

Retired UF Office Administrator Patti Acuña Dies

Longtime United Faculty Office Administrator Patricia Ann (Patti) Acuña died on July 5 after a long struggle with cancer at the age of 67. Patti had spent several years retired, traveling with husband Al and enjoying the company of her friends and family.



Patti's tenure with the UF spanned 11 years and four Union presidents, and her dedication, skill, wit and general passion for life and for learning helped to keep our organization strong and steady even in tumultuous times. She was a huge support for faculty and staff throughout our district. "She was always on the side of the employee," said former UF President Brendan Brown. "She understood the complexities of what we do, including the need for confidentiality, and she was always there when we needed her. She was a real pro."

Patti "touched everyone who knew her," said UF Executive Director (and past president) Jeffrey Michels. "She not only anchored the UF; she had an inspiring, remarkable zest for life. She was an avid Giants and 49ers fan, a gourmet cook, a world traveler; she loved adventures, from camping to cruising; she liked people, and she could tell a story." The UF sends our appreciation and support to Patti's family; she left her mark on our people and our organization, and we are better for it.

15-Year District Trustee Sheila Grilli Dies at 75



Contra Costa Community College District Governing Board Chair Sheila Grilli died on September 1, following a long illness. Grilli was elected to her fourth term as a District Trustee in 2010, representing Ward 3 (Martinez, Pleasant Hill, Concord, Pacheco). She was a prominent and popular figure in Martinez, owner of Sheila A. Grilli Booksellers downtown, a small independent bookstore of the sort one rarely finds anymore these days: packed from ceiling to floor with used and new books, local

history, fiction and poetry (most of which Sheila had read and looked forward to discussing), with room to sit and read or chat. She was passionate about learning, loved literature, and was a fierce advocate for students and for community colleges. She served our district with integrity, dedication and humor for 15 years, having started her career as a high school teacher in Clayton and a writing instructor at CSU Hayward.

According to the California Education Code, the Governing Board has 60 days to decide if the District will order an immediate election or make a provisional appointment to fill the vacancy.

President's Message



Greetings Colleagues. I hope that your fall semesters are going well. As president of the UF, I was very pleased that we were able to have Jonathan Lightman, Executive Director of the Faculty Association of California Community Colleges (FACCC), address two of our three campuses on All College Day this fall. His comments regarding State funds still owed to the community college system (and FACCC's fight to recover those dollars) were a refreshing change from the doom and gloom of the last several years. There seems to be extra money, for a change, and revenue projections so far are looking good both locally and at the State level.

Still, there is much to concern us in Sacramento from the so-called education reformers (kooks with moocs) to ongoing attacks on our pensions and academic freedoms, and we are lucky we have such knowledgeable and effective lobbyists like Lightman and FACCC's Andrea York fighting on our behalf. Other groups seem to weave in and out of education politics, picking some battles and avoiding others, but FACCC is at every important hearing and is constantly building relationships with legislators; they are the group keeping all the other groups informed, coordinating efforts, leading the fight for faculty rights and college funding.

For some time now, the UF has been considering entering into a more comprehensive partnership with FACCC. Many of our sister districts who are members of California Community College Independents (CCCI), a consortium of independent unions similar to the UF, including Foothill DeAnza, Santa Monica, and Santa Rosa, have established contract agreements with FACCC. These agreements lower the dues for FACCC membership (and make those dues entirely tax deductible) and strengthen our connection to this vital organization.

A FACCC contract membership would automatically make every United Faculty member in the district a member of FACCC. We would be guaranteed a place on the FACCC Board of Governors, and we would have a direct connection to the vital work in which FACCC is engaged. FACCC has been instrumental in pushing back against the corporatization of our colleges, refuting the utter nonsense that "professional reformers" like Robert Shireman of California Competes have been espousing. FACCC has also played a central role in challenging the sometimes arbitrary, unpredictable and overly punitive policies of the ACCJC.

If we were to establish a contract agreement with FACCC, we would need to put the plan to a vote of our members, since it would likely involve a change in our dues structure (with members no longer paying FACCC directly but the UF essentially buying membership for all). We're still working out the details and debating the pros and cons. More on this soon.

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Table Talk

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

September 11, 2013

News at a Glance

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- Agenda for the Year Includes Accreditation Workload and a Variety of Equity Issues
- Key Steps Taken to Improve Communication with Retirees
- Affordable Care Act to Expand Benefits Options for Part-Timers
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UF Looks to Increase Load for Lab Assignments

With compensation and a possible salary increase for 2014/2015 to be determined this spring by a formula, per our 2013/2014 negotiated agreement, the UF will turn to equity issues this fall including lecture/lab definitions and load. Article 7 of the UF Contract describes assignment types and load values, but these have remained static for decades while the realities of teaching have evolved dramatically in many cases. We believe it is time to rethink how lab assignments are defined and paid.

"My labs are more work to teach than my lectures, but they count for 25% less load. That doesn't make sense."

Many faculty, particularly in the sciences, report that their lab sections take more preparation and grading than standard lecture classes, but for full-time faculty (paid by load rather than by course hours), labs pay 25% less. Of course, not all labs require extra homework for faculty. Some have been embedded in lecture courses to give students in-class practice time without adding more assignments for faculty to grade. Some programs offer drop-in labs that involve no outside work for faculty at all (although recent changes to the hours-by-arrangement rules have added preparation and grading to many). Historically, lab sections have tended to be smaller than lectures (often limited by the number of stations built into the room), but this too has changed over the years with new construction, and it certainly is not universally true that labs are smaller than lectures.

A wide variety of classes in our district today are labeled "lab," and while there may be some fixed pressures (such as class size) working against simply paying all lab at the lecture rate, the current system does not seem equitable or even logical in many cases. It is true that most districts handle labs about the same way we do. So far, the UF has reviewed 58 community college districts in California, and we have not yet found one that pays exactly the same for all lectures and

labs. But there are some variations, and some progress has been made recently in lecture-lab equity. Perhaps the most progressive model is at nearby Chabot, where they changed their contract a couple of years ago to include several tiers of labs that load at different rates. Departments at Chabot were invited to apply for the load rate they thought appropriate for each lab (based on faculty workload), and apparently this new system has worked well so far.

Our plan for the fall is to continue studying best practices elsewhere, and to begin meeting with faculty throughout our district from different areas and disciplines to get a clearer sense of what faculty are doing now and what load rates would most fairly reflect the workload. We also plan to hold some open forums on this topic at all our colleges as we begin gearing up for spring negotiations.

2013/14 Agenda: Accreditation Workload; Equity Issues

In the wake of the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior College's appalling decision to revoke City College of San Francisco's accreditation in 2014, pending appeal, statewide efforts pressing for accreditation reform have intensified. The UF has been at the forefront of this fight, working with the California Community College Independents (CCCI), as well as with other faculty organizations (FACCC; CFT; CTA; and the Academic Senate). Just last month, the legislature approved a CCCI request (by a 10-1 vote of the Joint Legislative Audit Committee) to conduct an audit of the accreditation process. For years, we have been arguing that the high-pressure, punitive, and often unpredictable policies of the ACCJC are causing districts like ours to squander resources that would be better spent elsewhere. Now, a bipartisan legislative committee has finally agreed to investigate: a big step forward, we hope.

The ACCJC is itself up for renewal this year from the Department of Education, and last week, CCCI filed a "third party comment" calling into question the Agency's eligibility to continue accrediting community colleges without significant reforms. One key criteria, according to the DOE, is "widespread support among educators," and we argued that the ACCJC currently lacks this support. At every point, we stress that we believe in accreditation and quality control; we just don't think the current system is serving our colleges or our students.

Meanwhile, locally, we have tried to support our district's efforts to meet the demands and standards of the Commission, but with accreditation site visits coming in 2014, the UF is concerned about the workload demands on faculty. Accreditation, of course, including program review, course review and student learning outcomes, is mostly an "academic and professional matter" and thus the purview of the Academic Senates. But as faculty are increasingly being asked to produce and verify reports as a significant part of their primary assignment, the workload implications are clearly a subject for the Union. We regularly hear from faculty who are frustrated by increasing paperwork demands for which they feel that they are not fairly compensated.

One key agenda item for the UF this year will therefore be accreditation workload. Obviously, we don't want to undermine efforts to re-

new our accreditation. (Nothing is more distracting for an institution or requires more work from faculty than responding to sanctions.) But we want to begin a district-wide discussion about what the UF's role should be in the accreditation process, and if there are steps we can take to make sure that work is divided equitably and that faculty are fairly compensated for their work outside the classroom. Look for more on this issue soon.

Also on the agenda this year are a number of equity issues that have been simmering for some time: fair compensation for Program Leads; a review of evaluation stipends, especially for those chairing 7th-semester part-time-evaluation committees; and compensation for speech-team coaches and others who are required to spend significant time working with students that is currently unpaid. In our most recent survey, the majority of faculty who responded rated equity issues as more important than or equally important to salary increases. So in this second year of our two-year salary agreement, we will turn our attention to equity issues now. If you have suggestions for other areas we should pursue, please contact a UF Executive Board member and share your thoughts.

Key Steps Taken to Improve Communication with Retirees

Following discussions last spring between UF leaders and current retirees, the UF met with district officials last week to review some suggestions for improving communications. We are pleased to announce that beginning immediately, faculty who retire will no longer lose their district email accounts, as has been the practice up until now. Any current retiree who would like his or her email account reinstated need only contact District HR or the UF Office. Our new email server has much more memory than in the past, so keeping retirees linked in will no longer pose a problem. The UF has also decided to add a retiree section to our current web site and to build and maintain a listserv for easier communication with retirees. We hope to launch our retiree web page by the end of this semester.

Affordable Care Act Offers New Options for Part-Timers

By Deborah Dahl Shanks

Covered California is the new CA health exchange program as part of President Obama's Affordable Care Act. Starting Jan 1, 2014, employees who do not receive or buy health insurance from their employer may purchase coverage from an exchange and in many cases receive a subsidy from the Federal Government. Every individual must have "minimum essential coverage" (MEC) starting in 2014 or pay a tax. The initial open enrollment period will be October 1, 2013 through March 1, 2014.

Since full-time faculty in our district receive health insurance with 94% of the premium paid as part of their total compensation, the new exchange will essentially be an option for part-timers only.

Under Covered California, health-exchange coverage is a guaranteed issue to eligible people; no one can be excluded for pre-existing med-

ical conditions. Rates vary by geography and smoker status as well as plan and income level. There are numerous plans available under Covered California, including PPO, EPO and HMO plans from Blue Cross, Blue Shield, HealthNet and Kaiser. There are also financial assistance programs available: tax credits, cost-sharing subsidies and Medi-cal assistance, based upon income.

Details are available on-line at www.coveredca.com. The UF will also be sponsoring a number of free workshops on this important, new program. The first will be Friday, October 25 from 12noon to 3:00pm at DVC in the Trophy Room. Juliet Huang, from the California Labor Council, will speak and answer questions. The UF will provide lunch. Please RSVP to Deborah Shanks at ddahlshanks@dvc.edu.



**Affordable Care Act
"Covered California"**

Free Workshop

**Friday, October 25, 2013
12noon-3pm
Diablo Valley College
Trophy Room**

RSVP for Lunch: ddahlshanks@dvc.edu

Change in Tax Law May Help Same-Sex Couples

Last spring, *Table Talk* reported on a significant inequity faced by domestic partners and same-sex couples in our district. Federal law required that the District report health insurance coverage extended to non-dependent same-sex partners (or any who meet the definition of domestic partners as described in Article 21.6.5 of the UF contract) as taxable wages, unlike married different-sex spouses, who pay no taxes on health benefits. For some faculty members in our district, this has meant thousands of dollars a year in extra taxes.

Following the recent Supreme Court decision to strike down the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA), however, the Treasury Department and Internal Revenue Service have announced that all legally married same-sex couples will be treated as married for federal tax purposes. Not only do we believe this means that married same-sex couples will no longer pay extra taxes for district benefits, but according to CNN, couples may elect to file amended tax returns for 2010, 2011, and 2012 and seek a refund where appropriate. The details are still being debated at the federal level, and not all the news may be good. Same-sex couples may now find themselves paying the unpopular "marriage penalty" where some married couples find themselves paying more when filing jointly. Faculty who might be affected by the IRS decision should consult with their accountants or tax advisors.