

Presidential POV

CONSIDERING THE MAJOR GAINS it made last year, PFT might be tempted to sit back and savor its successes.

After all, the union secured a contract that protects full-time benefits and leaves wages untouched. The three-year deal also makes part-timers' office hours and the 50-50 healthcare plan permanent features of the CBA. What's more, PFT figured prominently in the passage of Measure B and helped Abel Guillén advance to the general election in the 18th State Assembly District race.

On top of these achievements, the union negotiated fairer management-retreat and faculty-investigation policies, kept the pressure on the district to hire scores of new full-time faculty members, and pushed for the issuance of retro pay for part-time faculty who hadn't been properly advanced on the salary schedule. By almost any measure, PFT had a good year.

Relaxing, though, would be a costly mistake.

With ongoing accreditation trouble at the district, two make-or-break statewide initiatives on the November ballot, and the creeping privatization of public education throughout the country—to name just a few of the challenges we face—PFT simply can't afford to let up.

First, the ACCJC: San Francisco City College made headlines this summer when it became the unhappy poster child for accreditation distress. Placed on "show cause," the last step before outright disaccreditation, SFCC and



More of these! Pictured are five of the six full-time faculty members hired in 2012: (from left to right) Cora Leighton, Communications, BCC; Maricela Becerra, LD Specialist, BCC; Heather Casale, Nutrition and Dietetics, Merritt; Wayne Fung, Autotech, CoA; Josh Ramos, PE and Assistant Football Coach, Laney. PFT is keeping the pressure on the district to hire scores of new full-time faculty with Measure B money.

its 90,000 students have begun to wonder publicly about what it takes to pass muster with the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges. Peralta, left on warning by the ACCJC, is likewise scratching its head.

While Peralta's situation isn't nearly as dire as City's, the ACCJC's decision not to lift sanctions against the district nonetheless came as a surprise and a disappointment. Most observers thought that Peralta—having benefited from unprecedented sacrifices from faculty, staff, and administrators to improve the district's fiscal health—stood a good chance of regaining full accreditation.

Whatever the frustrated expectations of Peralta-watchers, the fact remains that the district will for the foreseeable future continue spending its limited resources on accreditation-related matters. PFT will work with

the district to reestablish the colleges' sound accreditation status—as it has in the past—even as it eagerly anticipates a time when the colleges can get back to focusing on teaching and serving students. It will also reach out across the bay to help its brothers and sisters at the biggest public college in the state, who must now deal with the threat of disaccreditation and closure on top of the monstrous budget cuts that all the state's CC's face.

As the district hunkers down for another round of ACCJC-directed self-scrutiny, PFT is joining with labor groups around the state to stare down a threat from virulently antiunion forces. Proposition 32, a Wisconsin-style effort to end unions' ability to defend their members' interests, will appear on the Nov. 6 ballot, and it represents the most

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Meet Merritt College PFT Representative

Christine Olsen

CHRISTINE OLSEN, Merritt College Childhood Development (CHDEV) instructor and PFT rep, first came to Peralta in 1991. As department chair, Christine has been a strong advocate for her program and her faculty. Her outstanding communication skills and her deep commitment to faculty and students have made her an exceptionally valuable member of the union's Executive Council and a crucial part of the Merritt College and wider Peralta communities. She joined the union as she was signing her original employment documents at the district, and her involvement and activism have never wavered.

What first attracted you to union work?

In 1975 I was working as a teacher in a child development laboratory school in Santa Monica. The AFT (American Federation of Teachers) was organizing the teachers; I helped to organize that unit. I became active with the PFT at Merritt when then-president Michael Mills and grievance officer Mark Greenside approached me in tandem at a general membership meeting and convinced me that I should run for Merritt co-chair.

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

Teaching always comes first. Being co-director of the CHDEV Lab School

and working with student teachers and with my co-director, Newt McDonald, and I.A. Patricia Javaheri have been wonderful, rewarding experiences.

I've also really enjoyed working with the CDCPD (Council of Department Chairs and Program Directors). Faculty in both the academic disciplines and the CTE disciplines support each other at Merritt. We also have an excellent classified staff, which makes working up here a pleasure.

With the CHDEV grants, I work closely with the staff in the Office of Instruction, the President's Office, and the Business Office. They are a great group.

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

Fixing PROMT so that we can electronically track all the paperwork (PAs, RPOs, BTRs, etc.) would improve college life immeasurably. So much time is wasted trying to find out where the hardcopy is!

As a veteran of the PCCD, what advice would you offer to new faculty?

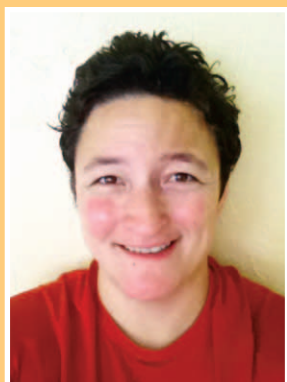
Join the PFT, of course! Also, get to know your campus PFT rep and find mentors to help you to learn how to navigate your campus and the district. Being connected and building some key relationships make all the difference when working in Peralta.



Christine Olsen

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

Family, grandchildren, hiking, and travel are my favorite pastimes. I just got back from Peru, where I checked off an item from my bucket list: visiting Machu Picchu—astonishing!



Meet Janell Hampton

As the PFT/CFT PLUCC organizer, I look forward to hearing from faculty members about their labor concerns and political goals both within PFT and beyond. I will be connecting with faculty members by visiting each campus several times this fall. I will be contacting individuals, departments, faculty organizations, and other campus and community groups. And I encourage colleagues who want to meet to discuss our movements and positions to contact me directly, so I can accommodate individual schedules. Get in touch at janell@pft1603.org or (510) 798-1508.



Peralta Federation of Teachers

500 E. Eighth Street, Suite B
Oakland, CA 94606
(510) 763-8820
union@pft1603.org

www.pft1603.org



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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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direct attack yet on organized labor in the Golden State.

Prop 32 is particularly dangerous because it disingenuously presents itself as an evenhanded check on both corporate and union power. It carves out special exemptions for business interests and grants greater power to corporations to push their anti-worker agendas.

On top of the campaign to stop Prop 32, PFT will lead the local charge to pass Prop 30, the governor's initiative to raise revenues for education and vital public services. The California Federation of Teachers rolled provisions of its popular Millionaires Tax into Jerry Brown's initiative last spring, to help voters concentrate on passing a unified proposition. If Prop 30 goes down, schools and community colleges would suffer "trigger cuts" worth \$5.4 billion—clearly, Peralta and its sister districts, already on life support, can't afford to see their funding slashed further.



Nor, of course, are the statewide initiatives the only political action on the fall program. The Nov. 6 ballot will also feature a race for the Area 2 PCCD board seat, the state assembly contest with PFT-endorsed candidate Guillén, and, not least, President Obama's reelection bid. PFT will assume a major role in the fall's political drama, and it will be counting on the nearly 1,000 faculty it represents to play their part, too.

What makes local accreditation struggles and state and national political fights part of the same discussion, of course, is the still-accelerating drive to defund public education. After all, we're in hot water with ACCJC largely because we don't seem to have the money to put on enough sections, compensate faculty adequately, or honor obligations to retirees—and no amount of cutting will make Peralta whole until more money comes in from



YES on 30: CFT Secretary Treasurer Jeff Freitas urges voters at an Aug. 7 rally in Sacramento to support public education and vital social services by voting yes this fall on Prop 30.

the state. Likewise, Props 30 and 32 loom large because passing the former means limiting further cuts to education, and rejecting the latter means leaving workers free to band together to advocate for (ever scarcer) resources on their own behalf. The bottom line: until the legislature can raise taxes with less than a two-thirds majority, California will continue to cut education spending and raise tuition and fees on students.

This cut-and-raise approach leads to a twofold privatization of education. By passing along the costs of higher education directly to students through increased tuition and fees, the state makes private individuals bear a larger share of the price of what is, after all, a public good (viz., an educated citizenry). Colleges, meanwhile, start looking to private industry to bankroll classes and programs as state support continues to wane—and when business underwrites curriculum, it will, quite naturally, want to have the major say in what's being taught, how it's taught, and who teaches it.

All of which is to urge you to get involved with your union this year. Attend the general membership meetings held at each college, go to your campus chapter meetings, and sit in on an Executive Council meeting. Read the quarterly *Peralta Teacher* (you're off to a good start!), and don't miss PFT's email newsletters, the *e-Communiqué* and *PCCD Board Watch*. Internet savvy? Like us on Facebook, follow us on Twitter at PFT1603, and visit us at www.pft1603.org.

In solidarity,
Matthew M. Goldstein
President, PFT, AFT Local 1603



Dear Faculty,

The Peralta Colleges Foundation is winning praises throughout the district for its reconstruction and revitalization. The foundation's records are now completely transparent, its actions conducted according to policy and strictly supervised procedures.

The PCF is fully committed to assisting students to achieve their academic goals and aiding faculty to develop innovative methods to deliver their subject matter. The track record for the new and improved foundation is quite impressive. Over the past two years, and with limited funds, the PCF has

- awarded 273 student scholarships totaling \$177K;
- given 18 faculty grants totaling \$23K;
- allocated the four colleges' libraries \$12K to purchase books to place on reserve; and
- underwritten the cost of the annual Chancellor's Trophy.

These changes are just the beginning. The foundation and the Peralta Retirees' Organization (PRO) are collaborating on workshops to help students. What's more, the foundation has revamped its website (www.PeraltaCollegesFoundation.edu) to allow student applications to be accessed online.

The PCF's board of directors, along with its companion, Friends of the Foundation, is drawn from all sectors of the community, e.g., retired faculty (this writer), chambers of commerce, industry, professional groups, and small business owners.

PCF provides needed financial help for students. In addition, faculty can use funds to help their students. One award allowed a COA instructor to train students to mediate in matters of domestic violence. Even a few dollars can change a life.

Imagine what we could do if we gave out more scholarships, more awards! But the foundation can only do what its funds allow it to. The more money in its scholarship funds, the more money it can grant. It's that simple.

So please consider asking payroll to assign an amount from your paycheck to the Peralta Colleges Foundation. As a bonus, the PCF is a 501(c)(3), and your donated monies are deductible. The beneficiaries are your students and your colleagues.

Check us out!

Michael Mills

Emeritus faculty at Vista and BCC, former president of the PFT and presently a director of the Peralta Colleges Foundation

Member Emergency Relief Fund (MERF)

PFT part-timers experiencing hardships as a result of assignment reductions in fall 2012 may apply for up to \$500 in emergency assistance. Awarded on a first-come, first-served basis, MERF monies will go to applicants who **1)** have current PFT membership; **2)** have worked in a department for at least 6 of the previous 10 semesters; **3)** have lost 50% or more of a semester base load assignment;

4) have no full-time employment elsewhere; and **5)** have no or only limited retirement benefits. MERF applications will be accepted beginning September 4, 2012, until funds are exhausted. Application forms can be downloaded from the PFT website, under the *Part-Time Corner* tab, or obtained from the PFT office, 500 E. 8th Street, Suite B, Oakland, CA 94606 (M-F, 10 a.m.-4 p.m.) (510) 763-8820.

PFT Volunteer Corps

By Janell Hampton

WHEN THE PFT and its Committee on Political Education (COPE) call for volunteers, it's often the same handful of people who turn out to work phones and walk precincts. Until now, this small team of stalwarts has been enough to get us through, but this election cycle is different.

Make no mistake: the core volunteers who have led PFT efforts through difficult times have done the union proud (see, e.g., our landslide in the Measure B election and our successful push to get Abel Guillén into the District 18 runoff). But our education priorities require stronger, more broad-based support if we are to prevail in the critical election cycle this fall.

Since we've been running the COPE membership drive, I've talked with more and more faculty who realize their voice is critical. (And if you haven't joined COPE yet, please do so now!) Even if you don't plan to join or contribute to COPE, the main issues we're calling faculty to volunteer for are important to all educators.

The PFT Volunteer Corps will be organized this fall around phone banking and precinct walking on the following critical issues: reelecting Barack Obama, electing Abel Guillén to the State Assembly for District 18, passing Prop 30 (the governor's revenue-raising initiative), and defeating Prop 32, an attempt to strangle organized labor.

PFT is looking for faculty to sign up for a few short shifts—even just one or two—of up to three hours. Contact me about joining the PFT Volunteer Corps or joining the COPE now. Reach me at janell@pft1603.org or (510) 798-1508.

What's Next for Community Colleges?

A teacher connects the dots

By **Peter Brown**, *Vocational Chair*

CALIFORNIA'S Community College system is under siege. Following political and fiscal attacks on K-12 and public universities, community colleges have found themselves in the crosshairs. The main threat to CC's? Privatization. And the economic crisis has only made things more perilous for the country's largest provider of public higher education.

Nor is privatization as simple as hanging a University of Phoenix shingle on the door of the state chancellor's office.

State government cuts budgets, allows banks to bleed colleges, increases student fees, reduces per-student funding, and tightens rules to reduce enrollment, classes, and faculty. Bean-counters force schools into alignment with budget cuts, limiting student access. City governments "help" their local colleges comply with state requirements.

All of this is devastating to students, who are already suffering from the economic crisis. Last semester, homelessness surged among Peralta students, with many forced to live out of their cars. Obviously, this seriously affects us as teachers and as human beings.

Our strengths are that campus organizations are shifting from business-as-usual, as they absorb the seriousness of the situation. The Peralta Federation of Teachers formed a coalition to challenge interest rate swaps. City College of San Francisco faculty, staff, and students called mass meetings in response to the Accrediting Commission's show-cause letter. Students led massive March protest actions over the past three years, and are organizing a statewide student union.

There are many challenges. Faculty, classified, and administrators are terrified of loss of accreditation, which can force colleges out of existence. The undeniable truth that accreditation issues usually involve genuine



Peter Brown, pictured here at a protest at Morgan Stanley, teaches Machine Tech at Laney

dysfunctionality on campuses makes it difficult to move beyond campus or district issues.

However, complying with accreditation demands will not limit or slow the attack on community colleges because the attack is driven by investment. The LIBOR/swap scandal reveals how banks sold interest rate swaps to public institutions, and then conspired globally to control interest rates at their expense.

The growing anti-swap movement may prove instrumental in taking the offensive to advance public education. The 99% has the potential to stop the corporate assault and turn it around to transform not just education, but also the world—if we don't let ourselves be diverted.

If you want to participate in the Anti-swap Coalition, please contact PFT/CFT PLUCC organizer Janell Hampton at janell_h@hotmail.com. Your union is more than a service organization; it's defending public education, and your rights as an educator. Make sure you are a union member, and join the PFT's Committee on Political Education (COPE).

Know Your UNION

The PFT's Executive Council consists of 16 representatives elected by dues-paying members of the union. The president, vice president, secretary, and treasurer, chosen by the faculty at the four colleges, serve as officers of the union. Faculty at all the campuses also select the diversity and part-time chairs; however, only part-time faculty may vote for the part-time chair.

Each college has two representatives, sometimes called co-chairs. Members of the PFT at each college elect the reps. In addition, a faculty member representing the vocational instructors (also known as CTE) has a seat on the Executive Council. The immediate past president of the PFT sits as a voting member on the Executive Council as well.

The Executive Council meets the first and third Thursday of every month during the academic school year, and is open to all faculty.

College co-chairs hold a chapter meeting on their campus once a semester. Each campus also hosts a general PFT membership meeting once a year.

The union has a variety of ways beyond face-to-face meetings to communicate with its membership. The PFT's regular publications are a quarterly hardcopy newsletter, the *Peralta Teacher*; a twice-monthly email bulletin, the *e-Communiqué*; and *PCCD Board Watch*, emailed after each meeting of the district board of trustees. And find us online at pft1603.org, follow us on Twitter at PFT1603, and like us on Facebook. CFT and AFT publications are distributed in mailboxes on a regular basis.

Three PFT Wins for Faculty

- 1 Negotiated a contract that protects faculty wages and benefits.
- 2 Secured part-time office hours and 50-50 plan as permanent parts of the contract.
- 3 Anchored PCCD parcel tax victory, saving hundreds of class sections.