



UNION NEWS

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THE DOWN BECOMES THE UP: The Los Rios Board of Trustees Races

By Bill Miller & Robert Perrone

Way down the ballot for California's November election—below Governor, the House of Representatives, and the ballot initiatives—is a really important election for all of us in the Los Rios Community College District (LRCCD): four of the seven seats on the LRCCD Board of Trustees. In Area 2, the LRCFT Political Action Fund Committee (PAFC) endorsed the incumbent, **Robert Jones**. Mr. Jones has done a commendable job as a Trustee. He is currently the Board president. His priorities include making certain that all who seek a community college education are able to enroll; assuring the community colleges are adequately funded; maintaining fees at current levels, and even reducing fees; and, continuing to strengthen career and technical training programs. If you live in zip codes 95608, 95610, 95621, 95622, 95628, 95821, and 95841, Robert Jones is your Los Rios Trustee and we urge you to cast your ballot for him.

Area 3 is the area formerly held by the late Terry Cochran. The PAFC interviewed the four candidates running for that seat and decided to endorse **Leroy Tripette**. Mr. Tripette works for the Intel Corporation, where he works in External Relations/Public Affairs. He believes that the biggest challenges facing Los Rios are:



1) the level of readiness of incoming students for college level math. He believes that too many students are arriving in Los Rios academically unprepared to be successful in a college environment. He would seek ways to provide resources to address the problem. 2) Supporting the growth and quality of Los Rios' STEM programs. 3) Creating new ways to integrate technology into the classroom. He recognizes that some technologies "appear to have been a quick fad," he also knows that other methods, such as digital badging, are gaining support as ways for students to complete their education. If you live in the following zip codes, 95664, 95762, 95742, 95683, 95682, 95623, 95667, 95684, 95726, 95720,

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96142, 95709, 95633, 95635, 95614, we urge you to vote for Leroy Tripette for Los Rios Trustee.

In Area 6, the LRCFT has endorsed **Deborah Ortiz**, the incumbent. Ms. Ortiz has served in many elected positions, including as a member of the Sacramento City Council, the California State Assembly and the California State Senate. She was elected to the Los Rios Board in 2010 and serves the residents of Downtown, Midtown, East Sacramento, River Park, Campus Commons and parts of Carmichael and Rancho Cordova. Ms. Ortiz is the Vice President of Government Affairs for the California Primary Care Association. If you live in zip codes 95608, 95670, 95811, 95814, 95815, 95816, 95817, 95818, 95819, 95821, 95826, and 95827, we urge you to vote for Deborah Ortiz for the Los Rios Board of Trustees.

Dustin Johnson, the Trustee in Area 1, is running unopposed. We still urge you to vote for him.

There are many other interesting races this November. Let's get out the vote so our voices are heard! ■

CHANGES TO CalSTRS CONTRIBUTIONS

By Dean Murakami

I am sure many of you are aware that there are significant changes to the CalSTRS contributions that have started this fiscal year. I want to take this opportunity to explain those changes and how it might affect us in Los Rios.

CalSTRS is the largest educator-only pension fund in the world, with a portfolio valued at \$181.1 billion. It covers about 862,000 people, and 1,600 school districts, county offices of education and community college districts. Its impact on California's economy is significant. The spending generated by CalSTRS retirees is estimated to be over \$9 billion, producing more than 60,000 jobs and providing in excess of \$2.1 billion in wages. The financial problems confronting CalSTRS stem from investment returns that did not live up to expectations, benefit hikes at the beginning of the last decade, and a state legislature that waited far too long to address the underfunding problem. Those investment returns account for nearly 60% of all CalSTRS revenue.

Until 2011, CalSTRS had estimated its investment returns would be 8% annually. In reality, from 2001-2012, annual investment returns fell far short of those estimates, averaging just 3.8%. As a result, CalSTRS is now looking at a \$74 billion gap between its assets and its long-term obligations, i.e. your pensions and the pensions of future retirees. That is only 67% of its funding. Even though CalSTRS staff (and most accounting professionals) view funding at the 80-85% level as healthy, the state legislative retirement committees requested the CalSTRS staff to prepare a report with a funding goal of 100%.

The state legislature finally got around to addressing the unfunded liability problem by passing AB 1469. This legislation, effective July 1, 2014, increases the individual faculty contribution from the current 8% to 10.25% in two years; and, increases the employer contribution from the current 8.25% to 19.1% in seven years. The legislation also increases the state's CalSTRS contribution from the current \$1.3 billion to approximately \$2.1 billion, over the course of the next three years. The legislation would achieve the funding goal of 100% within 30 years.

Faculty collective bargaining organizations differ as to the solution to the CalSTRS underfunding issue. While the California Teachers Association fully supports AB 1469, the California Federation of Teachers, which represents most community college faculty, believes that 80% funding is adequate to meet the needs of CalSTRS.



The 2.25% increase in employee contributions (from 8% to 10.25%) will make it that much more difficult to get our faculty bucket out of the red and provide increases to the salary schedule.

As long as COLA continues to be anemic and the legislature and governor refuse to address the lost COLA of faculty during the recession, there will be a significant financial strain on our bucket.

More than anything, it is the increase in the employer contribution from 8.25% to 19.1% in just seven years that will hurt community college faculty the most. K-12 and community college districts will see a real dollar increase in the employer CalSTRS contribution from the current \$2.2 billion to almost \$6 billion in seven years. Here are just some of the anticipated effects of that increase on community college districts:

- The overall increase in district costs will mean less discretionary spending on part-time medical and office hour programs.
- COLA gains will be undercut, as districts attempt to cover the increased costs by refusing to pass on to their employees any such COLA increases.
- The added costs will discourage districts from

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hiring new full-time faculty. This is crucial because the statewide average of full-timers/part-timers is currently 56%. Districts will seek to diminish the pain of those added costs by decreasing full-time, tenure track hiring, in favor of non-tenured contingent faculty, whose retirement costs are far less.

- Community college districts may be forced to lay-off faculty and/or cut programs.
- The increased district contribution rates will take money out of the classroom.
- The faculty rate increases will slow any economic recovery from the 2007-2012 recession. Many community college faculty had been anticipating some recovery in the form of increased salaries. Any increases will now be undercut by the CalSTRS contribution increases.
- At a time when community college districts are just beginning to emerge from severe cuts over

the past several years, such significant increases over the seven-year period in AB 1469 will negatively impact districts, resulting in cuts to programs, layoffs of teachers and ultimately lost opportunities for students.

- Perhaps the only positive aspect of AB 1469 for community college faculty and districts is that the State's contribution will be made outside of Prop 98. Unfortunately, the districts' contributions do come from Prop 98.

Another effect of these contribution increases that may not have been considered is the amount of spending power that will be taken out of the economy as a result. This will have impacts far beyond the individual faculty member's diminished spending. We will be working with the district to determine the exact cost these CalSTRS changes will be to the district and faculty bucket. Then we will have to negotiate how to best mitigate the negative consequences on faculty. ■

WHAT OUR UNION DID FOR ME LATELY

By John Burke

Sometimes we fall victim to "what have you done for me lately" thinking; taking for granted those institutions and people in the background quietly working on our behalf, such as our union and union representatives.

I have been an adjunct instructor in the Los Rios system for almost 10 years. During that same period I also worked as an adjunct instructor in two other districts, trying to cobble together enough classes and units to make a livable income. In the last eight years I never taught less than 20 credits a semester and in some semesters 24 or 25 credits. Freeway Flyer? My picture should be in the Wikipedia citation.

Naturally I was thrilled to receive an LTT appointment for the fall 2014 semester. The thrill was mostly gone, however, after I received my salary schedule placement. In my ten years as an adjunct instructor I had worked my way fairly far up the adjunct wage scale. As a new LTT, I was placed at step two because cumulative adjunct hours in the Los Rios district can only be counted up to two years for LTT and tenure track placement. Bottom line, I would be making only slightly more per credit hour taught as

an LTT as I was making as an adjunct instructor; yet I would be expected to do much more. Did I ask questions? No. I mostly just griped to friends.

Sometimes we also forget to assert our rights or just even ask questions if something does not seem right.

Serendipitously, at about the same time, Diana Hicks, ARC LRCFT President, sent out a general email about the online office hour provision of the newly negotiated contract. I wrote to her suggesting my situation was something that perhaps could be examined during the next negotiating schedule. She immediately responded to me that her understanding of the contract provisions was that as long as I was teaching at least the equivalent of a full load by combining adjunct jobs in multiple districts it should count the same as fulltime employment.

Long story, short, a big misunderstanding was corrected jumping me six steps on the salary scale. If it were not for our union, I probably would still be at step two with a bad attitude. ■



AFT CONVENTION – RECLAIMING THE PROMISE – PERSONAL IMPRESSIONS



Teresa Aldridge,
Counselor, CRC

As a first time delegate at the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) National Convention held in Los Angeles on July 10-14, I want to first say thanks to LRCFT for affording me this opportunity but secondly I want to say it was truly an educational experience that LRCFT members should experience during their tenure as faculty. The first impression I got from attending was that I was in an environment with thousands (nearly 3,000 to be exact) colleagues who cared about making a difference for others. What a powerful sensation when 3,000 union members start cheering for a young boy (Asean Johnson) who shared a story about how his teacher fought for his right to a good education or watching nine extraordinary union members receive the Everyday Heroes awards because they had chosen to give back to others.

The convention was also about taking care of business. I attended the AFT Higher Education Division meeting where a panel of presenters shared information on the rising student debt and on a model for how adjunct faculty worked together to create a meaning labor contract on their campuses. I learned that 30% of students have debt but never receive a college degree. The panel suggested that we encourage more loan forgiveness programs to help with this problem. The panel that discussed adjunct faculty (or contingent labor as they referred to them) issues explained that teaching excellence should be the basis for teacher evaluations not focusing on deficits. They also went on to suggest that co-leading workshops on the contract along with the department chairs and union leaders was a good way to explain the needs of contingent faculty.

There were many resolutions passed and some that were more debatable than others which as also exciting for a first timer. The most moving part of the convention for me was when Rev. Dr. William Barber shared his story of the movement he started called "Moral Mondays" in North Carolina. It began with a few clergy and activists protesting the regressive legislation that was being passed by the North Carolina legislature and now this movement which meets

every Monday has grown to over 2,500 on average, but at times tens of thousands protestors come out to support this movement. I agree with the words spoken by Rev. Barber, "I know it personally that when we get together, we win."



Alex May, Math, SCC

I found the speech by the Reverend William Barber, leader of the Moral Mondays movement, regarding the moral crisis in America, the high point of the convention - an impressive accomplishment, since he was competing against the likes of "Sex and the City's" star Cynthia Nixon. His energetic and inspirational speech put our work as educators in context. His Moral Mondays in North Carolina is a great example of how a grass roots movement can bring political pressure by forming strong alliances.

Hoyt Fong, Counselor, CRC

The connection of each speaker reinforced the title, "Keeping the Promise." Everyone from the president of AFT, Randi Weingarten, the CFT president, Josh Pechthalt, Governor Jerry Brown, Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti, and especially the Reverend William Barber, reminded us not to forget the inclusive nature of doing the right thing. The Moral Mondays movement unifies us from both the left and right, all political parties, all religions, to remember to educate all of California.



Dennis Smith, Retired,
Accounting, SCC

The 83rd Convention of the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) was called to order in July this year in downtown Los Angeles, California. Delegations of teachers, nurses, college professors, classified staff, and other public employees came together to learn from each other, to share information, to elect the national officers, and to direct the future policy and political work of the AFT. The delegation from the Los Rios College Federation of

KLOSS CARTOON

By John Kloss



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THE ROLE OF THE UNION IN THE WORKING LIVES OF FACULTY

By Robert Perrone

Sometimes, you do your job the way it's supposed to be done, you do it in the best interests of those around you, but you still get slammed. That's a good description of a struggle now taking place at CRC, although the "you" in this scenario is the Union.

Maybe you've heard the slogan, "Teachers' working conditions are students' learning conditions." It applies perfectly here. The CRC administration prepared a plan, essentially, to decentralize the Counseling area, by assigning individual counselors to academic areas. The plan did have the support of a minority of counselors, some of whom may even have raised the idea initially to the administration. Unfortunately, it appeared that nobody considered the potential impact of the plan on the working conditions of the very people who would be called upon to carry it out — counselors. Nor did it appear that serious thought had been given to its impact on students, as the administration rushed to put a pilot program in place for the fall 2014 semester. The pilot was portrayed as providing the value of counseling services to students in the academic areas, as "something innovative and productive," as if students in academic areas hadn't been receiving effective counseling services. As for being "innovative and productive," that is hardly the case, as most academic areas do have counselor liaisons that make regular appearances in the academic areas, particularly in Careers and Technology. And, of course, there's PE, where athletes have their own counselor assigned to that area and the Transfer Coordinator, whose office is outside of the Counseling Center.

To give you an idea of the current workload in the CRC Counseling Center, during just one week in this past August, 385 students were seen, with an average wait time of only 29 minutes. Students won't stop visiting the Counseling Center even if counselors are stationed in academic areas. The number of students visiting might decrease, but so will the number of counselors available to meet with students also decrease, putting an extra burden on those counselors still in the center.

Since students change their major an average of five times, the informed, knowledgeable, centrally located "general counselor" approach is the most productive, expedient method for counseling 15,000+ students with hundreds of different goals/aspirations. The opportunity to choose a counselor, something the plan for decentralization makes more difficult,



greatly improves the effectiveness of the student's experience. A student is not forced to see a particular counselor in a specific academic area. Often the gender or ethnicity of a student is a factor in preferring a particular counselor, options that might not be available to students who may feel compelled to see the counselor assigned to the academic area of the student's major.

Decentralization of counseling services would reduce the quality and scope of counselors' knowledge and skill by eliminating the collaborative, information-sharing nature of a counseling center. When you place a counselor in an academic area there is no quick rebooking if a student cancels; there is no ability to use the counseling crisis protocol. A crisis can't wait; it must be dealt with immediately.

One of the responsibilities of the LRCFT and, for that matter, any union worth the name, is to consider the impact on working conditions of any changes management may be planning. Ideally, management's responsibility is to discuss and, potentially, negotiate those impacts with the Union. In addition, management also has the responsibility to negotiate the actual plan with the Union, which is also a legal requirement, mandated by the Rodda Act, the 1976 law that granted collective bargaining rights to community college faculty.

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At CRC, the administration prefers to ignore the Union and, in the process, ignore its own responsibilities under the law. A counselor's request for information from the VPSS about the plan and the pilot program received no response. The Union's college president made a similar request to the VPSS and copied the college's president. The VPSS maintained her non-responsive attitude to that request, also, as did the college's president.

Reluctantly, the Union made an official information request to HR. Where the previous two requests were very general, requesting only "information," the Union's official request was much more specific. The information requested was germane to any determination of the extent of the plan and the pilot on counselor working conditions. It appeared that no thought had been given to the potential impact on those counselors who were not to be assigned to an academic area, whether their workload would be increased, whether they would be required to shoulder more crisis counseling and other tasks normally performed by all counselors in the Counseling Center.

The Union's efforts to represent its members were met with accusations of "stonewalling" an attempt to provide services to students. Of course, that wasn't the case — the Union was merely carrying out its responsibility to its members to assure that potential changes in working conditions did not carry with them additional burdens and responsibilities that can

AFT Conference [from page 4]

Teachers (LRCFT) was there so that we understand the issues from a broader perspective and to be sure that our voices are heard in the shaping of AFT policy. Conventions with the divisional meetings, issues committees, caucus groups, speakers, workshops, elections, general sessions, floor debates, etc. are a lot of work and your LRCFT delegation was engaged and on task. The 84th Convention of the AFT is planned for July of 2016 in Minneapolis, MN. Any member of the LRCFT can be elected as a delegate and all are encouraged to consider running.

Jason Newman, History, CRC

The AFT conference provided a wealth of information on the latest attempts across the nation by state legislators, the federal government, corporations

make the job even more difficult than it already is. While there is no doubt that well-meaning counselors envision such a program benefiting students, the administration appears to see the plan as a method of dividing a fairly united body of faculty with a reputation for confronting imperious administrators. What better way to dilute that strength than to move individual counselors to academic areas, where they would be working in isolation from their colleagues?

The CRC administration insisted there were no documents or emails in which the plan and its pilot program were discussed. This, despite evidence that such a plan had been discussed since at least last July, if not earlier. Evidently, the CRC administration believed that the plan and the pilot program was of no concern to the Union, that the administration had no responsibility to share any information about their plans with the Union and, certainly, that it had no responsibility to involve the Union in discussing and, perhaps eventually, actually negotiating such a plan.

Occasionally, in order to get the attention of a non-attentive person, you need to figuratively whack them with a two-by-four. Reluctantly, that is beginning to seem like the only option the Union has in order to carry out its responsibility under the law.

(Thanks go to Elizabeth Biggert, Monica Cranston, and Teresa Aldredge for providing some information on which this article is based.) ■

and management to stifle academic freedom on our college campuses while increasing the privatization of public resources in higher education. At the conference, the slipshod and deceptive operations of the ACCJC, the main accrediting body for California community colleges, received heightened attention and coverage. What I particularly appreciate about big labor conferences is the opportunity to network and meet other faculty from other states who are fighting for fairness in the workplace and social justice in our surrounding communities. ■



ARC REPORT

By Diana Hicks

ARC is off to a busy and productive semester. One group new to ARC faculty is our (Union) Area Stewards. We met during Flex and went over many of the changes to the contract. One of the purposes of the group is to create a conduit between the Union and the division faculty, so when we met during Flex, we went over many of the changes to the contract so that if questions arise in those divisions, these stewards can clarify some of the new changes. If you'd like to be a steward (and it counts as college service for full-time faculty), please contact Kris Fertel, as she is organizing the ARC group. Of course, faculty members can still contact me if they have any sensitive or complicated issues.

Another new addition to ARC, besides nine new faculty members and many interim deans and new administrators, is our college president—Thomas Greene. Based on what I've heard, most faculty members appreciate his humble approach and willingness to really listen. Also fairly new to ARC and the District is CAERC—Capital Adult Education Regional Consortium. The basic skills faculty members at ARC (English, Reading, ESL, and Math) have been meeting during the summer on campus, at SCC, and the District Office. Although the consortium is cen-

tering its discussion on the bridge (or identifying the gaps) between K-12 Adult Education offerings, faculty members are also concerned that some of the lower level basic skills classes may be next on the chopping block because of AB 86. This bill also targets CTE, so ARC could really use a couple of representatives from the career technical area to represent some of the bridges and issues facing this facet. The development of the plan (and likely implementation of it) is moving at a rapid rate.

The last, not so new issue, is the continuing problem regarding students with uncontrolled mental health or behavioral issues. I strongly encourage all faculty to read Article 21—Work Environment and Safety. The article is relatively brief but full of information regarding your rights to remove a student from your teaching environment and your ability to petition whether the student can re-enter the teaching environment. With the increase of behavioral issues in the classroom and other learning environments (centers, libraries and more), you need to know your rights and how to ask for a threat assessment if you and your students feel unsafe in the teaching environment. ■

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