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WCCFT Union NEWS

Monthly Newsletter of The Westchester Community College Federation of Teachers

Time for a New Promotional System: Part II

By Richard Rosell



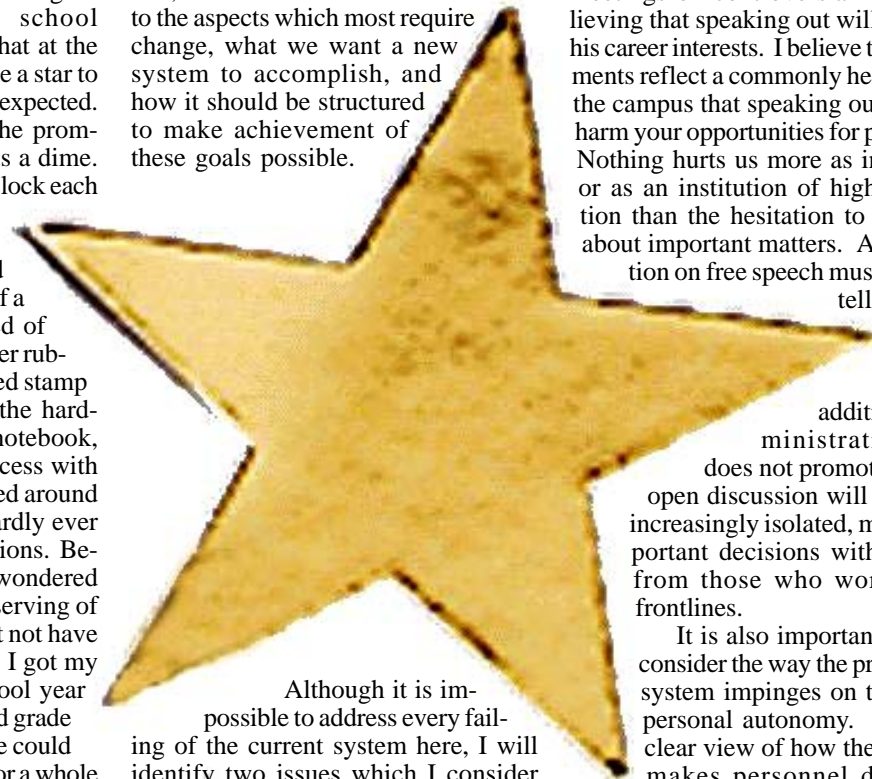
My second grade teacher had a very simple classroom management system. At the beginning of the school

year she informed the class that at the end of each day she would give a star to each of us who behaved as she expected. When we earned 100 stars she promised to reward us by giving us a dime. At ten minutes before three o'clock each day, she would imperiously walk around the room stopping at each student's desk and declare if we were deserving of a star that day. If she approved of your behavior, she would tap her rubber star stamp on her well inked stamp pad, apply a big red star to the hardcover of your composition notebook, and walk on to repeat the process with the next student. As she walked around the room day after day she hardly ever revealed the bases of her decisions. Because of her silence I often wondered how she decided who was deserving of a star and who was not. I must not have been a joy to have in class, as I got my dime just as the 180-day school year ended in June. (Only with third grade math did we realize that no one could ever earn more than one dime for a whole year of good behavior).

While our system of promotions has much more serious and long lasting implications than my teacher's star system, the two do share some things in common. And although as children we probably thought that the prospect of getting a dime made the whole effort worthwhile, as adults and as professionals we see the promotional system for what it is, a method of control masquerading as a system of rewards. While we

may have to be patient until we have a president who will openly discuss the system and the impact it has on us, we should not stop expressing our concern about it or considering how we can improve upon it.

As we consider the current system, we should direct our attention to the aspects which most require change, what we want a new system to accomplish, and how it should be structured to make achievement of these goals possible.



Although it is impossible to address every failing of the current system here, I will identify two issues which I consider among the most serious. If I do not reflect your view, I welcome your comments.

One of the more serious problems with our promotional system is that it acts a damper on an individual's willingness to speak openly and critically about issues of concern. On at least three occasions in recent months, I have had conversations with faculty who said as much. In one instance a colleague confided that I must be "brave"

to have written an article in the union newsletter critical of the president's State of the College Address. Another told me that he would be happy to write an article for the newsletter about an issue that concerned him, but only after he gets the promotion he is hoping for; a third colleague confided that he feels it is best if he avoids speaking out at meetings on controversial issues, believing that speaking out will only hurt his career interests. I believe these statements reflect a commonly held view on the campus that speaking out can only harm your opportunities for promotion. Nothing hurts us more as individuals or as an institution of higher education than the hesitation to speak out about important matters. Any inhibition on free speech must affect intellectual life

on the campus. In addition, an administration that does not promote free and open discussion will find itself increasingly isolated, making important decisions without input from those who work on the frontlines.

It is also important for us to consider the way the promotional system impinges on the loss of personal autonomy. Without a clear view of how the president makes personnel decisions, people are likely to feel *pressure* to act in ways they believe will enhance their promotional opportunities. For example, it is easy for people to wonder whether making contributions to the Foundation or attending a Foundation-sponsored event will affect one's prospects of being promoted. Similarly, people may feel pressured to "volunteer" for the registration phone banks,

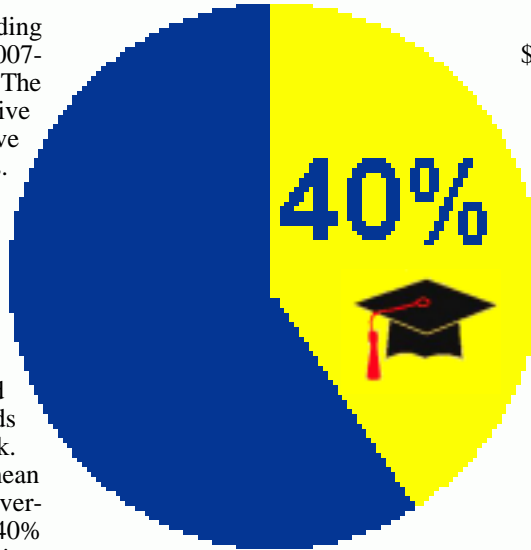
(See "Part II" on Pg. 4)

NYSUT Lobbies for Expanded Funding in State Budget

The push is on to expand funding to higher education in the 2007-2008 New York State Budget. The Governor has submitted his executive plan and it is now up to the legislative branch to weigh in on his proposals. The New York State United Teachers' legislative office, on behalf on its 60,000 members from higher education, has asked the legislature to make a greater commitment to improving the quality and competitiveness of the colleges and universities that make up the SUNY and CUNY systems and serve thousands of students in the state of New York.

In the first instance, this would mean bringing the state colleges and universities into line with the mandatory 40% underwriting of our students' education. To do this, the state must make up for years of flatlined budgets which have driven New York's two-year, four-year and graduate institutions into relying more and more on student tuition and private donations to operate. By law, the budget process is to be completed by April 1 so the next few weeks will be critical in persuading legislatures to come up with additional money. An important factor in this year's budget negotiations is the recent announcement that the state will have a \$1 billion surplus this year.

This year's Executive Budget is the best the teachers in New York's colleges and universities have seen in years, but it still doesn't go far enough to get higher education out of a hole. Governor Spitzer has proclaimed his commitment to public higher education and in line with this has proposed a \$100 increase in base aid. That is the amount per FTE (30 credits a year) the state will subsidize for community colleges. For community colleges, this would bring the total to \$2625, still far short of the approximate \$3200 the state would contribute if it were to honor the statutory requirement of providing 40% of operating costs. NYSUT is asking for a total increase of \$250, that is, \$150 more over the governor's proposal, which would make the state's share approximately 32% when overall costs are adjusted for inflation. In the last 16 years, the amount contributed by students has risen from



29.5% to 38.2% while the amount given by the state has done almost exactly the opposite, falling from 37.2% to 30.4%. The total bill to the state for increasing its share 2% points would be \$34 million.

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Another major financial investment, \$15 million, would fund the Full-Time Faculty Initiative (FFI), a measure designed to begin to stem the erosion of full-time/adjunct ratios in the state's community colleges, all of which are hovering around 70% of all sections taught by part-time faculty, a figure double what it was in the 1970s. The money for the FFI would be earmarked only for adding new full-time lines and could not be used for other operating expenses. The state has never had such a fund.

NYSUT has also targeted high need programs in information science, engineering, nursing and other allied health professions as recipients of increased funding. These are critical programs designed to meet the demand for high tech and public health jobs. It carries a price tag of \$5 million and would mean an increase over last year's budget which allocated \$1.8 million.

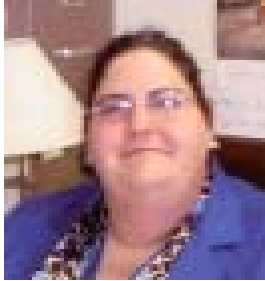
Finally, there is the matter of the Optional Retirement Program Equity, an issue which passed the legislature last year only to be vetoed by then Governor Pataki. In 2000, the state eliminated the 3% contribution for members of the State Teachers' Retirement System after ten years of membership or credited service. It promised to do the same for those enrolled in Optional Retirement Programs, such as TIAA-CREF, but never did. This is not a major expense and would require only \$500,000 for the first year to begin a three-year phase-in of the state's commitment to picking up the employee 3% contribution. It is a matter of pension equity and long overdue by the state.

In addition to these demands from Community Colleges, the SUNY state operated schools and the CUNY system need a serious commitment of increased funding to compete in the higher education labor market. We stand behind the proposals for more base aid and full-time faculty for the SUNY and CUNY schools. We reject the privatization of SUNY's teaching hospitals, a plan that would threaten medical education and research as well as health care delivery all across the state.

The internationalization of women's work

By Jo Stokes, Social & Behavioral Sciences

Union News continues to bring you analyses of international labor issues.



Globalization studies often emphasize the changing economic aspects within first world “global cities,” such as New York City, as centers of concentrated wealth and opportunity. The dynamics of the global city can be seen as impacting women in two ways. First, the demand in global cities for low-wage workers is increasing. The demand for these low-wage workers is being fulfilled by the expanding numbers of migrant workers (especially women) who can be pushed or sold into these positions. Second, the nature of globalization that allows for the international transmission of knowledge and products also allows for the increasing use of these avenues for entrepreneurs involved with people trafficking. While globalization can neutralize the effects of disparate geographies, globalization also forces a centralization of management and top-level operations in certain locales. The effect of this can be seen in the professional workforce, the development of a “professional household without a wife” as all adult members of the household engage in high-wage, extra-domestic duties fulltime. This has initiated the return in many instances of a serving class not seen in America in many generations. Due to the specific demands of these households, the labor in demand is low-wage domestic employment that impacts women’s labor more than men’s.

The impact of this “feminization” of the workforce can have two very specific dynamics. Initially, the low-wage aspect of domestic labor keeps women from gaining economic ground. While the demand for low-wage domestic work is high, the continual influx of new labor into the system negates the otherwise logical assumption that as demand for a specific labor set grows, so too should the compensation for such jobs. The trafficking of women into these positions depresses the actual earning ability of the women themselves, while increasing the profit of the traffickers. The second dynamic applies to women who successfully negotiate this system who may be able to gain greater personal autonomy, more control over their own household budgeting, and increasingly have more power and leverage over men. If women become more stable economically at the lower-end of the wage spectrum, they may gain power within their own social strata. As a result, we see the emergence of women in community building and community



activism. Some of this emergence must be tied to the unique position women find themselves in compared to their male counterparts.

In global cities, there are parallel dynamics occurring among the top and the bottom wage pools of these cities. Both the top and the bottom occupational spectrums are becoming internationalized. The globalization literature is filled with examples and analysis of the particulars of this at the top rung, but what is often missing is an acknowledgement that the labor supply is internationaliz-

ing at the bottom as well. As the need for domestic labor increases in global cities, the roles are being filled more and more by international labor rather than local which has an impact on the economic situation of the labor force of the host country.

While it might be nice to think that the worst case scenario for an immigrant woman is that she would find employment in a low-wage domestic position as she moves to a global city, it is a reality that the growing presence of women in other types of cross-border activities has also been on the rise. The secondary market for women’s labor has been in the sex trade. Through the trading and bartering of women across borders and the internationalization of the sex-trade industry by bringing sex-tourists to the doorstep of the service providers, women have become increasingly the backbone on which households and/or entire communities have become dependent. The labor force has again become “feminized” as women make up the majority of the sex workers, but the profit earning, whether it be individuals, consortiums, or governments, remains male-dominated.

The dynamics of cities like NYC, compared to those that are struggling, promotes migration of low-wage workers as well as the overall trafficking of women as a mean of survival. Women’s work infuses cash into the economies of deeply indebted countries and into the hands of those who specialize in their exploitation. Therefore, the utilization and exploitation of women’s labor cannot be overlooked as an aspect of today’s global world. Perhaps this is true as part of our long immigration history as well, but what it argues for is that gender is important in making an assessment of the realities of the immigrant and transnational experience. The reality of the globalized world is not immune from gender differences; it is instead embedded with them.