



# UNION NEWS

OCTOBER 2006 VOLUME XXVI, NO.1

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FEDERATION OF TEACHERS  
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## CCI SIGNATURE GATHERING CAMPAIGN HEATS UP

By Chuck Van Patten

MOMENTUM GATHERING TO RAISE ANOTHER \$700K TO FUND EFFORT

### IT DOESN'T HAPPEN VERY OFTEN.

Rarely is there a time like this when teachers can significantly reform higher education public policy, but that's what we can do now by qualifying the Community College Initiative (the "Community College Governance, Funding Stabilization, and Student Fee Reduction Act") for the 2008 ballot.

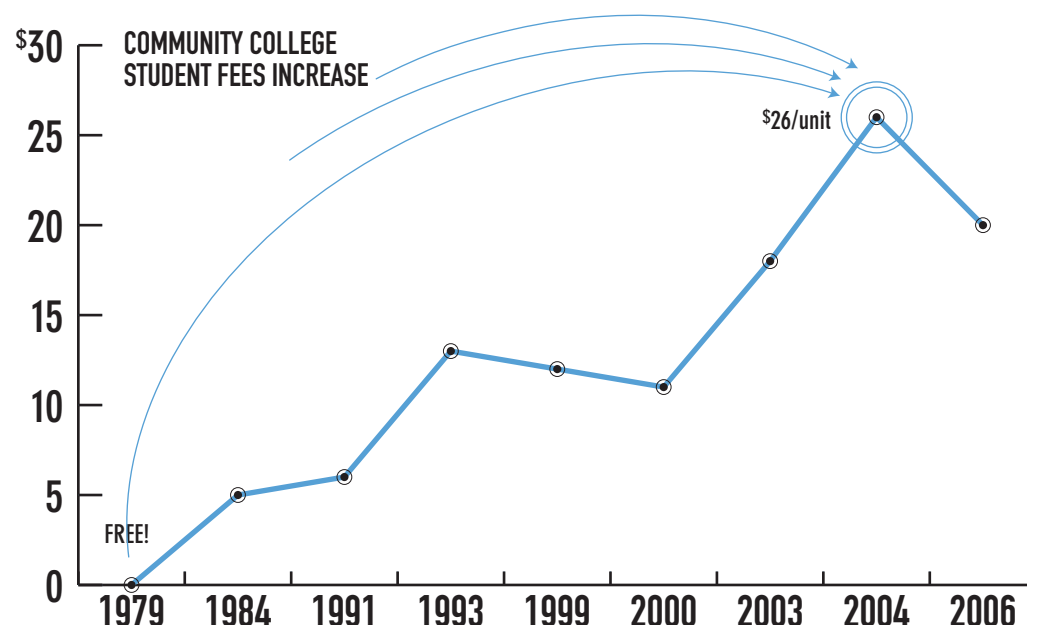
#### WHY DO WE NEED TO REFORM OUR COLLEGES?

The 1960 Master Plan for Higher Education guaranteed a college education to all Californians. This open-access system of higher education served the baby boom generation well. I was typical of my generation, and because of inexpensive higher education I was able to become a college teacher—even though my father was a rough neck in

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## THE STATE BUDGET & THE STATE OF LOS RIOS

It seemed that budgets have been on the forefront of union discussion at the beginning of the semester, especially after faculty received their retro check. That retro was one of the largest ever in the District, and the increase in the overall salary schedule was much better than I anticipated. It is a testament to the fiscal management of the District that we continue to have significant raises and have never laid off a full time faculty member even in the worst of financial times. Some might call it a conservative approach to budgeting, some might say the only reason the District lets go of a dollar is to get a better grip, but I think that this methodical approach has served us well in both good and bad fiscal times. LRCFT has always valued the fiscal management and health of the District, but there are times when it seems to a faculty member that the District is penny pinching when they are actually trying to strictly follow the contract. For example, a number of faculty have run into problems with personal necessity, personal business, and bereavement leaves. Even when leaves have been approved by the Area Dean, faculty have come back to a notice that their leave was not approved by the District and may have a reduction in pay. We hope that we can work out an acceptable protocol for the approval of leaves, and prevent faculty from experiencing a loss in pay in what they see as a legitimate leave approved by the District (isn't the Area Dean the District?). But, right now it is better to avoid being in this situation in the first place. Please read the "Leaves with Pay" section of the contract carefully, and if you have any question, contact an LRCFT representative.

I hope that by the time you are reading this column, the Governor has signed the budget currently on his desk. The budget formula for community colleges (SB 361) contains some critical funding for faculty in our District. First, the Governor had vetoed out the funding needed to maintain both the part-time office hour and the part-time medical benefits programs. I don't understand the reasoning behind the Governor's decision to stick it to the part-timers, but in Consultation Council the faculty groups such as the California Federation of Teachers, Faculty Association of California Community Colleges, and the State Academic Senate all lobbied the Community College System and Chancellor Drummond to place those items back into the system budget for next year. Gratefully, it was agreed upon.



Second, the legislature failed to include the money to hire more full time faculty in order to make improvement toward the 75:25 ratio. In Los Rios the full time faculty percentage is currently at 64.2%, so we need the money to hire full time faculty above the "faculty obligation number." This line item of \$45 million was negotiated back into the budget proposal through Consultation Council.

**IT IS A TESTAMENT TO THE FISCAL MANAGEMENT OF THE DISTRICT THAT WE CONTINUE TO HAVE SIGNIFICANT RAISES AND HAVE NEVER LAID OFF A FULL TIME FACULTY MEMBER EVEN IN THE WORST OF FINANCIAL TIMES.**

Third, there is \$159 million in equalization money, of which Los Rios will get approximately \$5.8 million. Fourth, there is \$100 million in one-time-only funds, of which Los Rios will receive approximately \$4.3 million. For the faculty portion we have discussed the use of those funds to start up a post-retirement medical supplement program. For a post-retirement medi-

cal program to work we may also need to contribute a continual portion of our salary. Exactly how much and details of the benefit plan are what LRCFT and the District will be examining this year. A vote of LRCFT members will be required before any post-retirement medical program can be implemented. If you believe that a post-retirement medical supplement program is or is not an important priority, please let us know. Budget forecasters have predicted budget difficulties, starting next year when we have make to payments for Governor Schwarzenegger's voter approved "fiscal responsibility" bonds. It is difficult to see when we will have the opportunity to make a financial commitment for a program as costly as post-retirement medical supplement in the future. As always in Los Rios, we will plan carefully and move cautiously.

It was unfortunate that the new faculty orientation and reception conflicted with my other meetings, and I did not have the time to meet with all of you. I want to welcome all the new faculty and hope that your Los Rios experience will be as rewarding to you as it has been for many of us old timers. I know that you are focusing on your classes and on the new situation, however, at some point you will be asked to get

involved in the governance of the college. That may be as simple as becoming active in your department or area, getting assigned to a committee, working with the Academic Senate, or working with LRCFT. LRCFT would appreciate the help from any and all faculty members interested in contract or political issues. You don't have to be elected to the LRCFT Executive Board to be active. Think about participating in qualifying the Community College Initiative for the ballot, or helping us in working with either the California Federation of Teachers (CFT) or the Sacramento Central Labor Council (SCLC). For example, LRCFT and CFT are planning a Women's Rights Conference in March 2007 at the Sacramento Sheraton. If you might be interested in helping or giving a workshop, please call me. LRCFT will be working with the SCLC to promote the Community College Initiative, participating in phone banking and precinct walking for the upcoming November election, educating our local representatives in the California Legislature on our issues, helping in the United Way campaign, helping with Loaves and Fishes, and many others. If you have an interest and the time for any of the union activities, please let me know. LRCFT can only be effective if we all work together. ■

the oil fields of Long Beach and my grandfather was a sharecropper from Iowa.

When voters approved Prop 13 in 1978, fees started emerging in the previously free California community colleges. When the periodic and cyclical budget crises occurred over the past two decades, fees usually went up. In 1984, for the first time, fees went up to \$5. In 1991 they went to \$6. In 1993 they jumped to \$13. In good budget years they dropped to \$12 in 1999 and \$11 in 2000. The bad years came again and in 2003 they soared to \$18 and in 2004 they skyrocketed to \$26. The budgetary crisis has subsided, so now they are down to \$20. The next time there is a crisis, history suggests, the governor or legislature will want to balance the budget on the backs of students.

In essence, it was a series of budget crises and short-sighted legislative solutions that killed the Master Plan, without any rational public discussion. Officially, the Master Plan is still on the books, but now it is a dream instead of the reality it was when I was a community college and CSU student in the 1970s. The public policy that served my generation so well and gave California a highly trained workforce was dismantled by a tyranny of government accountants who denied access to higher education to today's students from the working poor and lower middle-class.

The data supports the claim. The dramatic fee increases have caused an enrollment decline in the California community colleges of .07% for every 1.0% increase in fees, according to historic elasticity analyses; indeed, the community college system loses up to 15,000 students for every one dollar increase in fees. This is just very bad public policy and it is especially bad for California's future.

At-risk and poor students, obviously, are the most vulnerable to fee increases -- students for whom rent and groceries often must be a higher priority than fees and textbooks. The Californians most in need of higher education to escape the marginal fringes of society are denied access through fee instability and increases. However, this problem is not just an issue of social justice and fairness. An extra absurdity is that baby boomers will be leaving the work force soon, they will be taking their work-skills with them, and the Master Plan no longer serves the purpose of training the next generation in the skills needed to replace retiring workers. In Plato's Euthyphro, Socrates asked what gardener would tend to the old plants, and not to the



young? The tragic answer is, of course, only the gardener who soon does not want a garden.

#### HOW WOULD THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE INITIATIVE REFORM OUR COLLEGES?

It doesn't happen very often.

However, we are now living a rare moment where we can reverse the trend. By qualifying the Community College Initiative on the 2008 ballot we can return California to a state that gives its citizens educational opportunities and invests in its future.

The Community College Initiative would result in three major reforms.

First, the Initiative will reduce student fees to \$15 per semester unit while also restricting both the amount and probability of any future fee increases. Consider how this alone will go far toward increased student access and student success.

Second, the Initiative establishes a minimal annual funding level for community colleges. This is necessary because California community colleges have been under-funded to the tune of a five billion dollar shortfall over the past decade and a half. Prop 98 funding formula for K-14—which legally entitled community colleges to 10.93% of Prop 98 monies—has never been followed. For obvious political reasons it has always been more tempting to address the budgetary shortfalls by reducing the weak community colleges rather than by under-funding the politically powerful K-12 system.

Under the Initiative, without raising taxes, Prop 98 would be changed to establish separate funding guarantees for the CCC system and the K-12. (Thus, K-12 is not hurt by the Initiative.) The Initiative would effectively split the existing Prop 98 funding guarantee for K-14 into one guarantee for K-12 and one for the community colleges. And at this hour the split is essential. K-12 enrollment is leveling off and is even projected to decline over the next several years. Meanwhile, the community colleges are expected to grow at a pace of two to three percent per year. Consequently, since Prop 98 is based primarily on K-12 enrollment, it will be even more disastrous for open-access to higher education if our funding remains connected to K-12.

Third, the Initiative would establish the autonomy of the CCC Board of Governors (BOG) from the governor's office and would enshrine the BOG and the community colleges in the California state constitution. The result would be that the California community college system would be more like the UC and CSU system and less connected to K-12. The Initiative also protects local community college districts and their locally-elected boards. Faculty should not yawn at these governance reforms. Because of the Rodda Act for unions and AB 1725 for senates, the faculty have a legally mandated role in governance. Thus, the more independent our system is, the greater the opportunity is for faculty to function effectively and powerfully in governance.

#### WHAT CAN YOU DO TO REFORM OUR COLLEGES?

Indeed, it doesn't happen very often.

Remarkably, we really do have the chance to reform the community college system and align it more with the Master Plan.

But that won't happen by wishing, or by waiting for someone else to take action.

The Attorney General has given us until January 22, 2007 to get 600,000 qualified signatures statewide. That means effectively that we need one million signatures by early January. This would give us time to verify the signatures, separate the wheat from the dandelion and still have enough harvested to meet the legal minimum.

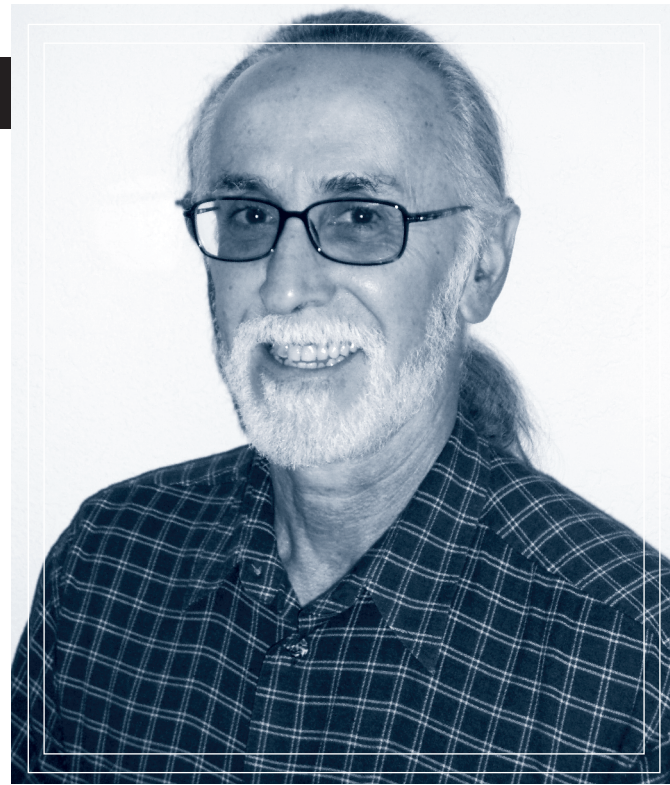
We need \$1.5 million. As I write this article on the fifth anniversary of 9/11, we have about \$850,000 in contributions.

**...WHAT GARDENER WOULD TEND TO THE OLD PLANTS, AND NOT TO THE YOUNG? THE TRAGIC ANSWER IS, OF COURSE, ONLY THE GARDENER WHO SOON DOES NOT WANT A GARDEN.**

We need you to make donations and gather signatures. Contact your local LRCFT representatives listed in this publication for donation envelopes, signature petitions and voter registration forms. If you are contacted, please pitch in and help.

Failing to qualify the Initiative for the 2008 ballot must not be the Waterloo for the California community colleges. If we fail, it will be a very long time before we have the opportunity to bring about reform of this significance. If we fail, the big dogs of Sacramento will think that we are weak and it will be harder than ever to lobby effectively at the Statehouse. We must succeed. We need your help.

Because it doesn't happen very often. ■



## WHILE SOME CHOOSE TO LIE DOWN, THE UNION DECIDES TO TAKE A STAND

While towels were being thrown in up and down the state, the LRCFT decided to stand and fight the attempt by Pick-A-Prof (PAP) to fill its coffers by using what the Union believes is confidential information. The information that PAP is seeking is student grades from all classes of more than ten students. PAP then will eventually sell the information to students looking for “easy” grading faculty. PAP’s possession of this information would mean, for example, that if three instructors teach English 1A, PAP will print charts showing the percentage of As, Bs, etc. given by each faculty member, per course. In this way, PAP offers students the opportunity to select particular classes or sessions based on perceived “easier” graders.

Los Rios faculty and faculty throughout the state are extremely disturbed at PAP’s requests, believing that the revelation of the actual grades issued for each course by identified faculty member violates the individual academic freedom rights of the faculty as guaranteed in their collective bargaining agreements and under state law. Faculty also have fears that revealing this information will adversely impact educational objectives and may reduce or eliminate employment for faculty with high standards. These objections are mirrored by faculty throughout the nation.

Unfortunately, however, the PAP juggernaut already has claimed the University of California at Davis (Actually, UC Davis had disclosed grades to PAP a few years ago based on a similar request, without informing the UC legal office of that request and its response), the California State University system and at least one other community college district, in addition to Los Rios. In a July 21 letter to a representative of PAP, the District’s legal counsel, Jan Sherry, wrote, in part, “Despite our strong moral and ethical objections to your request, we conclude your request calls for documents that we are legally required to produce under the California Public Records Act.” The main issue confronting the District in deciding whether to contest PAP’s request was the very distinct possibility that a judge would order the District to pay for PAP’s legal fees. Since PAP has hired a high profile law firm, those expenses could be considerable.

### WHO IS BEHIND PAP?

PAP is a subsidiary, as it were, of the MAS Acquisition XLIX Corporation (XLIX). According to its own prospectus summary filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission, XLIX describes itself as, “a vehicle to acquire or merge with a business. Our management believes that our characteristics as a reporting public shell company will make us an attractive combination candidate.” XLIX was incorporated in 1997 with absolutely no capital.

Interestingly, the same folks who brought us XLIX also brought us the XXXV Corporation and the XXXVI Corporation, all with the same person serving as CEO, treasurer and director. That same person has also been named as a defendant in SEC civil actions. But, that’s another story.

### BASIS FOR UNION’S CHALLENGE OF PAP

The LRCFT has made it clear that it disagrees with the District’s analysis and the decision to provide the information PAP has requested. In a July 18 letter to Sherry, the Union wrote, “We believe that the public interest is clearly better served by not providing the information that PAP has requested. We believe that grading policies and practices are an essential aspect of the academic freedom rights articulated in the collective bargaining agreement and that the public’s interest is clearly better served by not undermining that indispensable principle of higher education.”

In addition to the academic freedom issue, the Union also believes that providing the information, which experience shows allows students to choose instructors based solely on grade distribution, may have an adverse impact on the employment of adjunct faculty by allowing students to migrate to those classes taught by instructors with more lenient grading practices, while those instructors with more rigorous standards will suffer from a lack of enrollment in their classes, possibly leading to class cancellations and fewer employment opportunities. In the clash between PAP’s “right” to make a profit and the employment of citizens of this state, it would seem that the public’s interest in the latter plainly outweighs the interest of PAP to post grade distributions on its for-profit, password protected Web site.

### DECIDING HOW TO ADDRESS THE ISSUES RAISED?

The Union considered various approaches to the problems of how to contest the District’s decision to provide the information and to PAP’s demand for the information.

One tactic would have the Union seek injunctive relief in Superior Court. In essence, the Union would be asking the Court to stop the District from providing the information PAP was seeking. To do so would have required the posting of a bond equal to the amount of money deposited by PAP, plus funds equal to the amount of money PAP spent in anticipation of receiving the information. Factoring into that the cost of the Union’s attorneys would have made this approach prohibitively expensive. The Union could have filed what is called an “unfair labor practice charge” with the Public Employment Relations Board (PERB), the state office responsible for enforcing laws governing relations between public employers and employees. What convinced the Union not to pursue this tactic was a legal argument posited by the Union’s attorney.

One of the first steps the Union took was to make a demand that the District negotiate the release of the information to PAP. In this “demand letter” the Union argued that “the information could intrude on academic freedom of bargaining unit members, including the right of faculty to keep confidential their overall grading information.” The District’s response raised questions as to whether academic freedom was a subject that the District was bound by law to nego-

tiate with the Union. Thus, the District rejected the Union’s demand based on its belief that the Union did not have a right to negotiate over academic freedom matters. For the Union to contest that refusal would have required filing the unfair labor practice charge with (PERB). Without revealing too much of the Union attorney’s reasoning (the administration has been known to read these articles more closely than any faculty member), filing an unfair labor practice charge would have meant giving the current anti-union members of PERB (a board comprised of five members appointed by the governor) the opportunity to restrict bargaining over academic freedom matters, using an obscure opinion by former Attorney General Dan Lundgren, in which he opined that academic freedom was not negotiable and, indeed, did not even exist. We could not run the risk of being part of setting a dangerous precedent.

One approach the Union is seriously considering is to seek legislation, in conjunction with its state affiliate, the California Federation of Teachers, along with other faculty advocate organizations such as FACCC, that would restrict California’s Public Records Act to exclude the type of information PAP is seeking. In drafting such legislation, care will have to be taken not to give employers the opportunity to expand the Public Records Act exceptions to prevent information from going to faculty and other school employees.

In addition to seeking legislation, the Union directed its attorney, Robert Bezemek, who helped author AB 1725, who also was the attorney who represented plaintiffs in the Cervisi decision that gave adjunct faculty the right to receive unemployment benefits between semester breaks, and who recently helped author the language for the Community College Initiative, to prepare a brief for Attorney General Lockyer that provides a detailed analysis of the issues involved in PAP’s request.

The Union believes that providing the grading information to PAP is one more step on the road to total corporate control of higher education. The Union will continue to oppose and fight against the continuing trend toward the commodification of higher education that the PAP request represents. We will keep you informed of our efforts and what you, individually and collectively, can do to help implement a vision of higher education that respects the rights of faculty to maintain rigorous academic standards. ■





## DEFINING FACULTY BY THE WEAKEST LINKS

Control of one's work and control of the workplace is a labor management conflict rooted in a history of violence and spilled blood. The often violent conflict over control still exists today. Just use your favorite search engine and type in "Homestead Steel strike" and then "Radio Free Asia" and read about it for yourself. In the California community college world of the 21st century, fortunately we're not killing and dying over the struggle between management control of the workplace and faculty control of our professional work but the conflict is alive and seems at times to be insoluble. As an example at the community college system level, most administrators would say that "flexibility" is the only reason that the majority of community college faculty members are part-time and temporary. Those us who do the academic work know that the more likely reason is a cheap and controllable workforce. Even with pay parity for part-timers, the ability to control will still be the attractiveness of a having huge number of faculty whose very job security is often contingent on more than just enrollment numbers.

Full-time faculty on the tenure-track must also often subjugate control of what they feel is academically correct in order to get to the professional security of due process provided by tenure. Once a faculty member earns tenure, the balance of power to control academic work is shifted but the struggle continues. At the local level for instance, for more than a decade, the negotiating teams of the LRCFT and the LRCCD have been deadlocked over the issue of a flexible work week for faculty. In the brave but not so new world of online teaching and learning, the work week conflict has sharpened. Those faculty colleagues who are encouraged and have agreed to get out on the bleeding edge to develop and deliver online courses are starting to question the disconnect between the tremendous effort required to provide students the opportunity to telecommute while still being required to physically be on campus every day for five consecutive days. Several faculty members have written to me about this and related control issues in the past two weeks.

Writes one colleague, "In my last department meeting we were told we were supposed to be here one hour a day, five days a week and that someone will be checking each of our schedules to be sure we are doing that. The requirement to come on campus for one hour, when I have no classes on campus, takes away

from my ability to be with students online, and sorely limits the time frame in which I can do so. It makes my job exhausting because of the commuting. It leaves me no time or energy for course development." Another faculty member wrote, "I see more students in my office during non-published office hours than during office hours, because I am usually in my office 10-15 hours per week, not the five required. I am willing to develop new ways of teaching classes and new classes if I can provide students the help they need in a way I think is best. I don't think that forcing us to use the old model is the best way to help students and encourage instructors to do more." Yet another frustrated faculty member sent the following, "My fellow faculty and I—here at ARC and some at SCC—are wondering what's up with the dean's discretion to make faculty work 5 days a week or sometimes only 4. My spouse drove 1 hour each way on a day she had no classes, to sit in her office for an hour. Rumors are rife that management may lean on deans to keep all faculty on campus, esp. on Fridays."

The writer continues, "While many classes, labs, and their teachers do have daily schedules, I want to suggest at least 2 compelling arguments for community college teaching in the 21st century that support flexible faculty work schedules:

1) California is about to legislate to reduce global warming, and has strict air quality control, etc. For college teachers to drive in (via freeway, usually) when they have no scheduled classes to meet violates the spirit of every 'spare the air' state incentive and policy and adds to freeway gridlock. Many state employees already work 4-day weeks.

2) With imail, zipmail, email, conference calls, school websites, 'blackboard' and on-line quizzing, homework, receiving, marking, and returning papers via Word, etc., and posting grades, today's teachers have an incredible dazzling array of ways to contact students and do teaching work from home or off-campus computer/phone. It is archaic to require an hour in a room when students make use of the above technology 99% of the time."

These are but three of the many tense messages and conversations that I have heard from faculty at all four colleges in the past few weeks and I think that I know why. As we begin to create class schedules for implementing the compressed academic calendar for the fall 2007 semester, there is an administrative fear that the two-day block scheduling for the majority of classes will result in a loss of control of the historical five-day work week. Unfortunately, the most convenient tool that some administrators think they have to keep control of five days of faculty face time is to misuse scheduling of the office hour for the purpose of enforcing faculty attendance rather than for service to students.

I do not mean to broad brush nor is my intent to vilify our administrative colleagues. I would ask that they not do the same to faculty by continuing to define us by the weakest links among us. Certainly there are slackers among the full-time faculty who do not give their professional best to provide service to the college and they will take every opportunity to shirk that aspect of their responsibility. This behavior existed before there were online classes or a compressed semester. However, misusing the scheduling of faculty office hours to enforce attendance is the easy way out. There are more difficult but more appropriate solutions to single out and remediate those folks, the most obvious of which is to communicate clearly and to use the performance review process with courage.

In fairness, I know that the instructional administrators are already working hard to come up with creative options for the maximum and effective use of our college facilities by scheduling classes from Monday through Saturday. Most faculty members and the LRCFT are very supportive of this goal. Student access is increased, enrollment is increased, employment opportunity is increased, productivity is increased, and ultimately, financial security is increased. Use of facilities and full-time faculty during the Friday and Saturday block is the challenge.

**... SO WE WILL REPRESENT ANY FACULTY MEMBER WHO IS PRESSURED OR FORCED TO SCHEDULE AN OFFICE HOUR ON A DAY WHEN THAT FACULTY MEMBER DOES NOT HAVE A CLASS SCHEDULED.**

One option is to make Friday and Saturday classes more attractive to students by scheduling more of the oversubscribed classes on those days and maybe offering free parking. Another option is to move most of the governance committee meetings to Friday. The most attractive option for many faculty members is to schedule ongoing instructional improvement or "flex" activities on Friday. The worst option is to schedule a mandatory office hour on Friday (or any other day) for faculty members who have no classes scheduled on that day.

In fact, the LRCFT holds that to do so is a violation of the contract, so we will represent any faculty member who is pressured or forced to schedule an office hour on a day when that faculty member does not have a class scheduled. Article 4.7.2 of the 2005 – 2008 agreement between LRCFT and LRCCD states,

"One (1) office hour per day shall be scheduled on all days when classes are scheduled and total less than six (6) hours for that given day and count as part of the 25-hour work week."

If you agree to scheduling your office hour on days when you do not have classes scheduled that is your choice. If you do not agree and such has occurred, please contact your LRCFT college president (Diana Hicks at ARC, Chuck Van Patten at CRC, KC Boylan at FLC, or Annette Barfield at SCC) and LRCFT will intervene on your behalf to maintain control of your professional work. Fortunately, we can do this without bloodshed or violence. ■

# AFT CONVENTION, BOSTON

REPORTS:

By Diana Hicks, Reona James, Kristine Fertel, & Talver Germany

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AFT  
CONVENTION

OCTOBER 2006 VOLUME XXVI, NO.1

## DIANA HICKS, LRCFT ARC PRESIDENT

The AFT Convention in Boston brought a cornucopia of opportunities. This mid-July biennial convention is where the AFT, as a body, decides the coming years' political agenda at the national level. Our LRCFT representatives, including me, also vote on next term's AFT top officers, including the vice presidents to serve on the Executive Council at the national level. This council position is one of the important reasons we need to send our local representatives (LRCFT and other CFT unions across the state) so that we have California representation, and in this year's case, we re-elected Mary Bergen. Before we voted on this terms' resolutions, we publicly debated them, including such subjects as union organizing, higher education, healthcare reform, public services, and—the high profile mandate—No Child Left Behind, an absurd mandate as it does not provide adequate funding to support the requirements. Although engaging in and watching these sometimes heated debates are informative and entertaining, for me, some of the most satisfying and memorable times were also getting together and breaking bread over dinner with some of my LRCFT Executive Board colleagues, as it is always rewarding, for it helps us forge closer bonds with one another and work more effectively as an organization representing Los Rios faculty.



## REONA L. JAMES, NURSE, CRC & LRCFT GRIEVANCE CHAIR

Although it is always interesting to see national figures at the AFT convention, the person who most impressed me this year was Jane Alao. She accepted the Bayard Rustin Award for the Amel Centre for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Victims of Torture of Darfur, Sudan at the AFT Human Rights Award Luncheon. She put a face on the suffering of survivors of genocide in her country. As a Health professional, I was humbled by the problems she deals with on a daily basis. Her contribution to the daily lives of others is inspirational.



One reason I was so touched by Alao's efforts is that I have a friend at Cosumnes River College, Mathilde Mukantabana, who also endured genocide in her home country of Rwanda. Many of her family members and friends died. She too, works tirelessly to assist survivors, many of whom were orphaned by the genocide. Although these issues aren't given daily headlines, people are still suffering the effects of the

killing years later. I was reminded at the AFT convention that there is something that we can do to help. I plan to do so on a continuing basis.

Thank you for allowing me to attend the 2006 AFT Convention as a delegate from LRCFT. It was a valuable experience.

## KRISTINE FERTEL, LRCFT ARC COLLEGE REPRESENTATIVE

As an AFT delegate, I had expected long sessions filled with passionate debate over numerous resolutions; I hadn't expected to be personally inspired. However, when Han Dongfang, a Chinese labor activist now working to represent Chinese migrant workers, spoke, it broadened my perspective on organized labor. Listening to his struggles while imprisoned for 22 months for beginning the Beijing Autonomous Workers Federation as well as hearing him say, "Yes, when we organize a union, people are sent to prison. We are sad. But the trade union movement does not believe in tears, we believe in solidarity," I was moved. Realizing that the unions many are ready to quietly give up nowadays are what Dongfang says he "would be a dead person already" without was powerful.



## TALVER GERMANY, LRCFT FLC/EDC COLLEGE REPRESENTATIVE

The 79th annual convention of the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) was clearly a success. They succeeded in helping the convention delegates communicate the critical role of political action in representing the interests of our members throughout all levels of our union. They also succeeded in reenergizing the union members and gave us specific tools to reenergize our members on a local level.



The theme of this year's conference, Count Me In, showcased many ways members could be engaged at the grass roots level to make our union and communities stronger. You can be counted in, too. You can visit [www.aft.org/CountMeIn](http://www.aft.org/CountMeIn) to learn about and sign up for volunteer opportunities.

With three full days of motivating speakers, opportunities to interact with and hear legislators, networking, interesting breakout sessions, exhibits, and awards, the members were fully engaged and eager to learn as much as possible.

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I was assigned to the Civil & Human Rights committee. We worked diligently to hash out the issues and voted on various amendments related to education, civil rights, and gender equity to present to the larger body.

Although I was already fully committed, I left the conference with an even stronger commitment to the union as a movement for strengthening our local community and the nation. ■

# ANGELEDES & TAXES: THE REAL STORY

Courtesy of the CFT Website

You may have seen the Schwarzenegger commercials attacking his gubernatorial rival, Phil Angelides, for his plan to raise taxes. Or seen the news stories reporting Schwarzenegger's charge that Angelides "wants to raise your taxes by at least \$18 billion. He wants to tax virtually everyone, everywhere" (L.A. Times, August 24, 2006).

These attacks are the feverish product of Schwarzenegger's consultants, the most senior of whom have been borrowed from Karl Rove to aid Schwarzenegger's reelection campaign. Like the infamous "Swift Boat" lies during the 2004 presidential campaign, they have virtually no basis in fact. But like those well-financed myths, these much-repeated falsehoods have had their intended effect.

As a result, many people believe Phil Angelides wants to tax them. But unless the "them" is a corporation hiding money in tax loopholes, or the top 1 per cent of income earners—individuals who make \$250,000 per year, or couples that make \$500,000 per year—it isn't true. Those are the only tax increases Angelides has proposed (the same temporary increases that Republican Pete Wilson implemented in the early 1990s), and he has done so, responsibly, to support his proposals to expand public education and other necessary social services. His progressive tax proposals would raise \$5 billion, not \$18 billion, and they wouldn't affect you and me—unless you are richer than 99 % of the population.

Recent studies show that the gap between the richest Americans and the rest of us has grown over the past decade to the biggest difference in more than 75 years. The wealthiest one per cent of the population now holds nearly 35 per cent of the country's assets. At the same time, Bush's tax cuts for the rich have tilted the burden for supporting public services to you and me.

In other words, the superrich can well afford to help out with a little tax fairness. In California alone, the top one percent of income earners has received more than \$17 billion in tax breaks from the federal government in the last several years, thanks to G. W. Bush's regressive tax policies. Angelides' proposal would ask

California's richest to pony back just \$3 billion of that windfall per year.

Angelides has actually proposed a modest tax reduction for middle class and working families, as well as helping out with roll-backs of Schwarzenegger's increased college fees—which, despite the governor's pledge not to raise any taxes at all, are in fact disguised taxes on working people. Angelides would also create a commission to make recommendations on how to close corporate tax loopholes such as the ones that allow 46 businesses with income over one billion dollars to hide profits in offshore accounts and pay no state taxes.

When you add up the numbers, between Angelides' proposals to increase taxes on the rich and corporations (\$5.1 billion) and his middle and working class tax cut proposals (\$1.4 billion) the helping programs of the state—education, health care, and public safety—come up \$3.7 billion ahead, without any harm to you and me. So how has Schwarzenegger gotten away with his campaign of lies?

Well funded political campaigns can afford to repeat an idea over and over in the mass media until, like an advertising jingle, people are unconsciously humming it in their sleep. The process works especially well when it takes an idea already resonant ("I don't like taxes") and wraps it with plausible sounding assertions ("he wants to tax you") around a kernel of truth (Angelides is proposing taxes). Never mind that a key piece of information (the tax proposals are only for the rich and corporations) is left out of the picture. If you're not paying close attention, details don't matter.

Ernest Hemingway famously replied to F. Scott Fitzgerald's observation that "The rich are different from you and me" with "Yes, they have more money." At this historical moment, we might add, "Way more—and it's past time to share." Unlike our current governor, Phil Angelides will ask the very rich to do some fair sharing, so that educators (and health care providers, and police and firefighters) can do their jobs properly. These ideas deserve our full attention. And Angelides deserves our full support. ■

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ANGELEDES  
& TAXES

# YES ON 1D

Courtesy of the CFT Website

Prop 1D, the education bond measure, is part of the omnibus bond package placed on the ballot by the legislature and governor. It enjoys wide bi-partisan support. It would issue a \$10.4 billion bond for school and university construction.

Although voters approved Prop 39 in 2000, which lowered the supermajority necessary for passage of school bonds from 2/3 to 55%, and have passed many local school bond measures since then, the state's school population is the largest in the nation and continues to grow. The backlog in construction needs matches the state's size.

One welcome feature of Prop 1D is that fully half of the higher education portion of funding would go to community colleges, \$1.5 billion, and could be used as matching funds to leverage community college bond issue monies. This reflects the importance of the community colleges in educating the greatest numbers of the state's post-secondary students.

Prop 1D not only addresses general K-12 and higher education needs. The measure earmarks a portion of its funding (\$500 million) for career technical and vocational facilities, providing a crucial boost for the majority of students who will never receive a college degree. It will help make sure that our children's classrooms are wired for the latest teaching and learning technologies. Prop 1D will deal with school safety issues, including earthquake retrofitting, school security, playground safety, and asbestos removal.

Prop 1D invests in the state's future. ■

## Vote YES on Prop 1D.

**THANKS**  
TO ALL FACULTY WHO HAVE SIGNED  
COMMITMENT CARDS TO DONATE  
MONEY & ENERGY TO THE  
**COMMUNITY COLLEGE INITIATIVE**

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YES ON  
PROP 1D

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