



December 2004

Union NEWS

Monthly Newsletter of The Westchester Community College Federation of Teachers



Cooperstown Report



WCCFT officials touch all the bases at NYSUT conference

By Patricia Torres

The theme of the NYSUT Community College Conference held in Cooperstown over the weekend of November 5 was "Strategic Planning." The theme of the WCCFT General Membership Meeting of November 3 was "Building a Union Culture." The match was perfect for seven members of the Union — Jack Anderson, Anne D’Orazio, Patricia Torres, Richard Rosell, Karen Vanterpool, Don Weigand, and Ellen Zendman — who traveled to Cooperstown and attended the Conference and its targeted sessions for three days. Here are some of the things we learned and hope to apply to our continuing efforts to build a cohesive and strong faculty union at WCC.

Creative Bargaining for Adjunct Issues

The underlying idea of the workshop was expressed by Lou Stollar, the recently retired president of the union at FIT: "We are all members of the same union (full-time and adjunct) and we must uplift those at the bottom." Some states, such as California and Washington, are in the forefront, providing unemployment insurance and pro-rated pay to adjuncts. The PSC-CUNY has bargained for banked sick time and health insurance for adjuncts. FIT has bargained for prorated healthcare, paid office hours, office space, and paid leave of absence for pro-

fessional development, among other things for adjuncts.

Managing Conflict

Conflict is the result of differences, not the cause of them, and it is never about the person. The session began with the establishing of "group norms" in order to create a "safe" environment for the exchange of ideas. Dealing with conflict, it is important to "Listen (you need to listen twice as much as

importantly, finances. The plan must be concrete and specific in terms of who is responsible, what the outcome is to be, and how the outcome will be measured. There must be a target completion date—without that, the goal becomes a wish. A good strategic plan takes work, dedication, focus and financial support.

Violence in the College Workplace

Sky Rage—Road Rage—

training to our Union.

Bargaining Strategies on Health Care Issues

The general feeling is that healthcare issues are equal to and often more important than salary issues at bargaining time. Tom Anapolis of NYSUT strongly urged each local to have a health insurance committee year-round. He said there are many things the Union can do to maintain or decrease the cost of healthcare insurance so as not to lose benefits, such as availing ourselves of NYSUT services to compare plans, educating members on disease management and prevention, and auditing existing plans to see where costs can be cut and savings passed on to members. One of the things he pointed out was that periodic re-enrollment is an easy way to make sure that people who are no longer covered are not still enrolled, thus saving many thousands of dollars. Multi-tiered plans seem to be the new approach. Unions should place priority on cost-sharing v. cost-shifting. For self-insured units, pressure should be placed on all aspects of the industry to be participants in the insured’s plan.

Development of a Union Culture

Communication within the union membership and the



you speak), Acknowledge and Assert." Do not make conflict personal and always ask for clarity: "Am I to understand that you are saying..."

Strategic Planning

The best way to come up with a strategic plan is to realize that it is a long-term goal which will involve commitment, a timeline, and, most

Line Rage—Desk Rage. A session on "Violence in the College Workplace" touched upon issues related to violence on our college campuses. The key is developing a plan to follow when a campus incident occurs. There should be a clear statement of college policy followed by campus-wide communication. NYSUT is available to provide in service

(See "Cooperstown" Pg.3)



WCCFT Union NEWS

A Monthly Newsletter of
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Affiliated with New York State United Teachers

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Calendar of Events

Monthly Meetings:
First Wednesday, 12:00, Sci 102

December 16, 2004

HOLIDAY PARTY

February 2, 2005

Faculty Spring Luncheon

President's Message



Moving Forward to 2005 With Confidence and Resolve

By Anne D'Orazio

Secretary General Dag Hammarskjold often said that the United Nations had no power in the traditional sense—no armies, no money, no real enforcement mechanisms, but what it did have was moral authority. He wrote, “The UN must rely for the present mainly on the processes of negotiation, persuasion and consent to accomplish its purposes and, above all, on the exercise of enlightened and moral leadership....” We have much in common with the UN in this regard. As a public

sector labor union, we have no right to strike, no mandate for binding arbitration in collective bargaining, no ability to shut down the productive capacity of the nation. But, like the UN, we have the moral high ground and the wisdom to formulate reasonable proposals to advance our goals. All we need is the will to translate our resolve into political pressure.

We are not alone, as our recent attendance at the NYSUT Community Col-

lege Conference in Cooperstown made abundantly clear. In dialogue with other campuses, we can learn strategies and tactics that have worked for our brother and sister unionists. The Fashion Institute of Technology and the Professional Staff Congress of CUNY have both been involved in toe-to-toe struggles with their administrations. Some of the tools they have used include letter writing, petition campaigns, meetings with the Trustees, appeals to the Chancellor and, above all, open and transparent negotiations

drawing the entire faculty into the process. We have established good relations with Westchester County legislators, in White Plains and Albany. Our Vote-Cope drive can continue to develop those ties. We are currently finding a time for all the Westchester County State legislators to meet to discuss funding options in future State budgets.

The year 2005 is just about here. Time to start drafting resolutions. And as a start:

1. Strengthen our commitment to protect academic freedom.
2. Introduce principles of shared governance.
3. Demand administrative responsiveness to full-time and adjunct faculty issues.
4. Engage the entire faculty in dialogue on the relationship between academic issues and working conditions.
5. Build a strong political voice in the State and County.

While we outline our plans for building a union culture, and enlist others to join us, we can hear ringing in our ears the words of the great song from the musical *Fiorello!*, in which LaGuardia's secretary sings of her partnership with the mayor: “Our lives will be selfless and pure, like Upton Sinclair, Working with this man on the side of the angels.”

“Working...on the
side of the angels.”

Professor John Sarrubbo

June 5, 1946-October 19, 2004

Reflections of Sheldon Malev, a colleague.

I was driving down I-95 with my brother, Dan, en route to Queens one day during the early 1980's. My brother wanted to drive, and so we pulled over to the side of the road to change seats as we approached the toll booths in New Rochelle.

As we opened the doors and got out of the car to do this, another car drove up behind us and John Sarrubbo got out. “Do you need any help?” he asked.

John recognized my car and thought that we had a mechanical problem. He taught automotive mechanics here at WCC and was prepared to help. I was surprised, but very happy to see a good friend and to know that there was someone out there ready to lend a hand if I



needed it. That was John Sarrubbo.

He was among the most friendly and generous faculty members at our college. John was devoted to WCC and contributed a great deal to it. He was very active in the faculty union and was responsible for the establishment of our “Sick Bank,” which he also helped to administer. He cared about his fellow faculty members and he cared about his students.

We were very fortunate to have him with us for as long as we did and I feel fortunate to have had him as a good friend. We are all the better for having known John Sarrubbo and we will not forget him.

Let Us Remember the Most Vulnerable Among Us

By Richard Rosell

At our next graduation in May, when the college president invites the students and guests to applaud the excellent work of our faculty, stop to think about those who are not there to receive recognition: the adjuncts. Adjunct professors teach more than 50% of the courses taught on our campus.

Despite the important contributions adjunct faculty make to the college, it is increasingly clear that the college administration has no inclination to protect the interests of adjunct instructors when they are unfairly treated. In the past year and one half, two adjunct professors, one with 17 and another 18 semesters of teaching at the college, were not rehired to teach. (Remember, after the 20th semester adjuncts achieve senior adjunct status and the rights on the priority list.) In neither case was there any record of unsatisfactory evaluations, history of student complaints, or disciplinary actions against these in-

structors. Despite requests from the teachers and the union, the administration made no effort to investigate the firings nor were they willing to provide the fired teachers with an explanation for the decisions. When the union requested reasons for

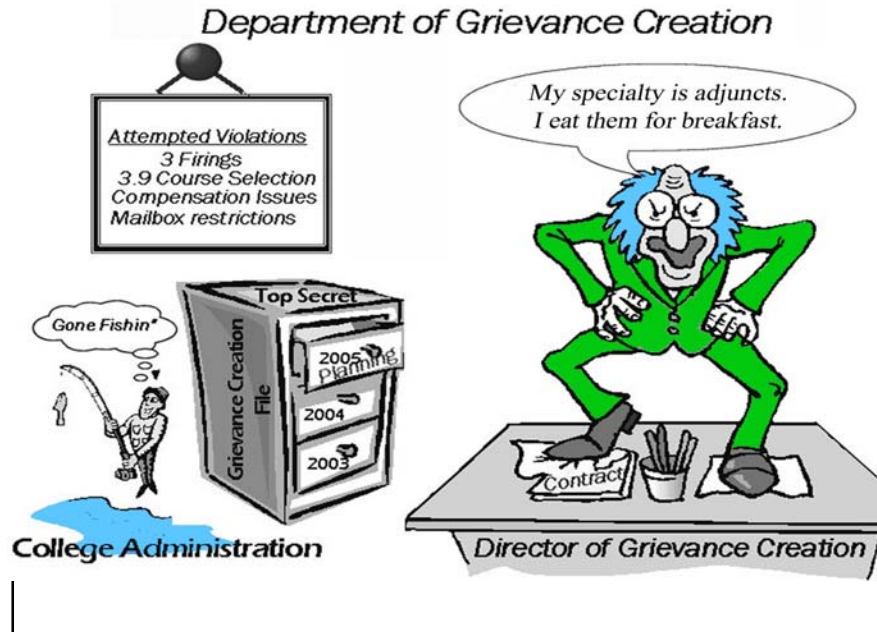
personal and professional consequences of being fired without warning or explanation fosters anger, self-doubt, and a sense of having been betrayed by the college. Understandably, the effect of firings extends beyond those who have suffered the imme-

that raise questions about the legitimacy of ESL administrative actions. Adjunct instructors, fearful of losing their positions, hesitate to speak out. By not providing explanations that are subject to investigation and transparency, upper level administration invites and supports abuse.

As we look forward to the New Year, we must strengthen our resolve to protect the vulnerable among us. Yes, the union can file grievances (and we did in all these cases) and we can go to arbitration (we are awaiting a decision on one case in the next few weeks), but that is not enough. We must SPEAK OUT and demand that the administra-

tion maintain the highest standards of fairness and transparency in those decisions that affect our members. A lack of transparency only spurs abuse by administrators, and suspicion and fear on the part of those who are subject to their decisions. We must insist on administrative fairness and transparency. Graduation is only six months away.

Both full-time and adjunct faculty representatives from Bronx, Mohawk Valley, Suffolk, Nassau, Rockland, Herkimer, Borough of Manhattan, and Westchester shared information on office hours, online course office hours, teaching responsibilities, and released time. All conference materials are available in Union Office AAB 115.



the firings, the administration hid behind the excuse that the contract does not require them to provide reasons.

Being fired without cause or explanation has serious personal, professional and economic consequences. While the economic penalties are serious enough, the

mediate harm, by generating fear and suspicion on the part of those who have seen their colleagues suffer. The effect is most obvious in the ESL department where the fear of administrators is most palpable (we have written about ESL firings in the past). The union regularly receives calls

Cooperstown

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community in general was the most basic feature for developing a union culture. Ellis Gage Searles from Mohawk Valley CC said the strategic plan for developing a union culture can be broken down into four states:

1. Know your membership.
2. Educate your membership.
3. Mobilize your membership.

4. Achieve your goals.

Union Representation at Disciplinary Hearings

Union representation at disciplinary hearings has been a part of collective bargaining since the 1975 case, *NLRB v. Weingarten*. The mandate has even been extended to non-union settings. This session gave examples of disciplinary procedures from FIT and

WCC and showed how to gather and present specific situations in which faculty could face discipline as a result of student complaints or alleged violations of college policy.

The last session of the Conference was a "contract exchange" where participants focused collective bargaining agreement language on work-

Academic Matters ARE Working Conditions

The mandate for Faculty Senates and Faculty Unions traditionally divides campus issues into, respectively, academic matters and working conditions. In practice, those lines are less than bright as we saw

this spring when the faculty, at a union meeting, passed a resolution on academic freedom. As we move ahead with building a union culture on campus, it is important that we approach all matters of concern to faculty together. (See,

for example, the article on "Plagiarism" below.) The WCCFT looks forward to working with faculty members of Senate committees to formulate the best guidelines for dealing with all aspects of our teaching responsibilities.

Plagiarism: What's the best antidote?

Research confirms the rising rates. But what can be done about it?

By Kate Ray

At one community college where faculty were surveyed in 1997, 86 percent reported suspicion of academic dishonesty, and 65 percent certainty of it, in their classes. Most of these same faculty did not consider academic dishonesty to be a "major problem," but rather something they should handle on an individual basis. (Ercegovic & Richardson)

Other campuses are responding to similar findings in different ways. Some are stressing honor codes. University of Maryland is requiring students to write and sign an honor code on every test or assignment. Some, such as UC Davis, are publicizing cases of cheating in their newspapers. Others, to prove plagiarism, are turning to Internet searching and to services that check the Internet and other sources for matching texts. ("Bringing colleges ...")

While no one has found a foolproof way to stop plagiarism and academic dishonesty in general, the fear of getting caught seems to provide some deterrence. Services like *Turnitin* help, but may face legal issues over their rights



to the materials they have in their databases. And even if you can find an exact match for a student's "work," there can be challenges to making the plagiarism accusation hold. In England a student who had clearly plagiarized plans to sue his school for negligence in "failure to give proper guidance in research techniques." (Baty)

Perhaps the best antidote for plagiarism would be a full program in values education to change the perception that this kind of theft is "no big deal." (See Christine Timm's article in the Nov. issue.) Short of that, bringing students

to a greater understanding of the relationship between their own texts and their sources is key. Warnings against plagiarizing, however dire, and care in formatting works cited pages will not stop students' plagiarizing if they do not understand the relationship between their sources and the body of their papers. (Ercegovic & Richardson)

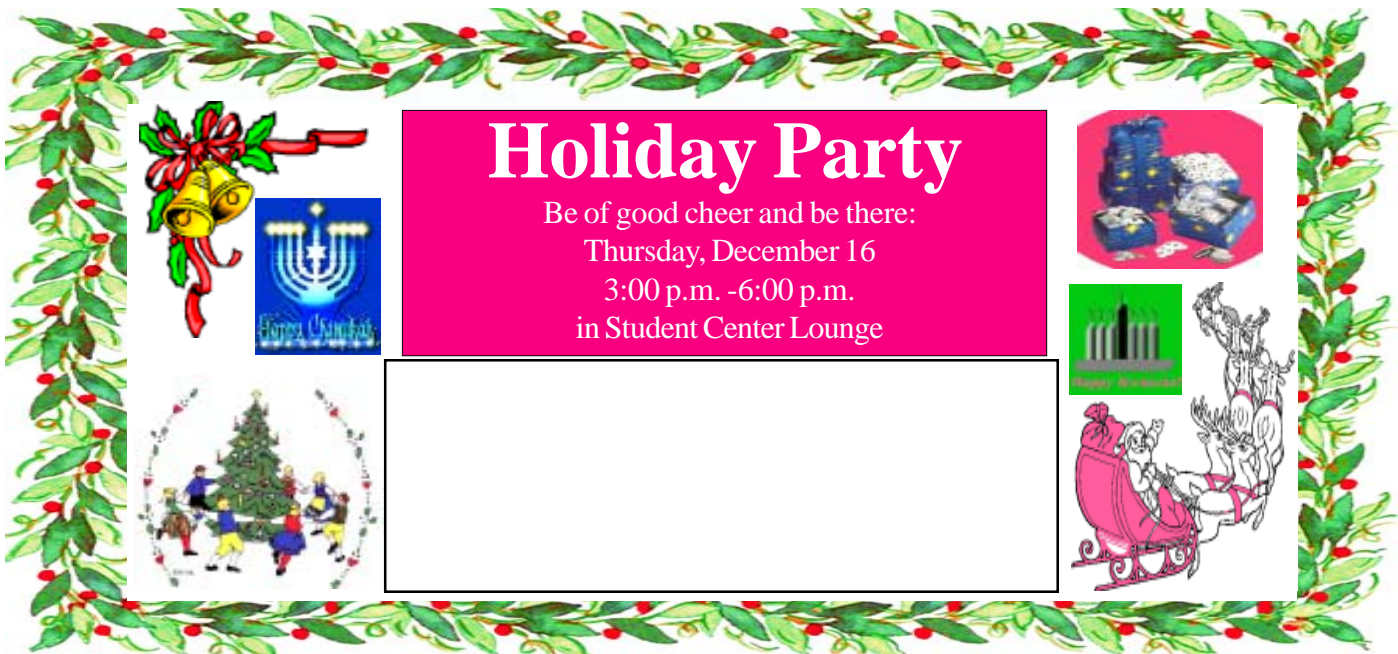
Sources (all available via EBSCO at WCC Library except College and Research Libraries which is available at the Circ. Desk):

Baty, Phil. "Plagiarist student set to sue university." *Times Higher Education Supplement* 28 May 2004:1+.

"Bringing colleges up to code." *Newsweek* 16 July 2001:8.

Ercegovic, Zorana and Richardson, John V. "Academic dishonesty, plagiarism included, in the digital age: a literature review." *College and Research Libraries* July 2004, 301-316.

"Web plagiarism keeps rising." *Curriculum Review* 1 Nov. 2003: 5.



Holiday Party

Be of good cheer and be there:
Thursday, December 16
3:00 p.m. - 6:00 p.m.
in Student Center Lounge

