

The PERALTA TEACHER

Peralta Federation of Teachers, CFT, AFL-CIO – Democracy in Education

May 19, 2010

vol. 52 no. 4

From the President

Negotiations update



Twice-a-week negotiating sessions during most of April made spring pretty intense. The bargaining team for the PFT, in consultation with the Executive Council, arrived at an agreement with district negotiators April 23. We brought our completed proposal to the PFT General Membership Meeting April 27 for ratification. After questions and discussion, the proposal was ratified by 97% of voting faculty. The details of the agreement are outlined in this issue of the *Peralta Teacher* in the Negotiations Update by Chief Negotiator Rick Greenspan.

I'm happy to report that no faculty will lose base pay and that we maintained our benefits as they currently stand. Eligible part-time faculty will continue to have the option to buy into the 50/50 healthcare program, and all eligible part-time faculty will continue to be paid for office hours. These were hard-fought victories. Yet our unit has been, and will continue to be, affected by the state and district budget crises. Part-time layoffs shrank our ranks; we gave back money for vital college functions such as staff development, TRC work, and sabbaticals; SLO and Distance Education coordinators will have their assignments reduced, and department chair release time is at risk. While we have much to be pleased about in this round of contract extension negotiations, we need to recognize that there is much hard work ahead of us, both here at the district and on a state level.

PFT has laid the groundwork for change at the state level. On March 4 hundreds of Peralta faculty and students to the streets of Oakland and San Francisco to let all Californians, our legislators in particular, know that we want state spending priorities to change. We called for no cuts to education or other public services and a fair tax system. On March 22, many of us again took to the streets, this time in Sacramento, to join the rally for more funding for higher education. On April 10 a group of PFT folks drove out to Stockton on a cold Saturday morning to join the California Federation of Teachers March for California's

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Contract Extended!

The Peralta Community College District Board of Trustees voted unanimously at its May 11 meeting to approve a one-year contract extension agreement between PFT and the district.

The board's approval keeps the current 2009-10 contract in effect through June 30, 2011. To secure the extension, faculty agreed to pay the district the actual amount of the increased benefits costs for active faculty for the duration of the extension. Faculty will pay the increase, estimated at around \$500,000, through the one-year return of stipends (including for TRC committee work) and release time (including for sabbaticals; SLO, staff development, Distance Ed., and TRC coordination; and, if the total cost of the benefits should make it necessary, a portion of that used for department chairs). Benefits and the salary schedule remain unchanged for another twelve months, and those on the steps will get their increases in 2010-11.

There will be two reconciliation periods: the first in December, the second in August. The reconciliation will determine if faculty are paying too much or too little. At the end of the 2010-2011 academic year, the faculty will have paid the actual dollar amount of the benefit increases, and the contract will revert to the language and

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From the President (cont.)

Future, a trek up the Central Valley. We proudly carried the banner, sang along with the brass band, and in general made our pleas for well-funded public education heard. On April 21, another small band of PFT members and several students journeyed up to Sacramento to meet CFT marchers on the last mile of their march. Later that afternoon we went to the Budget and Higher Education Committee hearing, where two Peralta students and a faculty member addressed the committee. The focus of the messages to the legislators sitting before us was the enormous harm created by cuts to categorically funded student services. On April 29, I joined other members of the PFT and students from PCCD on a march in solidarity with the Oakland Unified School District teachers during their one-day strike.

PFT has also been active at the district level. One significant change PFT made this academic year was to start both a bimonthly electronic update, the *e-Communiqué*, and a bimonthly review of board activities, *PCCD Board Watch*. Our improved communication tools give faculty better and quicker access to information—as educators we know information is power. At almost every board meeting this year, I and often other PFT members have addressed trustees on budget matters. We have insisted that contractual obligations be met, budget crisis or not, such as honoring counselors' 11-month contract. We will insist that the district negotiate fee-based education before it begins cutting individual deals with instructors and threatening our core program offerings. Our part-time representative has been to every college explaining the importance of the State Disability Insurance option for part-time faculty.

I'm proud to have represented the faculty at these various events and committee meetings, and I'm honored to have participated with students and faculty who see that we must take action now to step up to do the work that must be done to implement change.

A final note: Our wonderful and talented Staff Labor Representative, Sara Connors, will be taking a leave at the end of this semester. She will be greatly missed, as anyone who worked with Sara or had an occasion to need her advice or advocacy can attest to.

—Debby Weintraub, President
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510.763.8820

PT faculty update (cont.)

1-866-400-6689. One can also email NewCobraRights@cms.hhs.gov. If denied a subsidy call PFT at 510 763-8820 for information and help.

Finally, as the semester winds to a close, my best wishes for the summer. Many thanks for your contributions towards PT faculty advocacy this past year! Keep in touch.

—Cynthia Mahabir, Part-time Rep
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510.464.3185

JOIN THE PFT PAC

PFT PAC is the political action committee of the Peralta Federation of Teachers. Formally separate from the PFT, PFT PAC works on board races and supports public policy initiatives, legislation, and other efforts relevant to PFT faculty.

Become a voting PAC member by signing up for payroll deduction. PAC funds are used for specific political purposes, as determined by a vote of the members. Only PAC members can vote on how PAC funds are spent.

To join the PAC and have a voice in trustee elections and other political initiatives, please fill out the form at right.

PLEASE RETURN THIS FORM TO Matthew Goldstein (Laney College, T 402, X3156, mmgoldstein@gmail.com) OR FAX IT TO at 510-763-1140

NAME: _____ COLLEGE: _____ DEPARTMENT: _____
ADDRESS: _____ CITY: _____ ZIP: _____
HOME PHONE: _____ WORK PHONE: _____ E-MAIL: _____
TO: PERALTA COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICT, PAYROLL DEDUCTIONS:
YOU ARE AUTHORIZED TO DEDUCT THE AMOUNT OF:
_____ \$30 _____ \$25 _____ \$20 _____ \$15 _____ \$10 _____ \$

FROM MY GROSS SALARY EACH MONTH OF EMPLOYMENT AND PAY THE SAME TO THE PERALTA FEDERATION OF TEACHERS POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE. IT IS UNDERSTOOD THAT THIS AUTHORIZATION SHALL BE CONTINUED AUTOMATICALLY EACH MONTH OF EMPLOYMENT UNTIL REVOKED BY ME IN WRITING.

SIGNATURE: _____ ID # _____ SOCIAL SECURITY #: _____ DATE: _____

Part-time faculty update

I found myself salivating over some tax news recently amidst the corrosive budgetary actions PT faculty especially have borne the brunt of this past year. And, of course, we've been told there's more pain to come. So here's the juicy tidbit from the *New York Times* (April 25, 2010):

San Mateo County voters could soon become the first in California to approve a special parcel tax on property to help pay for community college education in the county... The tax would cost the owners of each parcel of property \$34 per year and raise an estimated \$6 million to boost the district's \$80 million budget.

'We're doing something that would be the first of its kind,' said Ron Galatolo, chancellor for the three-campus system that serves 40,000 students. 'Just because someone has not done it before does not mean we shouldn't try it.' Mr. Galatolo said none of the money raised by the tax would go toward administration. The proceeds would be placed in a separate fund and used to restore some of the part-time faculty, whose jobs the district cut to cope with a \$24 million reduction in its budget.

'I am going to bring those faculty back and put them into the classroom,' Mr. Galatolo said. 'We had 14,000 students on our waiting list last fall. There is a huge demand out there for our services. We're not providing the academic support they need because we don't have the resources.'

So, what do you think? Hecka cool! No? Time for us in Alameda County to follow suit, I say. Any volunteers?

Also, did you know that AB 656, currently being debated in Sacramento, would place a 12% tax on the extraction of oil and gas in California and raise \$2 billion annually for higher education in California? Every oil-producing state in the U.S. imposes such a tax. Please urge your California Assembly and Senate representatives now to support the Oil & Gas Severance Tax Act.

In other news:

Contract extension: The PFT-PCCD 2010-2011 contract extension, approved by the board of trustees on May 11, 2010, includes the continuation of PT office hour compensation and the 50/50 medical insurance program.

State Disability Insurance (SDI): SDI consists of Disability Insurance and Paid Family Leave. In accordance with AB 381, PT faculty needed to vote on whether we would like SDI coverage. SDI election ballots were mailed on April 12 to PT faculty members at their home addresses. The deadline was May 12, 12:30 p.m. The results are: 84% voted for SDI coverage; 16% voted against it. The next step is for the PFT to negotiate SDI coverage for the PT faculty with the District. My thanks to Beverly West, Peter Brown, Judith Rathbone, Susan Schacher, Sara Connors and Anna Roy for their generous assistance with the election work.

COBRA Subsidy: If you lost District benefits due to an involuntary termination or reduction in hours followed by a termination of employment (a non-renewal of a teaching assignment) between September 1, 2008 through May 31, 2010 you may be eligible for a COBRA subsidy through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA). See details at <http://www.cms.hhs.gov/COBRACContinuationofCOV> or call

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PT unemployment primer

Since part-time temporary faculty are laid off at the end of each semester, you are entitled to apply for unemployment insurance, even if you have an oral or written offer of community college work in fall. You are eligible for unemployment insurance because, as a part-time temporary faculty member, you have no contractual guarantee of continuing employment, and your rehire is contingent on sufficient enrollment and adequate funding. The maximum weekly benefit is \$450, plus a federal supplement of \$25.

Unemployment benefits are not automatic. You must file a claim, usually by a phone call to the Employment Development Department, 800.300.5616, or on the web at www.edd.ca.gov. (If you call, it is easier to get through to the EDD office later in the week.) When you apply, you will be asked for your Social Security Number, as well as the name and address of your last employer, and your last day of employment. You are no longer employed (and are filing for unemployment insurance) because your assignment has ended and you have been laid off. If you are asked the name of your union local, tell them Peralta Federation of Teachers, AFT local 1603.

You can call until Friday to open or reopen a claim that starts on the previous Sunday, or you have until Saturday if you apply online. Your first week will be a waiting week (no benefit) unless you are reopening a claim that was started less than a year ago with a waiting period at that time. After you apply, you will receive forms to file (by mail) for unemployment benefits for each week that you do not work at the college. You are eligible even if you have a small amount of other income from some other source, depending on your weekly unemployment benefit. Retirement income is considered

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Negotiations update (cont.)

conditions of the 2009-10 contract.

PFT sees the deal as a very good one for both the faculty and the district. Nor is PFT likely the only PCCD stakeholder offering givebacks: it's clear that all other units—SEIU, Local 39, confidential employees, and even administrators—are looking at significant sacrifices.

While our extension protects benefits and wages for another year, the district is still sorting out its so-called "structural deficit." The fiscal hole the district finds itself in wasn't dug by teachers or staff, a fact acknowledged by top administrators and recovery team members. The problem, however, is enormous, and it's likely that everyone will be called on—sooner rather than later—to make further concessions to ensure the long-term viability of the PCCD.

As PFT has said before, Peralta isn't bankrupt. The district's in debt, perhaps for as much as \$10 million or more, but there appears to be money in the reserves to cover the shortfall. The district, however, cannot go on like this. Accountants call our deficit *structural* because it's not based on one-time expenditures.

Bottom line: Peralta has ongoing costs beyond its revenues, and these expenses need to be curtailed. Our one-year extension is good news, but we need to brace ourselves for more—and tougher—fights ahead.

—Rick Greenspan, PFT Chief Negotiator
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510.763.8820

PT unemployment primer (cont.)

as employment earnings. You must also be looking for work, but you are not required to look outside your field of community college faculty work.

The 1989 Cervisi Decision (Cervisi v. California Unemployment Insurance Appeals Board) provides part-time faculty with this unemployment eligibility. The California Court of Appeals upheld a lower court's decision that college part-time faculty are not given "reasonable assurance" of rehire semester to semester because of the contingencies of enrollment and funding. Therefore, you are entitled to unemployment benefits between semesters—as well as during summer break. If you are employed for summer session, you are eligible for unemployment insurance during weeks you do not work before and after summer session.

If for some reason you are denied unemployment benefits, don't despair. There is an excellent chance that EDD has inadvertently misunderstood your rights. Contact the PFT office at 510.763.8820. We can give you advice on how to file a simple, and usually successful, appeal. Such an appeal could take some weeks, but it is free to you.

—Sara Connors, Labor Representative
sara@pft1603.org
510.763.8820

TRAVEL

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(you pick the dates—
we'll help with the plans)



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