

UF Hosts Fundraiser for Assembly Candidates

The UF is hosting a house-party fundraiser, co-sponsored by the Faculty Association of California Community Colleges (FACCC), for two candidates running for California Assembly: Elizabeth Echols, running to replace Nancy Skinner (who is termed out) representing Assembly District 15 (Albany, Berkeley, El Cerrito, El Sobrante, Emeryville, Hercules, Kensington, Piedmont, Pinole, Richmond, San Pablo, and parts of Oakland); and Tim Sbranti, running to replace Joan Buchanan (who is termed out) representing Assembly District 16 (Dublin, Livermore, Pleasanton, Alamo, Danville, Lafayette, Moraga, Orinda, San Ramon, Walnut Creek). Both Echols and Sbranti won tough primary elections with UF support, and both have strong track records supporting education and labor.

The party will be at the family home of UF Executive Director Jeffrey Michels in Orinda on Thursday, September 18, from 6-8pm. We will have live music, a Mediterranean dinner buffet, signature UF mojitos, and of course, rousing speeches from the candidates and assorted guests. Everyone is welcome! For details and directions, call the UF Office at 925-680-1771.

The UF will also be working to register voters for the November elections, and of course we have lots of opportunities during the year for faculty to engage in advocacy. If you want to get involved, or if you have a student whom you think might be interested in a paid internship with the UF PAC, email Glenn at gappell@sbcglobal.net.

Food Drive Contest to Begin in September

September is "Hunger Action Month" at the Food Bank of Contra Costa and Solano, and the UF is participating by hosting a Food Drive Challenge. The game works like this:



1) Any self-identified group (department, division, hallway, office, faculty, staff, management, student) may participate. Just provide the UF with your name and location, and we will have a collection barrel delivered to you anywhere in the District.

2) Collect food (canned or dried), and if you fill up one barrel, let us know; we can have it collected and replaced with an empty one so you can collect more!

3) When the deadline (TBA) passes, we will collect all the barrels, and the Food Bank will let us know which group collected the most food. (Cash donations are welcome too, of course.) Whichever group has collected / donated the most will win a fabulous, all-expense paid end-of-the-workday party hosted by the UF Executive Board!

The Food Bank serves approximately 149,000 hungry people every month, and they need our help! For more details or to request a barrel, just call the UF Office at 925-680-1771. Let us know the name of your group and where you would like your barrel placed.

President's Message

Greetings colleagues, welcome back! Here at the UF, as you all know, our job is to protect and improve working conditions for faculty, and to do this, we really work on two fronts: locally (in collective bargaining and by helping any faculty member who may have a conflict with management); and at the State level, where we advocate for faculty and students. As most folks know, we are an "agency shop," which means that non-members pay an "agency fee" to be represented locally, which is the same as member "dues." But only members are charged an additional contribution monthly to support the statewide work of our Political Action Committee (PAC). Full-timers contribute \$2.50/month to the PAC, while part-time UF members pay \$0.42/month. Anyone can contribute more just by informing the HR Department, and indeed many faculty do make extra contributions to the UF PAC, which we appreciate since it takes money to be effective in politics.

How did the UF PAC do this year? Let's review:

Measure E (CCCCD facilities bond): we endorsed, contributed \$3000 to the campaign, paid UF interns to advocate, table and distribute materials, helped make a "robo-call" to support, and devoted an issue of our newsletter to explaining the measure.

Result: Passed

Tim Sbranti for Assembly 16th District: we endorsed, contributed \$1000, helped distribute campaign materials and put up signs.

Result: Top Democrat in Primary; will be on ballot in November.

Elizabeth Echols for Assembly 15th District: we endorsed, contributed \$1100, and helped distribute campaign materials.

Result: Top Vote-Getter; will be on ballot in November.

State Budget: UF leaders met several times (individually, with FACCC, and with Chancellor Benjamin) with Assembly Budget Chair Nancy Skinner; we met with Senate Budget Chair Marty Block as well as other members of the Assembly and Senate Budget Committee. We organized a letter-writing campaign statewide to Nancy Skinner and Governor Brown. We advocated particularly for more COLA, restoration of categorical funding for part-time faculty, EOPS and DSPS, money for full-time hires and for more counselors and student-support services.

Result: Senate and Assembly budget proposal increased COLA, restored categorical funding, added money earmarked for full-time faculty hires. Unfortunately, the final budget did not include these improvements. There does seem to be momentum for next year, however, particularly concerning increasing full-time hires.

Accreditation: With CCCL, we pushed for an audit of the ACCJC, wrote letters to the Department of Education challenging seeking accreditation reform and helped sponsor legislation that would expand accreditation options for colleges. We spoke and wrote statewide to support CCSF.

Result: Influential legislative audit of ACCJC now complete.

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Table Talk

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

August 27, 2014

News at a Glance

- UF and CCCCDC Begin Salary Formula Review
- Increases to STRS, PERS and Benefits Far Exceed State COLA
- Benefits Comparison Leads to Question of Priorities
- UF Hires Veteran Union Advisor and Forensic Accountant
- UF Hosts Party for Assembly Candidates Echols and Sbranti
- Food Drive Contest Begins in September
- President's Message: UF PAC Does Well but Budget Disappoints

Salary Formula Review

The UF and District compensation workgroup met on August 20 to begin reviewing the salary formula for 2014-2015. We still have some details to discuss and scheduled a second meeting for September 3.

According to the 2013-2014 Agreement, compensation for 2014-2015 will be determined by a formula that takes into account all new revenues and employee-related expenses. Determining these numbers, especially for 2014-2015, takes time because the budget picture is so complex.

Unfortunately, the final State budget for 2014-2015 contained only 0.85% COLA (Cost of Living Adjustment), about \$1.2 million in increased revenues for CCCCDC. There is also a "growth allocation" potentially worth millions more, but our district is not experiencing enrollment growth this year, and we are unlikely to capture any 2014-2015 growth dollars.

Health insurance premiums are up about 14%, a new ongoing expense of nearly \$4 million (including retiree premiums, which account for about half). 2013-2014 was a great year of savings in medical benefits, due to our switchover to Blue

UF House Party Fundraiser for CA Assembly Candidates Elizabeth Echols and Tim Sbranti



Thursday, Sept. 18
6-8pm in Orinda

Live Music
Dinner and Drinks

All are Welcome!

RSVP for
directions
and
details:

925-680-1771

Cross. But for 2014-2015, both Kaiser and Blue Cross rates have gone up significantly. (Our initial review suggests that this rate increase has little to do with the change to Blue Cross, but is rather the result of a high-use insurance year all around with several expensive catastrophic illnesses of the sort that lead to premium increases.)

So the State COLA does not even come close to covering what should be a fairly routine and predictable increase in employee expenses. Plus there are unfunded increased costs this year to cover pensions (STRS and PERS), and the usual step and column increases.

Fortunately, there are some sources of revenue and savings not connected to State COLA and growth. (Our past agreements, for example, have yielded some savings, including the 5 minutes added to some DVC classes last year.) We hope to have the details of our compensation formula worked out soon. And we certainly will continue pressing, both locally and statewide, for financial plans that at the least allow faculty salaries to keep up with the cost of living (not to mention actually addressing the needs and deficiencies in our system).

STRS, PERS and Benefits Increases Far Exceed COLA

Although some community college districts in California are growing (particularly in Southern California around Los Angeles), many, like CCCCD, have seen enrollments decline in the past two years, and this is not too surprising. As the economy improves, enrollments tend to drop off a bit. This is why the UF and other faculty groups like FACCC, CCCI, CFT and CTA all pushed hard last year for what we considered a more equitable distribution of funds: higher COLA and less "growth." We asked for categorical programs (EOPS, DSPS, Part-Time Office Hours and Parity Funds) to be restored. And we sought new money earmarked for more full-time faculty hires. The Assembly and Senate Budget Committees seemed to listen. We were pleased to see all our priorities reflected in the Legislature's version of the budget this year. But in the end, the Governor rejected nearly every improvement for which we fought.

Not only did COLA go down rather than up in the final budget, but long-range plans for employee and employer pension contributions (for STRS and PERS) seem poised, like a huge unfunded mandate, to suck new dollars out of our district every year for the next seven. From 2013-2014 to 2020-2021 (the seven-year plan described in the budget to fully fund public pensions), CCCCD's annual contributions to STRS and PERS will rise by nearly \$12.5 million. In 2014-2015, the District contributions will rise by nearly \$700,000, and in 2015-2016 the increase is more than \$1,600,000. But there is no new money in the budget to cover these new expenses.

Furthermore, employee contributions are rising as well. STRS member contribution rose from 8% to 8.15% on July 1, 2014. Next year, for those hired prior to 2013, they will rise to 9.20% and finally to 10.25% on July 1, 2015. (Post-2013 hires will pay 8.56%, then 9.20%.) Without salary increases to cover these new costs, of course, the result will be a net reduction in take-home pay.

With medical insurance premiums also continuing to rise at an alarming rate, the challenges facing our bargaining unit seem substantial.

Locally, just maintaining our current level of benefits and providing for our pensions will take a substantial commitment of new revenue. Finding additional money for salary increases and equity adjustments will require not only a District commitment but careful and creative planning. This is one of the reasons the UF has hired a specialist to help us review the District's budget this year (see below).

On the State level, the stakes are only getting higher, as we have already begun the fight for a better budget next year. We simply must convince the Governor, the Legislature, and to some extent the public as well, that investing in student success starts with an investment in faculty. Stable, full-time, tenured faculty jobs (which don't require teachers to piece together multiple assignments at multiple institutions or to add overload simply to cover rising expenses) serve our students and colleges best. As faculty freedoms, protections, and financial stability erode, so too will the quality of our colleges. To most faculty, this seems obvious. But even as the State begins to allocate more money aimed at "student success," the quality of faculty jobs seems to be declining. Reversing this trend will be a key goal and challenge for the UF this year and moving forward.

Benefits Comparison Leads to Question of Priorities

Benefits comparisons are difficult because every plan is different; some have bigger copays and caps; some cover more or less; and certainly there is a wide range of coverage for faculty at Northern California community colleges. Some cover part-time faculty; others don't. Some, like Peralta offer one free plan (Kaiser) but charge more for the rest. Others, like Marin, cap District contributions and have employees pay the difference for more expensive plans. Some districts, like Solano and San Jose, cover 100 percent of medical premiums for full-time faculty for all available plans, while at the other end of the spectrum Ohlone offers no medical coverage at all. And of course, rates change yearly. The data below is from 2013-2014. Our rates at CCCCD have increased 14% since then, and we don't believe many other districts had such a high increase this year.

Still, the snapshot offered below is telling. During the financial crisis of the last few years, many districts negotiated higher employee contributions towards benefits. Resisting this shifting of costs to employees has

UF Hires Veteran Union Advisor and Forensic Accountant

The UF has hired CPA John P. Johns to assist this year in reviewing District finances and preparing for negotiations. Johns is a veteran labor consultant who has worked with a variety of public employee groups, from BART workers to city employees throughout the Bay Area to community college bargaining units, including recently at West Valley/Mission. He has worked as an auditor, particularly with city governments, and as a researcher for the Service Employees International Union (SEIU). For the UF, Johns has agreed both to review the District's budget and salary formula calculations and to help train UF leadership in understanding complex budgets and accounting rules. This is the second time in the past eight years that the UF has hired a forensic accountant to review the District's books. Our motivation has nothing to do with mistrusting the District; on the contrary, we particularly appreciate working with current District CFO Jonah Nicholas, whose commitment to transparency and skillful ability to present financial data clearly make him an asset to CCCCD. But an experienced outside perspective on our negotiating tactics, and on the kinds of data we review and the questions we ask, can only help.

been a core goal for the UF negotiating team. But clearly, some would argue that giving up benefits to increase salaries would be worthwhile. Salary rates affect retirement by raising pensions. And while benefits may not be taxed the way salary is, premiums can be paid in pre-tax dollars, which may mitigate the tax disadvantages.

As public educators, many faculty entered the profession believing that they were trading away some of the salary private-sector jobs might pay in return for better benefits, job security and a solid pension. But as the health care laws continue to evolve, with taxes coming on "cadillac plans," maybe it is worth our discussing whether offering several plans (including our excellent Blue Cross EPO) is something we can sustain and afford. Retiree health benefits are also a major expense that not every district shares. Should we be considering changes that would affect future retirees? We're planning open meetings this year and a survey to see what you think and begin a long-term discussion.

Full-Time Faculty Monthly Contributions to Benefits Premiums (using 2013-2014 data)

College District	Kaiser Single	Kaiser+1	Kaiser Family	Non-Kaiser HMO	Non-Kaiser+1 HMO	Non-Kaiser Family HMO	Non-Kaiser PPO/EPO	Non-Kaiser PPO/EPO+1	Non-Kaiser PPO+family
Cabrillo	N/A	N/A	N/A	\$670.00	\$1309.00	\$1838.00	\$643.00	1209.00	\$1835.00
Chabot-LPositas	\$48.00	\$96.00	\$144.00	\$84.00	\$168.00	\$252.00	\$699.47	\$1401.14	\$2309.38
Contra Costa	\$37.72	\$75.43	\$106.74	\$44.83	\$94.15	\$134.50	\$48.41	\$101.67	\$145.24
Foothill/DeAnza	\$99.00	\$198.00	\$297.00	\$192.00	\$384.00	\$576.00	\$283.00	\$567.00	\$850.00
Los Rios	\$96.34	\$96.34	\$96.34	\$584.93	\$584.93	\$584.93	\$1656.00	\$1656.00	\$1656.00
Marin (2014)	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$420.21	N/A	N/A	N/A	\$0.00	\$181.21	\$985.21
Ohlone	No Medical Coverage... Employees pick their own plans and pay 100%								
Peralta	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$15.00	\$30.00	\$45.00	\$135.46	\$302.66	\$454.68
San Francisco	\$0.00	\$161.22	\$479.54	\$54.81	\$268.48	\$625.14	\$680.06	\$1476.66	\$2325.16
San Jose	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
San Mateo	\$38.72	\$458.44	\$597.07	\$24.41	\$429.82	\$559.87	No PPO.	No PPO.	No PPO.
Santa Rosa	\$17.00	\$36.00	\$50.00	N/A	N/A	N/A	\$22.00	\$48.00	\$66.00
Solano	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
West Valley-Mis	Faculty pay into a health-reserve fund. 0.92% out of every paycheck.								