

Perspective



Community College Council of the California Federation of Teachers
American Federation of Teachers, AFL-CIO

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Healthcare for all?

The governor's health care proposal is a boon for the insurance industry, but not for the rest of us.

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Defender of the underdog

Meet Shannon Wilson, CFT field rep in the Central Valley.

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Q&A with Portantino

The new chair of the Assembly Higher Education Committee talks with *The Perspective* about his goals.

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OLGA TORRES PHOTO

Community College Initiative Campaign turns in signatures

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California Federation of Teachers
One Kaiser Plaza, Suite 1440
Oakland CA 94612

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Taking the Lead

Marty Hittelman, CFT Community College Council President

Persevere in the uphill battle

The governor has released his proposed Budget for 2007-08. It calls for 4.04% COLA and 2% growth for community colleges. He did not propose funding any of the items that we fought so hard to get in the Board of Governors' Budget Change Proposal for 2007-08. These items included funding to increase the number of full-time faculty; increase the funds for part-time salary equity, office hours, and health benefits; and increased faculty and staff development funds. The budget battle will occur after the May Revision of state income, and the CFT will be active in that fight.

The governor proposed a "bold" initiative on health care for all Californians (see page 4). His proposal, if enacted, would require that every person in California have health care insurance. The proposal does not provide the funding to make such coverage comprehensive and affordable. His proposal that employers pay 4% of payroll to cover their employees' health care is much less than most employers pay. This could lead to employers reducing the level of coverage that they provide their employees or just eliminate the employer-based insurance completely. There are few provisions in the governor's plan to contain medical premiums or skyrocketing profits. The CFT continues to support a universal single payer health care system such as that contained in Senator Kuehl's SB 840.

I have been representing CFT at the meetings of the California Health Care Coalition (CHCC). If your union and district have not yet joined the coalition, you

It has been my honor to serve you as president of the CCC in 12 of the last 16 years.

should do so now. The CHCC is working to control costs by providing information on costs and quality at individual hospitals and with individual doctors. They will be bringing out a prescription drug program that should reduce district costs.

The Community College Initiative (CCI) will have qualified for the June 2008 primary by the time you read this column (see page 5). It proposes to change the way that the community college share of Proposition 98 funding is determined, from the current inappropriate K-12 growth model to community college funding based on community college enrollments. The CCI also would increase the independence of the community college system from the Department of Finance.

The need for this was never clearer than at the January meeting of the Community College Board of Governors. The Board reluctantly approved emergency regulations for the allocation of enhanced funding for non-credit offerings—even though they understood these regulations to make little sense. The Department of Finance "forced" the community college System Office negotiators to accept language that was much more restrictive than the requirements under SB 361 in identifying courses that would qualify for increased funding per full-time equivalent student. The emergency regulations required that all funds so designated must lead to a "non-credit certificate of competency" or a "non-credit certificate of completion." Neither of these cer-

tificates are currently available in most of the community college non-credit programs, nor do they make sense.

The other faculty organization representatives and I advocated for allowing enhanced funded programs to have a goal of moving students into the credit program. The Board was too afraid of how the Department of Finance might react to any changes in the regulations that they had not agreed to. The Board made clear that they recognized that the regulations that they approved were not in the best interest of non-credit students. They will try to make improvements when they pass the permanent regulations. It should be noted that the governor did not propose to include any further enhancement funds for non-credit.

Finally, this is my last column in *The Perspective*. I am not running for re-election to the office of president of the Community College Council. It has been my honor to serve you as president of the CCC in 12 of the last 16 years. It is time for someone new to take on this leadership role. I have enjoyed representing all of you even though it was always an up-hill battle. Perhaps someday we will have a governor that understands the need to properly fund our community colleges as well as address the low percentage of full-time faculty now employed. We need to continue the fight for part-time equity in pay and benefits as well as rights to continue in an assignment. I have done my best but there is still much to be accomplished. I thank all of you for giving me the opportunity to serve.

Persevere.



The California Federation of Teachers is an affiliate of the American Federation of Teachers, AFL-CIO.

The CFT represents over 120,000 educational employees working at every level of education in California. The CFT is committed to raising the standards of the profession and to securing the conditions essential to provide the best service to California's students.

President Mary Bergan

Secretary-Treasurer Michael Nye

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COMMUNITY COLLEGE COUNCIL

President Marty Hittelman
Los Angeles College Guild, Local 1521
2550 North Hollywood Way, Ste. 400
Burbank, CA 91505
Email martyhitt@aol.com
Direct inquiries regarding the Community College Council to Marty Hittelman.

Southern Vice President Jim Mahler
AFT Guild, San Diego Community College
Local 1931
3737 Camino Del Rio South, Suite 410
San Diego, CA 92108

Northern Vice President Dean Murakami
Los Rios College Federation of Teachers
AFT Local 2279
1127 - 11th Street, #806
Sacramento, CA 95814

Secretary Donna Nacey
Los Rios College Federation of Teachers,
Local 2279
1127 - 11th Street, #806
Sacramento, CA 95814

Editor Fred Glass
Layout Design Action Collective

EDITORIAL SUBMISSIONS
Direct editorial submissions to:
Editor, Community College Perspective,
California Federation of Teachers
One Kaiser Plaza, Suite 1440
Oakland, California 94612
Telephone 510-832-8812
Fax 510-832-5044
Email cfoakland@igc.org
Web www.cft.org

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Mike Nye, Secretary-Treasurer
California Federation of Teachers
2550 North Hollywood Way, Ste. 400
Burbank, CA 91505
Telephone 818-843-8226
Fax 818-843-4662
Email CFTMikeNye@aol.com
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MARK YOUR 2007 CALENDAR

March 16-18 CFT Convention, Los Angeles

March 29-April 1 AFT Nat'l Higher Ed Issues Conference, Portland, OR

April 16-17 CA AFL-CIO Legislative Conference, Sacramento

May 4-5 CFT Executive Council, Burbank

May 11 Community College Council, Manhattan Beach

May 12 CFT State Council, Manhattan Beach

On front cover: Los Rios Community College District instructor Dennis Smith turned in signatures for the Community College Initiative at the Sacramento County Voter Registration and Elections office. Accepting them is Brad Buyse, Campaign Services Manager. Close to a million signatures were handed in for counting at registrars' offices throughout the state in January (see story on page 5). OLGA TORRES PHOTO

Central Valley field rep: Shannon Willson

The lessons of direct action

Defending the underdog came early for Shannon Willson. In the fifth grade, she knew what it was like to be bullied. In the following years, when she saw other kids picked on, she defended them.

California Federation of Teachers Field representative Willson was hired last summer, and assigned to the Central Valley. "I believe in fighting for what's fair," she asserts. "We all want to be treated with respect."

So it wasn't unusual that she got angry after she'd gone to work as an administrative assistant at Long Beach City College, when she saw her coworkers mistreated. "They'd make it hard for us to get hired for certain positions," she recalls. "Then they hired a really anti-union president, and we wanted an organization that was capable of confronting a hostile administration."

Willson "studied the regs," she says, and in 2000 the classified employees at the college decided to withdraw from their former union and join the CFT. In the effort to set up a new AFT local, she became chair of the organizing committee, and then a provisional president of the new union and a member of its negotiating committee. The local represents 400 technical, clerical, custodial and ground operations staff.

Her niche

"I really loved it," she says now. "I've always been someone

"No one in the room would even look at me. Then he mumbled, 'You're under arrest. Now will you come?' I said I wouldn't leave unless they put on handcuffs and treated me as though they really were arresting me. He reluctantly put on the bracelets."

who sort of didn't know what to do with my life. But when I became union president, I felt I'd found my niche."

In 2002 she was secretary to the dean of the School of Nursing and Allied Health at Long Beach City College. Long Beach had just hired a new president, E. Jan Kehoe, from Merced. Up to that point, the union had been represented for

years on the hiring, budget and facilities committees. Shared governance was written into the old union contract, and mandated by Title 5 of AB 1725. Kehoe, however, informed the union that because its old contract had expired classified union representatives could no longer serve on joint governance committees.

Administrators locked the doors of the union office, and took away release time from the union officers. The administration claimed that because the old union was still listed on the documents as staff representative, it didn't have to recognize the new AFT local. It refused to reach agreement on a new contract.

A matter of principle

In November of 2002 a hiring committee was convened to look for a new administrative services vice-president. Anyone hired into this position would directly supervise Long Beach classifieds. Willson decided that their exclusion from shared governance was a matter of principle that needed to be challenged.

"I wrote them all letters," she remembers, "telling them that I intended to attend. I even told



BOB RHA, JR. PHOTO

Shannon Willson's fight to allow classifieds to participate in shared governance at Long Beach City College led to her being handcuffed and removed from a campus building.

the campus police that I was going to do this, and of course I called the student newspaper to let them know as well." The college's vice-president of human relations called her up. "You will not go," he warned Willson, assuming he could simply dictate the rules. "I will," she countered.

At 9 a.m. on November 20, Willson showed up at the room where the meeting was to be held. The committee chair told her she shouldn't be there. When she didn't budge, he called the human relations representative, Irma Ramos, who told Willson, "We have to ask you to leave."

"I told them all, 'I have every right to stay. I'm part of this committee,'" Willson says, "but they warned me they'd call the police." A campus police officer did in fact show up, and asked her to come outside the room to discuss the issue. Willson refused to give up her seat, and

told the officer she was in a meeting and would happily talk with him once it was over.

"No one in the room would even look at me," she remembers. "Then he mumbled, 'You're under arrest. Now will you come?' I said I wouldn't leave unless they put on handcuffs and treated me as though they really were arresting me. He reluctantly put on the bracelets, and as I was escorted from the room, there was the photographer from the student paper."

The flash went off. When Willson arrived at the police trailer, the chief told her she'd made her point, and let her go. "What this really did," Willson explains, "was that it inspired our members to really get active. It was like a shot of adrenalin."

Long Beach classifieds wrote letters, picketed and packed

Lessons continued on page 6

FRED GLASS PHOTO



Marty Hittelman is stepping down as CFT/CCC President after this convention.

Community College workshops at CFT Convention

Get current on legal news, public policy, and employment issues relating to community colleges at the annual California Federation of Teachers convention, to be held March 16-18 at the Wilshire Grand Los Angeles. This year's convention theme is "Members leading the way."

Statewide union officers will be elected to a two year term, union policy will be set for the coming year on legislative, political and academic issues, and delegates will be informed and inspired by the spirited discussion that, as always, animates the proceedings. During the

Friday afternoon bank of workshops, union attorneys Bob Bezemek and Larry Rosenzweig will provide an update on community college legal news, and CFT/CCC President Marty Hittelman will steer a discussion of the Public Policy Institute's Report. On Saturday

at 3:15 p.m., Hittelman will talk with delegates about "New Funding for CCC Implementing SB 361 (Non-credit Adult Education)," and Sam Russo, Ed Murray, Phyllis Eckler and Deborah Kaye will assess "Organizing of Part-Time Faculty to Achieve Activism."

The Community College Council will meet on Friday evening following the convention reception, which this year will celebrate the 20th anniversary of the CFT's Labor in the Schools Committee. The CFT convention is the highest democratic decision-making body of your statewide organization. Don't miss this opportunity to help design union policy for the coming year.

The Governor's Health Care Proposal

First, protect the insurance industry

On January 8, 2007, Governor Schwarzenegger came up with his proposal to fix our health care system, which he calls "a sick old man." Perhaps inevitably, his solution is a body builder's prescription: he would put the patient on steroids, pumping up parts of the old system without addressing its fundamental, underlying problems. Indeed, his solution would only make things worse.

Schwarzenegger would require every individual to purchase private insurance, but with no guarantee that the coverage would be affordable and adequate. He would require employers of ten or more workers to pay a maximum of 4% of payroll to privately insure their workers, or pay the equivalent into a state fund.

Unfortunately, the national average for employer-provided health care is over 7% of payroll. In California school districts, the average is close to twice that. As State Senator Sheila Kuehl points out, the governor's proposal would "at best provide high-cost, low-benefit plans for many Californians; it limits what employers pay but not what individuals must pay or what insurance companies can charge."

At a moment when public concern over our health care system is rising in parallel with health care costs, the governor's plan places its emphasis squarely on shoring up the profits of the

health insurance industry.

If Schwarzenegger's plan is no solution, what is? The CFT is working on three levels to address the health care cost crisis: through collective bargaining; in coalitions addressing the worst problems of the current system; and seeking to replace the current system with a superior one.

Collective bargaining-based health care: just holding on

The old American model of employment-based health coverage—a cornerstone of worker benefits for the past half century—is breaking down, a victim of converging trends: declining union density in the private sector, with fewer workers covered by collective bargaining agreements, and out-of-control private health insurance cost increases.

Health care cost increases are being driven by bureaucratic waste in the insurance industry, increased profits, and medically

unjustified variation in quality of care and patient outcomes.

Insurance premiums for family coverage now average more than \$10,000 annually. Since 2001, family premiums have skyrocketed by 59%. Corporations are taking a hard line, seeking to get their employees to shoulder more of the costs, and in some cases dumping their health insurance programs entirely.

For public sector workers, the picture, while not yet so dire, is headed in the same direction. The health care cost spiral is forcing no-win choices upon the bargaining table: do we negotiate a modest wage increase, but accept employee co-pays that reduce or eliminate the wage increase? Or accept flat wages in return for keeping health care cost increases at bay?

"Of course we fight at the bargaining table in each district for the best possible benefits for our members and their families," says CCC President Marty Hittelman. "But that game is unraveling. The solution isn't just local bargaining anymore."

Fixing the worst abuses now

The CFT participates in several coalitions that address aspects of the health care crisis. The Education Coalition for Health Care Reform brings together public education labor and management groups in California to find ways of stabilizing costs while increasing quality. One explicit goal of the working group is to gain efficiency and cost savings by rating hospitals and bringing people to the good ones. Another shared goal is to stop shifting costs to members of our bargaining units. We are also after systemic change, rather than blaming the patient. Ultimately the group would like to see a single payer health care system (see below).

The CFT is also a member of the broader California Health Care Coalition, an organization of employers, unions and health and welfare funds, currently representing 2 million Californians. Like the ECHRC, members of



ILLUSTRATION JOS SANCES

the Coalition want to reduce health costs and improve quality without degrading benefits. It is currently negotiating with providers and health plans to create a model relationship that would raise performance and lower costs, and—a crucial element—make data on patient care transparent and accessible to members of the coalition. This is key to holding the plans and providers accountable.

The CFT is also working in different ways on the policy objective of a single payer health care system, through the Health Access coalition, and in the legislative process.

Single payer bill vetoed by governor

In an historic first, a bill that would have created a universal coverage system in California passed both houses of the state legislature in August of last year. The CFT-supported "Health Care for All," Senate Bill 840 (Sheila Kuehl), was sent to the governor's desk, where it provoked Schwarzenegger to call it "socialized medicine" and veto it.

SB 840 would have provided health care insurance for everyone in the state, including the nearly seven million people currently without it. By eliminating the private insurance middleman, which adds 25% in administrative overhead to health care costs, SB 840 would have been a great bargain. Health care providers, public and private, would have continued to function as they do today; and patients would have continued to see their own physicians. The only change would have been that instead of hundreds of insurance company "payers," there would be one: a single government-administered health insurance entity.

In Canada, where such a system has been in place for several

decades, the country spends 10% of GDP on health care versus the US's 14%, and every Canadian is covered. In the United States there are 47 million uninsured, and the number has been increasing by over a million per year for the last five years as employers increasingly shift rising health costs to employees or dump their plans altogether.

In her response to the governor's veto, Kuehl said that it signaled his intent to leave healthcare in the hands of private insurance companies and let working families lose coverage one family at a time, and let hospitals close for non-payment of bills one at a time.

The CFT is determined not to let that happen, either to its members or the students we serve. It will be working to prevent the Governor's unfortunate ideas about health care from being implemented. As California Labor Federation leader Art Pulaski notes, "This is a plan that Wal-Mart can love and Wal-Mart workers will hate. The proposed employer contribution is so low that even Wal-Mart, a corporation known for its minimal employee health care coverage, already exceeds the requirements."

Sheila Kuehl will reintroduce SB 840 this year, and CFT will work to support its passage. She acknowledges that with Schwarzenegger in the governor's chair, single payer won't be signed soon. But she, like CFT, views the legislative effort as an opportunity to educate the public about the nature of the problem and the best option for health care reform. When enough voters know the real story, single payer will become the solution for California's health care woes.

By Fred Glass

For the latest info and to get involved in CFT's health care reform advocacy, go to www.cft.org/home_news/healthpage.html

HEALTH CARE BY THE NUMBERS

Uninsured Californians	7 million
Uninsured Americans	47 million
Uninsured Canadians	0
Schwarzenegger's proposed employer mandate	4% of payroll
Current national average employer cost	7% of payroll
Current California school cost	14% of payroll
Estimated average out of pocket family expenses now	\$2,788 per year
Estimated out of pocket average family expenses with single payer	\$2,488 per year
% of US GDP spent on health care	14%
% of Canada GDP spent on health care	10%

Next: The election

Initiative campaign turns in signatures

The classified staff and faculty members of the American Federation of Teachers are on the verge of making community college history in California. During 2006 more than 1.6 million dollars were contributed and more than 900,000 signatures were collected in support of the community college initiative, officially known as the “Community College Governance, Funding Stabilization, and Student Fee Reduction Act.”

The Act would improve the governance and financing of the community college system, and protect students from fee increases.

In mid January, the signature petitions were filed with the 58 California county registrars for validation. The official results will be announced by early March. Based on statistical sampling completed prior to the filing, more than 70% of the signatures are valid and the initiative will be qualified. If that

California legislature accelerates the presidential primary, but in any event will be no later than June 2008.

Coalition goals

The California Federation of Teachers and its affiliated Locals and members were the largest single group of contributors to this effort. Leading the way from the beginning was the Los Angeles College Faculty Guild, AFT Local 1521. Along with

the Californians for Community Colleges. In response to mid-year budget cuts and skyrocketing student fees, the goal of the coalition was to seek a way to strengthen community colleges politically, stabilize their funding, and reduce student fees. The California Federation of Teachers shares those goals and joined the coalition shortly thereafter.

The group came to understand that constitutional recognition of community colleges as a segment of higher education was the only way to remove the “kick me” sign from our back. Further constitutional and statutory changes were also needed to achieve the goals of funding stabilization and student fee reduction. Two decades of effort through the legislative process had not produced these outcomes; thus the initiative was created. Now that the initiative seems likely to be headed to the ballot, another campaign has begun to educate the voters and to garner the endorsements of key supporters. Though initial polling indicates a 63% level of



OLGA TORRES PHOTO

Dennis Smith turns in initiatives in January to Sacramento County Voter Registration and Elections office.

support without arguments, which moves to 69% after arguments are made, a bare bones campaign is still needed.

In California, a bare bones campaign translates to just over 2 million dollars. Led by the Los Angeles College Faculty Guild and the California Federation of Teachers, AFT members and locals constituted the single largest group of contributors to the signature gathering phase of this magnificent effort. Many have given more than expected such as San Francisco, Los Rios, and Coast. Most have given generously, including Glendale, San Diego, Peralta, Cabrillo, San Jose, San Mateo, Palomar, Mendocino-Lake, Marin, and El Camino. Listing the contributions from every college would take more space than is allowed for this article but as of the end of 2006, every community college district in the California where AFT is the bargaining representative, except for one, has pitched in. To borrow from Charles Dickens, “Please sir, can I have some more?”

Keeping the door open

Community colleges must not remain the orphans of public education in California. We serve more than 2,000,000 students. They are the sons and daughters of working people, they are the working poor, they are the historically disadvantaged and they, like everyone, deserve access to the benefits of higher education and job training. The 1960 Master Plan for Higher Education in California promised an “open door” to community colleges for its citizens. Those who would ration access to higher education based on privilege of birth or ability to pay rather than ability to benefit do not believe in that promise. Our continued financial and public support of passage of the “Community College Governance, Funding Stabilization, and Student Fee Reduction Act” can keep the doors open for generations to come. We can be proud to say that through our union, we made that happen.

By Dennis Smith

The group came to understand that constitutional recognition of community colleges as a segment of higher education was the only way to remove the “kick me” sign from our back.

proves to be the case, a constitutional and statutory ballot proposition will be on the ballot in the next California general election. That could be February of next year (yikes!) if the

the Faculty Association of California Community Colleges (FACCC) and the Community College League of California, the L.A. Guild nearly four years ago joined a coalition known as



John Delloro with LACCD students.

Few California community college districts offer courses in labor education, and fewer still house labor studies departments: five, to be precise. This makes the new Dolores Huerta Labor Institute, named after the legendary co-founder of the United Farm Workers, all the more remarkable. The fledgling

center in its startup phase is housed at Los Angeles Trade-Technical College.

Trade-Technical College already boasts a thriving Labor Studies Department, but it delivers instruction through credit and non-credit labor studies classes with students drawn mostly from unions. The

LACCD launches Huerta Labor Institute

Huerta Labor Institute will function differently, assisting faculty in developing curricula across academic disciplines and delivering labor education classes, special lectures, film series and workshops in all nine campuses of the Los Angeles Community College District (LACCD).

“The Los Angeles labor movement will have a new way to spread the good word about unions to community college students throughout Los Angeles County,” said Dolores Huerta at an announcement ceremony last summer. “This is great news considering the important role that labor unions play each day in improving the lives of working families in Los Angeles County.”

The man hired to transform

the promise of the Huerta Institute into reality is John Delloro, a former community college student himself who transferred to a university American Studies program and planned to return to community college as an instructor. But he found himself working as a union staffer and labor educator instead for ten years, before going to work for the Institute in December. “I did my PhD in the trenches,” he laughs.

Although he has only been on the job for a few months, Delloro has already set up a series of talks by labor scholars at East L.A. College in conjunction with the faculty professional development committee, and set in motion a labor track in the interdisciplinary

Project for Adult College Education (PACE) program at Harbor College for Fall 2007.

The Huerta Institute relied heavily in its planning stages on the expertise of John McDowell of Los Angeles Trade-Tech College and Kent Wong of the UCLA Labor Center, as well as Carl Friedlander, President of AFT Local 1521.

The Dolores Huerta Institute is funded by contributions from ten Los Angeles unions, including Local 1521, which represents faculty in the LACCD. LACCD will match labor’s contributions dollar for dollar over that period.

For more information, 213-763-7070, or www.myspace.com/dhuertalaborinstitute.



Working the Floor

Judith Michaels, CFT Legislative Director

A first look at California's Faculty and College Excellence Act (FACE)

The trend of college and university administrators to rely on part-time, contingent or non-tenure track academic employees with disproportionately low salaries and little or no professional support to teach college students continues to escalate. This year we are part of a coordinated effort throughout the states to stem this damaging trend. An American Federation of Teachers campaign will create awareness about the erosion of full-time faculty and the overuse of contingent faculty, introducing legislation into several state legislatures that mandates a full-time hiring ratio and pro rata compensation and job security for contingent faculty.

California has been at the forefront of this struggle for decades, securing many legal, legislative, and contractual victories. Though conditions in our state may be better than those found in other areas of the country, much work remains. California's rapidly changing demographics, coupled with term-limited legislators and peripatetic administrators, obliges us to frequently remind the public about conditions for the academic labor force, as we strive to change those conditions and maintain our excellent public higher education system.

We'll be discussing the details of the bill at CFT leadership meetings and during Lobby Day, and amending it during the coming months as we secure allies during legislative hearings and in the state budget process

that lies ahead. In order to restore the ranks of full-time tenure and tenure track faculty, we'll need to make sure that our colleges report on the number of hours of undergraduate courses taught by part-time, non-tenured, tenure track and tenured faculty in each academic department. Those campuses that do not meet the seventy five percent goal will be obliged to increase the share of the total number of hours taught by full-time tenure and tenure track faculty such that by 2013 colleges can meet the legislature's goal of seventy-five percent. We stand prepared to assist them, through the collective bargaining process, in creating a viable, institutionally based plan to meet this goal.

Though we've made progress contractually, and in the state

budget, on the issue of pro rata salaries, we have more to do. Our bill will ask that each public institution of higher education determine a minimum salary goal for part-time/adjunct faculty members that is prorated to the salaries of full-time tenured faculty members doing comparable work, including office hours where applicable. Each institution will need to establish methodology to calculate pro rata salary goals subject to collective bargaining.

We'll also be looking at a process under which part-time and other non-tenure track faculty, after successful completion of a probationary period, receive timely notice of and priority consideration for part-time and non-tenure track teaching assignments in coming terms. The process will also need to ensure that qualified non-tenure track faculty members receive consideration for their past service when a tenure track position becomes available, and that non-tenure track faculty accumulate seniority, are notified of job openings prior to the position being posted outside of the institution, and have increased consideration for the appointment.

We understand, in the most basic way, that our teaching conditions are our students' learning conditions. We know that colleges thrust part-time teachers into situations in which they and their students can't thrive, much less excel. We must work for a solution to help administrations, and ultimately, the legislature, to give our colleges and universities the resources to hire full-time faculty. In the weeks and months ahead we must build an organizing committee of members from all of the higher education locals that will work on the FACE campaign, along with the work we are doing on behalf of the upcoming Community College Initiative.

The FACE campaign will give us an opportunity to organize

and mobilize our members as well as coordinate with each other across locals. To increase our chances for success, we will need to reach out to our allies in the labor movement and incorporate them in meaningful ways, and to create a visible message that connects the legislation with negotiations and organizing drives. These efforts will create momentum to create a Faculty Restoration and Equity fund in the state budget so that each year institutions can advance one-fifth of the way toward meeting the five year goals of increasing the numbers of tenure and tenure track faculty and ensuring that part-time and other contingent faculty receive fully comparable pay and benefits.

THE FACULTY AND COLLEGE EXCELLENCE ACT (FACE) SETS TWO MAJOR GOALS:

1. At least seventy-five percent of the courses taught on each campus of each public institution of higher education shall be taught by full-time tenured and tenure track faculty; and
2. all part-time and adjunct faculty shall receive pay and benefits that are equal, on a pro rata basis, to those earned by tenured and tenure track faculty doing comparable work.

Lessons from Direct Action continued from page 3

Board of Trustees meetings, disrupted board functions and luncheons, and joined faculty in a huge rally supported by other unions. The late Miguel Contreras, head of the L.A. County Federation of Labor, showed up with a mariachi band. Willson produced a collage of video clips of some of the Board's less honorable moments and held a "Board of Trustees Film Festival." After the CFT filed unfair labor practice charges at the Public Employment Relations Board, alleging bad faith bargaining, the district finally agreed to a fair contract.

Not enough to wait

"I learned something very important from this experience," Willson says. "It's not enough just to wait while the legal process runs its course. We couldn't arbitrate over issues since we had no contract, and the administration certainly wasn't stopping its attacks on us. We had to take some kind of action to resolve things, and in order to solve our problems, our members had to get active."

She also learned something about herself. "Some people just can't stand injustice," she explains, "and I'm one of them. I wasn't afraid to lose my job, and in the end, it was kind of fun. I had a great time."

Once the contract was signed, however, the relationship between the union and the district required many patient months to rebuild. "Direct confrontation isn't always the best solution to problems," Willson says. "We had no choice at the time, but later we found it more effective to concentrate on problem-solving."

After five years as local president in Long Beach, she was ready to make a greater commitment to the union. She applied for a staff position as executive director for the Coast Federation of Educators, and got hired.

Representing faculty turned out to be very different from leading a union of classified

employees. "Classifieds can have their jobs moved much more easily," she explains. "Faculty have tenure, which means they are much more secure. On the other hand, faculty have issues around intellectual property, right to assignments, 10-year reviews and others."

Being a staff representative was also very different from being local president. "I had to learn that the local leader is in charge. A staff role is more advisory, and you have to be careful not to overstep, to support leadership as opposed to being the leadership." Willson also worried initially that her lack of teaching experience would be an issue. "I thought

I'd find an attitude of 'what do you know?' But it turned out not to be an issue at all."

Now, as a CFT rep for several districts, she feels that classified AFT members are "proud to see one of their own climbing through the ranks."

Today Willson would like to avoid fights like the one in Long Beach in the districts where she works with AFT locals, preferring to work cooperatively with management to solve problems. But if that proves impossible, her history shows she knows what to do.

By David Bacon

Q and A with legislator Anthony Portantino

Freshman Assemblymember Anthony Portantino represents the 44th A.D., stretching across Pasadena, Altadena, Temple City, Duarte, La Canada Flintridge, and portions of other cities. Born in Long Branch, New Jersey, he moved to California, working many years in TV and film production. He served as city councilman and mayor of La Canada Flintridge, and is a past member of the Pasadena City College Bond Oversight Committee. His two daughters attend public school, and his wife Ellen is a vice president of the Walt Disney Company.

The Perspective: *What are your goals as chair of the Assembly Higher Education Committee?*

Assemblymember Portantino: I'm very excited to have been selected by the speaker for this post. I campaigned vigorously to be chair of the Assembly Higher Ed Committee. I want to bring an activist's approach to such an important job. My goals are to work on creating a seamless system of education, to help our students focus more on the higher end of the system, so that our community college students have access to career options, but also a window of opportunity for going on to four-year school. That's the question I want to work on: How do we make that transition from K-12 to our higher education system seamless here in California? The community colleges have a crucial role to play in that. But there are significant barriers right now to that seamlessness.

One of my goals is looking at barriers to concurrent enrollment, how we can facilitate those students who want to take community college classes before they're out of high school. This would serve, for instance, students in rural districts without access to AP classes, as well as those not interested in an academic path who wish to explore their career options.

The Perspective: *What do you feel is the biggest challenge facing the community colleges in California?*

Assemblymember Portantino: The biggest challenge is also what makes the state and its community college system special; it is open for all. You have the largest and most diverse

group of post secondary students in the world. That presents a challenge: not only how to make college affordable for the students but how to attract and retain faculty prepared for that and who themselves reflect the diversity of California.

"The issue of college affordability is important, but so is the overall cost of living in California, which presents its own challenges to students."

The issue of college affordability is important, but so is the overall cost of living in California, which presents its own challenges to students. How do they manage to buy books, put food on the table, a roof over their heads, all while paying for and attending school?

The Perspective: *What is your position on student fees?*

Assemblymember Portantino: To keep them as low as possible so we can have the greatest access for the greatest number of people. I am cognizant of some of the disincentives that the federal government has put in place to access, especially in regard to Pell grants. I have sent letters to our congressional representatives informing them we don't accept a tradeoff of more Pell grants for higher fees. Such a policy becomes an incentive to increase student fees."

The Perspective: *What is your position on the Community College Initiative?*

Assemblymember Portantino: I'm cautious when it comes to constitutional amendments, so I'm going to look at it from every angle, and at the end of the day when I've looked through it thoroughly and studied it completely I'll make a decision. I'm intrigued and excited that it's putting community college issues at the forefront. I'm not familiar enough with all facets of the initiative yet. I will weigh in when I've done my homework.

The Perspective: *What is your position on the Faculty and College Excellence Act?*

Assemblymember Portantino: I'm very concerned about the over-utilization of part-time faculty and lack of pro-rata pay. I'm happy that CFT has been talking about these issues with me. Judy Michaels and other CFT folks have been educating

me, and I'm grateful as a freshman that I have been getting educated and up to speed. I certainly think there is a lot of merit here, and especially on the issue of pro rata pay. I'm going to continue to work on these issues, and as the discussion develops your folks and my folks will continue to work together.

The Perspective: *Community college funding is in better shape now than in a few years, but this remains an under-funded system. How do you propose to change that?*

Assemblymember Portantino: How I propose to change it is quantify how to invest in our children's future. When we were part of the factory economy, you could get a high school diploma and get a middle class job. Now we're in a global high tech economy. We need to rethink how we fund and what we're funding education for, and I'm going to try my best to make that happen. I think you're going to see an overall discussion, a global discussion of funding led by the Speaker. If we can stimulate the public's trust in the institution we'll be able to move forward. Our children's future is our most important investment.



Anthony Portantino is the new chair of the Assembly Higher Education Committee.

The Perspective: *If you could talk with all of the community college faculty of California, what would you say to them?*

Assemblymember Portantino: Thank you—for working so hard to provide that first line of higher education and upward mobility to such a diverse population. It's a challenge but I'm glad there are folks who love being educators and are willing to provide that opportunity for what are often the first people in their family to go to college. It takes a special person to have the passion to do such important work.

Cash for College Cal Grant deadline approaching

Sometimes the difference between success and failure for your students hinges on whether they receive the financial assistance they need. Your students may be eligible for up to \$9,700 in Cal Grant aid for the 2007-2008 academic year. The Cal Grant program is the state's merit and need-based financial aid program administered by the California Student Aid Commission. To qualify, students must have at least a 2.0 GPA, meet eligibility and

financial requirements, and submit two forms: a Free Application for Federal Student Aid Form, and a Cal Grant GPA Verification Form. Find these forms online at www.fafsa.ed.gov and www.csac.ca.gov.

Although community college students have until September 2 to submit both forms, the California Student Aid Commission urges faculty to get information out and encourages students to apply as soon as possible. Effective and

timely financial planning will help your students to head into the fall semester concentrating on their studies instead of worrying where the money is going to come from to pay for school.

Free financial aid workshops to assist students in the application process are up and running across the state before March 2. For local workshop locations and dates, log on to www.californiacashforcollege.org, or call toll-free 888-CA-GRANT (888-224-7268).

Victor Valley continued from page 8

sultant, had to convince the district to honor the process.

But tenacity pays off. When the union finally concluded contract negotiations on January 18, it came away with an agree-

ment that would make any local union proud.

Local President Don Peavy says he's particularly happy about three things. First, there's pay. Victor Valley salaries will take a big jump in 2007-8 from \$700/unit to \$860, in 2008-9 from \$860 to \$918, in 2009-10 from \$918 to

\$972, and in 2010 from \$972 to \$990 plus COLA. Hourly rates will rise from \$40 per unit to \$55 plus COLA over the life of the contract. Non-credit faculty will get yearly increases of 2.5%—a victory that the district fought up to the final hour.

In addition to salaries, the

union won a preference list for rehires. Says Peavy, "Now there's some stability from semester to semester." The union also gained binding arbitration. "We believe it's an absolutely remarkable document for a first contract," noted the local president, who teaches

religious studies and served on the negotiations team. With him at the table for Local 6286 were Mike Mello, Leo Kelsey, and Carol Bachofner, along with CFT field reps Paul Jordan and Mary Millet.

By David Bacon

Local Action

Orange County

Nursing education for people, or for hospital corporations?

Dean Mancina, president of the Coast Federation of Educators, Local 1911, says there are many challenges in providing nursing education to students in the Coast Community College District. But one challenge the union didn't anticipate was the joint effort by a large hospital corporation and the district administration to use those obstacles to undermine the union.

"There's a severe shortage of nurses, to begin with," explains Mancina, who's taught at the Golden West campus for 29 years. "It's a very high tech field these days, and we have a state licensing board that dictates the parameters for curriculum, the preparation of faculty, and even limits the number of students in each class to twelve. To teach, you have to have a masters degree."

But one of the biggest obstacles to nursing education is salary. A nursing faculty member at Golden West College starts at about \$60,000 a year. In a local hospital a registered nurse can make upwards of \$150,000 a year with overtime. Recruiting skilled nurses to teach under those circumstances is understandably difficult. But, notes

Mancina, "Nursing is not the only discipline that faces this type of problem. Other academic disciplines, for instance in the sciences and business, suffer because our society doesn't support community college faculty salaries commensurate with what professionals in these fields can make elsewhere."

Nevertheless, the reputation of the nursing program at Golden West is excellent, and over 150 students are on a waiting list to get in. The district says it doesn't have the money to hire enough faculty to accommodate them all. The Board of Registered Nurses encourages schools to partner with hospitals, and the district has a long-standing arrangement with Hope Hospital in Newport Beach, through which the hospital pays the salary of a faculty member.

So it seemed like a gift when a big hospital corporation, Memorial Healthcare Services, which operates many hospitals in Southern California, announced that it would loan one of its own employees to expand the district's program. There was only one catch. When Hope Hospital pays for a faculty nurse to teach courses, that person is a member of the Coast district faculty, an employee of the district, and enjoys union representation.

Memorial proposed something different. The company wanted the instructor to remain its own

employee, and also wanted to be able to decide, through that faculty member, what the curriculum would be.

Integrity of the union

"At first, we simply were worried about maintaining the integrity of our union, and we wanted to make sure that this new faculty member would be protected and entitled to representation," Mancina recalls.

"The district, however, announced that the person teaching in this new position wouldn't be represented by the union, because he or she wouldn't be a district employee. That was when we started to look around to see whether there were other districts where this same thing had happened."

Mancina and the Coast Federation discovered that there were actually over 50 districts statewide where hospital employees were teaching nursing—people who weren't district employees, and weren't represented by unions.

"In Fresno, the faculty told us they were living through a nightmare. The hospital had taken over teaching the program, and their people had no long-term commitment to the district or to the students; their loyalty was with the hospital," he explains. Most nursing programs, for instance, still teach a "patient-centered model" of care. Hospitals, however, especially in the era of managed care, use an "efficiency model" to make decisions about what where they put their resources, and who is entitled to them.

Poorly served

"College nursing faculty normally don't want economic

issues governing decisions about care," Mancina says. "But the teachers coming in from the hospitals want students to get used to the way decisions are made there, on that basis. Plus, even though there are long waiting lists to get into nursing programs everywhere, we found that in many cases, hospital employees were flying to the front of the line. We became very concerned that our students would be poorly served, and that our own faculty would be pushed aside in this arrangement."

The union went to the table with the district, even while administrators were claiming that they didn't have to bargain over their decision to implement the program, just over its effects. The faculty discovered that the district had created a new job title, "affiliated faculty instructor," to cover the six new positions it wanted to create (three for nurses, and three for respiratory therapists). Yet their duties would be the same as those of any other faculty member: teaching, attending committee and department meetings, and holding office hours.

One example of what loss of union representation might mean for the nursing instructors cropped up during these negotiations. An administrator asked what the union was concerned about. Among other issues, Mancina mentioned Article 3 in the faculty-district collective bargaining agreement, governing academic freedom. The administrator replied, "Oh, these people would have no academic freedom."

Classic tactics

"We went to our local Orange County Central Labor Council, and they told us these were the classic tactics used in lots of other outsourcing schemes," Mancina says. "We then went to Assemblyman Jose Solorio, who wrote to the Chancellor and spoke to the trustees, and urged them to respect union representation. We mobilized people from our community, and especially our nursing faculty. Finally the board held a special meeting on this issue."

At first the district claimed the hospital was refusing to allow its employees to be represented by our unions. But finally the trustees backed down, and agreed that any new nursing teachers would have the same representation rights as other faculty.

"This is a good decision, and sets a precedent that other people can use as well, when the same situation crops up elsewhere," Mancina declares. "And most important, it shows that we're not willing to sell people out."

Victor Valley

Victor Valley gets a new contract

Part-time faculty in Victor Valley came to the end of a long road in January, signing their first contract as members of a local of the California Federation of Teachers. And without a doubt, patient work and stubborn insistence on rights paid off. Their new agreement will make a significant change in their lives and those of their families.

Five years ago, part-time faculty in the Victor Valley Community College District, in the high desert on the way to Barstow from Ontario, decided to join the AFT, and formed Part-time Faculty United/AFT Local 6286. Their board of trustees, however, would not respect their decision, and so began a long process in which instructors had to fight first for recognition, then for the right to bargain, and finally for a decent contract. That fight reached its culmination in January, with Part-time Faculty United's first collective bargaining agreement.

In 2002, administrators told instructors and other members of the unit they could only be represented by the Victor Valley College Faculty Association, an affiliate of the California Teachers Association, which represents full time faculty there. Two years later, part-timers won an important victory when the Public Employment Relations Board ruled that district administration illegally tried to choose a union bargaining agent for them.

In the darkest days of the state budget crisis, the district told part-time faculty that it faced a possible budget shortfall, and was cutting their salaries unilaterally by 10%. Since there was no contract or certification, the district said it was under no obligation to negotiate over the change, or even to justify it. The AFT organizing committee, taking the decision head on, told the district that the union doubted the shortfall would materialize, and in the end, mobilized enough pressure to rescind the cut.

An election finally took place in May 2004. By that time, faculty were fed up with their inability to bargain over the most basic changes in their jobs and conditions. The 540-person unit voted decisively in favor of Part-time Faculty United.

The district still delayed and had to be dragged into bargaining. During negotiations, its negotiators would sign off on items, only to see trustees then rescind the agreements reached at the table. Finally a mediator, and even the district's own con-



Members of the San Francisco Community College Federation Teachers, AFT Local 2121, braved a rain storm to participate in a San Francisco march with thousands of other opponents of the Iraq War on January 27. Walking with the local's banner are (from left) Steve Goldston, Ed Murray, Lu Marla Dea, and Rodger Scott. Local 2121 joined many other unions in the U.S. Labor Against the War contingent.