

Union NEWS

Monthly Newsletter of The Westchester Community College Federation of Teachers

November 2004

What Can Your Union Do for You?

One of the most important components in building a union culture is communication. Many faculty members, old and new, don't know what to expect from a union. Some don't know that they too have a voice. Others aren't aware of their contractual rights. In celebration of the newly rati-

fied contract, we randomly interviewed several WCCFT faculty members to find out their expectations of our union as we move to the next round of negotiations. Some were primarily concerned that the union stay on top of violations and ensure that the administration is following contractual obligations to the

letter. Others focused on more specific issues, such as the quality of daycare or the working conditions and benefits for adjuncts. These comments only scratch the surface of issues that affect our daily working lives. We invite you to add to the list. Your input counts.



Adjuncts first

"If a full time position comes up, they [should] consider the people that work here first."

Enforcing the contract

"Make sure the college follows the contract that's been agreed to between us."
- Maureen McPartlan-Hurson /PT



Benefits, benefits, benefits

"I have worked at other colleges that wanted us to pay for an adjunct's health and dental plan. Now that's fine...except the cost equated to about half of my monthly salary. And, that was if I was working the maximum 6 credit course load."

-Thomasina Tucker /PT

Affordable daycare

"The Virginia Marx Children's Center is a lovely state-of-the-arts facility. But, I just can't afford it. It's too costly...I've been priced out."

-Christine Timm /FT



Faculty rights

"Protect my rights as a faculty member. I've never had an issue, but would always want to know the union is behind the faculty watching."

-Bill Bastiansen/FT



Now let us hear from you!

Bulletin: Urgent ED39 Political Action

The New York State Assembly was not able to override Governor Pataki's veto on the restoration of the community college base aid and the rental monies. This will involve a significant loss of revenue for Westchester Community College.

From Wednesday, November 3 until Friday, November 12,

we need you to call the district office of your state legislator to let him or her know that we need those budget cuts restored. The Union will provide you with the phone numbers. On Wednesday, November 10, there will be a "Day of Coordinated Faxing" of a prepared letter. Go online to <http://politicalaction.nysut.org/>. It's the third letter on the list.





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A Monthly Newsletter of

Local 2431 American Federation of Teachers (AFL-CIO)
Affiliated with New York State United Teachers

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Calendar of Events

Monthly Meetings:
First Wednesday, 12:00, SCI102

Nov. 3, 2004

Building a Union Culture

Dec. 16, 2004

HOLIDAY PARTY

Conferences:

Nov. 5-7, 2004

NYSUT Community College Conference

Apr. 15-17, 2005

AFT Higher Ed Conference

Grievance Alert

Veteran adjunct faculty at the Westchester Art Workshop have approached the Union with a serious allegation. They maintain that the Administration of the College inaccurately informed them that they were not entitled to buy into the state retirement plan. Many of them have been teaching for decades without this benefit. The Union is investigating the charges.



President's Message

Sharing the Power

By Anne D'Orazio

"Branding" is all the rage these days. And it has arrived at Westchester Community College. How to market the college is the subject of focus groups run by hired outside consultants. We have looked at the good and the bad, sorted through strengths and weaknesses. We have debated whether or not those who come here ought to be called customers or clients (whatever happened to the old-fashioned word "students"?). All constituencies have been tapped. A new logo, a fresh look, consistent colors, we are told, will "spiff up" the old image and attract greater numbers of customer/clients.

Is this a vision? Does it speak to who we are and who we aspire to be as educators? Will increased enrollment allow us to reduce class size so that biology students aren't sitting on the floor and the social behavioral science instructors can conduct class discussions without breaking the class up into seven six-person groups? Does it bring the faculty, staff and administration together in a system of shared governance so that all who work here can participate in making significant decisions about the operation of the institution?

The most important umbrella organizations for higher education, the American Federation of Teachers and the American Association of University Professors, are concerned about the decreasing interest on college campuses in core educational values. Where are the focus groups on improving critical thinking, reflection and objectivity? Who is conducting a dialogue on the pedagogy of assessment? Who's listening to the complaints about the ef-

fects of the environment on learning?

Shared governance was a major component of life in the California Community College in the 1980s and was enacted as a mandate by the state legislature in 1988. No administrator would have made a decision about new faculty lines without consulting a joint faculty-administration committee which reviewed all departmental requests and

made recommendations as a body. The president of the college sat as a member of that committee.

If we are going to think of ourselves as business people marketing a product for a consumer, we need to remember that theorists of business organization concluded years ago that the greater the role of the worker in decision-making, the greater

"...we need to remember...the greater the role of the worker in decision-making, the greater the productivity of that worker."

the productivity of that worker. A regular feature in business trade journals consists of articles on employee involvement plans, which always lead to greater product efficiency.

We need to talk seriously about participation in decision-making. We can't be derailed by increased workloads and daily pressures from a discussion about the faculty's role in shaping and implementing curriculum policy, selecting academic colleagues and evaluating their work, allocating resources, determining ratios of faculty to administrators and students to faculty and planning for the future.

The Union will be calling on you to contribute to this discussion. We can be a more active part of the process of college governance.

Plagiarism in Our Own Words

The Warning Signs of Plagiarism and What We Can Do About It

By Christine Timm

Rutgers University Professor Donald L. McCabe is known by many as the “cheating guru” for his published studies and surveys on plagiarism in high schools and higher education institutions. Professor McCabe has been collecting data on plagiarism for over a decade and has found that students’ attitudes toward plagiarism have evolved significantly. According to McCabe, not only is plagiarism on the rise in U.S. colleges and universities but students seem to be taking a nonchalant attitude toward such infractions. *The New York Times* published results from McCabe’s 2003 study, which included data from over 23 higher ed institutions. The study revealed that 38% of students surveyed admitted that they had passed off stolen internet text as their own, a practice that has become popularly known as “cyber-cheating”. Forty-four percent of students surveyed indicated that they felt cyber-cheating was “no big deal” (*N.Y. Times* October 4, 2003).

Certainly, Westchester Community College is not immune to such trends. But how can faculty address these issues? Here are some suggestions taken from the College’s Plagiarism website:

Not sure if a paper has been plagiarized?

Here are a few warning signs:
1. The written “voice” does not match the student’s voice in previously submitted writing or in in-class writing. For example, the vocabulary can be too technical or sophisticated.

2. The submission does not follow the directions you’ve outlined or does not match

the assignment choices you’ve provided.

3. The paper contains internal references to personal experiences that seem unlikely for that particular student.

4. There are references to current events that don’t jibe in fact with the current year.

How can you determine if a submission has been plagiarized?

First off, it’s best not to assume that the student had criminal intentions. Despite the fact that you may have covered documentation of sources in detail in class, some students can be very confused about the protocols for documentation. In addition, because copyright rules for cyberspace have only been addressed lately, it can seem as though it’s an environment where “anything goes.” Because of this perception, some students sincerely believe that copying and pasting passages from an online article is O.K. Also, students can easily get disorganized and inadvertently leave out a parenthetical citation (or even two).

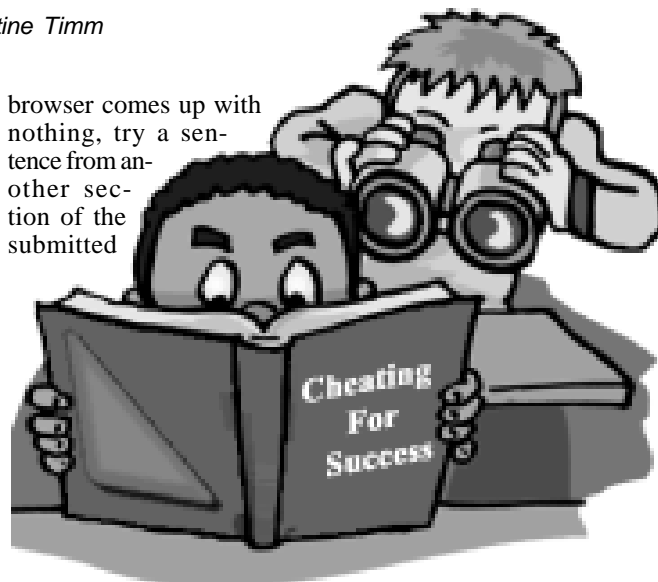
1. Interview the student about the topic and research.

Ask questions that require detailed answers. Usually if the student cannot respond, s/he will reveal which material had been borrowed.

2. Find the article online.

Use a comprehensive browser, like [Google](http://www.google.com) (www.google.com) or [Dogpile](http://www.dogpile.com) (www.dogpile.com). Type or copy and paste a sentence that you feel sure has been plagiarized into the browser text box. Frame the sentence with quotation marks. The browser will return the online sites where that sentence appears. If the

browser comes up with nothing, try a sentence from another section of the submitted



essay. You can also try this method at Findarticles.com.

3. Peruse the texts listed on the works cited page. Especially if the student has been careless with documentation, you may very well find the plagiarized passages here. In the case of intentional plagiarism, students don’t expect teachers, who are typically overwhelmed with dozens of papers, to actually go to the resources listed on the works cited page.

4. Announce to the class that you have noticed instances of plagiarism in several submissions. The assiduous (or guilty) student will go back to her/his copy and check it for evidence of plagiarism and ultimately let you know if s/he thinks it is the paper in question. This gives any serious student guilty of careless plagiarism the opportunity to correct the error without getting into too much trouble.

5. Ask the student if s/he had help composing the paper. Sometimes the “helper” can plagiarize material without the knowledge of the student/writer. In this case, the instructor would, of course, also want to help the student distinguish between getting

help and divesting coursework responsibilities.

What can you do if you discover a plagiarized paper?

Currently, the College is handling instances of plagiarism on a case by case basis. Of course, the first line of action is the course instructor. The College’s academic dishonesty policy leaves some latitude for faculty who need to deal with issues of plagiarism. Early on in the semester, teachers should establish penalties for plagiarism and even publish these penalties either in the syllabus or within a distributed course policies page. The teacher will probably want to indicate the plagiarism policy and penalties during the first week of the semester and make sure that students understand these policies and penalties. Some faculty even have students sign a document acknowledging that they understand these policies and penalties.

What is Westchester Community College’s policy on plagiarism?

The Student Personnel

(See “Plagiarism” Pg.4)

Our Vision

In our effort to plan for upcoming contract negotiations with the college, our desire to improve service to our members, and our wish to strengthen the voice of the faculty in campus decision making, the Executive Committee met recently to begin formulating a set of goals. Below is a list of some of the issues we considered. The list is not intended to be comprehensive, but merely suggestive of some of the ideas we discussed. Please take the time to share your thoughts with the Executive Committee. Please go to our web site, www.wccft.org, click on the contact link and send us your thoughts.

I. Professional Goals

- ♦ Remain a strong voice for student services.
- ♦ Strengthen the faculty's role in college governance, personnel decisions, and especially promotions.
- ♦ Improve opportunities for faculty advancement.
- ♦ Achieve 100% union membership among full and adjunct faculty.

II. Bargaining and contract compliance issues

- ♦ Hold workshops to increase faculty knowledge of the contract and faculty rights and foster contract compliance.
- ♦ Demand greater administrative compliance with all provisions of the contract: especially adjunct faculty rights and is-



sues relating to academic freedom.

- ♦ Improve local expertise in handling arbitrations, PERB rulings, and state labor law.
- ♦ Maintain the highest levels of compensation and benefits.

III. Political Activities

- ♦ 100% member contribution to Vote-Cope.
- ♦ Increase member involvement in state and county politics.
- ♦ Foster member communication with local and state political figures.
- ♦ Foster ties to other teacher and labor organizations in Westchester county.

IV. Member Recognition

- ♦ Member recognition for service to stu-

dents, the college and the union.

V. Health, safety and benefits

- ♦ Improved faculty oversight in health and safety issues.
- ♦ Demand full administrative compliance with all laws and regulations relating to health and safety.
- ♦ Increased faculty awareness of campus related health and safety issues.
- ♦ Strengthen union expertise in benefits administration.

VI. Communication

- ♦ Improve communication with full-time and adjunct members via the newsletter, internet, and e-mail.

VII. Retiree issues

- ♦ Protect retiree rights
- ♦ Maintain communication with retiree members.

VIII. Union History

- ♦ Develop a comprehensive, up-to-date history of the WCCFT.
- ♦ Help faculty and students to develop a fuller appreciation for the role of unions in the history of the country, rights of the working person, in international affairs, and teaching.

Plagiarism

(Cont. from Pg. 3)

Policies Committee proposed an "academic honesty policy" that addresses plagiarism. This policy was passed by the Faculty Senate on November 26, 2003. The policy defines plagiarism as follows:

"Plagiarism is the act of presenting another person's ideas, research, or writing as your own. Examples include:

1. Copying another person's actual words without both the use of quotations and documentation.
2. Presenting another person's ideas or theories in your own words without documentation.
3. Using information that is not con-

sidered common knowledge without acknowledging the source.

4. Using a paper writing 'service' or having a friend write the paper for you."

The College's academic dishonesty policy outlines the following possible consequences of infractions:

"If a student is found guilty of academic dishonesty, faculty members have the right to either:

1. Fail the student for the assignment/test.
2. Fail the student for the course.
3. File a letter of complaint, describing the infraction, with the Associate Dean of Student Personnel Services, or

any combination of the above.

A second reported infraction may result in suspension. A third reported infraction may result in expulsion at the discretion of the Vice President and Dean, Student Personnel Services."

The WCC Plagiarism site contains information and resources for both students and faculty. You can find the site at <http://www.sunywcc.edu/dep/english/plag/plagindex1.htm>. If you have any information, articles, or resources that you would like to share with colleagues or if you have any advice or suggestions regarding the content and/or navigation of the site, please email site manager, Christine Timm, at Christine.Timm@sunywcc.edu.