

Presidential POV

WHEN I envisioned my second term as PFT president, a settled contract and time to breathe figured prominently. Instead, we have the devastating report from the state's Fiscal Crisis and Management Assistance Team (FCMAT), a Sacramento-sent fiscal monitor, a hastily installed new chancellor—and an impasse in contract negotiations.

The FCMAT report has been discussed at length since the start of the semester. It was presented to our local board and also to the state Board of Governors. The report paints a bleak picture and suggests that Peralta's on the brink of insolvency. But the report is very clear on why we are at risk: we are at risk because we are mismanaged. The report is also very clear on what is not a concern: we have a strong fund balance and cash flow.

So we aren't poor, but we are poorly managed. And, sadly, many of the issues raised in this report are holdovers from the last time FCMAT visited Peralta, less than a decade ago. What's more, PFT has been calling out the same problems—again and again, publicly and in closed-door meetings with administrators—over the last couple of years.

In September, Acting Chancellor Fran White and PCCD Board of Trustees President Julina Bonilla got hauled in front of the Board of Governors to answer for the problems cited in the FCMAT report. They left with a fiscal monitor assigned to Peralta. A new position invented just for us, the fiscal monitor will be here to watch what we do and report out to the Board of Governors and ACCJC.

On October 8, after a speedy search and selection, the Peralta BoT unanimously approved a three-year contract for



¡Sí se puede! PFT President Jennifer Shanoski confers with civil rights activist and United Farm Workers cofounder Dolores Huerta, who stopped by the district in November. See the video message Huerta recorded in support of PFT's contract fight at pft1603.org.

Chancellor Regina Stanback Stroud. PFT had numerous concerns about the process, which saw the board suspend parts of its own policy and simply ignore other parts. Despite red flags from faculty from Skyline College, where Stroud served as president for ten years, PFT remains optimistic that collaboration is on the horizon.

Unfortunately, collaboration has not been ruling the day so far. The PFT and district negotiating teams have been working on a tentative agreement for a year but have been unsuccessful in securing a deal. Despite increasing revenues from the state, Peralta has claimed poverty and offered faculty no increase in compensation for the first eight months of our meetings. Finally, this summer, the district brought an offer that wasn't zero—it *very generously* offered to pass through the 3.26% Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) that was provided by the state, a Sacramento-funded bump our administration would also receive.

The district claimed that there was too much uncertainty to promise COLA in subsequent years and that there was

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I HAVE WORKED as the Principal Investigator (PI) for a National Institutes of Health (NIH) Bridges to Baccalaureate grant for the last ten years or so. One of the conditions of the grant is that the PI be given release time to supervise the grant, and so I've had to submit a request for an ePAF each term. In spring 2019, I was not paid for several months for work that I'd completed, despite repeated requests to initiate and approve the assignment. It occurred to us that if the PFT president's requests to get paid were falling on deaf ears, then there were certainly others who faced the same, or worse, frustrations. It's illegal for the district to knowingly not pay workers. So we filed a grievance and, of course, we won. Part of the grievance settlement was a late-payment penalty. Because PFT is not interested in wasting taxpayer money intended for students, \$3150 of the settlement was donated to the Peralta Foundation to establish four student scholarships aimed at increasing diversity in the sciences, the goal of the NIH grant that was at the heart of the issue in the first place.

Jennifer Shanoski
President, PFT, AFT Local 1603



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Peralta Federation of Teachers, AFT Local 1603 represents over 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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Unity Campaign

By Kimberly King

Diversity Chair

TODAY, tenure-line professors make up only 20% of faculty at two-year colleges across the nation, a complete reversal of 50 years ago. In the Peralta system, we are doing better than the national average, but still 70% of our faculty are part-time. They are part of the growing segment of 16.5 million contingent and “alternative arrangement” U.S. workers, part of the gig economy.

The “adjunctification” of higher education has spawned a movement of contingent faculty for more rights and compensation, and even the end of contingency altogether, according to Craig Flanery, a full-time labor organizer with the California Faculty Association, and part-time Labor Studies instructor at Laney College. Flanery headlined a October 23 PFT panel discussion at Laney, Unifying Full-timers & Part-timers: Fighting for Our Rights & Quality Education.

The discussion kicked off the PFT Unity Campaign, designed to raise awareness of the common interests of all faculty, the particular concerns of part-time faculty, and the strength that our unity brings. Speakers highlighted the effects that the exploitation of contingent faculty has on the quality of education received by students. For example, part-time faculty are only compensated for two office hours a week, while full time faculty are required to hold five office hours and can be more available to meet with students.

Adjunctification is also a threat to democratic shared-governance processes. Part-time faculty are not compensated for shared-governance activities, leaving most of the work in departments and on college and district committees to full-time faculty. The overreliance on contingent faculty also undermines academic freedom, which the American Association of University Professors explained as “the principal purpose of tenure” (*Inside Higher Ed.*, 2018).

Unity in unions makes a difference. Both Flanery and PFT President Jennifer Shanoski pointed out that full-time and part-time faculty have better compensation and working conditions


when they are part of the same union compared to unions only representing one or the other. We need each other.

Shanoski highlighted the benefits that PFT has won for part-time faculty, including office-hour compensation, the preferred hiring pool, and the same numbers of steps on the pay schedule as full-time faculty.

At the Unity Campaign event, Adele Ray, part-time Multimedia Arts faculty at BCC, noted that she was a founding member of an adjunct-only union at NYU and the New School and had recently founded a part-time faculty caucus for Peralta part-time faculty that met outside of PFT because she was at first unsure of PFT’s support for part-time faculty. Since then, Adele has gotten involved in PFT and last spring was elected as a PFT representative for BCC serving on the PFT Executive Council. Part-timers need to participate and vote in order for their needs to be represented in a united union.

Andrew Park, COA physicist and PFT rep, spoke about his experience of being part-time faculty for many years before landing a full-time position. He highlighted that the biggest change he noticed was the job security that comes with full-time faculty status.

Part-time rep Francis Howard noted that adjunct faculty aren’t able to provide the mentoring that students need because of their limited work hours and compensation. PT rep John Holmes suggested that in a future contract we could bargain for something that benefits PT and FT faculty equally, such as a reduction in the FT faculty teaching load that would bring a more reasonable work life for FT faculty and provide more work for PT faculty. Ultimately, our goal is to eliminate inequality between FT and PT faculty and enable all faculty to fully serve our students and colleges. Given the wealth in the state of California, this is possible. What is needed is the political will to make corporations and wealthy individuals pay their fair share.

Retired faculty member and former CTE rep Peter Brown closed the event on a visionary note. He suggested that we should not stay limited to fighting for what we think we can get and instead fight for what we actually need. Getting what we need is, after all, the goal of our unity. 

Grievance UPDATE

By Jeff Sanceri

Grievance Officer / Secretary

OUR WORK in the grievance office has been steady. Indeed, the hope is that one day we will have no work to do at all, because the administration reads our contract carefully and takes into account the rights and responsibilities of faculty before acting.

Sadly, hope for such a world might just be pure folly.

Currently, the grievance office has been working on ensuring the district records and maintains an accurate list of base loads for part-time faculty, which in turn ensures that part-timers' spring assignments are accurate. Indeed, protecting our most vulnerable faculty is a priority, especially since abuse and exploitation can take many forms, intentional or not.


Informally, we continue to mediate relationships between administrators and faculty at all five campuses, should we be honest enough with ourselves to characterize the district office as its own campus. In these informal instances, PFT worked hard to ensure that the administration at all five campuses does right by faculty and improve how it communicates with us.

Administrative retention is a consistent issue throughout Peralta (indeed, many community colleges in California!). As dedicated faculty, we of course do our best to understand the professional merry-go-round upon which administrators ride. But we also realize sooner than most that the exploitation and inconveniences that arise from such shortages are usually met by faculty directly, and by extension our students—no matter how much we, as instructors, attempt to shield our students from what they would otherwise plainly see around them.

We recently settled a grievance in which administrative carelessness led to faculty not receiving their paychecks. Luckily, the work of the bargaining team and executive council ensured that these faculty would be appropriately compensated for the delay in payment, and the school penalized. Three grievances similar to the aforementioned are near settlement, all of them cases where faculty and departments were either ignored or forgotten, and often had to fend for themselves and spend their own money and time to mitigate the fiscal inadequacy of the campus.

An unusual twist: I met and discussed the above grievances with our new chancellor. I found her straightforward and honest

and, if not always amenable to PFT, at least respectful of the position that faculty and the union had taken. My own hope is that moving forward her honesty and respect for faculty and students become the hallmark of her tenure at Peralta, especially as the fractured trust between faculty and administrators threatens to disintegrate altogether.

What the grievance officer does, more than anything, is solve problems. The hope is always that the problems can be solved quickly and amicably, but the underlying constant is that were it not for administrators who refuse to put the time and care into reading the contract and abiding by the agreement between themselves and teachers, there would be no need for a grievance officer. And yet I remain as busy as ever. My frustration stems from the fact that it is clear that at each of the five campuses (Merritt, COA, BCC, Laney, and the District Office), administrators routinely act without doing the necessary research. My hope is that as we continue to hire for administrative positions (as the ones we have leave for greener pastures), they will signal a change in culture where the faculty who teach the students are not seen as either the enemy, or an afterthought. 



Out in Force

More than 75 faculty members rallied at the Sept. 10 meeting of the Peralta Community College District Board of Trustees, urging a swift resolution to stalled contract talks between PFT and the district. CoA faculty turned out in force, among them (from left) Jeff Sanceri, Rick Greenspan, Phyllis Tappe, Mary Shaughnessy, Olga Fish, Rich Kaeser, Marissa Nakano, and Charles Washington. The strong showing by Peralta faculty was the first of two major actions at board meetings this fall. With negotiations now at impasse, trustees and district administrators can look forward to long Tuesday nights for the foreseeable future.


Negotiations NOTES

By Rick Greenspan
Chief Negotiator/Treasurer

AFTER NEARLY three months of financial stonewalling by the district, PFT filed paperwork with PERB (California Public Employment Relations Board) stating that negotiations are at an impasse. A state mediator began meeting with us in late November to help find a resolution.

Why declare impasse?

Without evidence, the district claims at every negotiations session to be in financial distress. Since early August, PFT has been asking the district for verifiable evidence that its account of its finances is accurate; it has been either unable or unwilling to oblige. Among other excuses, the administration claims its Finance Department is

**BOARD MEETING**
Tuesday, December 10, 7pm
333 E. Eighth St., Oakland
Bring Colleagues, Friends, and Family!

too understaffed to respond to PFT information requests.

Our contract expired June 30, 2019. We negotiated all summer, and by the beginning of fall, we had settled all outstanding issues except for salary (a category that includes the matter of parity for part-timers). At the beginning of fall semester, PFT was hopeful that we could settle salary and complete our negotiations within a few months. Then: nothing.

We've been asking questions like:

- ▶ What are you planning to do with the \$835,143 Peralta is getting from the state to hire new contract faculty?
- ▶ Are you actually using parcel tax money to fund Peralta classes, as promised to the voters?
- ▶ What about the money that Peralta is saving by drastically cutting classes this year?
- ▶ Based on the actual fall schedule and projected spring schedule, what would be the total cost of parity for our part-time faculty for 2018-19?


The district's response to these fundamental questions: crickets.

We are hoping that a state mediator will press the district to negotiate in good faith and answer our questions about their finances. But there are no guarantees that mediation will help get our questions answered or that it will help resolve the gridlock on salary and parity.

For that, we need your help.

What can you do to help secure a fair contract?

We're convinced that the only reason the district has moved at all on salary (from zero to a one-time COLA of 3.26% for 19-20 only) is because faculty have been showing up and making a stand at board meetings. Not only have faculty demonstrated and spoken out at board meetings, but students and Classified professionals have joined with faculty in demanding both across-the-board increases and parity for part-timers.

We need to keep up the pressure on the chancellor and the board. Everyone needs to get involved, come to board meetings, email the chancellor and the board, participate in college meetings, and work together to get the salary increases that Peralta faculty deserve. 

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simply no money available for part-time parity or other raises. PFT has pointed to sources of revenue, using the district's own documentation to support our claims, but we've been told that our data "do not paint an accurate picture of the district's finances." We've not been provided with any clarity on what, precisely, is wrong with the data we've produced. So we've declared impasse, and now we must stand up together for a fair contract.

In my time as PFT president (and even before as a department chair and grievance officer), I have watched so many things happen that didn't seem right. I've lamented the fact that I couldn't get supplies for my chemistry classes, watched the board receive reports that I'd never seen despite my

involvement in the shared governance bodies and District Academic Senate, raised questions about the use of taxpayer dollars to maintain administrative positions while classes got cut, and presented a slideshow on the sad state of our facilities. I've stood up with other faculty to question district decisions and often felt like my voice wasn't being heard. And I know that others feel the same way because they tell me.

Depressingly, our new chancellor has already said that our contract campaign "is going to drag on." Now is the time for us to stand up and be heard—loudly. Together we can make a difference in the lives of the part-time faculty who make up the bulk of our teachers. Together we can settle a contract and shift our energy towards saving our classes and our colleges for our students. **Together we can show our community what solidarity looks like and why it's important to stand up for what's right.**

Jennifer Shanoski
President, PFT, AFT Local 1603



Part-time rep Francis Howard (left) and CTE rep Matthew Silverberg pack the boardroom to push for part-time parity. BCC brothers Scott Hoshida (left) and Tim Rose (below) joined the action.