



# Perspective

## Current Investment Portfolio

From CalSTRS investment portfolio, the asset allocation mix for the period

### Asset Allocation as of March 31, 2014

Assets	Market Value (in millions)	Actual	Cur Tar
Global Equity	104,264	56.9%	
Fixed Income	28,692	15.6%	
Real Estate	22,576	12.3%	
Private Equity	21,811	11.9%	
Cash / Liquidity	3,587	2.0%	
Inflation Sensitive	1,005	0.5%	
Absolute Return	1,417	0.8%	
<b>Total Investment Assets</b>	<b>183,352</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	

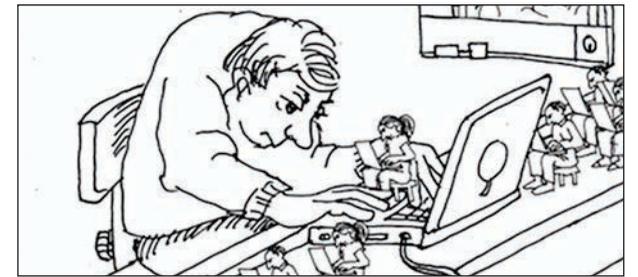
Table reflects allocation targets and ranges approved by the Teach



### Putting dance to work for social justice

Kathe Burick is a modern dancer, yoga instructor, and union activist. And she brings dance to the street for her values.

page 3



### Napolitano is sane about online ed

The new leader of the UC system has some things to say about the appropriate place of online education. And they represent a breath of fresh air.

page 5



### Battling for fair accreditation

The opaque decision-making process of the ACCJC seems to be reproducing itself in San Francisco, where the democratically elected board of trustees has been replaced by a "supertrustee" answerable to no one.

page 7

# Keeping CalSTRS safe for your retirement

page 4



## President's Column

Guest columnist: Jim Miller, Political Action VP, AFT Guild, San Diego and Grossmont-Cuyamaca Community Colleges, Local 1931

# "Taxifornia" Dreaming: Who Really Pays in California?

Last month on tax day we heard the usual histrionics from the 'pity the millionaire' crowd about how the draconian taxes on the affluent and businesses in "Taxifornia" are killing growth and jobs and driving folks out of the state.

There is only one problem with this—it's not true. Indeed, far from the socialist hamlet that the anti-tax zealots like to portray us as, California's tax system is still more regressive than progressive.

This is documented in the California Budget Project's (CBP) Annual report "Who Pays Taxes in California?" that shows that, "Contrary to the oft-repeated claim that high-income Californians pay an unfair amount of taxes, it is actually California's low-income households who pay the largest share of their incomes in state and local taxes." The CPB argues that "Given widening income inequality over the last generation, and the ongoing economic challenges facing Californians in the aftermath of the Great Recession, policymakers could take specific steps to reduce the regressive nature of California's system of state and local taxes and to promote economic security for low-income families."

### Myth-busting

But before we get to their recommendations, it is worth underlining some of the myth-busting reality that this report provides. It notes that even after the passage of the Proposition 30 increases in taxes for higher earners in 2012, the state's lowest income families still pay the largest share of their income in taxes. Specifically, while the top 1% of earners pays 8.8% of their income in taxes, a heavier burden falls on the bottom fifth of Californians who forgo 10.6% of their income in taxes.

Just above them on the income ladder, the second to last fifth of earners pays 9.2% of

their income in taxes, with the middle range income brackets paying 8.2 and 7.6%. Hence, the

CBP study shows, the poor shoulder the heaviest burden, as measured by percentage of income.

As the CBP study puts it: *After taking into account Californians' ability to deduct state and local taxes for federal income tax purposes . . . California's overall tax system is moderately regressive. . .*

So far from robbing the rich to fatten the poor, California's tax system is "moderately regressive." As for corporate taxes, the CBP study shows that they only account for 5.2% of state and local tax revenues. Thus it is individuals—not corporations—who pay most of the state's taxes, and the less you earn, the higher percentage of your income goes to taxes.

The CBP goes on to recommend the "better targeting of tax credits to low-income households" and the creation of a "state earned income tax credit" to make the system fairer for low-income earners and help address income inequality at the state level.

### Only temporary

While these are good ideas, it must also be noted that the biggest flaw of Proposition 30 was not that it was unfair to the rich, but that the increased taxes on top earners are only temporary. If we are to meet the educational, health, infrastructure, and other key challenges of the future, the Proposition 30 taxes on high-income earners need to make permanent.

In addition to this, other quite reasonable progressive tax reforms should include an oil severance tax and a revision of Proposition 13 that saves

the protections for ordinary homeowners but allows corporate property taxes to be revalued and taxed accordingly. Put simply, Disneyland doesn't need the same tax break as your grandmother.

As Paul Krugman points out in his review of Thomas Piketty's *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*, "progressive taxation—in particular taxation of wealth and inheritance—can be a powerful force limiting inequality." And this is evermore necessary because, "Tax burdens on high-income Americans have fallen across the board since the 1970s, but the

The big picture answer, then, is more progressive tax reforms that help ease income inequality while addressing our pressing current needs with an eye towards the next generation. If we do this, California will be able to move into the future with the revenue we need to be a leader in the 21st century.

Of course, engaging the revenue question head on like this will require political courage that, at present, seems lacking not just from the minority party still held hostage by Grover Norquist but from the Democrats who seem content to pretend that the question

**The big picture answer is more progressive tax reforms that help ease income inequality while addressing our pressing current needs with an eye towards the next generation.**

biggest reductions have come on capital income—including a sharp fall in corporate taxes, which indirectly benefits stockholders—and inheritance."

Otherwise we are left to continue what Piketty calls "the drift towards oligarchy" as the capitalism of the future trends toward the "patrimonial" with fewer and fewer gains trickling down to the rest of us.

of how to fund the future has been settled because Jerry Brown says so.

As one Democratic politician who knows better recently told me: "Nobody's going to show any courage until they feel the pressure to do so." Let's hope that day is sooner rather than later or our drift towards oligarchy will continue unabated. **CCG**

## MARK YOUR CALENDAR

May 17	Community College Council meeting, Marriott LAX
May 18	CFT State Council meeting, Marriott LAX
June 23 – 27	CFT Union Summer School, Kellogg West Conference Center, Pomona
July 11 – 14	AFT National Convention, Los Angeles Convention Center
September 27	Community College Council meeting, San Jose Marriott
September 28	CFT State Council meeting, San Jose Marriott

## Perspective

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.

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Kathe Burick

# Singing and dancing against the hailstorm

“I’m so angry,” Kathe Burick says, “I have to sing and dance.” That might not be everyone’s way of expressing anger, but for Burick it is a choice she’s made throughout her lifetime. “It gives me a big advantage for maintaining my humanity in the 21st century. Singing and dancing keeps our hearts and souls together in the midst of a hailstorm.”

For 33 years she taught modern dance at San Francisco Community College, and today continues as an instructor teaching tap and yoga. For the last two years at CCSF that hailstorm has been the effort by the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges to withdraw the college’s accreditation. Like most members of her union, AFT Local 2121, she views this as a step in a larger program to privatize education. And she uses her skills as a dancer and teacher to oppose it.

“My message is that downsizing and privatizing are not good for us,” she says. “Privatizing education is part of how we feel the weight of corporate power, which is trying to make human needs into a commodity, the way they have with health care.”

## Taking dance on the road

Together with her students, Burick takes dance on the road, to rallies where they make it part of political protest. At one recent rally in front of San Francisco City Hall they performed a satirical parody based on the Michael Jackson song Thriller. Its key demand was that the city’s mayor Ed Lee stand up and fight for the college. At another rally Burick transformed the old song “Putting on the Ritz” into “Time to Tax the Rich,” and this year her students will sing “Rejoice, rejoice, we have no

choice” in the words of the Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young song “Carry On.” [Burick’s March 2012 performance at an Occupy Education Teach-In at the State Building Rotunda, San Francisco, is available on YouTube at [youtube.com/watch?v=PQ14JZOhytQ](http://youtube.com/watch?v=PQ14JZOhytQ)].

Burick was the first woman in her family to get a bachelor’s, and later a masters degree. She grew up in a small town in Ohio, and in her teenage years, her family even lived in a state park there.

When she was three her mother took her to a dance class. She was hooked. At 13 she began to teach younger children. “It made me feel connected,” she explains. “When I’m upset it calms me down. When I’m blue it picks me up. Dance gets you moving, and yoga slows you down, so that you’re centered in your own body. I say English is my second language because dance is how I like to communicate.”

## Searching for political expression

She started searching for political expression as she grew up as well, although her community was not a radical place. She remembers, “In high school I set up the candy strippers in our local hospital.” That experience pushed her toward nursing at first. She was at a nurses’ convention when students protesting the Vietnam War were shot

down at Kent State. She tried to get the convention to send condolences and was voted down. “I was out of nurses training two weeks later,” she laughs.

In Chicago she became involved in the Ecumenical Institute, still working in health-care as a home health aide. “I liked the fact that they practiced what they preached,” she says. Then she moved to San Francisco. “I had a six-string guitar, and a friend with a 12-string, and we played at the Blue Unicorn [a local coffeehouse near the Haight Ashbury].”

She started taking classes at City College in music composition. Her mentor, Lena Johnson, however, convinced her to focus on dance. She went on to the University of California at Santa Barbara, combining dance and sociology. In college she studied dance as a developmental tool, and still believes it can play that role.

In 1980 she was hired at City College, which at the time required only a BA and two years teaching experience. Because she’d taught at a performing arts workshop in Santa Barbara, she qualified and was hired. Later she got her MA at San Francisco State University, while teaching at CCSF.

## From the heart

For Burick, dance is also a philosophy, and she teaches it as a multi-cultural experience. Tap, she notes, is an African-American art form. According to one of her students, Nathan Dias, “the class is one of the best deals in town, not only because it only costs \$20 for all 16 weeks, 2 hours a week, but you also get to take class with a woman who is not only a great tapper, but also an inspiring teacher who teaches from her heart.”

Burick emphasizes that dance education at CCSF has evolved from more restricted beginnings. CCSF’s dance program began in 1935-36 (it was called Junior College then), with morning classes at the U.C. Extension on Powell Street and afternoon classes at Galileo High School. The idea wasn’t to have fun, and classes had names like “Physical Education and Hygiene.” Incoming women



CHRIS HANZO PHOTO

Kathe Burick says, “I need to feel more directly engaged, and I try to do whatever is needed.”

were required to take “Games & Rhythms Fundamentals.” Then came folk and modern dance at the new campus on Ocean Avenue. By the sixties the college was offering jazz dance, square dance and ballet, and after the civil rights movement swept

the CCSF fight at community meetings, like a recent session of the Association of Retired Americans. “I’ve done so many phone banks I’ve lost count,” she says. According to AFT 2121 executive board mem-

“When I’m upset dance calms me down. When I’m blue it picks me up. Dance gets you moving, and yoga slows you down, so that you’re centered in your own body. I say English is my second language because dance is how I like to communicate.”

through San Francisco, it held an African-Haitian and Folk Dance Exhibition. Currently over 2000 students enroll in dance classes each semester.

“Every culture has a dance tradition, and we show people what our values are through our dance,” she emphasizes. “But we live today in a technological industrial culture that devalues people. The alternative is a earth-revering culture, in which we value singing and dancing because they give us a chance to show each other who we really are, and because they allow us to express the best of what makes us human.”

## Doing the nitty-gritty

Burick is also committed to doing the nitty-gritty work of union and political organizing as well. She gives up 2-3 classes each semester so that she can work two full days in the union office. “I need to feel more directly engaged, and I try to do whatever is needed,” she says.

Burick circulates surveys for the union’s bargaining demands, writes chant sheets, and talks up

ber Jessica Buchsbaum, “she is tireless in her enthusiasm and positive spirit, which she brings to phone banking, to 12-hour days of negotiating, and to yoga breaks she’ll offer during the various difficult situations we face.”

Together with other Local 2121 members she put in many hours on the campaign to pass Proposition A and guarantee funding for CCSF. She notes that five years ago the college employed 803 full-time faculty and 1,023 part-timers, while today it is down to 768 full-time and 824 part-time faculty.

“I know what it’s like to be those young people in my classes,” she emphasizes. “This is one place you can go where you don’t have to go into debt. This is a humane environment. The teachers are there because they love to teach. We are here for people who can’t afford it. Education is a human right.”



FRED GLASS PHOTO

During the Proposition 30 campaign, Burick played a billionaire’s wife in a guerrilla theater skit outside of the San Francisco Yacht Club.

## A need for action, not panic

## Keeping CalSTRS safe for your golden years

“I want to make sure that teachers know that their pensions are secure,” says Sharon Hendricks. Last month Hendricks, a communications instructor at Los Angeles City College, was elected vice-chair of the California State Teachers Retirement System (CalSTRS) Board of Trustees. “The position of the fund is strong. We are not going to run out of money anytime soon,” she says firmly. “But it is also necessary for us to act, and the longer we wait, the more expensive it’s going to be.”

Two years ago the state Legislature passed Senate Concurrent Resolution 105, telling CalSTRS to propose options for fixing the problem of the system’s unfunded liability. At that time the fund had a projected shortfall of \$64 billion. That means that the combination of contributions made by teachers, school districts and the state of California, plus the

upon retirement are defined by a formula, not by the amount of money in the fund. Like other funds, it took serious hits in the back-to-back crises of the dotcom bust and the Great Recession. The funds invest money contributed by workers, employers and sometimes government bodies. When the market rises and the value of investments increases the funds

**“Someone has to put more money into the system. The big questions are how much, from whom, when, and for how long?”**

expected rise in value of the fund’s assets over time, may not eventually be enough to meet the fund’s expected obligations.

Today, two years later, according to the CalSTRS website, “CalSTRS now faces an approximately \$74 billion funding gap. Under current economic conditions, CalSTRS has sufficient assets and projected contributions to pay benefits until 2046.” Because the state constitution requires the state to be responsible for paying teachers’ pensions, the general fund would have to come up with the money if CalSTRS could no longer do so.

#### Defined benefit pension fund

CalSTRS is a defined benefit pension fund, meaning that the benefits members receive

do well. But when the market falls the value of those accumulated contributions falls too. In the worst year of the current crisis, 2009, CalSTRS lost 25% of the value of its assets.

The benefit formula has been called “2% at 60.” Teachers who retire at that age receive monthly payments of 2% of their final salary at retirement, times years of service. For those hired starting in 2013 the new formula is called “2% at 62,” pushing back the qualifying age two years.

The contribution rate paid by teachers has been at 8 percent of payroll since 1972. Districts pay 8.25 percent, and have since 1986. The state’s contribution to the Defined Benefit Program in 1998 was 4.607 percent of payroll. It is currently 3.041

percent. The state pays an additional 2.5 percent of payroll “for purchasing power protection,” according to CalSTRS.

#### Largest in the world

The system is the largest educator-only pension fund in the world, with a portfolio valued at \$181.1 billion at the end of last year. It covers about 862,000 people, and 1600 school districts, county offices of education, and community college districts. It has a big impact in California. In 2006, just before the recession, it paid more than \$6 billion in benefits. One study estimated that the spending this generated supported over \$9 billion in economic activity—producing 60,867 jobs paying wages of \$2.112 billion. In 2012 the fund paid \$10.7 billion in retirement, disability and survivor benefits.

Pensions for new retirees average \$47,000. Workers covered by CalSTRS do not pay into the federal Social Security system and cannot receive SSA benefits based on the wages they received as contributors to CalSTRS. Most don’t receive employer-paid health benefits on retirement either. So the CalSTRS pension is vitally important to California educators, and often the only income they receive after retirement.

“A responsible solution,” according to CalSTRS, “will likely include gradual increases in contributions...” Adds Hendricks, “Someone has to put more money into the system. The big questions are how much, from whom, when, and for how long?”

The Legislature did pass a preliminary bill, AB 340, last year, to initiate cost savings, but not enough to stop the falling rate at which the plan is funded, now at 67%. Hearings were held this year by Assembly and Senate committees, jointly chaired by Assemblymember Rob Bonta and Senator Norma Torres. Hendricks says the goal put forward by CalSTRS staff is full funding—100%—but that they view funding at 80–85% as a healthy level. “The problem is that we’re going in the other direction right now—down when we need to go up.”

#### The big question

The CFT is having discussions on these issues. CFT Senior Vice President Lacy Barnes has been charged with coordinating the work that will result in a

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From CalSTRS investment portfolio, the asset allocation mix for the period ending March 31, 2014.

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Table reflects allocation targets and ranges approved by the Teachers’ Retirement Board in September 2013.

CFT response. She reports that an ad-hoc committee of CFT leaders and members with pension expertise met last month. The committee looked at shared responsibility for increased contributions, when and how these contributions might be phased in should they occur, and actuarial timelines that will ensure a secure and dependable pension plan for all vested members of CalSTRS.

could pay off every obligation. But education is not going to go out of business in California.”

The best solution, he believes, would be for the state to fund the shortfall, but outside of Proposition 98 funding: “At the very least, the state contribution should go back to 4.6%, and if they’re going to ask faculty to contribute more, what’s the return for us?” The obstacle he sees is conservative pressure.



Former CFT president Marty Hittelman believes, “At the very least, the state contribution should go back to 4.6%, and if they’re going to ask faculty to contribute more, what’s the return for us?”

Jim Mahler, president of the CFT Community College Council, emphasizes, “We don’t need 100% funding as a goal. Our increases should be incremental, and we should have triggers that allow us to go back if the funding picture improves. But every year we wait to act, we have to do more to catch up. The big question is how we do it.” Mahler believes that the Legislature will pass a package of changes as part of its budget trailer bill.

Former CFT President Marty Hittelman says the situation may call for change, but not for panic, and it’s important to have realistic goals. “A 100% fully-funded plan assumes that if we went out of business today we

“Creating a crisis here is part of demonizing and destroying the public education system,” he explains. “Private employers feel the pressure of our retirement system, and would like to get rid of it. It’s an ideological battle, and we have to have a clear policy in the CFT about what we stand for, and that we represent the employees’ point of view.”

The committee overseen by Barnes will make recommendations on these critical issues to the CFT executive council. Once approved, the recommendations will guide CFT’s lobbying and political action activities. Stay tuned. ☐

By David Bacon

Promising developments

# A tool for the toolbox

At the end of March, Janet Napolitano, the new President of the University of California system, spoke the truth about online education in a speech to the Public Policy Institute of California (PPIC). As Michael Hiltzik reported in the *Los Angeles Times*:

*Asked by [PPIC] President Mark Baldassare about UC initiatives in the online space, Napolitano moved promptly to separate fact from fantasy. She called the development of online courses merely “a tool for the toolbox.”*

*For higher education, she said, “It’s not a silver bullet, the way it was originally portrayed to be. It’s a lot harder than it looks, and by the way if you do it right it doesn’t save all that much money, because you still have to have an opportunity for students to interact with either a teaching assistant or an assistant professor or a professor at some level.”*

*As for preparing the courses, “if they’re really going to be top-quality, that’s an investment as well.” Taking aim at the dream that online learning might be most useful for students needing help in remedial courses in subjects like English and math, Napolitano said: “I think that’s false; those students need the teacher in the classroom working with them.”*

*Online courses might be all right for capitalizing on UC’s multi-campus structure by allowing students at one campus to take courses developed at another, she said, but she indicated that there’s still got to be human interaction.*

It’s a nice dose of cold water in the faces of our elected leaders in Sacramento—the governor in particular—to have the head of the state’s preeminent public institution of higher education question the mythology surrounding online education in such a way. And it echoes the points many of us have been raising with politicians that putting resources into online education will not be cheaper or better than fully funding the rest of our institutions of higher learning.

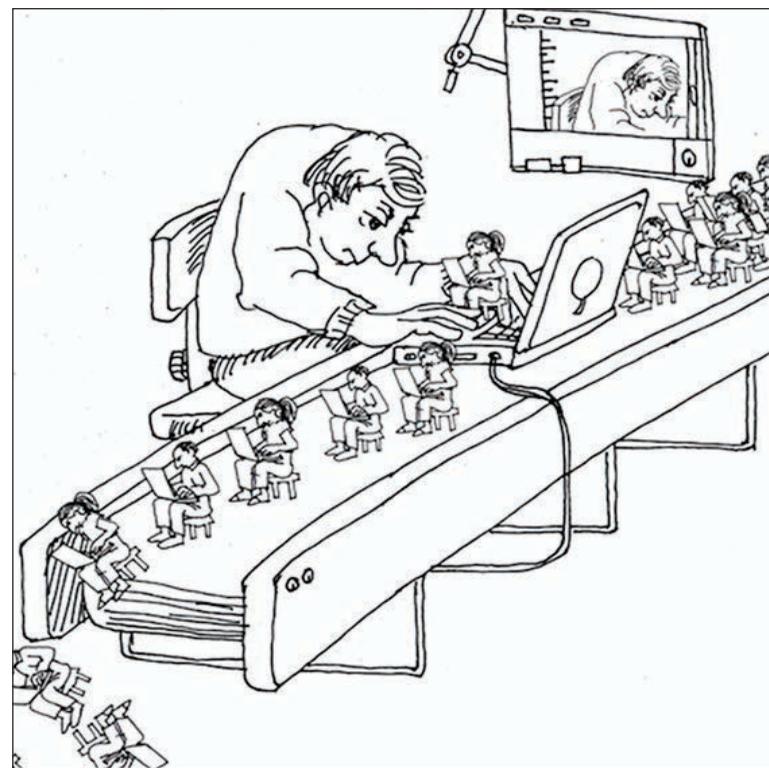
**No silver bullet**

Indeed, Napolitano’s signal that online education should not be seen as “a silver bullet” to solve all the funding and access ills facing California’s college students goes precisely to this point. The public nature of the comments should be

noted since not only do they articulate the position many of us in higher education have been pushing at the state level, but also they indicate in what direction the UC intends to go from here on out.

Napolitano’s comments come at an interesting time as lawmakers are increasingly demonstrating that they’ve heard us and are dialing back their unthinking boosterism of all things online, including Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs.) Steinberg’s MOOC bill is on ice, and, according to one lawmaker I spoke with, there are no new pieces of legislation promoting online education in the pipeline.

While Governor Brown’s signature Online Education Initiative (OEI) is being hurried into a pilot program that to date has had almost no planning behind it, there is room for stakeholders to make the program into something that will ultimately serve and not



that lawmakers are serious about creating good policy rather than jumping on the latest trend.

U. S. Department of Education, ACCJC, the California Education Code, and Title V, we came to the conclusion that MOOCs do not measure up in five key domains.

**Flying colors**

This past semester, I collaborated with colleagues at all four of our campuses and wrote an Academic Senate resolution resolving that “no MOOCs are developed or offered as courses for credit in any of the four SDCCD institutions” and, further, “that the Academic Senates of SDCCD recommend to the Board of Trustees that no SDCCD institution grants course credit to students who have completed MOOCs in other contexts.” Currently, it’s passing all the senates with flying colors.

My district’s rejection of MOOCs, Keliher’s experience with the OEI, and Napolitano’s comments regarding online education should emphasize that we can be successful in blunting the sometimes pie-in-the-sky ideas of our electeds when they’re trying to save money. Education should not be trifled with, and we need to be vigilant both in our state capital,

but also in our home districts and campuses, to ensure we stay true to our mission to serve our students. 



By Kelly Mayhew

**It’s a nice dose of cold water in the faces of our elected leaders in Sacramento—the governor in particular—to have the head of the state’s preeminent public institution of higher education question the mythology surrounding online education in such a way.**

hurt students and their community colleges. The governor has dumped \$16 million into the effort with a promised \$10 million over each of the next two years to grow online higher education.

**Alarm bells**

I spoke with Brian Keliher, chair of the Business Administration Department at Grossmont College, who was appointed to the OEI steering committee by the statewide Academic Senate. He believes there is a lot to be concerned about in the mad dash to implement the program, which is a proposed online “portal” or clearinghouse where students can go to shop for impacted courses if they’re shut out of the ones on their home campuses. He’s raising the alarm bells about some of the assumptions and lack of foresight in the program. However, the fact that there is a steering committee is a sign

At San Diego City College, after the outgoing president of my campus tried to circumvent the curricular process and coerce one of our department’s adjuncts into developing a MOOC, our Academic Senate passed a resolution against this action. When a group of key faculty from the Academic Senates and the union protested at a Board of Trustees meeting, the chancellor stepped in and declared a one-year moratorium on MOOCs and established a task force to look at whether or not they would be appropriate courses to develop and offer in our colleges. I was appointed by my Academic Senate to serve on that committee and it was eye opening to say the least. We spent all of last year reading everything we could get our hands on regarding MOOCs. And ultimately when we examined the primary measures of quality as established by, among other entities, the



PHOTO COURTESY OF UC OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

The University of California president is clear that “those students need the teacher in the classroom working with them.”



## Legislative Update

Al Hernandez-Santana, CFT Legislative Director

### Standing up for fair accreditation

The CFT is in a pitched battle to repair our broken accrediting system for public community colleges. The State of California is an anomaly not only in the Western region, but nationally, in that it is the only state where community college accreditation is handled by a single private agency separately from other institutions of higher education.

Much has come to light, thanks to CFT research, about manipulative practices, policy violations, and illegal conduct by the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC). The problems have been in evidence for a number of years, but came to a head during the imbroglio over the move by ACCJC to terminate the accreditation of City College of San Francisco.

### Key bills

On the heels of legal action by CFT and the City Attorney of San Francisco against the ACCJC, and a temporary injunction issued by San Francisco Superior Court judge Curtis Karnow to keep CCSF open pending the outcome at trial, key bills moving through the California Legislature now seek not only to protect CCSF, but to reform our state's accrediting system and prevent other community college districts from suffering excessive

red tape, expensive costs, and unnecessary angst at the hands of the ACCJC.

First, Assembly Bill 2087, authored by San Francisco Assemblymember Tom Ammiano, seeks to restore the full authority of the local governing boards (Boards of Trustees). The California Community College System consists of 112 community colleges in 72 community college districts. Each community college district is governed by a Board of Trustees democratically elected by the residents of that district.

In the case of San Francisco, power was wrested from the local board by the California Community Colleges (CCC) Board of Governors upon the appointment of a "Special Trustee With Extraordinary Powers." The bill would prohibit the CCC Board of Governors from usurping, transferring, or limiting in any way the powers of the elected

governing board of a community college district, when the BOG exercises its duty to provide assistance to community college districts encountering severe management difficulties.

Second, Senate Bill 965 by Senator Mark Leno (D-San Francisco) seeks to stabilize CCSF funding for five years, while the college recovers from declining enrollment due to the actions by ACCJC. On a declining scale over five years, the bill calculates apportionment funding to the district until enrollment is restored to the level prior to this year, while allowing the state chancellor to make adjustments for cost-of-living and other apportionment deficits. SB 965 also makes legislative findings and declarations as to the necessity of a special statute for the San Francisco Community College District. (The district suffered from financial management problems before the imposition of sanctions in 2012, and does so currently, but for different reasons. The SFCCD Board of Trustees had actually balanced the district's budget in early summer 2013 before the ACCJC's closure

### We have an historic opportunity to transform accreditation for the better, and your help can make it happen.

order. Following the commission action, student enrollment plummeted, causing the current financial difficulties SB 965 is meant to address.)

### Fair accreditation reform bill

Third, Assembly Bill 1942 by Rob Bonta (D-Oakland) is a reform bill that would ensure a fair accrediting system for all community colleges. This bill restores accountability and transparency by requiring accreditation decisions to be made public, and for the accrediting agency to provide due process and reasonable notice to the public and college about evaluations. It would also allow colleges to appeal penalties. Transparency is further insured by requiring the accreditor to annually disclose to the public information concerning charges to member institutions and its own financial data.

AB 1942 also infuses healthy competition into the accreditation process by allowing

community colleges to choose their own regional accrediting entity, provided the latter are allowed to operate in the state. Lastly, AB 1942 prohibits conflicts of interest concerning members of the accrediting board, lobbying activities and accreditation actions, while demanding the inclusion of teachers, counselors, classified and administrative employees on the evaluation teams.

All three bills will be heard on their first policy committees, in either the Assembly or State Senate, in the month of April, culminating with CFT's Lobby Day on April 29. Next steps will be on to fiscal committees and a vote on the floor of each house. Please respond to CFT Legislative Action alerts on these bills by contacting your legislators and urging them to do the right thing. We have an historic opportunity to transform accreditation for the better, and your help can make it happen. CCC

## Book Review



# What Did You Learn At Work Today? The Forbidden Lessons of Labor Education

by Helena Worthen

[www.hardballpress.com](http://www.hardballpress.com)

At the outset of Helena Worthen's new book, she recalls the question that we've all heard and probably articulated ourselves many times, often with an overlay of disbelief: "Can they do that?"

In Worthen's capable hands, the question expands in many directions, all roads well worth traveling with her, through stories—sometimes her own, most told to her by others—that explore what it

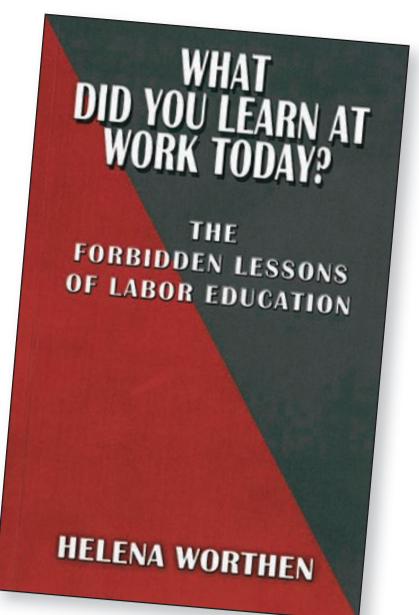
is like to be a working stiff in twenty first century America, confronted with growing economic inequality and a labor movement in decline.

Twenty years ago Worthen taught writing at Laney

College in Oakland. She also edited the CFT's first newsletter devoted to part-time community college instructors and their issues at work. Now, having retired from what became her next career, in labor education, she has produced a wise book springing from the important but mostly overlooked idea that workers

can use their workplace as a space for collective learning.

Drawing upon her bank of experiences as a labor educator in various locations across the Midwest, Worthen has melded down to earth stories of working people engaged in struggles to improve their lives with theories of learning that attempt to explain their



successes and failures in terms that might be useful for workplace and community activists.

Worthen shows how these ideas can help us figure out

**Continued on page 7**

# Forward movement in the battle for fair accreditation

Democratic institutions require transparent processes. The lack of such transparency in the insular culture of the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC) has begun to crop up in other places where its influence has been felt. The agency's style seems to be cloning, as similar curtains fall over local college decision-making.

Take, for instance, City College of San Francisco. Over one hundred students and faculty marched at CCSF's main campus on March 13 and rallied in front of the administration building to call for the resignation of state-appointed "Special Trustee with Extraordinary Powers" Robert Agrella. Agrella had recently approved double-digit raises for top administrators in secret after faculty took pay cuts, and implemented a new policy requiring CCSF students to pay fees before the semester started.

## In the special trustee's head

With the CCSF Board of Trustees disbanded by the state Board of Governors, Agrella is operating on his own. He believes he is observing the Brown Act, requiring public disclosure of public education decision-making, by posting agendas and taking emails. Faculty union president Alisa Messer has a different take: "Apparently these meetings are happening in the special trustee's head," she said, "and an email counts as public comment. No one agrees that an email comment is public."

During the March 13 protest, SFPD and CCSF police locked the doors of the administration building. Students inside the building unlocked the doors, and when protestors tried to make their way into the building, the police responded with clubs, fists, and pepper spray. Two students were arrested. Charges were later withdrawn.

A day later, CCSF supporters traveled to City Hall for a rally and hearing about San Francisco Supervisor David Campos' resolution that called on State Chancellor Brice Harris to restore CCSF's elected Board of Trustees.

"It is time to put voters back in charge of our community college," said Campos. "We cannot continue to allow our open and transparent democratic process to be replaced by closed-door, unilateral decision making. Our community should be engaged in decisions

regarding City College – not a single administrator." The supervisors passed the resolution unanimously.

"None of this would be happening if we hadn't been improperly sanctioned by ACCJC in the first place," says Messer.

## New developments, new allies

Thanks to the hard organizing work by AFT 2121 members beyond the borders of the campus, a bright light continues to be cast on the shadowy ACCJC, and new allies continue to show up, demanding the rollback of the private commission's closure order, and reform of the agency itself.

On the legal front, recent developments include Superior Court Judge Curtis Karnow

**Thanks to the hard organizing work by AFT 2121 members beyond the borders of the campus, a bright light continues to be cast on the shadowy agency, and new allies continue to show up, demanding the rollback of the ACCJC's closure order, and reform of the agency itself.**

setting a date in October for trial of the suit against ACCJC by the San Francisco City Attorney and the CFT. The ACCJC is currently maneuvering to prevent trial. The agency has stonewalled all requests for discovery documents. Nonetheless, due to the injunction granted by Karnow in January, City College will stay open for the foreseeable future—long past the date for closure in July set by ACCJC.

At the legislative level, three bills are making their way



Assemblymember Rob Bonta's press conference to announce his fair accreditation bill, AB 1942, brought supporters from San Francisco to Sacramento on February 19.

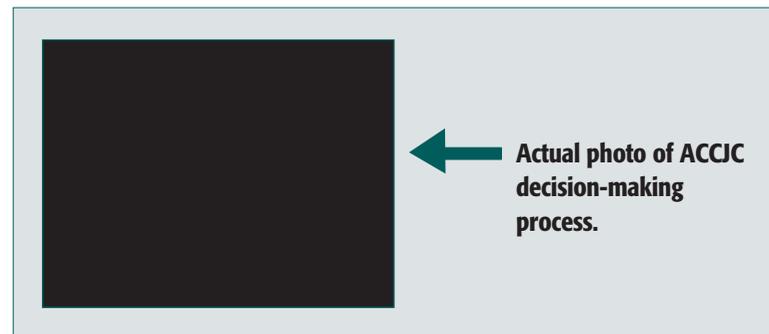
through committees to protect CCSF and reform the accreditation process in California. (See page 6 for details.) Eight members of the California congressional delegation, led by Jackie Speier, sent a letter

de-certify an accrediting entity, and if so, when and in what circumstances?"

Teams of speakers from City College, including faculty, students, and deposed trustees, have now spoken before hundreds of people in community college campuses across the state. Out of these visits has come greater understanding of what is happening in San Francisco, concern at ACCJC's actions, and resolutions of support for CCSF. ☐

For more information, [cft.org](http://cft.org) and [aft2121.org](http://aft2121.org). To arrange for a visit by a CCSF team to your campus, contact Alayna Fredricks, [afredricks@cft.org](mailto:afredricks@cft.org), or call 510-523-5238.

By Fred Glass



View the new six minute video, "The Fight for Fair Accreditation," on the epic battle of City College of San Francisco's faculty union, AFT 2121, to save the college from the rogue accreditation agency, ACCJC, and ensure this never happens again to another college. [youtube.com/watch?v=EJVMoyCpHFE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EJVMoyCpHFE)

## Book Review continued from page 6

how experiences at work are understood (or not) by communities of learners. Following Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger, she describes and presents examples of learning at work in *communities of practice*, and pays close attention to their implications in various settings.

Worthen tells us that markers of a successful community of practice include: beginners

must be legitimate participants; the path from beginner to expert or leader must be transparent; and the work beginners do must be real work. These characteristics should result in a community that "can survive the passage of time and pass on the skills that it nurtures" to the next generation. It is a profoundly democratic idea, but one not exactly nurtured

in most workplaces.

Lest you get the impression that *What Did You Learn At Work Today?* is some dry social science tract, it's not. One of her examples of "theory"—which, she informs us, can be bad as well as good—entertainingly explores how Edgar Rice Burroughs's durable creation, Tarzan, demonstrates bad theory, through the character's

impressive feat of teaching himself to read—something Worthen notes can actually only happen in an interaction with someone who is already in possession of the reading code—another example of a community of practice.

A novelist, Worthen has a great ear for workers' voices and deep empathy for their situations. A short review

can't do justice to the sprawl of insights in this unique book. By the way, the answer to the question is, unfortunately, usually, "Yes, they can"—unless workers learn together how to prevent it, and substitute something better. *What Did You Learn At Work Today?* makes a valuable contribution to that project. ☐

Reviewed by Fred Glass

# Local Action

## Prop 30 “saved public higher education”

In Los Angeles the money coming in from Proposition 30 will help, but according to Joanne Waddell, president of the Los Angeles College Faculty Guild, AFT Local 1521, “it’s still going to be a long climb back.” In the Coast District the administration is finally going to start hiring full-time faculty again, beyond retirement replacements. And at Cuesta College the district is engaged in a kind of shell game, identifying Proposition 30 funding in the annual budget as a source for salaries, while reallocating the same amount of money from the general fund at the same time.

These three experiences convey the variety of responses in community college districts in California, as teachers struggle to repair the damage from years of budget cuts, and district administrations sometimes cooperate, and sometimes don’t.

“I think Proposition 30 saved public higher education in California,” Waddell says. “We would be in a very different situation had it not passed. So we need to thank our friends, families and neighbors for stepping up and doing what was needed.”

### Los Angeles



Joanne Waddell

In Los Angeles, the influx of Prop 30 dollars will make it possible to plan for summer school this year. In 2013 that was out of the question. Intersession sections are increasing at Mission College by 211%, Pierce College by 200% and L.A. Trade Tech by 120%, while similar increases are also underway at the district’s other six campuses.

“Each college turns in its plan,” Waddell explains, “but it’s all going to students in the form of more classes, and in some cases, more counselors too. Our district is following the letter of the law in allocating the money, with no battles. It’s going for what it’s supposed to, and giving everybody some breathing room.”

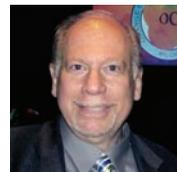
In bargaining, for the first time in years, the union is not faced with a discussion of what cuts will have to be made. Instead, there’s some growth in the money available. “We actually had a negative COLA during the recession,” Waddell says. “Now it’s only 0.8%, but at least the needle’s moving in the right direction. People don’t have to think about cuts,

and we can start to build back.”

The era of cuts brought with it “every bad idea in education,” she says. One legislative proposal, SB 1456, the Student Success Act, originally would have tied community college funding to performance. The worst aspects of the law were pulled back, due to faculty union pressure. But one result was that every freshman student now has to have an education plan, counseling and assessment. “That’s not a bad thing, but it’s costly,” she notes, “and it puts new financial pressures on community colleges.”

Waddell is very aware that the clock is ticking on the part of the revenues that will expire after four years, the quarter cent sales tax. “We’re looking for an alternative revenue stream, like the oil severance tax,” she says. And three years later, the bulk of Prop 30 funds, the income tax increase on the wealthy, will sunset too. “Potentially, we could be at the cliff in 2018, and we don’t ever want to go there again,” she says. “Prop 30 is the will of the people. The Legislature should simply renew it,” rather than send it back to the voters. “But,” she says, “I’m confident that if we have to do it again, we can.”

### Coast



Dean Mancina

On the other hand, in the Coast Community College District, Dean Mancina, president of the Coast Federation of Educators, AFT Local 1911, says the district refers to the money as only something to restore what was previously cut. “They actually have a negative attitude toward the new revenue,” he marvels.

That’s not a perspective shared by the faculty in the three-campus district, who view Proposition 30 funds alongside

an improving California economy. “Even if it’s not a significant amount of additional dollars here, it has relieved the pressure. At least now we don’t talk exclusively about how to cut the budget.”

This year the district decided to replace twelve full-time faculty members who were retiring, and it agreed to hire six more. Twelve years ago Coast employed 570 full-time faculty members. Today that number has dwindled to 406.

“In two colleges most departments are down to one full-time faculty, or even none,” Mancina charges. “Some department chairs are part-timers. That saves the district a lot of money, since here part-timers are only paid for classes, with no ancillary pay for office

and charts and graphs. People asked, ‘What’s your plan to hire more faculty?’ Some change in our upper management team is necessary, because the ones they have now are out of touch.”

### Cuesta



Debra Stakes

At Cuesta College, according to Debra Stakes, president of the Cuesta College Federation of Teachers, AFT Local 4909, “Proposition 30 funds are certainly helping.” The college has been on sanctions from the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges, and is on “show

years,” Stakes explains, “after they took a \$600,000 cut.”

In the meantime, faculty haven’t had a raise since 2008. The district is in the bottom 10% of the state’s community college salary spectrum. At the last board of trustees meeting, over sixty faculty members showed up, including department chairs, and the public comment section of the agenda lasted an hour.

“We’ve been hit with a \$200 increase for our health-care premiums, but the board was pretty unsympathetic,” Stakes recalls. “They see the Proposition 30 funds as just another source of income. When we insisted on just a 1% increase on the salary column they took us to impasse. This attitude, and our desperation, is undermining the college’s ability to attract both faculty and students. Many high schools here are now advising students not to go to Cuesta, because they’re unsure whether they’ll be able to complete a course of study.”

Nevertheless, Stakes believes that Proposition 30 will have a permanent impact. “We live in San Luis Obispo County, one of the most conservative in the state, but we passed it here. We went door to door with our partners from other unions, and explained not just why we needed Proposition 30, but why it’s important to have a union too. I still see union-bashing in the paper here, but it’s less than before. There’s a shift, and I think we’re building trust.” **CC**

By David Bacon

**The clock is ticking on the part of the revenues that will expire after four years, the quarter cent sales tax. We’re looking for an alternative revenue stream, like the oil severance tax. And three years later, the bulk of Prop 30 funds, the income tax increase on the wealthy, will sunset too. Potentially, we could be at the cliff in 2018, and we don’t ever want to go there again. Prop 30 is the will of the people. The Legislature should simply renew it.**

hours, program or curriculum development.” Now, with the first six full-timers hired in ages, the district seems willing to reverse the trend toward expanding only the part-time faculty.

The district, however, also seems bent on using the opportunity to build up its reserves. “They built them up even during the recession, and now they want to build them up more,” he says. Reserves now total \$37.7 million, or 21.8% of its unrestricted funds. At the same time, the union has been at the table with the district for three years. “There’s no money on the table, and they say they’re not going to put any there even now.”

When the board of trustees announced a special meeting last fall about hiring full-time faculty, several faculty members attended. “The administrators had their typical report, full of doom and gloom,” Mancina recalls. “But we’re tired of stats

cause” status. “We lost 600 FTES in 2012–2013, and we’re shrinking,” she says. “But it would be much worse without this money.”

The Proposition 30 funds have been identified in the annual budget for salaries, as the district tries to build up enrollment again. “They have to create a balanced budget for five

