

CHIEF NEGOTIATOR'S REPORT

By KC Boylan

Negotiations may be moving forward at a rapid pace, but agreement has slowed to glacial speed, all while the state budget crisis continues to heat up. The consequence? We are frantically working to keep our heads above water. Contract negotiations in Los Rios have moved beyond limited discussions about non-monetary issues with the hope of improving the contract in small yet meaningful ways, to rearranging the deck chairs on a ship that feels like it's sinking.

Small teams of negotiators are continuing to meet and discuss the issues identified early on in the process: professional autonomy, college service and workweek issues, campus safety, special review. Meanwhile the negotiations team and the LRCFT Executive Board are seeking input from our members and discussing ways to keep the faculty bucket from running dry as Los Rios faces the worst cuts to hit community colleges in decades.

Contract negotiations may have slowed, and in some cases stalled altogether, but many of the issues continue to plague our members. One issue in particular has grown in urgency as FTE cuts at all of our colleges are being made: that issue is Preference. The reassurance that "Los Rios will not lay off employees" provides little solace to the hundreds of adjunct faculty who recognize that massive cuts to FTE will leave many of them looking for employment elsewhere. The cuts are here, and the question being negotiated is "How can we meet those cuts while still protecting the longevity rights of some of our most valued adjunct faculty?" Unfortunately, the answer still eludes us.

LRCFT campus leaders are working through their respective Faculty Workload Committees to identify FTE reduction guidelines or to actually make recommendations to cut specific sections. While the ideal approach would preserve a student centered schedule, balanced in the needs of our ever evolving mission, the unfortunate reality is that in our rush to finalize decisions before the semester's end too many classes are being targeted based on who is teaching them, not necessarily on student need. As each of the colleges have developed their scheduling and assignment processes over the years, the timelines for completing the schedules have also shifted based on individual college processes. The result is that adjunct faculty at one college may have been assured of an assignment, while adjunct at other colleges are still waiting to hear. Additionally, an early promise of a proposed assignment is not consistent with contract protections for preferenced adjunct faculty (Article 4.10.8), which align "initial assignment" with the receipt of a Tentative Class Schedule (TCS). LRCFT is committed to protecting the rights of all faculty; however, in this time of reduction, we are particularly diligent in enforcing the contractual protections for



those faculty who have earned preference.

While negotiations will continue on the issue of preference for assignments, discussions on other issues barely move forward, including revisions to the Special Review process, possible tracking options for college service, exploring alternative modalities for conducting office hours. With time running out for improving the contract, the negotiations team will focus on those areas where we believe progress

5

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can be made in spite of the uncertainty surrounding our financial future. Both LRCFT and LRCCD share a common interest in campus safety, and those discussions are still moving forward; likewise, both sides have agreed to continue the discussions around Professional Autonomy relative to computer privacy, intellectual property, and the appropriate levels of faculty involvement in and accountability for college planning processes. Though LRCFT and LRCCD remain far apart on many of the issues under Professional Autonomy, we still have time to determine a direction for future inquiry and action, if not to determine changes for the current contract.

Look for a final update before the end of the semester. ■