

UF Seeks Out-of-the-Box Solutions to Added Benefits Costs

As health-care premiums continue to increase, without any COLA or new money from the State, college districts across California are looking for ways to contain costs. Essentially, there are three options. Option One is to shift the burden of increasing costs to employees. Some districts are seeking to cap contributions so that employees become responsible for future increases. Option Two is to lower costs by purchasing less coverage. Plans can be changed to cover less (or to increase co-pays and deductibles), or districts can offer fewer, less rich plans, perhaps allowing employees to step up to richer plans at their own added expenses. Both these approaches have advocates, and there isn't space in this issue to review them at length (nor have we been discussing such significant benefits changes in negotiations). But neither plan actually changes the basic problem that costs are going up much faster than inflation. Even if we reduce costs using Option Two, the financial breathing room we create will be only temporary. Eventually cost increases will catch up, and we'll be in trouble again (only with weaker health benefits).

Option Three is a bit more unconventional and long-term, but it may offer more real hope than the first two approaches. The idea is fairly simple: since health-care costs are related to both quality and experience, we could decrease costs by improving both the quality of our care and our health. Health is the most obvious. If as a group, District employees could become healthier and thus need fewer hospitalizations and other expensive care, our costs could go down. Wellness programs, weight-loss contests, health and lifestyle counseling ... all these have potential worth exploring. In terms of quality, ironically, lower quality costs more. According to the California Education Coalition for Health Care Reform, 30 percent of all direct health care outlays today are the result of poor quality care. Secondary infections acquired during hospital stays increase hospital charges by more than \$150,000 per patient! The Coalition estimates that poor-quality health care costs the typical employer between \$1,900 and \$2,250 per covered employee each year.

The UF learned more about Joint Labor-Management Training offered by the Coalition at last month's California Community College Independents (CCCI) Conference. If our district underwent this training, we'd gain access to a database of quality information that might allow us to reduce costs by incentivizing use of the best local hospitals and health-care providers.

These out-of-the-box approaches to rising health care costs may take time and would certainly take broad-based, cross-constituent cooperation, but perhaps right now, while the Nation is sorting out its own approach to health care, we stand to gain most and lose least by improving our employees' health and the quality of our medical care.

New UF Survey Now Underway: Please Participate

We know the semester is nearly over, and faculty are busy, but we have taken some care to prepare our General Fall Survey. Please follow the link in Jeff's email when it comes, or go to www.surveymonkey.com/s/general-uf-dec-2010 to participate. We value your input!

Health, Benefits and Retirement Conference March 18

The date for our UF/FACCC Health, Benefits and Retirement Conference is set for March 18. It will be an all-day conference (flex activity) with workshops on STRS, Financial Planning, Health Benefits, Leaves, and more. For details and to let us know what interests you the most, please read and respond to the General UF Survey now underway. And look for our emails and announcements in the spring.

UF Election Results Now on the Web Site

Thanks to all who participated in our recent elections. You'll find the results on our web site at www.uf4cd.org. All measures passed, including the resolution authorizing the UF to work with the District to enroll part-time faculty in State Disability Insurance and Paid Family Leave.

CCCCD/UF Move Forward with SDI and PFL for P-Timers

Following our recent election, the UF will begin working with the District this month to enroll part-time faculty in State Disability Insurance and Paid Family Leave. We are not yet sure when this change will go into effect. We will keep faculty posted.

President's Message

The news from the State has been bad, again, but the budget situation is still fluid. At the moment we have \$3 million or so in new money, tagged as "growth." Will it be taken away? Probably. Will there be mid-year cuts? Possibly. Will there be cuts again next year? What about the year after that? Wait, I'll get out my Ouija Board and my Magic 8 Ball.

I don't mean to make light of the times or to minimize the depth of California's recession, but we have heard most of this before. The voices of doom predict worse to come, and our fear leads us to make bad decisions. When the coin flips and circumstances improve, we wish we could go backward and make better choices. It's even worse when we feel falsely secure and plan as though the good times will never end.

So what should we be doing as faculty members and employees in CCCCDC during such unstable times? I offer these suggestions, as we go off towards Winter Break: first, don't panic. Our district has healthy reserves and thoughtful leadership. And our contract and collective bargaining protect us. There are no big surprises coming. Second, don't rush. We're going to hear predictions; we're going to hear new ideas. Let's take time to review and discuss and consider. The wind is too unsettled for us to just blow with it. Third, check in with the UF. Have you heard an unsettling rumor? Email me or your UF VP or Advocate. Do you have a suggestion? Send us an email. Let's stay informed and united. And lastly, keep up the good work. Let's not let fads or fear distract us from our teaching and our mission to serve students.

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Table Talk

The Newsletter of the United Faculty of
Contra Costa Community College District

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Negotiations Continue: Ratification in Early Spring?

Negotiations for 2010/2011 are set to resume December 15 after several workgroup meetings in the past month to discuss compensation and part-time parity. Clearly, it is no longer possible for the teams to reach a Tentative Agreement in time for a ratification vote this fall. But while the pace of negotiations has sometimes been frustrating (this is, in fact, the longest we have gone without reaching agreement in the past four years), the UF team has consistently left workgroup meetings feeling that we have made progress. So we remain cautiously optimistic in hoping that we will have a tentative agreement in place for the faculty to review and ratify by the start of the spring semester. After all, we will soon need to begin negotiations for 2011/2012, and both sides have expressed a strong preference for concluding the prior year's agreement before we consider next year.

Most of our talks this past month have focused on developing short-term and long-term plans for part-time pay parity. The complexity of this issue, as well as the UF's reasons for insisting on a parity agreement now, before we conclude our 2010-2011 negotiations, are reviewed and discussed below.

UF Pressing for Part-Time Parity Plan

History and Definition of Parity

In 2002, the State Legislature allocated categorical money (dollars that can be spent only for the intended purpose) to supplement part-time salaries, and at that time, they required that districts define parity by setting local parity goals. "Parity" refers to equivalency in salary between part-time and full-time faculty with equivalent levels of education and experience. Then, as now, part-time faculty were paid considerably less than their full-time counterparts, but since a portion of full-time pay compensates for out-of-classroom responsibilities that are not typically required of part-timers, each district was asked to define parity for itself.

In CCCCD, we agreed to define parity for instructional faculty at 75%. The UF and District reasoned that 25% of a full-timer's pay compensated for office hours and professional activities (meetings, committee work and the like), so we set a goal of paying part-time faculty 75% of a full-timer's salary for an equivalent assignment. For non-instructional faculty, we defined parity at 87.5% (since 12.5% of a full-time counselor or librarian compensates for non-scheduled activities).

In our 2002 agreement, we also affirmed that by 2004, we would meet again to "finalize specific percentage increases or decreases applied to the [part-time salary] schedules." At that time, the District's share of the parity funding provided by the State was \$1,636,146. Many other districts simply took that money and applied it to their part-time salary schedules. But CCCCD did not. For technical reasons, and because we pay part-timers on one hourly salary schedule (without differentiating by assignment-type or load the way the full-time salary schedule does), our District found it easier to calculate parity at the end of each semester, and pass through the State money as a bonus.

Although in past agreements, the UF and CCCCD have committed to shifting our system to a pay-per-load model that would make adding parity to the salary schedule easier, District IT and HR have not yet been able to resolve the technical issues. So we have never added parity money to the salary schedule, and we have continued to pay parity as an end-of-the-semester lump payment.

Our Current Parity Picture in Context

Not only has our district failed to pay parity money on the monthly salary schedule (which has negatively affected some part-timers' retirement with STRS), but we also have done less than most districts to achieve parity. Where many local districts like Foothill/De Anza and San Francisco have made significant annual progress towards their parity goals, CCCCD has never allocated any funding towards parity. This has left our part-time salaries significantly lower than salaries at other Bay 10 districts.

In 2009, when our UF/CCCD Compensation Committee reported to the Governing Board, we noted that while full-time salaries had increased to the middle third of the Bay 10, with about 5-7% more needed to reach the top third, part-time salaries for lecturers and professors of English Composition have remained in the bottom third, some 15-38% below our goal of top third.

Because we pay part-time assignments on an hourly schedule, with no modification related to load (where a contact-hour is a contact-hour regardless of how much preparation and grading is involved), which is quite different from how we pay full-timers, our parity rates vary significantly depending on assignment type. They also vary depending on step and column. Ironically, those who have been at CCCCD longer, who are higher on the salary schedule, are paid worse compared to their full-time counterparts than new hires and those at the bottom of the schedule.

At present, approximate parity rates are as follows: 43% for English Composition; 54% for Lecture; 73% for Lab; 80% for PE; 84% for Counseling; and 106% for Librarians. Depending on step and column, the

parity rate can shift by up to 6%. So while some PE and Librarian assignments pay above parity (because full-time assignments are based mostly on scheduled hours, so on the hourly schedule, the pay adds up favorably in comparison), our part-time lecturers and professors of English Composition are far below parity (less than 40% for Comp. faculty at the top of the salary schedule).

The Current Crisis: Pay Cuts for Our Poorest Paid Part-Timers

Last year, the State cut categorical funding for several programs, including part-time parity, by nearly fifty percent. For most districts, the parity cut translated as a hit to the general fund. Like part-time office hours (for which the state also provides some categorical funding), parity for most districts was already a contractual obligation, paid on the salary schedule at some previously agreed-to rate. So when the State cut the funding, most districts had to adjust as a district, the same way we have had to adjust to cuts in apportionment.

For CCCCD, however, because we have always just passed through the parity dollars without putting them on the salary schedule, the State's cut threatened to translate as a salary reduction for part-time lecturers and professors of English Composition (the only groups who currently receive parity dollars per our agreement). Last fall, we concluded our 2009/2010 agreement by deciding to spend all of the parity funding the District received from the State to prevent a pay cut in the fall. Part-timers last fall received the same 7.8% parity adjustment at the end of the semester that they had received in the previous year. (In fact, this wound up requiring the District to supplement the State funding by a small amount.) We delayed until the 2010/2011 negotiations deciding what to do about Spring 2010.

So if we do not reach any parity agreement during current negotiations, the consequences will be as follows: part-time lecturers and professors of English Comp. will have taken a one-time 7.8% salary cut last spring. This year, there are only enough parity dollars from the state to afford a parity rate of 4.3%, so part-time lecturers will have lost 3.5% as an ongoing pay-cut. And rather than moving closer to parity and closer to the top third of the Bay 10, this one group of faculty, our part-time lecturers and Comp. professors, will have been singled out for especially rotten treatment.

Why Parity Matters

1. Equity

Obviously, the key argument for pay parity is equity. There is simply no reason why a part-time professor with equivalent education and experience should earn half what a full-timer earns to teach the same class. Nor does it make any sense that our lowest-paid faculty should have to take a pay cut in a year when no other faculty have had to make salary concessions. Part-time faculty throughout our district are already facing layoffs and schedule reductions as sections have been reduced. To cut their pay as well would only worsen morale and further divide our faculty.

2. Attracting and Retaining the Best Professors

Furthermore, it's important to remember that most other districts have not cut part-time pay as a result of the State's reduction in par-

ity funding. The less our part-timers make in comparison to other districts, the harder it will be to attract and retain quality faculty. That may seem less of an issue in these days of reduced schedules, but our colleges still compete with nearby districts for part-time faculty. We can't afford to start making negative progress in parity.

3. More Full-Time Hires

Every year, UF representatives attend the district-wide Staffing Meeting (what was called, until recently, the Box 2A meeting), where we press for more full-time hires. Every year, it's the same story. Full-timers are too expensive. It costs approximately \$44,000 per year more to hire a full-timer than to have the load covered by part-time faculty. Everybody agrees more full-timers would be better. But our full-time/part-time ratio has not improved in years.

If we make part-timers more expensive, if we get closer to parity, this equation will change. We know that at other districts, improving parity has been a crucial first step in improving the full-time/part-time ratio. As parity increases, after all, the comparative cost of full-time positions decreases. Will this make classes more expensive to offer overall in the long run? Yes. But our system rests much too fully these days on the exploitation of part-time labor, and this benefits nobody, including our students. Change will only come incrementally, but the UF believes that progress in parity is a key ingredient to making things better for our faculty and our students.

Other Issues: Overload; Part-Time Committee and SLO Work

In some districts, overload assignments are treated exactly the same way as part-time assignments (as if a full-timer was simply teaching part-time on top of his/her regular assignment). At CCCCD, this is not the case. Full-timers who want to teach overload have priority in scheduling over part-time faculty (including those with staffing preference), and we do not currently pay parity on overload assignments. We did at first, but in 2005, when faculty took a 7% pay cut, our members elected to stop paying parity on overload assignments (as a way of mitigating the pay cut for our part-timers at the time).

At present, the parity plans under discussion in negotiations have not included beginning to pay parity on overload assignments. Although the UF has never agreed that overload should be paid at a lower rate than part-time teaching (some districts actually have a different salary schedule for overload), there simply has not been enough money available to consider allocating funds to overload at this time. For now, when we talk about parity, we mean closing the gap between part-time and full-time A-load assignments. Addressing inequities related to overload will need to be a next step.

As to part-time office hours and committee work, we have discussed professionalizing part-time faculty by requiring (and compensating for) one office hour per class, just as full-timers must provide, as well as involving part-timers more fully in program review. If we could afford to compensate for committee work and SLOs, we might redefine parity at 100%, as some districts have done. But this too seems mainly to be a subject for future consideration. At present, our aim is to prevent or mitigate parity cuts and to put in place a plan for progress.