

# CFT CONVENTION

By Colette Harris-Mathews, Ed. D, CRC Communication Studies

At the March California Federation of Teachers convention I had the opportunity to elect a new CFT President, Secretary/Treasurer, Vice Presidents and approve CFT policies through resolutions. The level of respectful, yet competitive campaigning at the convention clearly indicated the desire of candidates to lead CFT at a time where unions are under increased scrutiny nationwide. I increased my union knowledge and received relevant information during the general session workshops: Strategies for Successful Partnerships with the Interfaith Religious Community, Professional Issues in Higher Education and Legal updates for Community College Faculty.

Convention speakers emphasized the importance of education from a legislative perspective. Tom Torlakson, state Superintendent of Public Instruction, Judy Chu, U.S. House of Representatives, and California State Senator Loni Hancock reflected on legislation affecting unions and their individual work in education. The most impactful speaker, Wisconsin AFT President

By Sandy Warmington, SCC Librarian

The 2011 California Federation of Teachers Convention in Manhattan Beach was lively as well as enlightening. The theme "Stand Up, Stand Together, Speak Out" was echoed throughout the three days. One of my favorite moments was the presentation by Bryan Kennedy, president of the Wisconsin Federation of Teachers. Even though I was familiar with the basic story, Kennedy's description of what happened and the accompanying video made it come alive for me. The long standing ovation was well-deserved and expressed a feeling of true solidarity with workers in Wisconsin.

Another activity that resonated with me was the showing and discussion of the issues depicted in the film "Race to Nowhere." The director, Vicki Abeles, asks the question. "Are the young people of today prepared to step fully and productively into their future?" This film

By James Telles, FLC Librarian

The theme for the 2011 CFT Convention was "Stand Up, Stand Together, Speak Out!" Particularly moving and timely was the panel discussion on the first morning. Yes, a panel discussion was moving. The panel members were all participants in the Free Speech and civil rights movements in California. They were ordinary students who saw injustices in our society and took a stand against them. Their powerful discussion of the events and motivations invigorated me for the rest of the convention and beyond.

It is time for us to react. Nearly all Americans are suffering and are rightfully angry, yet their anger is being

Bryan Kennedy, highlighted protests in Wisconsin and work being done to protect the collective bargaining rights for all unions.

The Panel Discussion: Education and Freedom of Speech gave an inspiring background of the free speech movement in education. Stan Oden, CSUS Professor and UC Davis student activist, detailed his response to the death of Martin Luther King. King's death engendered Oden's activism and demonstrated how one powerful event led to a lifetime of working for the rights of others to fair treatment.

My first experience as a CFT Delegate was enlightening. The convention slogan, "Stand Up. Stand Together. Speak Out!" reminds each of us that we have a responsibility to remain vigilant to union concerns. We also should appreciate the extent of the work done on behalf of union members and support of the work of our union leaders! ■

allows us to "hear from students who feel they are being pushed to the brink, educators who worry students aren't learning anything substantive, and college professors and business leaders, concerned their incoming employees lack the skills needed to succeed in the business world: passion, creativity, and internal motivation."

As a parent and an instructor I was deeply affected by this film and especially by the issue of whether students are being taught to think/reflect/extrapolate and therefore develop the abilities needed to survive in a complex society. The tendency of "teaching to the test" that has resulted in part from performance based measurements has had unforeseen and unintended consequences that are worth considering and further discussion. Hopefully this film will be playing soon at a campus near you. ■

funneled in the wrong direction. Educators and other public workers are scapegoats, used by politicians who don't want to compromise or make hard decisions. Their blind adherence to dogma and putting political careers ahead of what is best for the country makes compromise impossible. We know there is no basis in reality to their slogans that portray all public workers as parasites, yet this untruth and more are broadcast to the public every day. It is time to reach out to family, friends and, more importantly, strangers. We need to discuss rationally what really brought us to this new depression. Through compromise we can craft the practical solutions to get out of this mess and build a system that looks out for

everybody, not just a tiny percentage of our society.

Three days of workshops and subcommittees brought home the harsh realities we are all facing, but they also provided techniques and practices to counter and ameliorate these realities. From pre-K through the university, things are getting worse every day, but we press on, continuing to give our all to our students, our schools and our communities. We care, we sacrifice, and we fight. The public needs to see this truth. For me, one important point made by the panel keeps

By Dan Crump, ARC Librarian

I am actually more involved with the academic senate than the union, but I feel it is important to be informed about all areas of faculty leadership. That is why I was happy to have the chance to attend the recent CFT convention. It was very interesting to attend the meeting of the Community College Council in which I was able to hear about legislative issues affecting us, learn about the statewide conflicts about STRS pensions and find out details about the proposed merger between the community college sections of CFT and CTA. Many of the attendees stayed around for the social Friday evening--it was good to mix with colleagues throughout the state, connect with new folks and reconnect with old friends and just find out what is happening all around.

The General Sessions are always good to hear about general issues affecting all CFT members. And it was



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and student support, so that we can hire and mentor more of the best instructors out of our part-time pools, so that we can afford smaller class sizes. Just as critical, address economic class inequality in California. Often, our students miss class or fall behind on homework or don't take the time to get extra help because they must work, or care for their siblings or children, or assist their parents, or lack medical insurance, or all of these things. Many come from homes where they are the first to attend college, and familial and social support is limited.

We must expand college-based programs which reach into disadvantaged communities and increase the size and scope of categorical programs like EOPS and RISE. We must never forget the fact that working members of our students' families, and our student themselves, must find jobs which provide health care and pay a living wage. The more wealth is driven to the top, the more community colleges and the students we serve will suffer.

coming back to mind. Ordinary Americans have a set of values, a sense of what America really stands for. That is why the Free Speech and civil rights movements in the end were not just radical or revolutionary, but really an awakening of the whole country to what was right. This thought motivated me to get as much as I possibly could from the convention and to come home and share what I learned with friends and strangers alike. I encourage all union members to contact your local campus representatives and get involved. The country needs to be awakened again. ■

great to hear speeches from legislators who know education--Representative Judy Chu (she taught in CCCs in L.A. and East L.A. for 20 years) and California Senator Loni Hancock (author of bills on education reform, career academies and hands-on career exploration for high school students). It was also great to hear Wisconsin AFT leader Bryan Kennedy, who related his recent experiences with the governor and legislature in the Badger State. It included a video of some of the rallies--brrrr, it sure looked cold, but the energy exhibited by the participants was heart-warming to all of us!

I am thankful for the opportunity I had to attend the convention. The information I learned and the resources that I obtained will allow me to be a more effective participant in local and state activities to promote student success and to be a better faculty member overall. ■

Frankly, the use of SLO's by WASC/ACCJC, Administration, or any outside body to assess instruction reflects a simplistic, micro-management model which fails to comprehend accountability measures already in place at the community college and the nature of the academic profession. Faculty must do all we can to remain proactive. Improved outcomes will come not with attempting to whip educators into shape when we are already good at what we do, but from adequate funding and increased social equity. It is not a simple answer, but it is the truth.

Make no mistake: we are being lowered into a pot of warm water which may one day boil.

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