

What's the Heck's Going on Here (cont.)

federal level? Do we have to choose between these possibilities, or do we deal with them all in different, but connected ways?

Are they systemic, representing fundamental trends which engender corrupt, even criminal behavior and are manifested locally, regionally and nationally—even internationally?

Can we rely on those who are supposed to represent us as we have in the past, or must today's leadership emerge from the ranks of ourselves and our colleagues and communities, with the least to lose and the most to gain?

Are all of the above isolated and separate, or are they connected and related, a puzzle to be worked in order to arrive at strategies which let us address the full scope of our challenges?

Are the challenges facing us impossible, so daunting that we can only lose hope?

Or are they daunting because we have been misled, misinformed and de-educated about basic aspects of how our society works?

Does the size of these challenges paralyze us, or simply mean we must think in new ways, discuss and debate, educate and organize ourselves in new and different ways, weaving together action on local, state and national levels to accomplish the truly tremendous changes we are called on to make, in order to ensure humanity survives and flourishes?

How we answer these questions—and, just as importantly, how we approach and discuss them—is the basis for a sound assessment. That, in turn, is a basis for strategy and action leading to victories that few if any of us can imagine in this seemingly dark time. Remember that “apocalypse” actually means “the lifting of the veil,” the moment when the full truth is seen.

And the truth will set us free.

—Peter Brown
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Cutting remarks: Our students speak out against budget cuts at the Oct 13 PCCD board meeting.

YES!

A little good news for part-time faculty: Peralta will continue to pay \$60 stipends to part-timers who complete evaluation reports of their part-time peers. Work with your deans and department chairs to find out if you can help out—and pick up a few bucks along the way!

Questions? Ideas?

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The

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From the President

Greetings Faculty:

Public education in California is being dismantled. The crippling mandates of Proposition 13, including the need for a two-thirds majority in the legislature to raise taxes and a lack of appropriate revenue sources to fund public institutions, have forever changed access to higher education, community colleges in particular. How will our union respond?

Here's what we shouldn't do: We shouldn't allow districts to control the discussion on “productivity.” Let's not mince words: increased productivity means only one thing, more students per instructor. Our



district insists that classes (with a few contractual exceptions) must meet a 17.5 productivity goal. Where did the magic number of 17.5—and the convoluted formula that conjures it—come from? Good question.

There is no statewide agreement on this number. If we seriously want to look at how “productive” parts of our institution are, we should turn our attention to the district office, where no FTES are generated, and begin inquiring about *its* productivity. Though the district insists cuts are being made as far away from the classroom as possible, it hasn't given us a standard for district office and administrator productivity.

Yet we're pressured to increase our class sizes as the district slices “unproductive classes.” Enrolling more students without the resources to help them is not going to make us productive in any useful sense or solve the educational problems our students face. As much as it pains us to turn students away, the time has come to draw the line. Our contract does not have many limitations on class size, in great part because

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Part-time Faculty Update

Amid deepening worry and nagging economic insecurity, but with stubborn optimism, about 30 part-time faculty members from all four colleges attended the Board of Trustees meeting on June 9, 2009 to advocate saving classes—for the sake of the students we serve, for the academic integrity of our district, and, of course, for our tenuous livelihoods.

Several of us addressed the board directly. A few who couldn't make

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From the President (cont.)

historically the district has refused to accept such restrictions. But common sense tells us that students in an overfilled class will get less attention than students in a class with a reasonable cap.

So one thing we must do as a union is continue to fight for class-size limits, even in these tough times, and stick to the few mandates we have in our contract. The longer we accept the overcrowding of our classes, the harder it will be to undo in better years.

Another thing: let's get rid of the business term *productivity*; it has no place in assessing the work of an educational institution. Part of the work of a subgroup of the District-wide Educational Master Planning Committee (DWEMPC) that I worked with last year was to look at the term. Though we all understood that one aspect of productivity is ratio of full time equivalent students (FTES) to full time equivalent faculty (FTEF), we stressed the importance of other assessment strategies to determine if a class is valuable and important.

Specifically, we called for decision-makers to look at whether a class fulfilled a need outlined in a department's program review and the college's master educational plan; whether a class aligned with community and labor market needs; and whether a class was essential for transfer, certificates, or the scholastic depth of a department. Our task as educators is to make our classes meaningful and useful to our students.

As our educational institutions are squeezed and forced to become more "productive," we not only have overcrowded classes and insufficient support services, but a decrease in fulltime hires.

Our union must vigorously advocate for more fulltime hires. Teaching in community colleges is no longer a career path, but a temporary, low-paying job that by its nature keeps faculty fragmented and powerless. Waivers to the 75-25% law, which requires that 75% of a district's sections be taught by fulltime faculty, are currently being pursued by districts. Our union must be active in ending the abuses of this law.

Students are paying more and receiving less, and those of us lucky enough to be employed are working harder with fewer resources. Our work as a union cannot only occur at a district level since the problems are statewide; we must be voices in legislative initiatives, too.

In unity,

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Part-time Faculty Update (cont.)

the meeting sent statements, which I read to the trustees. It is critical that we maintain—indeed, strengthen—our advocacy through collective efforts during these precarious times.

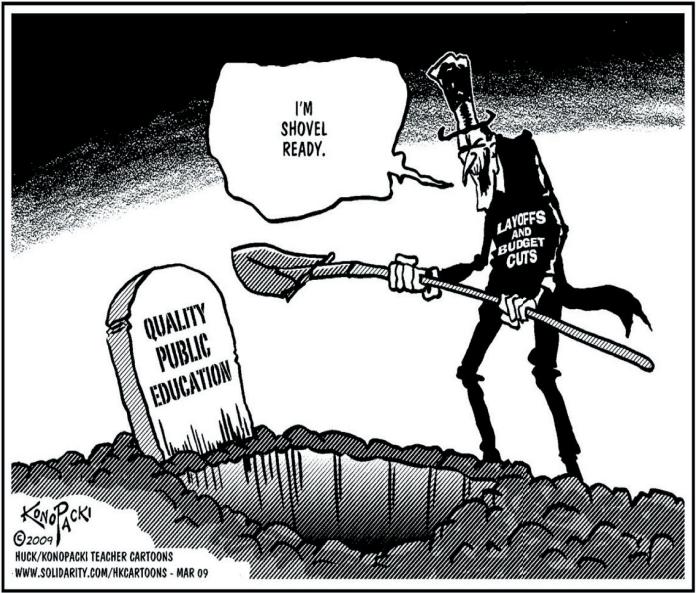
In order to keep track of the class assignment status of part-time faculty, I recently sent out a short email questionnaire. Please be sure to send your response back to me. If you need the questionnaire, let me know immediately at cmlaney2003@yahoo.com.

And just in case you haven't noticed your sick leave balance on your pay stub, you should note that the District has not updated sick leave accrual for part-time faculty members since 2005. Therefore, the number of hours listed on your current pay stub is likely to be inaccurate. The PFT will look into having this deficiency corrected by requesting a change from the manual updating process to an automated one.

On the state legislative front, Andrea York, Director of Government Relations for the Faculty Association of the California Community Colleges (FACCC), reported on October 12 that the Governor had just signed the FACCC-sponsored AB 381 (Block), which will allow bargaining units to elect their part-time faculty into the State Disability Insurance (SDI) program, separate from fulltime faculty. Our task now is to discuss with part-time faculty members the benefits of electing SDI and to advocate for its adoption by our district. In the meantime, let's all send thank-you notes to Andrea York at ayork@faccc.org.

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Graveyard Humor from the AFT . . .



What the Heck's Going on Here?

As we begin to directly experience the growing budget crisis in our district, differences—heated disagreements, even—begin to appear among us.

These differences are based on varying assessments of our lives and the situation we face; sometimes they're buried so deeply we aren't even aware of them.

Every decision made by any one of us is based on an assessment: I'm hungry, and the fridge is empty—should I go to the store or a restaurant? Assessment: what do I want to eat? Do I feel like cooking? What's open? What's the weather like? What's my budget like?

So let's look at a few of the elements that might shape how each of us responds to the changes going on. Is the budget crisis caused just by incompetence and corruption amongst bumbling, inept local officials who could simply be replaced?

Is it caused by actual criminal intent? Could we solve the problems simply by excising criminal elements?

Is this a "normal" recession, just another business cycle we can suffer through until normality returns, or does a "jobless recovery" mean there is no real recovery?

Are these problems fundamentally local, or at the state level or

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