



UNION NEWS

OCTOBER 2011

AFT LOCAL 2279
2126 K STREET
P: 916-448-2452
F: 916-448-1480
www.lrcft.org

FACULTY AS SCAPEGOATS: ATTACK THEIR PENSIONS AND UNION

By Dean Murakami

The media frenzy concerning our pensions can be summarized by the recent news headlines from the Sacramento Bee and other news organizations.

Six-figure Pensions Surge for Sacramento County

\$100,000 Pension Club of Retirees in California is Booming

Six-figure Pensions SOAR for California School Administrators

Reform Public Pensions or Perish

These headlines and stories seem to imply that a teacher's pension of \$100,000 is typical; that we do not earn our pension or that we don't contribute towards our pension; that the state is the primary contributor to our pension system; and, that we are the primary cause of the state deficit. Unfortunately, these headlines seem to resonate with the public as reflected by these blog responders:

"It can change tomorrow if they just break the union contract and start acting responsibly."

"Time for candidates to run on platforms declaring war on public sector unions. It's us versus them, and there are way more of us, just need politicians with balls."

"But they must deserve it, with all the carpal tunnel they got from pushing those pencils around at work!"

"Only strong medicine that nearly kills the patient can wipe out a massive parasite infection, and parasites we have."

People making over \$100,000 in CalSTRS pensions are only 2% of retirees, are mostly administrators, and earn that level of pension only after a long career in the system. In addition, some of these retiree statistics combine the pension benefits of married couples when both participated in the CalSTRS system and one spouse has died. And, with the retirement of the baby boomers, it doesn't require a PhD to realize that the number of retirees will increase. And, most of those retirees will have spent many years serving the people of California.

We contribute 8% toward CalSTRS, the District contributes 8.25%. The State

IN THIS ISSUE

Faculty as Scapegoats	1
Performance Review Issues	3
CFT Appointment	4
Trouble Makers School	6
Chief Negotiator's Report	7
Elect Sharon Hendricks	8
Union Organizing at CRC	9
Working Class Org & Power	10
Hatred of the Working Class	13
Strategic Planning for LRCFT	14

contribution to all public employee pensions (CalSTRS and CalPERS) has actually declined over the years from 4% to about 2%. In addition, the contributions to CalSTRS by the employee, employer, and state are determined by the legislature, not by any contract with the unions. So is that 2% state contribution to pensions (\$5.1 billion total to CalSTRS & CalPERS combined) the primary cause of the state budget deficit? Did unions and our pensions cause the record unemployment and loss of sales tax? Did unions and our pensions cause the housing crisis and loss of property taxes to municipalities?

What about hybrid plans? CalSTRS has a hybrid plan that helps prevent spiking, called the Defined Benefit Supplement Program (DBSP). While we contribute 8% to CalSTRS, from January 1, 2001 through December 31, 2010, 2% (1/4

[continued on next page]

[from previous page]

of the contribution) went toward the DBSP. In addition, money paid for overtime, overload, summer school, intersession, stipends paid to department chairs, and any earnings above the yearly salary goes into the DBSP. The DBSP earns a 4.5% annual return to the employee.

There is no question that the loss of investment revenues in CalSTRS has increased the unfunded liability and we need to reverse that trend. Luckily, investment returns have picked up recently with CalSTRS reporting a 23.1% return which is the highest in 25 years. Unfortunately, it is not enough to make up for the investment losses during this recession. As a result, some level of pension reform will be necessary. However, it will be a question of whether it is done responsibly through recommendations from the CalSTRS Board or directly through the legislature and Governor or via the initiative process. It seems that everyone is an expert about our pensions, except us. There is no doubt that pension reform is on the way, but will public sentiment take away the pension benefits from all of us?

SB 27 (Simitian) would have made minor modifications to the CalSTRS DBSP and prevent a faculty member who retires from returning to teaching for six months. Thus, a faculty member who retires in May/June could not teach part time until the following January. In addition, the money owed to the retiree from the DBSP would be delayed for six months. While this legislation did not pass this year, it will be brought back in 2012 along with many other retirement bills. It seems that a number of legislators want to make news with their retirement reform packages.

A number of retirement initiatives have been filed with the Secretary of State's office and are in the signature gathering stage to qualify them for the November 2012 election. Here are some of them.

1. Modifies public employee pension benefits. Eliminate authority to set public employee retirement benefits by contract or collective bargaining. Initiative constitutional amendment.
 - a. You must be 62 years of age to receive retirement
 - b. Limits any retirement to 60% of highest 3 year average
 - c. Requires equal match of employer/employee contributions
 - d. Applies to all current employees



2. Requires minimum investment by public pension or retirement systems in California businesses. Initiative constitutional amendment.
 - a. 85% of funds must be invested in California
3. Increases income taxes on teachers, nurses, police officers, firefighters, and other public employees for pension income. Initiative constitutional amendment.
 - a. Tax public pensions over \$100,000 at 15%
 - b. Applies to STRS and PERS retirees
4. Increases retirement age for teachers, peace officers, and other public employees. Initiative constitutional amendment.
 - a. Must be 65 years of age for full retirement benefits

With these attacks on our pensions it is important that we have someone on the CalSTRS Board that will represent community college faculty. For the first time ever, community college faculty have the opportunity to elect someone to the CalSTRS Board in 2011.

It is not clear how many of these initiatives will get the necessary signatures to qualify them for the November election, but this is a determined group of tax reformers that only need one good corporate sponsor. We will keep you updated.

[continued on page 5]

PRESIDENTS REPORT

2

PERFORMANCE REVIEW ISSUES

By Kris Fertel

Your peer review team has recommended to not grant you tenure; or, you are being given an overall unsatisfactory on your peer review; or, you are informed you will have an extended or extra review. Nothing motivates faculty to meet with their union representatives more than concerns about their livelihood. At the end of each semester, college union presidents are confronted with a myriad of performance review issues. However, the best time to bring up such concerns is before things are being put in writing. You should begin thinking about this year's performance review right now.

Many faculty have misconceptions about performance review (a.k.a. Article 8). Performance review is not a punitive process developed by management; it is a contract issue that has been jointly developed and negotiated by faculty to ensure professionalism within the institution. It is your process for ensuring that we all continue to strive for and achieve excellence and that our district continues to be known for such excellence. Not taking it seriously disrespects who we are as educators. Believing that management controls it blinds you to when they are the ones abusing the process. For these reasons, when you are hired, union representatives make the following recommendations:

- Get to know Article 8. There are specific criteria for what constitutes professional behavior for all faculty members. Meet them. There are specific guidelines, timetables and procedures for peer review that must be followed. Know them.

- Record everything. Think about what you do for your department, your area, your profession, your campus and the community at large beyond the scope of your daily work. Serving on committees, rewriting curriculum, writing articles, attending conferences and participating in events are all examples of your contributions as a professional. You will need to document these in your self-study.

- Ask for a sample self-study. Every department or area structures them a bit differently to account for their individual disciplinary differences. Try to get one from a colleague in your field who is not part of your PRT when possible. Use them as a model.

Beyond these general recommendations, let a union representative know if you have any questions or concerns. Here are examples of some of the issues you should share with us:



"I am being given a needs improvement overall. Can they do that?" Yes, if there is justification and there are specific examples for each less than satisfactory rating. Less than satisfactory ratings cannot be arbitrary or secretive; you have the right to know why and what you have done specifically to receive them. Moreover, the justification shouldn't be a complete surprise. It needs to be documented over the course of the period under review. Deans should be alerting the faculty member of issues via email, meetings with the faculty member, etc... If such a decision has been recorded and supported, keep in mind you have the right to append any written rebuttal or explanations to the review form.

"One of the faculty members on my team is out to get me. Can I file a grievance against him/her?" No. Grievances are not faculty against faculty. What you can do if you are tenure-track and if you know you have a personality conflict with a team member, is file a one-time peremptory challenge in your second, third or fourth year review to have that individual removed from your team. That challenge must be filed within three weeks after being notified of your team composition. If time has lapsed and/or that is not possible, make union representatives aware of your concerns so that we can help you find the best possible solution.

"My peer review is being delayed due to extenuating circumstances. Can they do that?" Yes, but not without the consent of the Union, as performance review is a contract between the Union and the District. Union officials must be informed of and consent to any delays, even if the faculty member is the one who has pursued and requested such delays.

[from previous page]

"I'm full-time and being told I need to do a formal extra or extended review in the spring. Can they do that?" There should be no extended reviews. Faculty are reviewed in either the Fall or the Spring semester, as specified in the relevant timetables in Article 8, depending on whether you are tenured, tenure-track, or adjunct. The review itself must be completed by the end of the semester under review and submitted at that time unless you are tenured, in which case the form must be submitted by the end of the academic year. All regular or adjunct faculty may be subject to an extra review under two special circumstances, a Reassignment Review or a Special Review, as specifically defined in 8.14 of your contract. *Such reviews are conducted by a special review team. If you are being asked to do an extra review that is not one of the above, you should contact your union representative immediately so that we can determine if this is some form of informal review, etc... and ensure that the contract is being upheld.

"My performance review team is trying to use SLOs and/or other statistical data to evaluate my performance. Can they do that?" No. In a review team conference, the team may discuss "the results of the syllabi, workstation observations, the review of professional responsibilities, administrative documentation and the student review forms." Those are the

only elements that may be discussed, considered and cited in recommendations by the team.

"I'm an adjunct faculty member with preference and have been denied load because of an overall less than satisfactory performance review last semester. Can they do that?" No, if that was the sole reason and the performance review prior to that one was satisfactory. As per 4.10.8.1 of your contract, adjunct with level 2 or 3 preference who receive two consecutive, documented overall less than satisfactory performance reviews may be denied a load.

Those are examples of some of the situations in which your union representatives have represented members over the past year. If you let us know, we can help make your performance review truly reflect and enhance your performance.

As a final note, although being judged by others often gives rise to a desire to wave fists and rage against the machine, consider your goal. If your goal is continued employment, keep in mind that the "they" in all of the situations above are those with whom you will work closely. Do not take on your colleagues or managers in anger, do not refuse to participate further and become insubordinate; just pause and breathe. Then call us and let us take it on for you. ■

LRCFT EXECUTIVE BOARD MEMBER APPOINTED TO EXECUTIVE COUNCIL OF CFT

By Linda Sneed

Saturday, September 10, I became one of two part-time community college faculty on the Executive Council of the CFT (the California Federation of Teachers, our state-level union). Now officially a Vice President of the CFT, I will have the opportunity not only to understand more completely but to help shape the strategies we employ state-wide to defend the strength and integrity of California's public education system and to secure public and legislative support for our schools and colleges. It is now my responsibility and my privilege to help implement the resolutions passed by the delegates at our annual CFT Convention and to help establish the CFT's annual budget. Representing not only community college faculty in general but part-time faculty more specifically, I am very much looking forward to bringing the realities, priorities, and great ideas of our part-time faculty to the attention of the CFT President, Secretary-Treasurer, and fellow Vice Presidents. We deserve working conditions, financial compensation, and benefits comparable to those of our full-time colleagues; we deserve job security; we deserve to be included at every level of decision-making where faculty have a voice. I invite you to share your ideas with me so



that they can be part of the conversation at CFT Executive Council meetings, the next of which will take place on November 5. Please contact me at lbsneed@toast.net or through our Los Rios email system; you can also call me at 812-325-2595. ■

[from page 2, Faculty as Scapegoats]

All community college faculty who are in CalSTRS will receive a ballot by mail on October 1st. Only community college faculty will be able to vote online or by phone for this Board seat. It is absolutely critical that all Los Rios faculty participate in this election. LRCFT has endorsed Sharon Hendricks for the CalSTRS Board. She is a faculty member at Los Angeles Community College, on the Executive Board of the Faculty Association for California Community Colleges (FACCC), and a member of the California Federation of Teachers (CFT). She has been regularly attending the CalSTRS meetings the past three years; she has already developed a critical understanding of the issues facing CalSTRS and has established a

working relationship with the CalSTRS Board. She has been endorsed by FACCC, CFT, and the

Community College Independents. I have worked with Sharon Hendricks at the State Capitol on retirement issues and budget; we work together on the FACCC Executive Board, and she is someone with whom I can easily discuss critical retirement issues that concern faculty. I urge you to vote for Sharon Hendricks to the CalSTRS Board.

I encourage you to attend the next LRCFT/FACCC Pension, Health, & Benefits Conference to keep up-to-date on your pension and district benefits. We have the conference every year during the fall Flex week. About 100 faculty attended this year, and we hope to see more of you there next year. This conference is not just for those about to retire, this is for all faculty, especially new faculty who need to understand their benefits and plan their pension strategy. I strongly encourage you to attend next year where we will discuss any pension changes, many of the District benefits, which few know about and even fewer take advantage of, and we will clarify the benefits within the LRCFT contract.

I also want to mention that there are two clearly anti-union initiatives that are in the signature gathering stage.

1. Eliminates Collective Bargaining Rights for Teachers, Nurses, Police Officers, Firefighters, and Other Public Employees.

This initiative would end LRCFT's ability to represent faculty while negotiating salary and benefits with the district. We believe the working conditions, salaries, and benefits in Los Rios are the result of a strong collective bargaining position we have with the District. LRCFT's commitment to fiscal stability and responsibility are part of the reasons why Los

Rios is a great place to work. This kind of initiative fosters an atmosphere of mistrust between employees and employers.

2. Prohibits Political Contributions by Payroll Deduction. Prohibitions on Contributions to Candidates. Initiative Statute.

LRCFT fights hard to get local politicians elected that support community colleges. This initiative is designed to end unions as a credible player in elections. This is a Wisconsin-style initiative which would require unions to get individual members to sign for voluntary contributions every year. It would also prohibit unions from contributing to candidates.

What is most egregious and deceptive about this initiative is that while it states that it will do the same for corporations,

the fact is corporations do not use employee contributions for funding their political activities. Indeed, the proposed initiative specifically states: "Other political expenditures remain unrestricted, including corporate expenditures from available resources not limited by payroll deduction prohibition." Corporations outspent unions 11 to 1 in the last election, and now they want to make sure unions are eliminated completely. This is a highly deceptive initiative that aims to remove unions from the political process.

Lastly, I want to say that I had a great time marching with the United Farm Workers (UFW) as they went up the Central Valley. While I did it for two days, a number of them did the whole 167 miles. It was reminiscent of our March for California's Future last year. The UFW march was responding to Governor Brown's veto of the Farm Worker's Bill that had passed the legislature. It looks like a compromise has been reached and an amended bill will be signed by the Governor soon.

I hope that all of you are doing great this semester, especially in these very difficult budget times. Classes are overflowing and more is asked of you every day. LRCFT will continue to do its best to keep us moving forward, work with the district, lobby the Capitol, and work with our constituency groups. ■

It is absolutely critical that all Los Rios faculty participate in this election.

TROUBLE MAKERS SCHOOL

By Chantel Perales

In June of this year, I attended a “Troublemakers School” sponsored by Labor Notes. For those of you who would shy away from such an event based on the name of the event alone, let me assure you that there was much to be gained from attendance.

One inspiring workshop was comprised of a panel of students, faculty, and classified staff, representing a unified front against the assault on education, educators, and students. One of the most powerful speakers of this panel was a student who shared his experiences with California’s public education system. He began his presentation by stating, “You would like to save education in California, but produce nothing worth saving.” This student gave his narrative of his K-12 education from Inglewood, California, a notoriously disenfranchised area. There he experienced in full what lack of resources means: instructors teaching outside their discipline, outdated or unavailable materials, and no multicultural instruction. Fortunately, this young man rose above these humble beginnings, and is now attending a U.C. school. Yet it is precisely these types of stories which should inspire us all to make tangible improvements to our public education system.

Another workshop was comprised of a group of teachers who were very well versed in taking a stand against anti-educator actions. The United Teachers of Richmond, a chapter of the CTA, are well informed on educationally related activism and social justice issues. Furthermore, this group of educators did not demonstrate the same complacency which I see as so widespread today. They reminded us all that the value placed on tests, merit and performance pay are all actions which indicate a privatization of public schools, and posed the question: “Can our schools survive as a fundamentally democratic system, participated in by all, or will we move to a corporate and privatized educational system?” In answer to this question, the presenters reminded their audience of what many of us already know: that trends towards accountability and performance pay are trends toward the privatization of our public schools. These trends also ignore social inequality inherent in the system. For instance, well funded schools will continue to receive further merit awards, whereas struggling schools in impoverished areas may continue to be penalized.



Chantel Perales is an adjunct English instructor at CRC

If we want to continue to place a value on diversity, creativity and critical thinking, then we should continue to de-emphasize the importance placed on outcomes, and concentrate on educating the individual instead. ■

CHIEF NEGOTIATOR'S REPORT

By KC Boylan



"In like a lion and out like a lamb," another season of negotiations slipped by with little to show for our most recent efforts, but a collective sigh of gratitude

for those who came before and left us with a contract that has managed to deflect the whispered threats of take-backs.

The 2011–2014 LRCCD/LRCFT contract includes several modifications, many of which simply reflect changes in dates, terminology, and statute. Article 2: Salaries has been modified to incorporate the changes to education code regarding the increased adjunct workload limit from 60% to 67%. Article 3: Fringe Benefits and Retirement offers clarification for faculty wishing to participate in the STRS pre-retirement reduced workload program; the education code indicates the program must begin in the fall and be calculated in whole academic years, up to five years maximum. Article 4 updates the language regarding summer session and preference, specifically that preference will be used for staffing purposes; however, preference cannot be obtained during the summer. Article 4 changes also include clarification to the adjunct office hour program, indicating that office hours will typically be scheduled on days that classes meet and should be evenly distributed across the semester to promote student access.

Over the course of the spring semester, five small work groups representing LRCCD and LRCFT focused on issues ranging from Workweek and College Service, to Professional Autonomy, Preference, Special Review, and Work Environment/Safety. In spite of the healthy discussion at several meetings for all of the groups, only the last two topics resulted in changes to contract language.

LRCCD brought Article 8: Performance Review, section 8.14.2 Conditions for Special Review, as a topic for discussion and clarification. The interest was in clarifying conditions under which a special review

may be requested. The negotiated language reflects a move away from an arguably indefensible standard "Evidence of... impairment that would make it impossible for the faculty member to perform the normal duties assigned" to "Documented evidence of... impairment which causes significant concern regarding the ability of the faculty member to perform the normal duties assigned."

LRCFT brought Article 21 Work Environment/Safety, section 21.2 Removal of a Student and section 21.3 Threat to Faculty Member, as topics for discussion and action. The shared interest was in identifying a clear process by which faculty could seek the help they need when confronted by threatening behaviors in the workplace. The language added to 21.2.1.2 states, "The sole basis for imposing disciplinary sanctions on a student is the student's behavior." Regardless of extraneous conditions, all students are accountable for their behavior and subject to the disciplinary process. Additionally, LRCFT sought changes to section 21.3, Threat to Faculty Member, that would make the process for filing a complaint and obtaining access to appropriate law enforcement more transparent and responsive. Faculty who are attacked, assaulted, or menaced by any student shall report the incident promptly to the Los Rios Police Department and their immediate supervisor, with the assurance that they will be contacted by the district within one working day to initiate a preliminary investigation. At the conclusion of the investigation, the district will once again contact the faculty member to communicate the overall outcomes.

Admittedly, the changes to the contract were significantly less than many hoped for. Arguably, our decision to extend the previous contract was wiser than many had predicted. The painful and seemingly draconian cuts last spring followed by the sudden, unexpected influx of FTE this fall, caught many off guard and tested sections of the contract that had been taken for granted for years—specifically Article 4 (Course Assignments, Staffing Levels/Schedules/Overloads, Work Week, Adjunct Faculty Member Workload, Hiring Preference). The formal process for negotiations has ended, but the ongoing conversations about contract language, its meaning and its enforcement are very much the topic of conversation in the monthly Labor/Management meetings between LRCCD and LRCFT, as well as topics for conversation in the College Faculty Workload Committees, and the Executive Board of LRCFT. The true test of a strong contract is its ability to protect our members when times are bad, not just in times of stability. ■

ELECT SHARON HENDRICKS FOR CALSTRS BOARD

By Robert Perrone



Website: <http://www.sharon4strs.com/>

Email: sharon4strs@att.net

Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/sharon4calstrs>

Twitter: <http://twitter.com/#!/sharon4strs>

FAQS FOR CALSTRS BOARD ELECTION

Who is eligible to vote?

Eligible voters in the election are persons who were members of the Defined Benefit Program and/or participants of the Cash Balance Benefit Program employed by a community college district during the 2010-11 school year, between July 1, 2010, and June 30, 2011.

When will I receive my ballot?

Mailed ballots arrive at CalSTRS members' homes on October 1st.

What will the mailing look like from CalSTRS?

The envelope with the official election ballot enclosed should look similar to this:

How long do we have to vote and when is the last day I can send my ballot in?

You will be able to vote between October 1st and November 30th. Voted ballots must be postmarked or received by CalSTRS on or before November 30th to be counted.

Is mailing the ballot back to CalSTRS the only way to vote?

When you receive your paper ballot in the mail, you will give three options for how to vote in this election. You can mail your paper ballot in, phone in your vote, or vote on-line. Instruction on these various voting options will be enclosed in your mailing.

What do I do if I lost or didn't receive my ballot?

For questions and generation information regarding this election, contact the Election Coordinator, Tom Barrett, at electioncoordinator@CalSTRS.com or 800-228-5453. ■

8

Sharon Hendricks is the CFT, CCCI, FACCC and CPFA endorsed candidate for the Community College representative on the CalSTRS Board. "We are facing unprecedented attacks on teachers and public pensions while also witnessing great economic instability. These are challenging times for our country, our state and our role as educators in the public sector. Politicians are using the attacks on our pensions as a tool to undermine unions and weaken the middle class. As the elected Community College representative to the CalSTRS Board, I will fight for the secure retirement for all part-time and full-time community college faculty. I will also keep you informed and solicit your ideas about challenges facing CalSTRS and its members."

Carl Friedlander, President of the Community College Council, states "Sharon Hendricks will be a thoughtful, forceful, and persuasive voice on the CalSTRS Board. She understands both the fiscal and political challenges our retirement system faces and she will engage in the kind of regular, two-way communication with faculty that the current situation demands."

Sharon has been working to ensure the retirement security of community college faculty at the state level, serving on the CFT and FACCC Retirement Committees as well as at the local level, speaking to local chapters' and unions' faculty groups regarding CalSTRS issues and the attacks on teachers and public pensions. If you have questions for Sharon or want information about her campaign, please feel free to contact her.

UNION ORGANIZING AT CRC

By Jason Newman

During the fall semester of 2011, the LRCFT leadership team at CRC will continue to engage in contract education, membership outreach, political organizing, and contract enforcement with management and faculty. Over the past two years, establishing a Workload Committee, open communication channels with management, filing labor grievances, and motivating faculty to take part in local and statewide political events have dominated the activities of the LRCFT on campus. The next year will include more emphasis on contract education, membership organizing, and political outreach.

To help faculty comprehend the complexities of our new contract, the LRCFT president and representatives at CRC, in conjunction with CASSL (the Center for the Advancement of Staff and Student Learning), will hold three contract education workshops this semester. The first workshop focused on the Performance Review (September 27, from 1:30-3:00). A second workshop, entitled Writing the Self-Study (October 19, from 1:00-2:30), will assist both new and veteran faculty in writing an effective self-study as part of the Performance Review process. To address the concerns of part-time faculty regarding future employment, the workshop, Solutions for Part Timers in Challenging Times will take place on November 2, from 4:00 to 5:30. The workshops, as well as other events on campus sponsored by the LRCFT, are available for flex and college service credit.

Other public informational events, forums, and social gatherings sponsored by the LRCFT will take place during the semester at CRC. On September 22, President Dean Murakami of the LRCFT provided a large-group presentation on the impact of declining state revenues on students and faculty within the Los Rios Community College District. In partnership with the CRC Senate through the Senate-Union Joint Issues Committee (SUJIC), faculty forums on the implementation of a College Hour at CRC, and the effectiveness of the Compressed Calendar system, will be held sometime during the semester. The faculty Workload Committee will continue to meet as it has done here since early 2010. Mid-year cuts and the reallocation of FTE continue to dominate the discussions between faculty and management. The holding of faculty social gatherings at a local family-owned restaurant, a process that began last year at CRC, continues this semester to provide faculty with an off-campus venue to unwind and discuss important issues. An average of 20 people attended each of these events last semester, and the first two held this semester as well.



Political organizing and encouraging faculty to take part in shared labor struggles in our community remain a central focus of the LRCFT at CRC. The Ami Bera/Dan Lungren election for the 3rd congressional district, the most important congressional race in the nation for both the Democratic and the Republican parties, places Elk Grove and Cosumnes River College in the forefront of the 2012 election. Election-related events, from debates between the candidates to information sessions on the election, will take place on campus over the next academic year. Recent solidarity actions by LRCFT members from CRC include attendance at the several marches held by the United Farm Workers between May and September, and the on-going three year demonstrations at the Hilton Hotel off Arden Way in Sacramento. In both instances, workers are fighting for a fair contract and to be able to effectively unionize. The LRCFT leadership at CRC will continue to publicize other social justice events and shared labor struggles taking place in our community. ■

UPCOMING CRC WORKSHOPS:

more info: Jason Newman, newmanj@crc.losrios.edu

WRITING THE SELF-STUDY	OCTOBER 19	1-2:30 PM
SOLUTIONS FOR PART TIMERS	NOVEMBER 2	4-5:30 PM

WORKING CLASS ORGANIZATION AND POWER

THE BIENNIAL CONFERENCE OF THE WORKING CLASS STUDIES ASSOCIATION

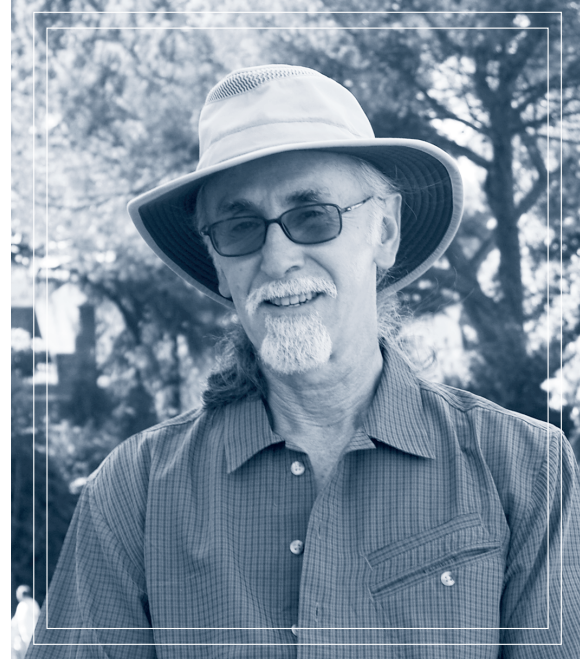
By Robert Perrone

The biennial conference of the Working Class Studies Association (WCSA) took place at the University of Illinois, Chicago campus from June 22nd to June 25th. The WCSA strives to develop and promote multiple forms of scholarship, teaching, and activism related to working class life and cultures. The WCSA conference alternates each year with a conference on "How class works," sponsored by the Center for Study of Working Class Life at Stony Brook University. This year's WCSA conference theme was "Working-class organization and power."

Attendees and presenters came from around the country and the world to participate and lead the 70 panels and workshops. Some of the goals of the WCSA, particularly that of creating partnerships that link scholarship with activism in labor, community, and other working-class organizations, were reflected in the workshops.

In the past few months much has been made of "class." Unfortunately, it seems like the only time we hear or read about "class" is when the term is hurled as an accusation. "[This] is a class war on the people," Moore says. [Democracy Now! interview with Michael Moore, March 10, 2011] "It's class warfare, and it's the kind of language that you would expect from the leader of a third world country, not the President of the United States" [Florida Senator Marco Rubio's July 1 response to President Obama's talk on the budget]. "This isn't class warfare," says President Obama in his recent address about jobs to a joint session of Congress. Despite all attempts to gloss over the concept of class or to make it a boogey man to be avoided, there is no getting around the fact that the United States is, indeed, a very stratified society. This is evident in statistics that show the divide between rich and poor in this country is wider than in any other industrialized society. ["23 Things They Don't Tell You About Capitalism," Ha-Joon Chang, p. 108] Class is a fact of life in America; ignoring it won't make it go away. Thus, the importance of the WCSA conference.

The days were divided into two morning and two afternoon sessions, with a plenary session in between after lunch. The sheer number of workshops in each session made it difficult to decide which one to attend. Here's just a small sample of some of the workshops: "Chicana/o Studies—Counter Hegemonic and Working-Class Political Voices in the Academy"; "The Professionalization of Social Change";



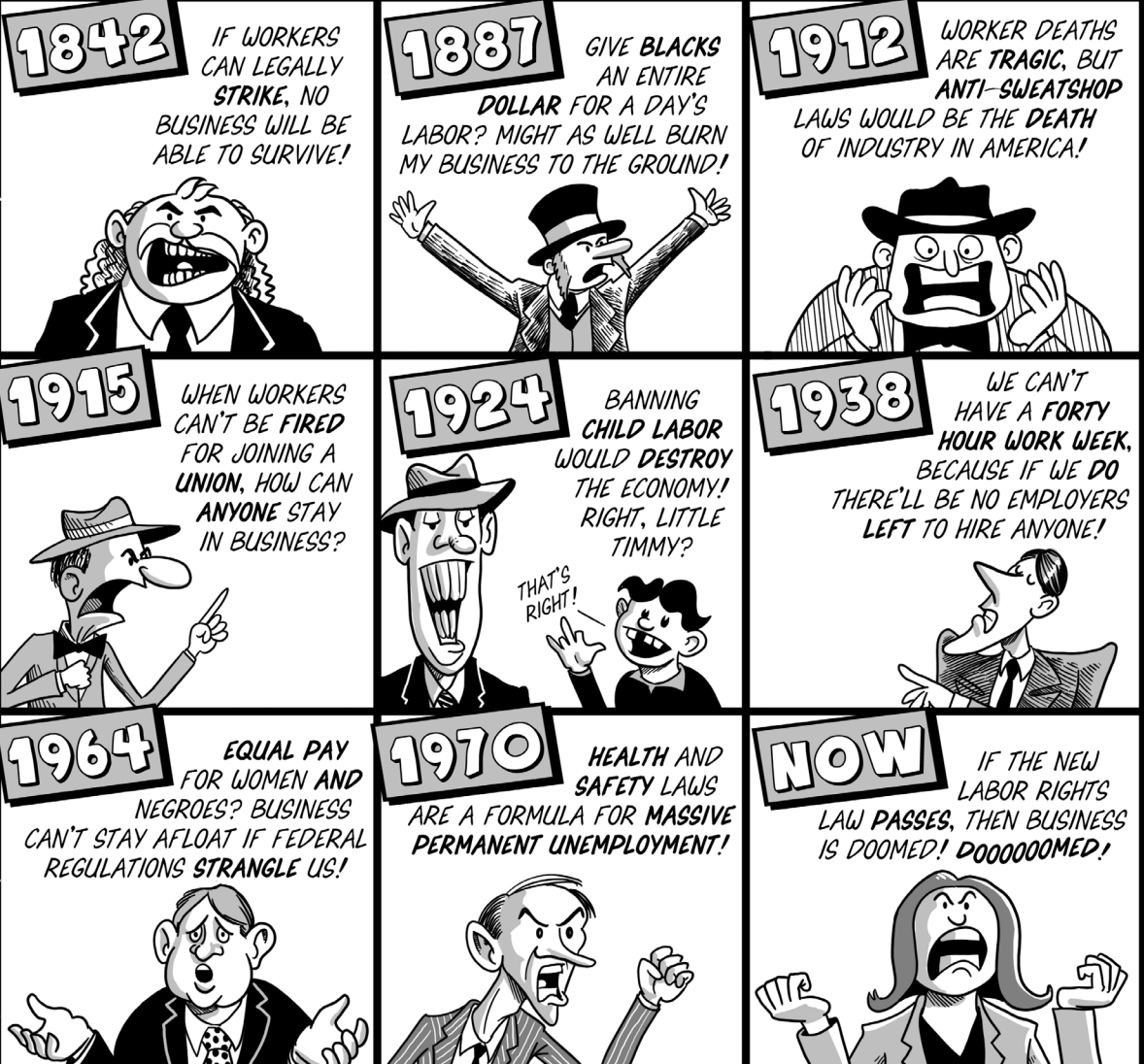
Craven Images: Anti-Working Class Depictions in American Film, Television and Crime Stories"; "The Working Class in the Food Chain"; "Higher Education and the Digital Divide: Helping Working-Class Students Navigate New Media and Online Learning." Since it was not possible to attend all of them, here is a summary of the more interesting of those I did attend.

"Politics, Schooling and Reform"

The first presenters addressed the topic of "Attitudes about teacher labor unions and collective bargaining." The popular critique, usually put forth by opponents of public education, has public education failing to adequately educate students and targeting teacher collective bargaining agreements for putting public school managers in strait jackets. To counter this, the presenters pointed to evidence of improvement of educational outcomes in public schools. Underscoring this, an article in the August 18 Los Angeles Times reported that the Los Angeles school district has not only held its own in improving math and English test scores, but in most cases outpaced schools run by outside organizations that benefited from additional funding.

The presenters continued to undermine that popular critique, arguing that the limitations on school managers are overstated because collective bargaining is a mutual process. In fact, in many states, collective bargaining laws favor management, with no

[continued on next page]



A BRIEF HISTORY OF CORPORATE WHINING

11

strike clauses, the ability of management to impose its last, best and final offer.

"Unions in Food"

The title of this session had more to do with the area of study of the moderators than the actual presenters, who were three non-academics involved with food in very different ways.

God's Gang

Caroline Thomas is a leader in the organization that calls itself "God's gang." She says her purpose and that of the organization she works hard to build is to provide a common ground for Christian and non-Christian youth that will address the problems of inner city life. Toward that end, she has guided the organization in setting up a food pantry and urban gardening program. That food pantry is now the most successful food pantry in the city of Chicago. She coordinates a community supported agricultural program that addresses the nutritional needs of the

people. God's Gang also supports a variety of activities that enable youth and adults to choose a life of self-help at the same time they contribute to strengthening their community. The youth are engaged in urban agricultural and landscaping activities, as well as African dance and crafts. The SSUGA, South Side Urban Gardeners Association, provides family and senior citizens opportunities and assistance to develop neighborhood/ backyard gardens.

Food Desert Action

For those wondering what a "food desert" is, Sheelah Muhammad was more than happy to explain. In Chicago it's a problem in which entire communities have only very limited access to fresh fruits and vegetables. As a result, those communities suffer from health problems related to poor diets. As she told the audience, "How you live depends on where you live."

Out of this desert stepped Fresh Moves (FM), an organization that has taken on the responsibility of

[continued on next page]

[from page 2, Working Class Org]

bringing fresh produce to under-served communities of color. FM operates year-round on a rebuilt bus donated by the Chicago Transit Authority (CTA). It offers high quality produce at affordable prices. FM also offers cooking and nutrition classes and the food sold is local, sustainable and organic. Muhammad stressed that it is a misconception that African Americans don't want to eat healthy foods. "It's a question of access," she said. "So, get on the bus and have a shopping experience."

ROC-United

Jose Oliva was a food server at the former Windows on the World, the restaurant that was on the top of the World Trade Center. He and his former colleagues who survived the WTC destruction formed ROC-United (Restaurant Opportunities Center United). He and his colleagues set out to improve the working conditions of restaurant workers; carry out research and policy work; engage in direct action; and organize food service workers. He pointed out that less than one percent of private sector food service/restaurant workers are unionized. An immediate goal of ROC is to convince restaurant owners to offer paid sick leave to their workers for, as Oliva pointed out, two-thirds of restaurant workers in the Chicago area go to work sick. It's either that or stay home without pay. ROC helped organize the Food Chain Workers Alliance, which seeks to build cross-class unity in an effort to support the struggles of food service/restaurant workers for a better life.

Slam Poetry and Power

This was held as a plenary event. Mark Smith is a former steelworker. "The slam world is a world of equality," he said. Slam poetry broke the traditional form of poetry readings, where, instead of a dispassionate reading, we get a marriage of the art of performing with the art of writing. Slam poets have formed slam communities, where the emphasis is on democratizing and performing poetry.

Gwendolyn Brooks pointed out that slam poetry is one of the most powerful teaching tools to teach young people about poetry. "Poetry can save people," she said.

The Working Class in the Shadow of War

Those of you who watch Spanish-language television or read Spanish-language newspapers may have seen the US Army's advertising appeal to Latinos, the "Yo soy el Army" campaign, where Latinos are the targets of military recruitment. According to Irene Garza, a graduate student in American Studies at the University of Texas, the military targets Latinos out of a false belief that Latinos have a "natural predilection for violence." She explained that the military uses those "attributes identified as negative and turns them into redemptive traits to build

up young Latinos as ideal warriors." And the federal government is complicit in this conspiracy, as shown by the military service clause in the federal Dream Act.

Class and Culture in the Language Classroom

This session highlighted issues of class confronting community college composition instructors in the Midwest. For working class students, one of the more difficult barriers to overcome in learning to write is having them see themselves as college students. For the community college instructor, teaching to the diversity of students is the most difficult aspect of teaching composition.

Presenters noted that "class" is often masked as "personal problems." All of them agreed that to have collective action, you must have a collective identity. One presenter teaches composition in a tribally-controlled college, where, she said, "One sees the interaction between culture, class and composition."

Session attendees were left with this question: How can we convince students that a higher education is the path to "status improvement" when they see the majority of faculty in the same conditions as they are—broken down cars, desperate conditions, etc.?

Gendered Experiences of the Economy

Emily LaBarbera-Twarog spoke about women's political participation as exemplified in the meat boycotts of 1973, where women across the country came together in a boycott started at the kitchen table of a stay-at-home wife.

She talked about the end of the New Deal activist state and how 75% of women wanted to remain on their jobs after World War II rather than return to the traditional housewife role.

Kristi Lonius spoke of what she called the "mancesion," the current recession that hits men the hardest and shows the gendered nature of the recession. "It's a narrative of female ascendancy and male decline," she told the audience.

Jack Metzger pointed out how the new low wage economy relies on women-dominated jobs.

I left the conference with a renewed sense of urgency to do what I could to overcome the social forces arrayed against us as we try to provide students with the tools they can use to navigate the treacherous path to a modicum of success. There is no getting around the fact that you are on the front lines of a battle being waged for the hearts and minds of your students. These difficult economic times are like a crucible, where your dedication is steeled for a protracted struggle. We are, indeed, all in this together. ■

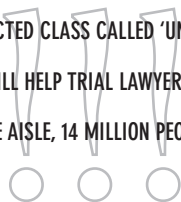
SHAMELESS OPPOSITION TO THE JOBS BILL REVEALS THE GOP'S DEEP HATRED OF THE WORKING CLASS

By Carl Davidson

If you want to have your class consciousness raised a few notches, all you have to do over the next few weeks is listen to the Republicans in Congress offer up their shameless commentary rejecting President Obama's jobs bill [\$1.1 billion of which would come to California. ed.].

This week's doozy came from Texas Congressman Louie Gohmert, who was outraged that capitalists were being restricted from discriminating in hiring the unemployed, in favor of only hiring people who already had jobs elsewhere. I kid you not. Here's the quote:

"WE'RE ADDING IN THIS BILL A NEW PROTECTED CLASS CALLED 'UNEMPLOYED,'" GOHMERT DECLARED IN THE HOUSE SEPT. 13, 2011. "I THINK THIS WILL HELP TRIAL LAWYERS WHO ARE NOT HAVING ENOUGH WORK. WE HEARD FROM OUR FRIENDS ACROSS THE AISLE, 14 MILLION PEOPLE OUT OF WORK -- THAT'S 14 MILLION NEW CLIENTS."



One hardly knows where to begin.

First, the Jobs Bill does no such thing as creating a 'new protected class.' It only curbs a wrongly discriminatory practice.

Second, so what if it did? Americans who uphold the Constitution, the 14th Amendment's equal protection clause, and the expansion of democracy and the franchise generally, will see the creation of 'protected classes' as hard-won progressive steps forward from the times of the Divine Right of Kings.

Third, if Gohmert had any first-hand knowledge of the unemployed, he'd know they usually can't afford lawyers, especially when the courts are stacked against them.

Fourth, to create even more confusion, Gohmert raced to the House clerk to submit his own 'Jobs Bill' before Obama's, but with a similar name. Its content was a hastily scribbled two-page screed consisting of nothing but cuts in corporate taxes.

What's really going on here is becoming clearer every day. The GOP cares about one thing: destroying Obama's presidency regardless of the cost. They don't even care if it hurts capitalism's own interests briefly, not to mention damaging the well being of everyone else. Luckily, Obama is finally calling them

out in public, although far too politely for my taste. The irony will likely emerge if and when they ever do take Obama down. I'd bet good money that a good number of the GOP bigwigs would then turn on a dime and support many of the same measures they're now opposing.

But most of them, especially the far right, would still likely press on with their real aim, a full-throated neoliberal reactionary thrust that repeals the Great Society's Medicaid and Medicare, the New Deal's Social Security and Wagner Act, and every progressive measure in between. Their idea of making the

U.S. labor market 'competitive' and U.S. business 'confident' is to make the whole country more like Texas, with its record volume of minimum wage work and poverty, the race to the bottom. They're not happy with

12% unionization; they want zero percent, where all of us are defenseless and completely under the thumbs of our 'betters'.

In brief, prepare for more wars and greater austerity. If you think I'm exaggerating, over the next months observe how the national GOP is trying to rig the 2012 elections in Pennsylvania, Michigan and a few other big states. Our Electoral College system is bad enough, but they are going to 'reform' it to make it worse by attaching electoral votes to congressional districts, rather than statewide popular majorities. This would mean Obama could win the popular vote statewide, but the majority of electoral votes would still go to the GOP. Add that to their new 'depress the vote' requirements involving picture IDs, which are aimed at the poor and the elderly, and you'll see their fear and hatred of the working class.

We've always had government with undue advantages for the rich. But just watch them in this round as they go all out to make it even more so. We have to call it out for what it really is, and put their schemes where the sun doesn't shine. ■

*Carl Davidson is a retired computer teacher/technician living in Aliquippa, PA., a regular blogger for the United Steel Workers at usw.org, a member of Steelworker Associates, and a writer for BeaverCountyBlue.org, the *Progressive Democrats of America* website in western PA.*

STRATEGIC PLANNING FOR THE LRCFT

By Dennis Smith

14

As someone said, "It's hard to remember that the mission is to drain the swamp when we are up to our armpits in alligators." The elected leaders and professional staff of your union have certainly had to deal with a number of "alligators" recently but they have never lost focus on their responsibility for stewardship of the mission of the Los Rios College Federation of Teachers. In early June, the LRCFT governing board and staff spent one day last June in a culminating session of the current round of long-term strategic planning for our (yours and mine) faculty union. The day was masterfully facilitated by Patty (PJ) Harris-Jenkinson, SCC Communication Professor.

LRCFT as an organization has practiced strategic planning for as long as I have been a member. This latest round began in 2008 with a comprehensive survey of all LRCCD faculty supplemented with a 2009 survey of the LRCFT governing board. In the summer of 2009, time was given to digesting the survey results and planning to plan. In two weekend meetings in the fall, values were articulated, a planning process was understood, strategies were developed, and goals and objectives were drafted. The work product produced from these meetings will be very useful for the union. The bigger story was the learning experience that the participants had as a result of doing that work together.

For some the experience was painful, frustrating, confusing, and worrisome. For others it was hopeful, productive, and encouraging. We learned that there were new and bigger alligators in the swamp and we were not yet in total agreement about the best response to the changing situation and about a plan for the future. There were seemingly conflicting visions and more planning work to be done. Thus, during 2010 the LRCFT leadership continued to dialog with the members and among ourselves while working on many of the goals and objectives outlined in the draft plan.

In June of this year, another run was made at coming to closure on the statements of common mission, shared vision, and values for the leaders and members. This was essential to bringing ownership and life to the strategic planning efforts for the future of our union. The day was a success and pending some formatting, editing, and a final governing board review of the language, it appears that this stage of LRCFT strategic planning work is complete. That



success came from the determined efforts of your faculty colleagues who take seriously their elected responsibility for the organizational health and development of the LRCFT.

Going back to the "draining the swamp in the midst of the alligators" idea, this last round of strategic planning revealed that more help and better tools are needed to be sure that we can both survive the current threats and also achieve the future that we want for each other. One vision that everyone has is that LRCFT would benefit from more involvement, activism, and leadership from more members. To that end, a major strategy shift of the LRCFT will be toward member organizing and education in addition to the traditional service focused strategy of member representation and advocacy.

a major strategy shift of the LRCFT will be toward member organizing and education in addition to the traditional service focused strategy of member representation and advocacy.

On a personal note, as the past president, I'm grateful and excited to be a part of the strategic planning work of the current LRCFT elected leaders. We have, once again, collaboratively developed a sturdy long-term plan for the future of our union and will be better for having it. ■

CLASSROOM IN THE (URBAN) DIRT

By Robyn Waxman

Sacramento City College's pilot phase of "City Farm" [see March 2011 edition of Union News. Ed.] is in full swing this semester, bringing two disciplines and enormous energy to a classroom in the dirt campus garden. This curriculum-based and cross-disciplinary garden represents the collective planning of faculty, staff, administrators, and students.

Why a Garden?

City Farm can make abstract theory more tangible for our next generation of learners. In these times of economic instability, we are forced to be creative. While we can't buy equipment or afford guest speakers like we might have in the past, we can use the resources we have on campus—the actual campus. We are currently experiencing, and are about to welcome students from feeder schools who work and learn in campus gardens. City Farm can provide a bridge from these programs, nurturing better transitions into college level learning and college culture. There is a growing list of faculty interested in adopting a City Farm plot for academic use in disciplines like History, Geography, Art in Chemistry, Engineering, and Graphic Communication.

Experimental and Experiential

Young adults of 2011 ask *why*. They have a need to understand purpose, context, and goals of the material they learn. As I heard one 20-something describe to me last year, "tell me why I'm setting up this boring Excel spread sheet, and I'll do it all day!" Students want to understand knowledge's application and to see theory made real. The phenomenon can be challenging for educators, but we can also employ it to produce a generation of scholars who question the status quo, who remember their classroom experiences through a kinesthetic engagement, and who actively practice and apply critical thinking. Think statistics and probability, role-playing alternative economic models, and 3D data visualizations. How about role playing the agri-business industry, facilitating community events, or building a dye garden? The applications are endless, fascinating and exciting.

Early Adopters

Plant Biology and Early Childhood Education classes will spearhead the pilot project, using the soil as part of their classroom experience. Each semester the Biology Department purchases species to study under the microscope. Growing the species at City Farm will offer students a more memorable, experiential approach to the curriculum. The City Farm Club, which includes students from varying disciplines, will help facilitate these curricular projects.



Robyn Waxman is coordinating the City Farm Club and the garden's programming. She is also a founding faculty member of the Graphic Communication department at Sacramento City College.

Additionally, the student group shares a plot at City Farm and plans to offer educational programming to the SCC community. Ryan Thalken, City Farm Club President describes the project as "... a rare opportunity for students of all disciplines to form community."

With an innovative frame, any discipline can effectively use a garden to augment the traditional classroom. This creates deeper and more memorable learning for all disciplines.

The City Farm pilot project currently resides between Lillard Hall and the Sutterville Road staff parking lot. ■



City Farm's just built raised beds, full of potential!

[more photos on next page]

City Farm



Passing the "torch" to Ryan Thalken, City Farm Club President



Dr. Kathryn Jeffery, SCC President and Ryan Thalken, City Farm Club President: engaging with the CDC children in turning the dirt

LRCFT CONTACTS

ARC ■ CRC ■ FLC ■ SCC

PARTIAL LIST OF OFFICERS

President: Dean Murakami
484-8497
murakad@arc.losrios.edu

Past President: Dennis Smith
650-2905
smithd@scc.losrios.edu

Secretary/Treas: Donna Nacey
568-3100 x13568
nacey@sbcglobal.net

PAFC Chair Walter Kawamoto
kawamow@arc.losrios.edu

AMERICAN RIVER COLLEGE

College Pres: Diana Hicks
484-8210
hicksdl@arc.losrios.edu

College Rep: Michaela Cooper
484-8130
cooperm@arc.losrios.edu

Dispute Res Off/
College Rep: Kristine Fertel
691-7254
fertelk@arc.losrios.edu

College Rep: Peg Scott
484-8048
scottm@arc.losrios.edu

FOLSOM LAKE COLLEGE

Chief Negotiator/
College Pres: KC Boylan
608-6628
boylank@flc.losrios.edu

College Rep: Zack Dowell
608-6605
dowellz@flc.losrios.edu

College Rep: Wayne Olts
530-642-5685
oltsw@flc.losrios.edu

Adjunct Rep: Hali Boeh
boehh@flc.losrios.edu

COSUMNES RIVER COLLEGE

College Pres: Jason Newman
691-7668
newmanj@crc.losrios.edu

College Rep: Teresa Aldredge
691-7368
aldredt@crc.losrios.edu

College Rep: Sharon Padilla-Alvarado
691-7131
padills@crc.losrios.edu

College Rep: Gabriel Torres
691-7673
torresg@crc.losrios.edu

Adjunct Rep: Linda Sneed
sneedlc@crc.losrios.edu

OFFICE STAFF

Union News Editor/
Exec. Director: Robert Perrone
448-2452 x14
perrone1@igc.org

Admin. Assistant: Reina Mayorga
448-2452 x10
myhija@aol.com

SACRAMENTO CITY COLLEGE

College Pres: Annette Barfield
558-2579
barfiea@scc.losrios.edu

College Rep: Alex May
558-2688
maya@scc.losrios.edu

College Rep: Sandra Warmington
558-2484
warmins@scc.losrios.edu

LRCFT Designer/
College Rep: Robyn Waxman
558-2280
waxmanr@scc.losrios.edu

Adjunct Rep: Jan Carver Silva
carversilva@surewest.net