the expense of everyone else.

Now is the time for action, and we need an organized response. Our Union is a demonstration of collective will. We need support to do what we do at our colleges, and we demand that the State follow through on the investment of MassEducate.

If you are feeling powerless and overwhelmed by the state of the world, the state of higher ed, or your financial security as a community college educator, now is the time to plug into the potential of MCCC's broader Fair Pay campaign. Nothing will change if we don't make it change, and as the co-chairs of the Organizing Committee, we are here to support all 15 colleges build momentum and win our fight for a living wage and reasonable workload. We CAN win this fight, but we can't do it without a critical mass of MCCC members and allies sounding the alarm on our silent crisis. Let's DO THIS!

MTA Field Rep Colleen Fitzpatrick (left) and Senate District Coordinator Julie McNeill-Kenerson (right) gear up at MTA's Higher Ed Conference March 1, 2025.



PREVIEW FOR APRIL: LEGISLATIVE ROUNDTABLES, SILENT REPS & WATCH PARTY