

UF Food Drive Planned for October to Support Food Bank

The UF is planning to host a food drive throughout the District to support the Food Bank of Contra Costa and Solano. Working with staff and the Associated Student Unions, we will be placing collection barrels at division offices and in classroom buildings on each campus starting on October 18 (through November 4) and offering a prize for the division or department that collects the most food (per pound per FTEF). The winners will receive a gourmet meal (breakfast or lunch) prepared and served by the UF Executive Board!

The Food Bank of Contra Costa and Solano serves more than 132,000 people in need every month and supports more than 180 charitable agencies. October and November tend to be slow months for food collection, which is why we are timing our food drive before the holidays. Financial contributions will be welcome too. Look for posters and fliers with details coming soon.

Know Your Contract: Scheduling Office Hours

Changes to the contract in last year's agreement now allow all faculty to designate one office hour as "on-line." This must be a regularly scheduled hour, posted along with on-campus office hours, during which the faculty member is available via email, webCT/blackboard, Skype, or other electronic means to consult with students.

Article 7.8.1 specifies that full-time instructional faculty must hold five office hours per week, scheduled no more than one and one-half (1 ½) hours per day. This is true for the on-line office hour as well. Faculty may not need to be physically on campus more than three days a week, depending on schedule, but we still need to be available to students over at least four days (counting the on-line office hour).

Faculty teaching on-line courses may, at their option, hold office hours on-line in the same ratio as their on-line courses are to their total semester load.

The office-hour obligation is directly related to instructional load, so those with reassigned time (such as department chairs) are required to hold fewer office hours (proportional to their instructional assignment). Teaching overload does not increase one's office-hour obligation beyond 5 hours per week.

Management may authorize variations to the office-hour requirements when the department chair and dean approve.

Part-time faculty are not required to hold office hours, but may be compensated for up to 1.5 hours, depending on their teaching load. According to article 7.8.4, part-timers may elect to serve the following office hours per week based on the following loads: .2 to .399 load: one-half hour; .4 to .599 load: one hour; .6 load: one and one-half hours.

Part-time faculty members must have and use a District email address to designate an office hour (or half hour) as on-line.

President's Message

Reform without investment is a bad recipe, and faculty are rightly fed up with increasing "accountability measures" while our funding keeps getting cut. Programs we know serve students well, from EOPS to Hours-by-Arrangement, seem to be under attack. Class sizes have ballooned; faculty and staff are being stretched unreasonably; full-time hires continue to decline; and according to State Chancellor Jack Scott, as many as 670,000 students may be turned away altogether from California community colleges this year. Meanwhile, the weak economy seems to breed bad ideas, and there are more on the way.

Pension reform is a huge threat in this environment (and likely to materialize in some form during the 2012 election). Rather than seeking to improve pensions for all, legislators seem bent on reducing benefits for public employees. CalSTRS and CalPERS have both shown strong signs of recovery since the start of the current recession. CalSTRS posted investment gains of 12.2% in 2010 and 23.1% in 2011. CalPERS earned 11.6 and 20.7% in those two years. But details and facts tend to get swept aside by the sound bites during election years.

Another major concern on the horizon is legislation that will likely follow recommendations of the "Student Success Task Force," empowered by Senate Bill 1143, which was passed in 2010. This 20-member group has been meeting monthly since January 2011 and is on the verge of publishing its list of recommendations and seeking feedback. (They are planning two open forums, one in Northern and the other in Southern CA; and the Academic Senate's Fall Plenary, Nov. 3-5 in San Diego, will likely be another key opportunity for faculty input.)

The Task Force proposals include a significant increase in student services with each entering student required to meet with a counselor to write an educational plan for which progress will be reviewed annually. There are suggestions that emphasize basic skills, coordination with high schools, and new student record systems. But there seem to be few details proposed having to do with funding. Many of the Task Force's recommendations may be good ideas, but unless new initiatives are backed by new resources, implementation may do more harm than good.

The stakes are high, and the landscape is shifting rapidly, which is why faculty need to be marshalling all our resources both locally and statewide to stay informed and to influence public discussions. With these goals in mind, the UF has joined with other independent (CCCI) locals (including Foothill/De Anza, Santa Monica, Santa Rosa and others) to hire David Balla-Hawkins as our advocate and advocacy trainer.

Hawkins served eight years as the legislative advocate for FACCC and ten years lobbying for CSU faculty. For CCCI, he will conduct local trainings in grassroots advocacy and organizing, and work to represent community college faculty in Sacramento. We're also continuing to strengthen our partnership with FACCC and our relationships with local legislators. We want to increase local dialog too. Come join one of our upcoming roundtables!

United Faculty Executive Board Members

Contra Costa College	Los Medanos College
Vern Cromartie	Milton Clarke
Rachel Dwiggins-Beeler (PT Rep)	
Stuart Lichter	Marco Godinez
Jeffrey Michels (Pres.)	Luis Morales (PT Rep)
Aminta Mickles (Vice Pres.)	Michael Zilber (Vice Pres.)
Rudy Zeller	

Diablo Valley College

Glenn Appell (Vice Pres.)	Jason Mayfield
Deborah Dahl-Shanks (PTF Advocate)	Steve Padover
Doug Dildine (PT Rep)	Mary Ulrich
Katrina Keating (Treasurer)	Bruce Koller
Marina Crouse	Donna Wapner

UNITED FACULTY OFFICE

Terri Adame, Office Administrator
Rachel Dwiggins-Beeler, *Table Talk* Editor
(925) 685-1230 x2502 or 680-1771 fax (925) 680-7283
email: uf@uf4cd.org website: www.uf4cd.org
(Email Jeffrey Michels at ufjeffmichels@gmail.com)



Table Talk

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

September 28, 2011

News at a Glance

- Unstable Budget Picture Offers Some Hope for Recovery
- District/UF Evaluate Proposal from Anthem Blue Cross
- UF Endorses Sharon Hendricks for CalSTRS Retirement Board
- Symposium to Begin with Full-Time Faculty Roundtables
- UF Plans Fundraiser for Assemblymember Susan Bonilla
- UF Food Drive Planned for October to Support Food Bank
- Know Your Contract: Scheduling Office Hours
- President's Message: Pension Reform and New CCCI Advocate

Unstable Budget Picture Offers Some Hope for Recovery

With California still shackled by a weak economy, and predictions about this year's "trigger budget," possible "mid-year cuts," and the future of community college funding still mostly gloomy, our district's financial crisis is probably far from over. But unexpectedly high projections for the 2010-2011 ending fund balance (district and college reserves) has the UF hoping we can recover some of last spring's negotiated concessions.

Presenting the "2011-2012 Adoption Budget" to the District Governing Board on September 14, the District's finance team was quick to point out that a projected structural deficit coupled with rising costs and no new state money will likely exhaust the total reserve in less than three years. They warned of a \$6 million deficit in 2011/12, a \$16 million deficit in 2012/13, and a \$13 million deficit in 2013/14. But the projected total reserve for 2010/11 (ending balance at June 30, 2012) is about \$31.5 million, which represents a 23% reserve, a sharp increase over last year's 16% reserve. And as UF President Jeff Michels told the Governing Board, speaking during public comment, "we didn't vote yes on concessions to grow the District's reserves."

District leadership, for its part, has been clear in informal discussions with the UF that they did not seek concessions last year in order to increase reserves. This is why at the moment, we are optimistic about the chances for some recovery.

The UF Budget Committee is still analyzing the causes of this unexpected increase in fund balance, and members of our UF negotiating team will soon join in a "meet and confer" discussion with Local 1, Management Council, and the District to discuss possible adjustments to last year's agreements. The budget picture, both locally and statewide, is still in flux, and the projected ending fund balance is in no sense a hard number yet; but in this frustratingly unstable financial atmosphere, the UF is stressing the need for transparency and trust. We think some recovery now will help to maintain trust as we go on.

Anthem Blue Cross Bids to Replace Health Net

As the District and employee groups continue seeking options for containing health care costs without sacrificing quality, we have entertained a bid from Anthem Blue Cross to become CCCCD's non-Kaiser provider. So far, Blue Cross has made two presentations to a cross-constituency group including UF, Local 1, and management representatives. The plans they are offering would replace Health Net's HMO and Health Net Elect for current members and retirees in our district.

Some aspects of their proposal are attractive; they have an "Exclusive Provider Option" (EPO) plan that would allow members to go to any doctor in Blue Cross' national PPO network without needing a referral. Their network, the largest in the state and in the nation, includes more than 90% of California's hospitals and 86% of doctors, and members would not be limited to physicians in one local health group (like Hill Physicians, John Muir and Alta Bates). Members would also be covered out of state, which would be particularly good for retirees who move or for parents with dependent kids in college. Blue Cross would also offer a Preferred Provider Option (PPO) that would allow members to go outside the plan to any doctor at all, for a substantial copay (40% up to an annual cap).

Blue Cross is also proposing to lower premiums in the first year. Rather than an anticipated 10-12% increase from Health Net, we would see a 6-12% decrease in rates in our first year with Blue Cross (depending on which plans we choose). Copays for the EPO plan, which we think would be the most attractive plan for current Health Net HMO and Elect members, would mostly not change under the current proposals, though we would have the option of raising copays to lower premiums further if we choose to negotiate that.

On the surface, it looks like a better health care plan for less money, but there are many concerns to be considered as well. First, we have no promises regarding premiums in year two. Blue Cross is clearly offering a good rate to get our business. But our rates in year two will be based on our "experience" (how often and to what extent district employees use the health plan), and this could easily cause rates to shoot up.

Our current health care plans, both Kaiser and Health Net, are so-called "capitated" plans. This means the carrier pays physicians a set rate to see patients in the plan, whether our members go to the doctor or not. Hospital expenses are paid on a case-by-case basis, but not doctor's visits. This stabilizes costs, to some degree. The Blue Cross EPO plan, however, is not capitated. The plan will pay for doctor's visits one at a time. Members will be able to go to any specialist without a referral, but this may cost the plan more, which would raise our rates in the future. At the moment, we have no data about how often our group visits doctors. Capitated plans, like the ones we have now, don't track or provide that data. The Blue Cross plan would give us that data monthly (which would be quite useful to use if we were to consider a "self-insured" plan, another option we have been discussing where we might save on some administrative costs). But moving to a non-capitated plan would also involve some risk if it turns

out our members go visit primary-care doctors and specialists more frequently than the average upon which current capitated rates are based.

Blue Cross also has been in the news too often recently for the wrong reasons. Perhaps most troubling, they recently severed ties with Stanford Medical Center, claiming that Stanford was asking too high a price for services. While negotiations are still ongoing, and the Blue Cross representatives expressed some confidence that Stanford would be back in their plan within a few months, the break is cause for concern, not only because Stanford is a world-class medical facility to which our members would like access but also because it suggests that Blue Cross may break with other top local hospitals in the future. Some E-Board members have also expressed concern over Blue Cross' reputation for trying to hike individual rates unreasonably.

We may be facing a tough decision down the road, and if we get to that point, we will certainly hold union meetings and do our best to solicit as much input as possible before putting any change before the faculty for a vote. There may still be other options to consider as well, not only from Health Net but from other providers. We are still looking into self-insured options, for example, as well as plans offered by PERS, consortium possibilities and also wellness programs and other ways we might stabilize and contain costs. The UF's priority through all these discussions will be to protect both the quality of our health care and the variety and flexibility of our options and plans. We want to be open to the possibility of change but still thorough and cautious in approaching new proposals.

The UF has continued to employ a local benefits agent and health-care expert, Kevin Roberts, as our consultant, and we have established a benefits team that includes Stuart Lichter, Tina Levy, Elaine Rehr and Donna Wapner (as well as the UF president and VPs). Please feel free to contact any member of our team if you have questions or suggestions related to health care. Benefits (including health care and retirement/pension issues) may also be a topic for our upcoming Symposium on the State of Our Profession (see the article in this issue of *Table Talk*.)

UF Endorses Sharon Hendricks for CalSTRS Board

The UF Executive Board voted unanimously to join CCCI, CFT, FACCC, CPFA and others in endorsing Sharon Hendricks to become the next community college representative on the CalSTRS Board. Ballots will be mailed before October 1 to all community college faculty members who are active members of CalSTRS, and the UF strongly encourages everyone to look out for the envelope and make sure you vote. "With public pensions under attack, it is crucial that we have someone strong and smart representing us on the CalSTRS Board," says UF Vice President from DVC Glenn Appell. Hendricks, who was keynote speaker at the UF's benefits conference last year, has a solid understanding of retirement/pension issues. She has served as Retirement Liaison for the LA Guild, served on the



FACCC Board and Retirement Committee; and she has been mentored and endorsed by the outgoing community college representative on the CalSTRS Board, Carolyn Widener. She has worked as part-time and full-time faculty and as a speech pathologist in the K-12 system, Widener points out, so she is sensitive to the complex interests of the various groups in CalSTRS.

Symposium to Begin with Full-Time Faculty Roundtables

In order to help the UF develop local strategies on issues related to working conditions, including full-time/part-time ratios; SLOs and other paperwork related to program review and accreditation; scheduling, staffing and enrollment management; salaries and benefits, all faculty will be invited this year to participate in a Symposium on the State of Our Profession. The first events will be full-time faculty roundtable discussions on each campus, open to all full-time faculty. (Part-time roundtables will be scheduled as well, later in the year.) At each meeting, faculty will be asked to list and prioritize concerns, and then we'll follow an interest-based process to brainstorm and evaluate options for making improvements in working conditions. Meetings will take place as follows:

DVC: Tuesday, October 25, 3-5pm, BFL Conference Room

CCC: Monday, October 31, 2:15-4pm, AA 216

LMC: Tuesday, October 25, 12:30-2pm, L-109

Some of these meetings (DVC and CCC) have been scheduled to overlap with Academic Senate meetings, so if you can't attend, please consider sharing ideas with your union or senate representatives prior to the roundtables.

UF Plans Fundraiser for Assemblymember Susan Bonilla

All faculty and friends are invited to attend a house-party and fundraiser for Assemblymember Susan Bonilla (D-Concord) on Thursday, October 27 at 6pm in Orinda. Co-sponsored by the United Faculty and the Faculty Association of California Community Colleges (FACCC), the party will include live music, margaritas and fajitas. We are suggesting a contribution of \$25 to Bonilla's 2012 reelection campaign from all who attend, but no donation is required. (Both the UF PAC and FACCC PAC are making substantial contributions to Bonilla's campaign in connection with this event.) Bonilla chairs the Assembly's committee on higher education finance and is herself a former high school English teacher. She has been a consistent supporter of community colleges and a friend to the UF. Please join us for this opportunity to show our support and appreciation for her work. RSVP to Terri in the UF Office (925-680-1771) for the address and directions.

