

UF Takes Steps Towards FACCC Contract Membership

As we have been reporting, the United Faculty Executive Board has for some time been exploring the possibility of a contract membership with the Faculty Association of California Community Colleges (FACCC). Many of the faculty unions with whom we work most closely in the California Community Colleges Independents (CCCI), including Foothill/De-Anza; Santa Rosa; Santa Monica; and Santa Barbara have already become contract members of FACCC. With statewide issues and advocacy more important than ever (as threats to our pensions, academic freedoms and college funding seemingly increase every year), we think the contract membership may be the most effective way to strengthen our voice in Sacramento.

Contract membership would offer a number of benefits to UF members. For the majority, who are already dues-paying members of FACCC, their FACCC dues would go down 10% in this agreement. Full-timers normally pay \$15 per month (over 12 months) to belong to FACCC. Our contract would lower those dues to \$13.50 and make them fully tax-deductible. For part-timers, normal FACCC dues are \$5.00 per month (over 10 months); these would drop to \$4.50 per month and be tax-deductible. Our contract would also guarantee the UF a seat on FACCC's governing board. Plus, UF members would receive a variety of negotiated discounts as part of our contract, including 25% off 2014/15 fees to attend the popular Great Teachers Seminar or FACCC's excellent Advocacy and Policy Conference in Sacramento.

The contract itself would be with FACCC's "Education Institute," which is the research and professional development wing of FACCC. This means that the UF would to some degree be able to direct research projects as needed. We often struggle to compare contracts and working conditions from district to district, information that can be quite useful to us in negotiations. As a contract member, we will be able to look to FACCC to help provide and analyze data. FACCC will also provide trainings for us as needed.

As part of our contract, the UF would agree to make every UF member also a FACCC member. The cost of FACCC dues would be added to the regular UF dues that members currently pay. Our dues today remain some of the lowest in California, even among independent unions, which tend charge significantly less than affiliated locals (such as the California Federation of Teachers [CFT] and the California Teachers Association [CTA]): our full-timers pay 0.55 percent of their regular salary and 0.35 percent of overload; and part-timers pay 0.35 percent of their regular salary. In addition, full-timers pay a flat \$2.50 per month as a contribution to our Political Action Fund, while part-time members contribute \$0.42 per month.

The contract membership proposal we are planning to ask our members to approve in February would keep all the percentages and PAC dues the same but would add \$13.50/month (over 12 months) for full-timers and \$4.50/month (over 10 months) for part-timers to cover FACCC dues. Our members would then stop paying FACCC directly. Again, for current FACCC members, this will constitute a net reduction in overall dues. Those not currently members of FACCC will be paying more to cover their FACCC membership.

Why FACCC?

The UF Executive Board has been considering a contract with FACCC for several years, and we have always hesitated because we take seriously any dollar deducted from faculty paychecks. We also know that a part of current UF dues goes to political

advocacy, and we think we have made those dollars work quite well in recent years. With CCCI, we hired a lobbyist, David Balla Hawkins, whose work on our behalf in Sacramento has been extraordinary. Not only was David instrumental in improving the so-called Student Success bill that has threatened to add many new requirements for our colleges and students without adequate funding for infrastructure, but David also made terrific strides in the fight for accreditation reform by successfully pressing for a legislative audit and hearings over the current costs of accreditation. He keeps our local UF leadership well informed of statewide issues and bills that come up, guides us when we go to Sacramento to testify in hearings related to college regulations, and he has been effective in training our leadership and other faculty groups in local advocacy and political action.

Also, we have terrific relationships with our local legislators that we work actively to maintain. We support good candidates who support education; we meet regularly with our state senators and assembly members to make sure they understand what our students and colleges need and to debunk myths often spread by professional "education reformers." In other words, the UF and CCCI already represent our members aggressively and effectively. And yet . . . FACCC offers something more and makes us all better.

FACCC is not a union or a union group like CFT, CTA or CCCI. FACCC is statewide professional organization (like the American Medical Association). FACCC hosts seminars and conference around the state, working closely with local faculty groups to meet professional-development needs and keep faculty informed. In our district, for example, FACCC co-sponsors our annual Retirement and Benefits Conference, and they have co-sponsored all of our major political rallies to get out the vote for Proposition 92 and Proposition 30 (big fights in recent years). They help us plan, organize and fund local activities, from small fundraisers for local candidates to policy forums and conferences. They sponsor a Great Teachers Seminar; Part-Time Faculty Symposium; Veterans Summit; Advocacy and Policy Conference; and many more such events.

Because of all this public activity, FACCC has a reputation statewide as a professional association, known for its commitment to faculty and students. It is true that FACCC is primarily an advocacy group, dedicated exclusively to representing all community college faculty. But FACCC's reputation exceeds advocacy. FACCC is known as a bridge-builder, linking the Academic Senate, the unions, and the statewide Associated Students, working with the Community College League and the State Chancellor's Office, forging coalitions where possible, standing up independently when necessary. In short, while there are lots of groups these days trying to represent us, our strongest and most widely respected arm seems to be FACCC.

Because FACCC is not housed in any particular camp, in other words, FACCC has a foot in every camp. FACCC's current president comes from a CFT affiliate. FACCC's current Vice President comes from a CTA campus. It isn't just the independent unions that are partnering with FACCC. We are all strengthened and connected by the work of the Faculty Association!

Founded in 1953 and now with nearly 10,000 members, FACCC has become, in the words of the *Sacramento News & Review*, the "best political voice for community college faculty in the state." But clearly, FACCC is only as powerful as its membership, which is why more and more locals are opting for contracts aimed at strengthening connections to FACCC.

Statewide Risks and Opportunities: A Long List

The UF's current priority list looks very much like FACCC's list: accreditation reform; faculty staffing and compensation; fighting privatization; securing our retirement and protecting our pensions; improving college infrastructure and particularly student services; professionalizing part-time faculty and hiring more full-timers. FACCC also is mobilizing for an enhanced Cost-of-Living-Adjustment (COLA) in the 2014-2015 budget to recover some of the millions we lost in revenue during years with no COLA. *This one fight alone, if won, could pay us back all our FACCC dues in a single swipe, since our salaries are clearly tied to COLA, and FACCC has been one of the driving force in keeping this lost revenue at the front of all funding conversations this year.*

We are also watching with alarm a ballot initiative proposed by the Mayor of San Jose that would allow public employers to unilaterally reduce pensions in order to save money. At present, our pensions are protected by the state constitution, which essentially requires that we not lose any value in our pensions without being given something of equal value in return. This is why so-called "pension reform" has mainly targeted future hires rather than current employees. As much as we work to protect future employees as well as ourselves, many current UF members have been less affected by recent reforms than they might have been otherwise because of the constitutional protection. But this new initiative, the "Pension Reform Act of 2014" asks voters to amend the constitution. If the bipartisan group supporting the bill collects enough signatures to put it on the ballot in November, we are likely looking at a big statewide fight for all public employees, not unlike our campaign to defeat Proposition 32 last year (which would have essentially prevented unions for collecting any money for political action in California).

The anti-union, anti-teacher forces have been gaining strength, and they are well funded. Some want to contract-out online education to third-party MOOC providers. Some want to tie teacher-pay to "performance" in ways that threaten academic standards. Some want to replace counselors with counseling software and paraprofessionals.

This is why the E-Board feels we cannot wait and forever react too late to bad legislative ideas. We need to become more proactive, writing legislation that would help our colleges and our students, heading off bad ideas at the pass. This is why we are trying to become even more active at the State level, to press for investment in quality education, not gimmicks and new "accountability metrics." And this is one of the reasons we think the time is right to enter into a more formal partnership with FACCC.

We will hold a vote in February to decide if the UF will enter into a contract with FACCC. The proposed contract is on-line at the UF website. To share your opinion or ask questions, please come to one of our meetings outlined below or email Glenn Appell at gappell@sbcglobal.net or Jeff Michels at ufjeffmichels@gmail.com, or talk to a UF E-Board member.

As previously announced in *Table Talk*, UF / FACCC membership discussion forums will be held on all campuses as follows:

CCC: Monday	Feb. 3	1-2pm, LA-107
LMC: Tuesday	Feb. 4	4-5pm, L-109
DVC: Wednesday	Feb. 5	2-3pm, L-151
SRC: Tuesday	Feb. 11	3-4pm, W-204