

Presidential POV

Raises are the big story, of course.

PFT secured the first faculty pay increase in almost seven years as part of its fall agreement on re-openers to the 2012-15 contract. The deal bumps up overall faculty compensation by 4%, and includes the first-ever 25-step salary schedule for part-timers—with some PT vets seeing raises of almost 20% on their hourly wages.

PFT Chief Negotiator Rick Greenspan and the team he led put together a package that stands out as one of the best deals won by community college faculty both in the Bay Area and around the state. Peralta faculty clearly appreciated the work of Rick & Co., with nearly 98% of voting unit members okaying the deal.

PFT VP Tae-Soon Park, Secretary Patricia Dudley, and Part-time Representative Cynthia Mahabir figured prominently in negotiations, as did PFT COPE Chair Janell Hampton and counselors Trulie Thompson, Steve Pantell, Ann McMurdo, and Miriam Zamora-Kantor, who doubles as a PFT rep at Laney.

See full details of the agreement, including convenient pullout salary-schedule cards, in the Negotiations Update (*inside*).

Other autumn action

Nor were contract talks PFT's only fall business. The union continues to push the district to improve the

(continues inside)



Michael Mills

You can't always get what you want— Past PFT, DAS president looks back

THE PERALTA TEACHER is starting a new series about the history our union. In the next few issues, the *Teacher* will run interviews with the people who led and helped shape PFT.

In this first installment, the *Peralta Teacher* talks with Michael Mills, now retired, a two-time PFT president and former faculty senate leader. Mills is frank about the challenges he faced when he led the union, and offers candid assessments of what PFT will likely confront in the years ahead.

What years did you serve as PFT president?

I first served as president in 1982, but at that time the executive director, not the president, did most of the heavy

lifting. I was elected president again from 2003 to 2006, by which time PFT presidents had the full range of responsibilities that they have today.

Can you briefly tell us a little about your work at Peralta prior to becoming PFT president?

I started in 1968 as a part-timer at the Grove St. Campus, teaching American history and political science. I got hired as a full-timer in 1970 and taught at Grove St. until 1977, and then joined the Peralta College for Nontraditional Studies (PCNS), a precursor to Vista [now BCC]. I served as faculty senate president for 10 years at PCNS, later at Vista. In 1975 I became the first DAS president. I directed the Berkeley

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Peralta Federation of Teachers, AFT Local 1603 represents nearly 1,000 teachers, counselors, librarians, and nurses at the College of Alameda, Berkeley City College, Laney College, and Merritt College. PFT is an affiliate of the California Federation of Teachers and the American Federation of Teachers, AFL-CIO. AFT represents more than 1.5 million members nationwide.

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part-time rehire pool. Evaluations, a crucial part of the rehire process, have been performed and/or recorded inconsistently around the district, and as a result many part-timers who ought to be eligible for the pool don't show up on the DO's official list.

Another snag: an as-yet-unexplained district policy ordered the colleges to treat faculty work previously paid for with stipends as part of load. While PFT has managed to get the district to reverse the decision—limited time assignments not pegged

to an instructor's salary will again be paid for with stipends—there are a number of outstanding issues related to SLO and assessment work that the union is seeking to resolve.

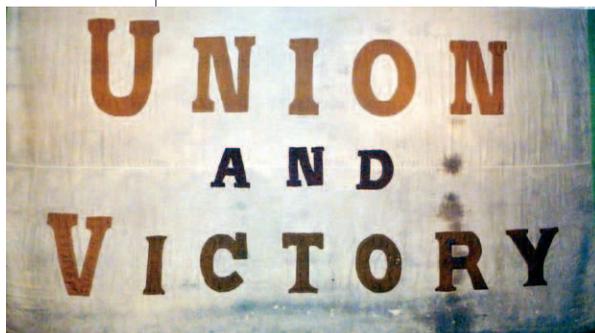
And, frustratingly, the problems around compensation for SLO and assessment work haven't been confined to how faculty are paid: it appears that scores of faculty haven't received anything at all for their efforts, even though they were promised modest stipends to help their colleges meet various accreditation-related assessment goals.

Faculty who in fall 2012 or later were promised payment to do SLO or assessment work but haven't been paid should email PFT Database Coordinator/Communications Specialist Laura Watson at union@pft1603.org. To help PFT get things straightened out, include any email announcing the stipend-earning opportunity and a copy of any work done to take advantage it.

Meanwhile, even as PFT helps sort out the problems around SLO-related compensation, a new accreditation cycle has begun at the colleges. Faculty will again be leading the way as our schools try to remain in the good graces of the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC). And as the piece excerpted from the CFT's *CCC Perspective* makes clear (see following page), the ACCJC—

facing a barrage of criticism for its recent actions against City College of San Francisco—has proved to be a fickle and demanding taskmaster.

This issue of the *Peralta Teacher*, the last of 2013, includes the launch of a new series about the history of the union. Starting this edition with an interview with Michael Mills, two-time PFT president and Peralta's first



DAS president, the *Peralta Teacher* will feature close-ups of the people who built the PFT over the years.

Holidays, PFT-style!

Aficionados of local labor history and of the Bay Area generally take note: The Oakland Museum of California has a wonderful show up, *Bay Motion*, a collection of found film footage shot around the East Bay and beyond. Projected on large screens in continuous loops, the piece is a cinematic tour of NorCal in the twentieth century, and features bits of home movies, industrial films, newsreels, and Hollywood outtakes. Among the amazing images: a 1930s Labor Day parade down Broadway, and color home movies taken in West Oakland by a leader of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters.

Don't miss PFT's annual holiday party, Thursday, Dec. 12, 4-6 p.m. at the union offices (500 E. Eighth St., Suite B, Oakland, 94606). We'll have plenty of food and drink, lots of excellent company, and cartoons and gifts for kids. The entire Peralta family is invited to partake in the festivities. RSVP to union@pft1603.org by Dec. 9—and please let us know how many kids you're bringing so we have enough gifts to go around.

In solidarity,

Matthew M. Goldstein

President, PFT, AFT Local 1603

Michael Mills

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International Trade Program and I created the Center for International Trade Development.

What first drew you to the PFT?

PFT helped me secure my permanent position in the early 1970s, and I was impressed by how it got things done.

Why did you eventually decide to run for PFT president?

After I left the senate and went back to full-time teaching, [Merritt English instructor and PFT activist] Mark Greenside suggested I run for president. I saw that the union was in disarray, and that its credibility among faculty was on the wane, and I wanted to do something to restore its presence and visibility. The union had and has the real authority to represent faculty interests to the administration—and, of course, it negotiates salary and benefits.

What issues were the PCCD faculty facing both in the district and on a state/national level during your 2nd term as president?

The marquee issues were salary and benefits.

Please tell us about changes to the PFT contract during your presidency and why the PFT felt those changes were needed.

The major change was to benefits. In 2003-4, benefits were becoming extremely costly, with no end in sight to increases. So it was clear during negotiations the district was going to hold out for benefits changes. They wouldn't budge on new hires getting lifetime benefits. This position ultimately resulted in the two-tier health benefit system. But PFT held firm on keeping benefits for all employees while they were active. We proposed and insisted on the bridge to Medicare. Chief negotiators Bruce Jacobs and Rick Greenspan developed language so post-'04 folks who retire before Medicare eligibility get healthcare at district expense until they reach the Medicare eligibility age.

To this day it really pains me. I bore responsibility for it and I had to meet with faculty and acknowledge that it was unfair. But we really had no alternative. We forestalled within Peralta what has become a crushing debate in other public employee circles (witness Detroit, San Jose, Oakland). We salvaged a decent package—better than decent: quite strong, actually—for all employees, including good salary increases.

What were the major challenges you faced as a president of PFT?

I inherited a union in disarray; I inherited a dysfunctional office staff and a building we were about to be evicted from. I inherited finances that made our



“Having the experience as a DAS and faculty union president gave me insight into our mutual limitations.”



auditor, John Pooley, shudder. We had impossibly disorganized archives—they had no retrievable value. Eventually, I hired Ann Whitehead, and within months she created a model system of archival organization that was the envy of the CFT.

Another major challenge was getting faculty to realize that they were in a labor union. Our faculty consider themselves to be professors, educators, and they sometimes think that labor unions are only for truckers or hob carriers. Also, getting faculty to turn out for meetings was impossible, even when we'd communicate the need to participate

Other Post-employment Benefits (OPEB) was another major challenge. We simply had to stabilize the cost of benefits, especially for retirees. Then-CFO Tom Smith devised a plan for a bond issue—\$150 million—to be invested, with the interest to be used to cover the

spike in retiree benefits cost. I got along well with Tom Smith, and he had a lot of integrity and I respected his opinion—that this was an absolute necessity for the long-term health of the district.

What was PFT's relationship to other faculty groups when you were PFT president?

There was an underlying tension between the senate and the union about the authority of each group. The PFT negotiates salary, working conditions, and benefits with the district. On the other hand, the senate has the authority on matters that are strictly educational, but they do not bargain with the district. Having the experience as a DAS and faculty union president gave me insight into our mutual limitations. I worked well with the late DAS president Norbert Bischoff, and I had a good relationship with DAS president Joseph Bielanski during my tenure because we both knew the boundaries. We also knew that if we could work together we could have a fairly united faculty.

What was the nature of the relationship between PFT and the district during your presidency?

We got along rather well. When Elihu Harris became chancellor, he quickly established an open-door relationship. PFT had immediate access with the chancellor. Not just the district, but the colleges. We rebuilt our presences at the colleges, and together with Mark Greenside—a huge asset—we let it be known that we'd be present. We went to the administration and said, What's in our mutual interest? How can we head off problems before they start?

The Laney Bistro, the Beginner's Inn, is a good example of the kind of college-level successes we had. There were a bunch of grievances coming out of faculty who worked in and around the café. The grievance officer and I called in OSHA—it was because PFT pursued grievances and followed up with OSHA that we managed to secure the new facility.

What will be the biggest challenges of the future?

Maintaining benefits will be challenging in the face of public outrage over public employees' pensions and benefits. 

Negotiations UPDATE

Highlights of 2013-14 agreement

By Rick Greenspan

PFT Treasurer/Chief Negotiator

Increases in Salary

- ▶ All part-timers placed on new 25-step schedule (letters informing folks of their new step placement went out Nov. 12)
- ▶ Increases in both contract and part-time salary schedules
 - 3.65% across-the-board increase on contract schedule
 - no increase in contract extra-service schedule
 - minimum of 1.57% raise for part-timers, with some part-timers getting up to 20% raises on their new steps
 - increases show up in November for contract, by December for all part-time
 - increases are retroactive to July 1, 2013 (retro checks may not come until December or January)
- ▶ Return of sabbaticals beginning in spring 2014
- ▶ No increased costs to faculty for medical or dental coverage compared to 12-13
- ▶ Beginning fall 14, part-time 50/50 plan will only be available to part-timers for Kaiser (PPO plan will be available only at 100% of COBRA cost)

See the handy pullout card included in this issue of the *Peralta Teacher* for complete salary schedules for full-time contract faculty and part-time faculty with no full-time employment.

NOTE: All Peralta employees (faculty, classified, and administrators) will need to “buy back” 1% of this year’s increase using their 14-15 “share of new money.” If there is no new money in 14-15, that would mean a 1% across-the-board cut in all salary rates for F14. But the PFT is confident that next



PFT Chief Negotiator Rick Greenspan, who teaches Automotive Technology at the College of Alameda, worked through lunch as contract talks concluded this fall.

year’s increase to Peralta’s coffers will be well above 1%.

Stipends and Non-instructional Assignments

- ▶ Stipends will be paid as straight dollar amounts and not converted to hours for each person. Stipends include payments for SLO work, TRC work, etc. A stipend is typically paid in a situation in which faculty are compensated after they have completed a specific job/task.
- ▶ ZZOIS assignments are special non-instructional assignments that faculty take as part of teaching load (for example, if someone is given release-time to be SLO Coordinator, Distance Ed. Coordinator, or a leader in the college’s accreditation self-study).
 - All ZZOIS assignments will be now confirmed in advance via an email which will include a number of things, including:

- 1) length of assignment,
- 2) release time for assignment,
- 3) responsibilities, and
- 4) assessment process for assignment (if any).

- If these assignments go on for more than two years, a selection process will be developed and all faculty at the college will be given a chance to apply for the job.

NOTE: This doesn’t apply to ZZOIS assignments such as department chair, which are part of the PFT contract.

Counseling

Essentially, there will be no big changes in the current process for determining eleventh-month contracts for contract counselors working outside the normal semesters and summer.

Grievance Procedure

An additional step will give the chancellor a larger role in the process prior to binding arbitration. 

ACCJC under Fire

An accreditor loses credibility

By Fred Glass

CFT Communications Director

DURING THE VIETNAM War an American officer famously explained, “We had to destroy the village in order to save it.” Apparently this was the approach embraced by the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC) in its shocking decision in July to terminate the accreditation of City College of San Francisco (CCSF).

But after years during which ACCJC had things its own way—intimidating college administrators and faculty instead of working collaboratively, sanctioning colleges out of all proportion to other accrediting regions, diverting scarce educational resources and funding to “compliance,” and blowing off any criticisms of the damage it was inflicting on collegial relations—the tide is now shifting. Public exposure by the CFT of the ACCJC’s practices and motivations has pierced its customary lack of transparency and generated pushback from a growing array of forces against the out-of-control agency.

The ACCJC is now facing multiple lawsuits—including one filed by the California Federation Teachers—and possible “delisting” by the U.S. Department of Education (DoE), in addition to a state audit. Critical letters and angry public statements from elected officials are sailing around the ears of the ACCJC’s leaders.

On August 13, the DoE issued a letter to ACCJC President Barbara Beno that agreed with CFT on several key points, ordering the agency to fix four violations of accrediting standards or face its own termination. These included: the apparent conflict of



CCSF supporters take heart at a fall rally at San Francisco City Hall.

interest by Beno in appointing her husband to the CCSF site visit team; the failure to field accreditation review teams balanced fairly between administrators and faculty; and failure to distinguish clearly between “recommendations” and “deficiencies.”

A week later, San Francisco City Attorney Dennis Herrera initiated legal action against the ACCJC. Seeking to overturn the disaccreditation of City College, he charged that “the private agency unlawfully allowed its advocacy and political bias to prejudice its evaluation of college accreditation standards.”

Many observers, CFT included, think CCSF was punished by ACCJC for opposing reform legislation that sought to restrict the current broad community college mission to a narrower “transfer” function. That legislation was vocally supported by ACCJC in 2011-12.

The City Attorney also filed a legal challenge with the Board of Governors of the California Community Colleges, saying that “the Board of Governors improperly ceded its public duties to a wholly unaccountable private entity in the ACCJC.”

In addition, two state Senators, including Jim Nielsen, a Republican, and the United Latin American

Citizens have publically questioned the practices of the ACCJC, particularly those of its president.

All of this controversy beginning to swirl around what would normally be a bland, neutral administrative education agency going about its quiet tasks in support of public education has drawn the attention of a growing number of elected officials, including Congressmembers Jackie Spiers and Anna Eshoo, who raised concerns about ACCJC’s disproportionate sanction rates and secrecy.

Accreditation review should result in improved instruction and increased access to education. The opposite, with a vengeance, is occurring today. The City College closure is but the most egregious case of ACCJC overreach. That ruling should be rescinded, and the U.S. Department of Education should pull the ACCJC’s authority, giving it to an agency that cares less about ideological missions and more about public education and the rule of law. As Assemblymember Tom Ammann said when CFT announced its lawsuit, “The blatant lack of transparency, loose interpretation of the rules, seen through a lens of hubris and elitism, cannot continue. San Francisco is our backyard and the college is our treasure. You don’t destroy the village to save it.” 

This article is excerpted from a significantly longer piece that ran in the October issue of CFT’s CCC Perspective.

Meet PFT Representative

Matt Freeman

MATT FREEMAN, BCC political science instructor and PFT rep, arrived at Peralta in 2007, when he took a part-time teaching assignment at Laney College. Matt joined the union immediately upon getting hired as a part-timer, and got elected as a college PFT rep this year, in his first full semester after earning tenure. (He landed a full-time contract position at BCC in 2009). Matt has worked hard to protect the contract and defend the rights of BCC faculty, and he brings a strong personal commitment to organized labor and progressive politics. His co-rep on the Center St. campus is veteran art instructor Joe Doyle. Reach Matt at mfreeman1978@gmail.com or (510) 981-2949.

What attracted you to union work?

I was first attracted to union work because I see it as an opportunity to build progressive-minded capacity and power for working families.

How do your roles as faculty member and PFT rep complement each other?

As a member of the faculty, I have unique and direct insight into the needs and concerns of my colleagues. As a PFT rep, I am in a position to work at providing for those needs

while also protecting and improving the space in which we work.

What do you like best about working at BCC and in the district?

The best thing about working at BCC is the diversity of our students. We have one of the most diverse student populations in the country, and it makes everything I do harder and better at the same time. I wouldn't want to teach in any other environment.

If you could change one thing about Peralta, what would it be?

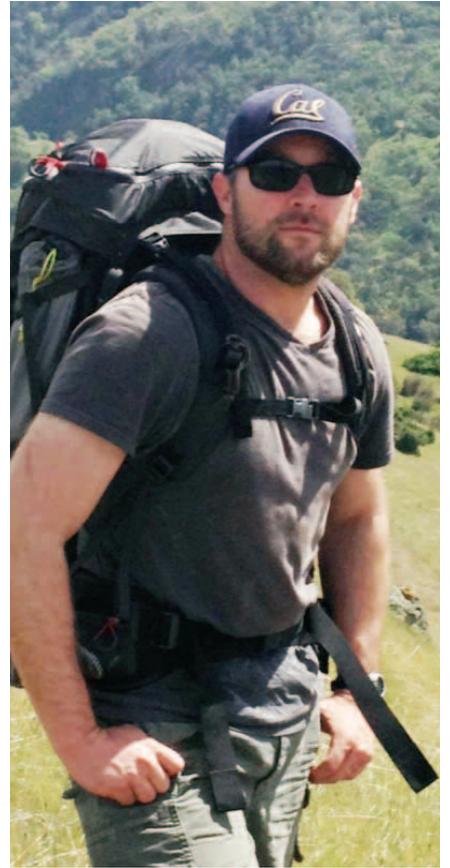
I would change the Peralta email system. A lot of other districts use Google Apps. because it is cheaper, faster, and way more intuitive. I would switch our Peralta email system to Google Apps.

As a recently tenured instructor and a former part-timer, what advice would you offer new faculty?

Be specific, strategic, and deliberate in everything you do. Don't put all your eggs into one basket.

When you're not teaching, serving on committees, and doing union work, how do you like to spend your time?

I love spending time in the outdoors with my family.



What are your goals for the spring term?

My goal for the spring is to call every PFT member at BCC and sit down with 50% of them. Organizing our faculty to build power begins with building relationships through shared values. I want to sit down one-on-one with at least half of the BCC faculty to find those values and begin building power

pft
Annual
Holiday
Party!

All faculty, staff, and friends are cordially invited to join the fun at PFT's annual holiday party! There will be gifts for the kids, raffle prizes, as well as delectable food, treats, sweets, and beverages!

Thursday, December 12
4:00 to 6:00 p.m.

PFT Union Office
500 E. 8TH Street, Suite B, Oakland
(blue and white building on corner of 5TH Avenue and E. 8TH Street)

RSVP by Monday, December 9. Email: union@pft1603.org