



March 2008

WCCFT Union NEWS

Monthly Newsletter of The Westchester Community College Federation of Teachers

Union Launches Contract Negotiations

The February membership meeting of the Westchester Community College Federation of Teachers formally launched discussions of contract proposal issues. Over 110 unit members gathered to review areas of concern gathered from full-time and adjunct faculty surveys. From Distance Learning to Department/Curriculum Chair released time, the items covered a wide range of contractual matters. Each topic was addressed briefly by individual faculty members and sign-up sheets were

provided for future, smaller group focus. After the formal meeting concluded at noon, 40 members stayed until 1:00



J.R. Wilson, Labor Relations Specialist, addresses union members.

p.m. to contribute more ideas on the bargaining proposals. The exchange of views was at all times lively.

J.R. Wilson, NYSUT Labor Relations Specialist, opened the meeting with an overall view of what it means to belong to a union. He emphasized the importance of solidarity and explained the legal process of handling contract violations, an issue that was raised later in the hour under New Business.

Given the intensity of feeling on both the substantive and procedural aspects of the Union's operation, in addition to the sessions scheduled on each of the areas proposed for negotiations,

two meetings specifically on the grievance process were scheduled for February 20 and February 21.

Follow-Up Grievance and Contract Sessions

On February 20 and 21, the Union held open sessions for unit members to discuss the grievance process. Richard Rosell, Chairman of the Grievance Committee, outlined the history of grievance handling in the WCCFT. He pointed out that over the 39 years of Union presence at the College, the tradition has been that the President and Vice President of the Union discuss the potential grievance with the faculty member and try to find resolution in informal meetings with the Administration. In most cases, this works.

If the issue cannot be resolved with the supervisor or if it appears to be a contractual violation for which there is

a remedy, the matter is referred to the Executive Board and the NYSUT Labor Relations Specialist for review. If there is agreement to proceed, the Union conducts an investigation, evaluates the evidence in the case and may decide to file a grievance, following the procedures outlined in Section 7 of the Collective Bargaining Agreement.

Rosell also explained that individual members may pursue a grievance on their own with a representative of their choice. Only the Union, however, can make the decision to proceed to arbitration.

Faculty members in attendance (13 on the 20th and 5 on the 21st) asked questions about how evidence was gathered

and weighed, what selection criteria were used in going forward with a grievance, the timeliness of filing a grievance, how the distance learning memorandum of understanding had been amended and interpreted and how a larger grievance committee or different grievance structure (such as stewards or building reps) could be formed. The President of the Union encouraged faculty to continue this open discussion of member involvement.

A session on Adjunct Faculty issues and Released Time was scheduled for Wednesday, February 27. Distance Learning will be the topic of an hour long discussion immediately following the March 5 membership meeting.



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, 11:00 a.m.
Science Building 102
(Lunch is served)

February 20, 2008
11:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m.

&

February 21, 2008
4:00 p.m.- 6:00 p.m.:
Grievances Handling

TBA:
Meetings on
Contract Negotiations

March 5, 2008:
Benefits

April 2, 2008:
Health and Safety

May 7, 2008:
Legislative Luncheon



Our Job: Not "9 to 5," but 24/7

By Anne D'Orazio

How many days a week does a teaching faculty member have to be on campus? The contract says that faculty members teaching at 8 am or at 5 pm (or after) will have a four day schedule and if that four day schedule cannot be arranged that semester, the faculty member shall have a four day week in the next semester even without an 8:00 or 5:00 class. Nowhere does the contract say a teaching faculty must be on campus five days a week. Moreover, in the 1971 arbitration that affirmed the right of the Administration to schedule early morning and evening classes, the arbitrator specifically says that college faculty may be likened to flight personnel in that they have no set working schedules. Like a pilot whose work week is determined by flights, a teacher's work week is determined by classes.

Colleges, including community colleges all around the country allow teaching faculty flexible schedules. While a professor may schedule classes five days a week, he is under no obligation to do so. Four, three, even two day schedules are permitted. Why? Because in truth, a teacher is always on duty. Teachers are professionals who take their jobs very seriously. They may work better in a library, at home or in a museum. They may be most creative and productive when they have two days to block out time to research, write, think, talk to colleagues somewhere else, communicate by email, or make and answer calls from their own home offices. There is even precedent for this in some divisions at WCC. Many schools see this shortened week as an environmental issue—keeping people off the roads, saving gas, cutting energy costs on campus. Whatever their reasons, teachers and administrators have agreed that teaching is not a nine to five, Monday through Friday profession.

So what are the arguments against this? The most commonly heard (and one Dr. Hankin said to me): "We are a community college. Students need to

see their professors." According to the contract, the teaching faculty are obligated to teach fifteen hours a semester (twelve in English) and hold five (or eight) office hours. Every teacher on campus is willing to meet students at other times if necessary to accommodate students' busy schedules.

Then what do the holders of the "faculty must be seen" really mean? Are we to be on display somewhere on campus? Should students see us at department meetings, committee sessions, co-curricular activities, school functions? All faculty engage in some or all of these activities. Are students complaining that we're not visible? The primary responsibility of a teacher, especially at a community college, is to teach. We

"Teachers are professionals who take their jobs very seriously."

hear this all the time. We spend a lot of time preparing lectures and assignments, grading papers, re-doing syllabi. Much of this kind of work has to be done individually, in an environment that is conducive to reading, thinking, planning, writing. Does that mean an office on campus? Are we to be on-call at all times in spite of the demands of our particular occupation? There was a time in the 1950s and 1960s when community colleges were still considered part of the K-12 system (it was often called K-14) and teachers at WCC can remember the days when teachers clocked in at 8 and out at 5. That hasn't been the case now for about 40 years! Is our Administration hopelessly locked in the past? When is the WCC Administration going to change with the times? It is not much to ask that our Administrators begin to think, as they themselves encourage, "outside the box."

It's time for teachers to stand up and be proud of who we are and what we do every day, every semester, every year. We bear the burden and the blessing of educating people of all ages and backgrounds. And we do not have to defend a schedule that may be different from other constituencies.

www.wccft.org



Two New County Legislators: Who Are They and What Do They Plan to Do?

by Patti Sehulster

Even before they took office after the county legislator election in November, 2007, Lyndon D. Williams (D - District 13, Mount Vernon) and Peter B. Harckham (D - District 2, Katonah) responded to the controversy over Chairman William Ryan's proposal for an increase in his own pay. Both legislators-elect believed the public and



Lyndon D. Williams

a committee should consider the debate, and that type of argument seems to represent their political styles, regardless of the issues.

For Westchester County Board of Legislators Representative Williams, a native of Mount Vernon, championing issues for the public became a matter of primary importance in his own highly contested election, for which, as *The Yonkers Insider* reported, he requested federal monitors to "make sure that voters [were] treated fairly" and did not face "voter suppression." An elected — and three times reelected — Mount Vernon City Council Member from 1993 - 2005, Williams served as president of the Council three times and chaired several committees, including those concerned with finance, public works, and public safety. An experienced corporate and tax lawyer and CPA

and president of the Westchester Black Bar Association and member of NAACP, Williams has shown consistent devotion to economic development, housing, crime prevention, recreation, and the encouragement of high school students in higher education, particularly in the area of the study of law. He and his wife have raised three children in Mount Vernon, and his struggle has always been to rebuild the city on every level. He has taken that enthusiasm for rebuilding and change to his county legislative seat with a particular focus on taxes and fiscal responsibility. According to *The Journal News*, he has said that he has long believed any "process [. . .] that would involve residents of the county, is a good one." His vast political and legal experience should serve him — and hopefully the residents — well.

While Peter B. Harckham possesses far less political experience than Williams, he too is a life-long resident of the Hudson Valley area, although he, his wife, and two daughters have lived in Katonah on their small horse farm only since 1990. But Harckham does have a great deal of experience in the three issues that concern him most: the protection of our environment, particularly our water supplies and open space; the creation of affordable housing, especially for senior citizens and first responders; and the termination of unfunded State mandates that prevent substantial property tax relief. He labels himself a fiscal conservative, a community leader who works for public-private partnerships, and someone who believes, as he states in his web-posted "Political Philosophy," "No effort should be spared to protect our environment, heritage and educational system. . . . [We should be] building consensus for a roadmap to the future . . . [and should] rebuild the partnership between our towns and county government." In enacting the philosophy he espouses, this owner of a media and communications company has served as president of A-Home, a non-profit

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housing corporation that constructs and operates affordable housing and has acted as vice chair of the Clarence E. Heller Charitable Foundation, a group that advocates sustainable use of natural resources and decreasing environmental toxins and supports art and environmental education programs. During the time he has not been working on



Peter B. Harckham

these projects or his business, he has written several position papers on groundwater, has merged his work for the Katonah-Lewisboro School District and the Lewisboro Soccer Club to help combine affordable senior housing with the cost of new athletic fields and has helped the Wolf Conservation Center and animal rescue efforts. In addition to addressing these interests, Harckham hopes to use his position as County Legislator to preserve the county's rural and historic character, build up library facilities, and find ways to offset the huge tax burden of property owners.

Whether they attack property taxes or housing development, Williams and Harckham have until 2009 to work together for the benefit of Westchester County. We hope they will promote change that this union can support.



Adjunct Faculty Protocol

by Diane Urban



What we propose:

Why we think it's a good idea:

Senior adjunct names in SOI and College Catalog	For adjuncts, both of these events will help to make our presence more noticeable and help to integrate us more completely into the college. We will be seen as colleagues and not "asides". In terms of public relations, these changes would also benefit WCC. Since 70% of courses are taught by adjuncts, the SOI looks as if the courses schedule is tentative, based on finding instructors. Adding the credentials of senior adjuncts to the college catalog is another public relations benefit to the college. Based on the WCCFT survey, 26% of the adjuncts who responded held a doctoral degree.
Right to assist in the selection of textbooks	In an effort to integrate adjunct faculty into departmental discussion and decisions, their contributions to the selections of textbooks is essential, especially in departments that agree on a common text book. If the department allows faculty to select their own texts, then adjunct faculty should also be able to do so. Since adjuncts often teach for more than one college/university, prep time is multiplied by the use of different texts for the same course. Since we are not paid for any prep time or office hours, this is a hardship for many. The difficulty is compounded by last minute course assignments for adjuncts who, if they have not used the text before, are only a week or two ahead of students in preparing assignments.
Personal day	Life happens and adjuncts need to be treated as human beings who have outside responsibilities and not interchangeable machine parts. Since no substitute is needed to cover the course, it is not a matter of money. The adjunct would be responsible for making up the material just as full-timers do.
Shared office space (faculty leave, sabbatical, voluntary program)	This is a wonderful way to continue our "play nicely together" theme. The more the full-timers and part-timers interact, the more we will realize that we have so much in common. Also, it is a fact that adjuncts do talk to students before and after class; additional office space would make that a better situation for us and for our students. Other colleges have used this "sharing" of offices successfully.
Gated parking lots for evening courses	Time is at a premium and searching for parking because students are using the faculty lot is not acceptable. Again, it is quality of life; we are asking for the same quality afforded our colleagues who work during the day. Adjunct faculty should purchase IDs just as full time faculty do.
Evening and Saturday morning Division staff	It is important to have access to support staff who can provide scantrons, assistance with equipment, chalk and other necessities. Students also would definitely benefit from having these offices staffed at these peak times of classes in every building.
Faculty lounges in every building.	This is something that would be shared by full-timers and part-timers. The ability to mingle, to share ideas, problems, friendships, these are qualities that create job satisfaction. We are not islands and we need a place to connect with each other. It has never been a problem simply to post a note or a weekly schedule on the door when the room is needed for a meeting.
Telephone lines	The Union has looked into the idea of trunk lines for answering machines and has found that this is not a difficult or expensive item. The adjunct faculty members would have a telephone number on which they would place their own message. The messages could be accessed and returned from any phone. This is a benefit to the entire college community. The ability to reach our students and to have our students reach us without giving out personal phone numbers is essential. It would also improve the working conditions of the support staff who are often overwhelmed by students asking to leave messages for adjuncts who have no voice mail. Again, that represents 70% of all courses taught.
Email	This, like phone lines, is essential to improved communication. By a simple process, email could be accessed from the adjunct faculty member's home computer.

What we propose:

Why we think it's a good idea:

Use of library from home

While all of us can access the Westchester Library System, we cannot access the college library. The message on the college library site reads: **Use your college network-email username and password.-NOTE: Adjunct faculty who need network access should contact their Department Chair.** Network access seems to be a complicated process; I requested this access in September and I am still awaiting a response. Initially, I was given an e-mail and then told I could only use it on computers on campus. Well, that does not allow the flexibility all professors need to work from home as well as from campus. As an adjunct, that need is essential. It costs money to come to campus; working when and where I can is a quality of life issue. Library access benefits us as well as our students.

Health care stipend

I recently read an article than many companies are providing healthcare options for pets. I think it is time we explore how we can help adjuncts provide reasonable healthcare for themselves and their family. We are not asking for the full coverage, or even to buy into the plan and risk raising the premiums that full-timers have to pay. We are asking for support in paying the overwhelming cost of individual coverage by having a stipend. It is something worth discussing.

Keep a Knockin' but You Can't Come In

It was too good to be true. The Adjuncts would have a large room in the Tech Building to work, hang their coats, check email. But no sooner was this gift completed that we learned that a previous room designated for senior adjuncts was to be taken away. OK. We could understand. It was needed for a department chair. Then with no warning, the conference room in the Tech Building, long used by both adjuncts and full-timers was locked! A note on the door announced that henceforth this room was only available by reserving it for a meeting. A second note on the door reminded adjuncts that they had an office on the other side of the building for which they could get a key. The Tech Building has now joined the Classroom and Science Buildings in having locked "Confer-

ence Rooms" that experience limited use while adjuncts hover around copy machines without a place to go. And unlike the Classroom Building which does



have a few tables and chairs in the mailroom which are supposed to constitute a faculty lounge, the Science Building has no place at all for faculty—full-time or adjunct to sit and talk for a minute.

Meanwhile, the "new" office in the Tech Building remains to this day without a computer. (There is a desk with a sign that says, "Computer to go here.") There are no blinds and the sun shines so brightly through the windows that faculty have to turn their backs on their desks to see the papers they're reading. And did we mention that the room is so hot, that the door has to be left open to get a bit of air?

We're happy to see that a place has been carved out of the Library for Native Plants. Is it possible that teachers deserve equal treatment?

Next Meeting

Wednesday, March 5 Science 102

11:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m. : Benefits

12:00 p.m. - 1:00 p.m. : Distance Learning

What We Can Learn From the Writers' Strike

by Richard Rosell



The medical group my doctor has participated in for years recently merged with another group in Westchester County. While I have no doubt

that there were many reasons for the merger, one of the main considerations was to prevent insurance companies from playing the two groups off one another. In principle, medical groups are no different from the AARP, the NRA, or unions. What prompts people to create and join these organizations is the recognition that there is strength in numbers; as such, these organizations seek to provide their members with the means to address common concerns in a way they could not do on their own.

The recent strike by the Writers Guild of America provides a useful example. With the growth of the Internet and digital media, 12,000 movie and television writers voted to strike against the major television and movie producers, which included such companies as the News Corporation's Fox studio and network, General Electric's NBC network, Disney and Universal Pictures operations. As reported in the *New York Times*, "The strike centered on, among other things, writers' demands for a large increase in pay for movies and television shows released on DVD, and for a bigger share of the revenue from such work delivered over the Internet." According to the same *Times* article, those who opposed the Writers Guild argued that they

"must use new revenue to cover rising costs."

After agreement was reached to end the strike Tony Gilroy, the writer and director of the film "Michael Clayton," stated that, "while the strike had been punishing, it was clearly necessary. As writers and directors, we have our nose in the tent for real for the first time," he said. "There are question marks about how it will be implemented, but there is no one who can argue that the strike was not necessary. We would never be in the position we are without it. Anybody who says the strike was a bad idea is dead wrong."

As we enter bargaining in the next few months it is instructive for us to consider what we can learn from the success of the Writers Guild in their battle with the Alliance of Motion Picture and Television Producers. I believe there are at least three things:

1. The importance of having clear goals and objectives.
2. The importance of unity and support for your negotiating team.
3. The importance of solid preparation.

Clear Goals and Objectives

The goals we seek to address in the bargaining process must reflect the concerns of our members and the problems they face. In our efforts to define and clarify our goals the bargaining team has produced an online survey for full-time faculty (114 full timers responded) and a separate survey for adjunct members (110 adjuncts responded). These surveys provided important information

that we will carry forward in our proposals. Second, we dedicated the February union meeting to bargaining and planned meetings over the next few weeks to provide unit members an opportunity



to discuss thirteen issues the surveys indicated reflect the concerns of various constituencies the union represents. These issues range from the adjunct protocol, distance learning protocol, campus health and safety, librarian payback hours, clinical nursing hours, health insurance, promotions, etc. (The entire list of discussion groups is available on the union website: www.wccft.org.)

Value of Unity and Support

The value of unity and support will be critical to a successful outcome in bargaining. It is important that the negotiating team know that the faculty stands behind them. I recall the rousing support the previous bargaining team received from the membership at our February 2006 luncheon, along with the outcry against the insulting demands from the administration. I have no doubt those two factors played a key role in bringing out a speedy resolution.

In addition to the strong voice of our members, we must not hesitate to call on our friends should it become necessary to do so. The Writers Guild was able to depend upon their friends in labor, especially the Screen Actors Guild, in achieving their goals. The actors were unwilling to cross writers' picket lines, appear at major awards ceremonies such as the Golden Globes, or appear on late night TV shows that refused to reach agreements with the writers. Through the efforts of our President, Anne



D’Orazio, our union has maintained strong ties with other unions throughout the county. Let’s hope our bargaining goes smoothly and our voice is strong so we can avoid the need to bring in outside help. But we should not hesitate to call on our friends if it

our health insurance costs. Having been bombarded day after day with media stories about the ever increasing costs of health insurance and other unions agreeing to absorb some of those costs, it would have been easy for us to accept *the obvious* and go

along with the administration’s demand. Yet, that is not what the union did. We demanded data on the prior three years of insurance costs. Upon analyzing the data, we found that not only had there not been significant increases, but in certain years the college’s health insurance costs had actually gone down.

Despite our efforts there is no guarantee of a speedy settlement. It took the Writers Guild four months to bring the strike to a

successful conclusion. Our bargaining team is mature, with many of us having gone through this process before. We understand the importance of listening and giving serious consideration to the issues the other side brings to the table.



It is our hope that the administration comes to the table with the same attitude.

A quote in the *New York Times* from Leslie Moonves, chief executive of CBS, suggests that the strike between the Writers Guild and the producers could have been approached in a more mature manner. He said, “Hollywood executives might do well to spend more time with guild leaders in coming months, if peace is to prevail in the long term. The lesson is, we shouldn’t meet every three years.” There is wisdom in those words. Both sides come to the table with real issues. Resolving these issues demands that both sides come to the table with an open mind and a creative spirit. We hope that is the spirit that will prevail as we move ahead in our bargaining with the administration.



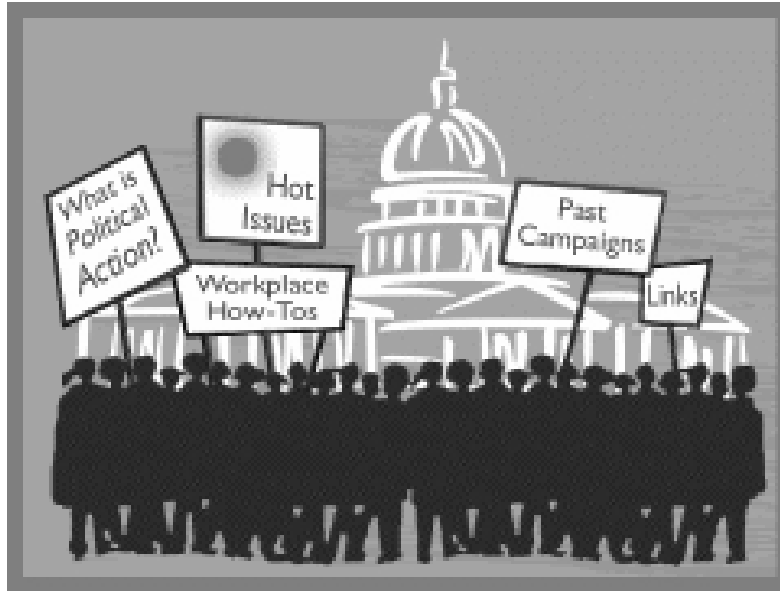
becomes necessary to do so.

The Importance of Solid Preparation

The bargaining team and the executive committee have a strong appreciation for the importance of solid preparation as part of a successful bargaining strategy. Part of that planning was addressed in some of the factors we discussed above: clear understanding of our goals, creation of a unified membership, identifying our allies. But there are other things we must also keep in mind: maintaining good communication with our members, thorough investigation of administrative proposals and a review of relevant pertinent empirical data. The last point was made especially clear in our last round of bargaining. As some will recall, the administration insisted that the bargaining would not end unless the faculty agreed to pay for a significant portion of



*Westchester Community College Federation of Teachers
(Local #2431 AFT)*



PAC Bulletin!

*“Unionists cannot leave politics alone,
because politics will not leave us alone.”*

—Elaine Bernard, Executive Director
Harvard Trade Union Program

GIVE TO THE UNION VOTE COPE CAMPAIGN

To Support Our Lobbying For:

- **Passage of the College Budget**
- **Approval of Collective Bargaining Agreement**
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