Negotiating Stronger Protections for Academic Freedom

Last Friday, I joined dozens of 4CD faculty in attending the FACC/C/AAUP Conference on Academic Freedom at Berkeley City College. I found the discussions eye-opening, at times appalling, as they continued into the evening. Colleagues attended from all over the State: faculty from CCCI locals in Santa Barbara and Eureka had driven long distances; some had flown in from Orange County and LA. Everyone had similar reasons for making the trip and similar stories to share: not only are faculty being divested from decision making, and authority when it comes to curriculum and course offerings by statewide shifts towards performance-based funding, guided pathways, AB 70, and other reforms that try to tell us what we can and cannot teach. At the conference, we listened carefully to the stories of the UF, where full-time faculty were told to “volunteer” during a break.

Part-Time Faculty Issues

In workgroup meetings this fall, the UF agreed with District management that our formula from last year’s agreement would yield a second pay-parity increase for part-time load adjustment factors (for lecture and English composition assignments), we also agreed that we would review the numbers twice more this year, to see if another increase might be justified. More importantly, in the long run, for the first time in many years, the District and UF seem to be on (or near) the same page with regards to equity for part-time faculty. Both sides are now talking about making incremental, annual pay adjustments until we achieve equity by assignment type, at which point we could shift to pay-per-load instead of hourly pay for part-time faculty. With some new State money earmarked for part-time office hours, and more flexibility in some funding sources, there is reason for part-timers to be optimistic about the next collective bargaining agreement. Some meaningful bumps in pay should be coming. Of course, we will need to be vocal and engaged to make sure the progress we think possible actually materializes.

Legislative Report

CCCI Files Amicus Brief to Protect Pensions

On September 20, the California Community College Independents (CCCI), and the Faculty Association of California Community Colleges (FACC), both organizations to which our UF belongs, joined with others in filing an “amicus brief” with the CA Supreme Court in the case of Alameda County Deputy Sheriffs. Association v. Alameda County Employees’ Retirement Fund. Like a similar recent case in Marin, the issue at stake is whether public employers should have the right to change vested benefits after employees have earned them. The CA Constitution has been understood to require that any “disadvantageous modifications” be balanced by “the advantages of comparability of pensions.” So if, for example, UIRS wanted to reduce faculty pensions for those already retired, they could not do so, unless the reduction was balanced by some new gain of comparable value. Recent lower court decisions have called this “modification doctrine” into question. The 55-page brief has been posted on the UF website.

The UF will hold an election for UF President, beginning today, October 2, with votes due by noon on Wednesday, October 17. All UF members should receive a voting link by campus email by the end of the day on October 2 from a “no-reply” address (as in our previous electronic votes). Each link is unique to each member and can only be used once. So if you know a colleague who did not receive the email, do not share voting links. Additional information about the process is available at an upcoming Zoom link should call Terri Adame, our UF Office Administrator: 925-680-1771. Terri can also take votes by phone or email: uf@uf4cd.org.

Two candidates are running for UF President (for the two-year term that begins Jan. 1, 2020): Donna Wagner (DVC Professor of Health Science and Addiction Counseling; and current UF President); and Silvester Henderson (LMC Professor of Music and Choral Activities, and former Academic Senate President). Candidate statements are printed in this issue of Table Talk. All forums will be posted on the UF website. In addition, Donna and Silvester will appear in public forums, as listed above, where they will be available to meet faculty and answer questions. For more information about the candidates, visit the UF Elections Handbook, posted on our website: www.uf4cd.org.
Negotiations Update

Improving FT/PT Ratio and RaisingSalaries

It looks as if 4CD will advertise at least 40 open full-time faculty positions to start next fall, including requirements for faculty who have retired, but a second number could go even higher. At least 22 will be new positions, funded by an ongoing 2018/2019 State allocation worth about $1,309,000 to our district. At every level, these 22+ new positions, which will finally start to make a positive change in 4CD’s full-time/part-time faculty ratio, are a direct result of faculty advocacy and a focused UF strategy. At the State level, the Governor’s original budget proposal included no new money at all for full-time hires. Through all the debates over a new funding formula and online college, UF representatives, working with colleagues in FACCC and CCCI, spoke at hearings, wrote letters, phoned legislators and met with staff at the State Chancellor’s Office to insist that faculty hiring be recognized as a top priority for our system. And our legislators here in Contra Costa County listened to us and were instrumental in negotiating for the money we received.

In allocating the money, the State’s original plan was to divide funds based on a complex formula that took into account how low and high the district’s share of the per-FTE distribution goes. But UF representatives lobbied the State Chancellor’s Office for a more equitable distribution, and we won.

Even then, there were questions about how the money could be spent. Surprisingly, not all districts will be required to use their new faculty allocation to hire more full-timers. Although the money is earmarked for this purpose, the rules allow districts that have more full-time faculty than required by their “Faculty Obligation Number” (FON) to spend the new money however they like. 4CD has a relatively low FT/PT ratio, but for historical reasons hard to explain, we are above our FON, so the District might have made different plans for the money. Fortunately, the UF has spent the last two years drawing attention at every turn to our desperate need for more full-time faculty.

At the District Governing Board level, Donna Wapner and Jeffrey Michels, representing the UF, have spoken nearly every month for the past two years about the importance of making new full-time positions a top District priority. We wrote a statement of support for a 75/25 full-time/part-time ratio goal, which we asked our trustees to endorse. And we raised the issue consistently with Chancellor Wood and District leadership. At the college level, we met with college presidents. When DVC Interim President Ted Weidner determined last year that DVC would not even replace all retirees (to move a couple of positions off of “categorical funding” and back to the “general fund,” thus lowering the FT/PT ratio even more loudly and effectively), we were not about to be quiet.

And when Susan Lamb was hired as DVC President, we brought this issue to her attention even before she had officially started. We have made sure our trustees and managers understand how important it is that 4CD address our shortage of full-time faculty and that we support the employment barriers that marginalize our massive part-time faculty. If I am given the honor of serving as your President, I will promote a culture of openness, trust, and honesty to empower our faculty to make the changes that are needed. Our District is a leader in the community college field and is ready to take the lead on this critical issue.

My name is Silvester Carlson Henderson. As a 35 plus year education professor and educator, I have worked extremely hard to remain current, innovative and creative in my instructional style via an open mind to learning and to change.

In the twenty-five years that I have taught at Los Medanos College, I have advocated in the promotion of higher education and student success within our campus community and our district office. As I investigate my college, Los Medanos College, I have learned that LMC’s mission,

College District describes my heartfelt passion for leadership, social justice, and inclusivity. In my faculty and our rights are of utmost importance to me. My service was the Music Department Chair, the Academic Senate President for Los Medanos College, and President of the Academic Senate, which I have been serving in for the past two years. My experience is vast, from being a Trustee to serving as a Trustee for the Contra Costa County Community College District.

I think we need to be more proactive about who we are in our community and who we are as individuals in the community. It is time to intensify our efforts and come together more focused, more determined and more together.

I have served 12 years on the UF Executive Board (as benefits lead, faculty advocate, VP for DVC, and for the last four years as UF President), and in that time, I have worked as a grievance officer, negotiator, contract negotiator and serving as our faculty representative at the State level. I have been involved in a deep understanding of negotiation strategies and techniques; a firm knowledge of employee legal rights; a willingness to work beyond our college and advocate locally and statewide; excellent communication skills; and dogged persistence. Even with my expertise, there are constant curve balls, delicate and frenetic situations, and many land-mines to regularly avert. I believe that I am a better faculty representative today than when I started as President four years ago. The learning curve is enormous! But I remain entwined in the need to serve our faculty and to fighting for our rights as educators and the quality of our jobs. My experience, and that of the dedicated colleagues on my team, serve our union well. As threats are mounting to our pensions, our medical benefits, our academic freedom, our role in shared governance, even to our rights to union representation, we need experienced, tested, committed leaders now more than ever.

For the past 12 years, since I have been part of the UF leadership team, our track record has been one of success. Some of our accomplishments include:

- Increasing salaries across the board by 18% with substantial increases to part-time parity adjustments; • increasing options for full-timers to teach overload for extra pay; • exploring the opportunity to create a pool of faculty outside of class (Equity Hour); • guaranteeing banked load options and protecting our banked-load article (one of the best in the State); • adding online office hours; • improving flexibility for Sabbatical leave; • substantially expanding family leave options; • increasing load for science labs; • adding compensation for Certified Program Leads; • extending time to submit Verifications of Employment for initial salary placement; • establishing International, while at the same time increasing paid PT office hours; • increasing professional development funds; • adding on-going professional development funds; • adding protection for Intellectual Property Rights in our contract; • raising compensation for Dept. Verifications of Employment for initial salary placement; • establishing In

Candidate Statement: Silvester Carlson Henderson

“I want to go far; go with a tribe”

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Candidate Statement: Donna Wapner

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