

PART-TIMER MEDICAL STIPEND

## Faculty members tell their stories to the Board

by Katharine Harer, AFT 1493 Co-Vice President

On Wednesday evening, March 25<sup>th</sup>, smack in the middle of Spring Break, five faculty members spoke to the Board of Trustees about the impact on their lives of the District's current PT medical reimbursement stipend of \$600 per semester. A number of part-time and full time faculty members came to the meeting to show their support.

### Think about your own healthcare

The opening speaker was Skyline Health Science and Allied Health professor, Paul Rueckhaus. Paul is the Coordinator for the Allied Health Career Advancement Academy and Health Navigator programs at Skyline. He's been at Skyline for four years and has also taught classes in English Composition, public health and ESL for healthcare and hospital-ity workers. Paul led off by asking all of us to think about our own healthcare: "I'd like to begin by asking everyone in this room to think about the last time they experienced a health issue." He went on to describe the instability that many of our part-timers feel about not being able to afford healthcare. Paul then discussed the differences among the over 700 part-time faculty who teach in our district, acknowledging that many have their healthcare covered by spouses or other jobs. "However, many part-timers are actually full time teachers, cobbling together a number of teaching assignments from various school districts -- known as Road Scholars, Road Warriors, Free-way Flyers and other catchy names to describe the sometimes frantic race that drives us from campus to campus." Many in the room, including the Trustees, nodded, recognizing Paul's depiction of the lives of this group of part-timers.

Paul went on to cite some of the data from the recent union survey of PT healthcare: "Average annual healthcare expenses paid by part-time employees was \$5,519 per year--330% of what the medical stipend covers. And although the Affordable Care Act has expanded eligibility for health coverage, the costs of the plans are still out of reach for many of our faculty members." He then shared the shameful fact that SMCCCD ranks #9 out of the Bay Ten, our 10 neighboring community college districts, in the amount and type of coverage offered to part-time faculty. The Trustees were given a chart prepared by the union that outlines the benefits offered by each of the Bay Ten districts.

Paul was followed by Jennifer Mair, part-time Communications professor at Skyline College. Jen-

nifer worked in the corporate sector where she had full benefits before she began working as a part-time teacher in our district, sacrificing her healthcare to work with students. Jennifer doesn't simply teach classes at Skyline; she has designed a successful program that guides students to imagine, advocate for and create start-up projects responsive to the needs of the campus. Through the process of writing, presenting, creating community engagement and participating in campus forums, students receive funding from a grant Jennifer has written to the President's Innovation Fund. As a result, they see their projects come to life. Jennifer has given the Skyline community a huge gift over her many years of part-time employment.

### Covered California would cost \$500/month

Jennifer then recounted the harrowing story of a snow boarding accident two years ago that broke both her legs. Because she had no health insurance other than Healthy San Francisco, she could not afford to be taken to a local hospital. She had to endure the long drive back to San Francisco in order to receive medical attention. While Jennifer was healing from her injuries, Healthy San Francisco was subsumed by Covered California, which left Jennifer with no affordable healthcare options. She did not qualify for a subsidy and her benefits under Covered California would cost \$500 a month. She is currently uninsured. For Jennifer, a substantial increase in the amount of the Medical Reimbursement Stipend would be "a huge step in feeling supported in my work for the district."

Next, part-time English professor, Kim Escamillo, addressed the Trustees. She has taught part-time at both Skyline and CSM for more than seven years. "At Step 11 I gross somewhere between \$36,000 and \$43,000 each year for teaching 6-8 courses, as well as working in the writing center, grant work and extra sub jobs. I also serve voluntarily on the COI committee, participate in a Learning Community, and I'm a mentor in the Umoja and Project Change communities. Teaching at CSM is not a part-time job that I'm doing while I'm working towards other goals—it is my career."

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San Mateo Community College  
Federation of Teachers  
AFT Local 1493, AFL-CIO  
1700 W. Hillsdale Blvd.  
San Mateo, CA 94402  
CSM Building 17, Room 131  
(650) 574-6491  
aft1493.org  
facebook.com/AFT1493

### Editor

Eric Brenner, Skyline, x4177

### Editorial Board

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Dan Kaplan, x6491

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## FACULTY WORKING CONDITIONS

# AFT & Senate leaders discuss concerns about excessive workload

by Teeka James, AFT 1493 President

On March 2, 2015, AFT Executive Committee members met with the District Academic Senate to discuss what appears to be near universal distress on the part of faculty over our ever-expanding workload. We all know the drill: SLOs, committees, evaluation, hiring, program review—oh yeah, and teaching. During the conversation, it became apparent that while in some cases our workload has expanded through addition—with new responsibilities, such as handling email or assessing SLOs, being added to the faculty docket—in others, responsibilities have simply swollen from their once manageable states into a many-headed Hydra.

Mythical serpents aside, the problem seems to be one of scale: not only are there too few hands to make light work, but too many folks are slow to pitch in, leaving most of the burden to a fraction of the faculty ranks. In fact, the AFT workload survey (spring 2013) revealed uneven distribution of workload amongst full-time faculty as a primary factor in burnout; the survey also indicated that part-time faculty are

interested in participating in committee work, provided that they are paid for it. The center of the problem—too many tasks, too few (willing and paid) workers—has two obvious solutions: increase the number of workers or decrease the number of tasks. Before we can take either approach, we need to figure out how much (non-teaching work) is enough, with “enough” connoting both manageable load and equitable distribution.

It won't surprise anyone that we have no solution yet, just fantasies, but AFT and DAS agreed to meet again later in the semester. In the meantime, we are cataloguing committee seats and listing faculty duties in as much specific detail as we can muster so that we can cross reference our contractual obligations against our lived experience. Just as Heracles could not defeat the Hydra without help from Iolaus, we've got to tackle this workload beast together, or else watch what scraps of sanity we cling to be devoured by exigency.

## The Advocate

*The Advocate* provides a forum for faculty to express their views, opinions and analyses on topics and issues related to faculty rights and working conditions, as well as education theory and practice, and the impact of contemporary political and social issues on higher education.

Some entries are written and submitted individually, while others are collaborative efforts. All faculty are encouraged to contribute.

*The Advocate's* editorial staff, along with the entire AFT 1493 Executive Committee, works to ensure that statements of fact are accurate. We recognize, respect, and support the right of faculty to freely and openly share their views without the threat of censorship.

## AFT 1493 discourages full-timers from taking on excessive overload

The following resolution was passed at the April 13, 2011 AFT 1493 Executive Committee meeting:

Whereas economic instability and budget cuts are affecting the employment status and livelihoods of part-time faculty in the SMCCCD,

Be it resolved, that the AFT 1493 Executive Committee recommend that full-time faculty members **seriously consider refraining from taking on excessive overload in situations where part-time faculty will be displaced from courses to which they would have otherwise been assigned.**



## From priority for interviews to real equity for part-time faculty

*The following letters to The Advocate are a continuation of the discussion of whether in-District part-time faculty should be given some kind of priority for getting interviews for full-time positions. A proposal for priority interview status was published in the December 2014 issue and numerous responses were included in the February 2015 issue. - Ed.*

### An unfair system

I wanted to follow up with three points that I think are of the utmost importance to the discussion of part-time priority interview status. The first is that the language proposed is only for priority *interview* status; therefore, concerns about not hiring quality teachers need not be an issue. If no adjuncts are found to be best for the job, the search will be widened to find the best person to teach our students.

The second is that the argument in favor of this proposal is not as simple as mere location. When an adjunct has been working at a college for years—five years is the requirement in the proposal—they have been evaluated and told they are good enough to teach at the college. If these part-timers are not quality teachers, they should not be re-hired, which leads me to my final point.

This problem is part of a larger issue that faculty has little control over, but which the collective strength of our union can fight against. COLLEGES NEED MORE FULL-TIME TEACHERS. What students need are full-time teachers who have the ability to devote time and energy to campus activities, initiatives and goals; faculty who are paid adequately to attend department meetings, be involved in discussions and solutions. Colleges can operate for a lot less money by having adjuncts teach the majority of classes. This system is not fair to our students, and it is not fair to our part-time teachers. This is the root problem that must be fixed. Until it gets fixed, however, I see priority interview status as the right step in a more equitable direction.

In Unity,

*Autumn Newman, Assistant Professor of English, CSM*

### The Vancouver Community College model

While I applaud the proposal about in-house adjuncts getting priority in full-time hiring – I believe that our ultimate goal should be to get rid of the antiquated and undemocratic two-tier system entirely like what is going on in Vancouver Community College (VCC) in British Columbia.

We need to be studying what is going on at Vancouver Community College (VCC) in British Columbia. At VCC, part-time faculty are paid 100 percent of full-time faculty. At VCC, part-time faculty, once they are beyond the probationary period, can work their way up to 100% full-time if they

wish which is very different than the perpetual probationary and part-time status of adjuncts everywhere else. VCC has the functional equivalent of tenure, called regularization, for all faculty teaching at 50% of full-time. In addition, being part-time is a voluntary, not an involuntary, status.

No doubt about it that the current system needs to be changed. Keeping faculty in a perpetual underclass is not the best way to use our human resources -- nor is it fair to them or our students.

*Helen Singer, Adjunct Faculty, L.A. Community College District*

*For more information about part-time faculty conditions at VCC, see the Chronicle of Higher Education article, "A Canadian College Where Adjuncts Go to Prosper," at: <https://chronicle.com/article/A-Canadian-College-Where/123629/> - Ed.*

### Equal qualifications, equal treatment

The previous two letters make excellent points about how the inequities for part-time faculty go far beyond the question of priority *interview* status for in-house part-timers. The serious inadequacy of health benefits for part-timers has also been well documented by faculty presentations at the March 25 Board meeting. (See article, page 1.)

An important step in moving towards pro rata conditions for part-timers should be to create a higher, more regularized status for part-time faculty. By this I mean that, after a reasonable probationary period (perhaps 2 – 3 years) during which they are regularly evaluated, part-time instructors should be given a seniority status equivalent to full-timers and they should receive pay and benefits that are comparable (on a pro rata basis) to full-timers.

I also believe that part-time faculty who are eligible for this higher status should go through a hiring process that is more rigorous than the typical procedure by which part-timers are selected solely by individual administrators with far less thorough interview / documentation / demonstration procedures than those used to select full-time faculty.

The less rigorous hiring procedure carried out by an individual administrator should only be used in emergency situations and those hired in this more informal way should be considered explicitly temporary until a more thorough evaluation of the instructor is done. Instituting more thorough hiring procedures for part-time faculty as well as carrying out regular evaluations of part-timers would eliminate any perception that adjunct faculty are not as qualified as full-time faculty and would remove any possible excuse that they should not be given equal respect and pro rata pay and benefits.

*Eric Brenner, Advocate Editor*

## Organizers have been busy pollinating this spring

by Katharine Harer, AFT 1493 Co-Vice President & SCI Organizer and Michelle Kern, CSM Part-Timer Rep. & SCI Organizer, with contributions from Rob Williams, Skyline Chapter Chair

It has been an enormously productive spring for our Local's Strategic Campaign Initiative (SCI) organizing project. See below for brief descriptions of the following:

- Presentation at the CFT Leadership Conference
- Growth of Committee on Political Education (COPE) fund
- Successful Part-Timer Appreciation Days at Skyline & CSM
- First Place award in the CFT Communications Awards
- SCI organizing grant renewed for next year
- Faculty present to the Board on Part-Timer healthcare

### CFT Leadership Conference Workshop

Katharine & Michelle were honored to be asked by CFT Communications Director, Fred Glass, to present at the CFT Leadership Conference in order to share our new members materials and one-to-one member outreach program. Fred talked about the difficulties of organizing members and the success of strategies such as ours. We followed by showing off our materials, describing the visits we've made to new FT and PT faculty and discussing the impact of having these conversations. Not only do we put a friendly face on the union, but we are also able to answer questions, learn about problems, offer assistance and build our capacity for carrying out important campaigns, such as the PT Medical Reimbursement Stipend Campaign.

### Turbo Growth of COPE

Our local's COPE Committee was languishing up until Katharine and Michelle got involved. Through our advocacy and meetings with faculty, we've quadrupled our COPE members since last November – and this is just the beginning! The local is looking ahead to the District Board of Trustees' elections next fall, and with a well-funded COPE campaign chest, our goal is to run candidates who will be advocates for faculty and students.

### Part-Timer Appreciation Days at Skyline & CSM

The Second Annual Part-Timer Appreciation Day on Thursday, March 12<sup>th</sup> at Skyline College was a warm and welcoming affair and an excellent opportunity for full-time and part-time faculty to put down their book bags and briefcases and get to know or reconnect with each other in a comfortable, inviting space. There was a healthy mix of both part-time and full-time faculty in attendance. As one part-timer remarked: "It's great to finally get to put a face to the names that are seen on the AFT website and emails." This year there was friendly, lively discus-

sion in between delicious slices of pizza, plus we gave out 13 terrific raffle prizes, including 10 gift cards from the Skyline Bookstore, courtesy of Store Manager Kevin Chak, and three gift certificates from local Pacifica businesses: Salada Cafe, The Farmer's Market natural food store and Paisano's Restaurant.



Scene from Skyline Part-Timer Appreciation Day

Last year one of the biggest topics discussed was the medical reimbursement issue. This year, some of the concerns brought up by those in attendance included part-timers getting assigned to ill-equipped classrooms, full-time faculty taking overload classes and the impacts on part-time positions, and part-timers' right to be paid for SLO and other committee work. In addition, the hiring process and the need to fill full-time positions with dedicated part-timers was a lengthy discussion, as well as one adjunct asking how, exactly, are part-timers hired? Over the four-hour event there was a renewed sense of solidarity between Skyline faculty and enthusiastic support for the work of AFT 1493.

CSM's Second Annual Part-Timer Appreciation Day held on Wednesday March 18<sup>th</sup> highlighted how wonderful and important it is to be able to sit down with colleagues and talk about what we do and how our year has been going. Members of the union's Executive Committee were on hand to chat about issues, concerns and questions and to hear stories about on-the-job successes. Adjuncts at CSM are a diverse faculty of caring professionals who take their roles seriously and care about their students. Whatever the subject, part-timers take their passion for teaching into the classroom and are eager to see their students triumph. Among topics discussed were the part-time medical stipend campaign, ways that teaching can be an art, issues around seniority, and how to access various benefits for part-timers.

### OMG we won First Place!

When we first conceived of a colorful, friendly and informative packet of members' materials last summer, we never dreamed we'd win an award. We just wanted to have something wonderful to give to new FT and PT faculty members when we made our one-to-one visits. Our members have ap-

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## Article -- "Student success: By any means necessary" -- generates many responses

The following letters were sent in response to the article, "Student success: By any means necessary," by Merle Cutler in the February 2015 Advocate. -Ed.

Dear Merle,

I had the chance to read your article in the latest issue of The Advocate. I want to thank you for having the courage to write such an honest piece about "student success." While I think we have to support our students, we definitely cannot be compromising our academic standards or our expectations. Doing so is a disservice to our students and to the standards we want to uphold as an institution. I am so sorry that you had to go through such a trying situation with little to no support.

I'm not sure if I ever shared this with you, but when I took your English 100 course that summer I learned more about being a writer than I did in any past English course. I had taken several English classes, but your teaching, your expectations, and your guidance were incomparable. Since then, whenever students have asked for a recommendation for an English instructor, I have told them that if they really want to learn to write, they should take one of your classes.

With respect and gratitude,

*A former student who wishes to remain anonymous*

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Hi Merle:

Due to my retirement, it has been far too long since I have had the opportunity to speak with you. I have always admired both your courage and your voice. Your article in the latest issue of the Advocate is a clear example of both. I am sorry you have had to endure this painful experience with a student who was clearly not prepared to take your course. It does not surprise me that you failed to have appropriate and necessary support from your administrators. I have seen this play unfold many times before--for example, in the CSM Nursing Program maybe 20 years ago.

Under certain circumstances, the type of administrative failure you describe is totally predictable. These types of administrative decisions, tragically, do not only fail to support quality faculty, they also undermine student success. In media stories about student success and failure, teachers are generally the focus. The narrative is usually about the need for quality teachers to achieve student success. Rarely do I see stories which discuss the role of administration. Administration is generally invisible and administrators are typically presented as a benign or positive influence. I think that the failures by administration you experienced are typical and, as I say, predictable. If educational outcomes are to improve, the competence of administrators and administrative practices needs to be part of the conversation.

I predict that administration will do everything possible to act as if your article does not exist. As a Latino educator,

I want to thank you for giving this student a real and honest educational experience. The process of accommodation supported by the administration harms this student greatly by promoting a sense of false competence and entitlement as well as by undermining your appropriate authority. I am very sorry that you have experienced harm as well.

Best Wishes,

*Ernie Rodriguez, Professor Emeritus, CSM & Cañada College*

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Merle's rant was a good read--loaded with lots of drama and excitement. The article would make good reality TV. However, as with most stories in the press, there is always two sides to the story and we really only heard one side of this tail. Thanks to Fox Noise, the concept of "fair and balanced" in the media has become a joke, but you could have at least taken the time to get some sidebar comments from "John", her ex-Marine, so we could get a better perspective as to what really happened. After all, she did manage to trash him better than a seasoned Taliban fighter ever could. I suspect "John" was only collateral damage and the author really wanted to attack her Dean and the VPI. To coin a phrase from a former President, "Mission Accomplished", but did she really have to involve a student in her personal war, especially a member of a very elite club of citizens who have chosen to serve and help keep the rest of us safe?

*Roy Brixen, Professor Emeritus, Adjunct Professor--Electronics Technology, College of San Mateo*

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I loved your article -- loved, loved, loved it. If it's okay with you, I'm going to forward the article to a few of my adjunct friends. As adjuncts, we already feel dispensable and often worry that we'll risk losing classes if a student files a complaint. I've had more than one friend become worried after a student complained or simply threatened to complain over something as silly as an assignment the student didn't personally like.

What I can't believe is that the issue with John continued to escalate.

I'm sorry the student and the administration caused you so much stress, but I'm so proud of you for not only defending your values but also writing about your experience. I'm sure these issues happen frequently, but even after they're resolved, people often feel too intimidated to discuss them. I think many readers will find your article to be cathartic as well.

*An SMCCCD part-timer who wishes to remain anonymous*

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## FIRST PERSON

# Why I decided to retire in disappointment and disgust after 47 years with the District

by Frank C C Young, Chair, Philosophy Department

I did not decide to retire at the end of the spring 2015 semester—after 47 years at Cañada College—because I am intellectually or educationally exhausted nor because I am physically or mentally incapable of carrying my load. It is certainly not because I am eager to collect my pension. Rather, it is for the following reasons, which I would like to share with my AFT brothers and sisters.

The main reason for this decision was that my Division Dean, David Johnson, was “empowered” by our Vice-President of Instruction, Gregory Anderson, with the consent of our President Larry Buckley, to present an “aggressive approach” to me in dealing with issues of enrollment that have come up over this semester and the last.

At a meeting with Dean Johnson (which was also attended by my union representatives, Elizabeth Terzakis and Lezlee Ware) I was reminded that in the fall semester of 2014, two of my classes, Philosophy 190 (Contemporary Philosophy – 19th & 20th Century) and Philosophy 300 (World Religions) were cancelled due to low enrollment. Through Dean Johnson, President Buckley and Vice-President Anderson informed me that, according to their interpretation of the union contract, I had one year to make up the missing units—despite the fact that the contract suggests, and past practice supports, allowing three years to balance one’s load. This latter interpretation concurs with the interpretation of other Deans at our campus and at our sister campuses.

Nevertheless, presented with my administration’s interpretation, I planned to teach two classes in summer 2015 with no pay, to make up the units. In the meantime, the Dean informed me that another class, Philosophy 320 (Asian Philosophy), was under-enrolled this semester (spring 2015) and would also be cancelled.

At this point, the “aggressive approach” that Vice-President Anderson’s “empowered” Dean presented to me—first orally at the meeting with my union representatives, and then later in an e-mail—was the offer that if I decided to retire at the end of this semester, Anderson “would forgo having [me] make up the two classes from last semester, letting [me] teach an under-enrolled class this term, allowing [me] to teach summer classes for pay, AND having [me] come back as an adjunct once [I am] eligible.”

My predicament is that, if I don’t retire, then, according to VPI Anderson and President Buckley, I will have to make up three classes in one year—two during summer session and one in addition to my fall classes. And whether this “solution” will work depends on all my classes in summer and fall filling and not being cancelled because of low enrollment. The administration insists that all my classes have at

least 20 students despite the fact that my other class enrollments are over 35 or 40. They refuse to take those numbers into account and let them cover my low-enrolled classes or to allow other colleagues within my own department to shift their overload numbers to compensate for low-enrolled classes. Their lack of flexibility on this issue is contrary to practices on at least one of our sister campuses. This seems unfair.

In addition to being unfair, the practices of Cañada’s administrators clearly show that they are more concerned with enrollment numbers than interested in the educational and academic needs of the students or their needs for more diverse classes. Keeping sections open not only facilitates the students’ intellectual growth by providing them with a wider selection of classes but also helps them fulfill the requirements necessary to transfer to four-year institutions.

As a result of these priorities, I am forced to accept the Vice-President’s “aggressive approach” to my situation and retire under the conditions of his incentive offer, which appears to be a buy out. My retirement, under their interpretation of the contract and with their administrative calculations, will also save them money: it will be cheaper to pay a new teacher than to keep an old timer around. To remain teaching in what has become a business environment (rather than a collegial or academic one) would cause me unnecessary and unwarranted stress and compromise my life with my wife and family. Again, it seems the numbers, not the quality of education for the students, let alone the wellbeing of a dedicated employee, is what matters for them.

I raised this concern with Chancellor Ron Galatolo and Vice-Chancellor Eugene Whitlock. The Chancellor said he supports the faculty in that we are hired to teach and it’s not our major concern to recruit students to make sure our classes are not cancelled. I was glad to hear the Chancellor’s agreement on this point because recruiting students is not, in fact, listed as one of our responsibilities in the contract. I also want to point out that, in the fall of 2014, Vice-President Anderson very happily and enthusiastically introduced us, at our Division meeting, to the newly hired administrator who, as one of her primary responsibilities, is supposed to recruit students for Cañada. This is further evidence that increasing enrollment is not the responsibility of the faculty, so the faculty ought not be penalized and expected to account for low enrollment in ways that jeopardize the interests of their students and their departments, not to mention their jobs.

The Vice-Chancellor’s response was somewhat different. He suggested to me that offering my philosophy classes online would guarantee enrollment! I was surprised, if not appalled, that he would suggest denying students the oppor-

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*Organizers have been pollinating  
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preciated our clearly written and beautifully designed packet of information cards, headed-up by faculty quotes and photos and tucked inside the union's bright red tote bag – and so did the judges of the statewide Communications Awards! Our members' materials and outreach program (funded in part by our SCI grant) was voted BEST in its category: "Single Effort" by a local. The Communications Awards were announced at the CFT Annual Convention in Manhattan Beach, March 21-22.

## **SCI Organizing Grant Renewed for 2015-16**

More good news: we got word at the Convention that our grant for next academic year, written by Katharine, was fully funded. This means we will be able to continue to carry out our successful member outreach project and our COPE fund revitalization as well as stretch our wings into the larger community.

*Responses to "Student success: By any means necessary"  
continued from page 5*

Last semester must have been a nightmare for you. Getting continually undercut by those in authority who should be supporting you and backing you up is horrible enough, but getting placed in a situation where you have legitimate fears for your own safety is even worse. I can't say, however, that any of it surprises me, much as it appalls me. Between the desire to hold on to the flow of tuition money, the desire not to do something that would jeopardize the student's ability to further his education, and the desire to "honor" the veteran's service (there's a whole lot of PC stuff on veterans these days, which feels very ironic to me for many reasons), I'm not really surprised by the way the administration acted. It would be nice, it would have been nice, if the administration would confront their dual role of providing certification to students (and it seems this student was mainly interested in getting

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tunity for face-to-face instruction to "make the numbers." I can see Philosophy 103, Critical Thinking, or Philosophy 200, Introduction to Logic, being put online, but not the other philosophy classes. For one thing, in philosophy classes, most people understand it is imperative to engage in a dialogue (Platonic dialectic, one of the oldest means of intellectual exchange) with students, not only to clarify and explain the different theories and concepts and give them a better understanding of the various philosophical traditions, but also, during that process, allowing all the students in class to benefit from the conversation in real time. In order to be effective in many working environments, students must learn to think on their feet and handle the physical presence of other interlocutors. This can only be done in a face-to-face classroom environment. Besides this basic requirement, online classes make it difficult to guard against plagiarism; the authenticity of essays submitted for examinations is best verified by class participation.

Katharine and Michelle will be sending out a survey in early fall asking faculty members about their connections in the community and asking for leads to organizations that may be interested in working on education issues with our union. We're already talking to the Jefferson Elementary union folks about joining forces on education-related projects.

## **Faculty Present to the Board of Trustees on the PT Medical Stipend Issue**

On March 25<sup>th</sup>, five faculty members – two FT and three PT – presented their personal stories and argued effectively for the improvement of the current Medical Reimbursement Stipend for PT faculty. This important presentation and the leadership of the campaign naturally grew out of the organizing work and outreach that Katharine and Michelle have been doing with the support of the SCI organizing grant. (*See the article on page 1 for a full report.*)

certified that he had received an education) and of providing an education to students, and to struggle with the obvious tension that the former is meaningless if they don't in good faith try to provide (and succeed in providing) the latter. Throughout the whole saga, there seems to be little interest on their part in whether or not the student is actually getting educated, even aside from the fact that their willingness to bend almost every rule on his behalf undercuts so much of what they claim to uphold.

I'm happy I don't have to deal with hardly any of that. That mainly goes to the Dean of Advising, who I think does quite a good job of upholding the standards, of supporting (and certainly not undercutting) the faculty, and of drawing a line between providing reasonable and unreasonable accommodation.

*Dean of Humanities at a small liberal arts college in Massachusetts  
who wished to remain anonymous*

On this particular issue of online classes in philosophy, I would like to quote what J.S. Mill pointed out a long time ago: "To refuse of hearing an opinion because one is sure that it is false is to assume that their certainty is the same thing as absolute certainty. All silencing of discussion is the assumption of infallibility." I cannot compromise my educational and academic goals and philosophical ideology simply to meet the expected numbers. This is an educational institution, not a business or financial corporation!

I have served the District for forty-seven years, which enables me to retire with pride and honor despite the machinations of my supervisors. I am secure in my accomplishments and have done my part to deliver high quality education to our campus community for most of my adult life. But to those of you who still have a few years to go before being ready to retire, I will say this: Be aware, my colleagues, of the not particularly "hidden" agenda of some of our new administrators.

# A retired community college professor volunteers in a 3rd grade class in Boyle Heights

by Ernie Rodriguez, Professor Emeritus, CSM & Cañada College

Ed. Note: This is the inaugural article of "The Retirees' Voice", a new column from the perspective of retired SMCCCD faculty members. It is written by Ernie Rodriguez, former psychology professor at CSM and Cañada College and past AFT 1493 President.

One of the joys of retirement is freedom from what I came to call the tyranny of the academic calendar. While the long summer break and a month off between semesters are certainly great perks, I always felt that the lack of flexible time off due to the constraints of the academic calendar limited my freedom to fully enjoy life. It is wonderful to be able to travel and engage in activities at any time of the year. As one example, for the last few years, I and my wife Allyson, have taken advantage of this flexibility to volunteer our time as teacher's aides at an elementary school in L.A.'s Boyle Heights neighborhood.

Why volunteer in Boyle Heights as opposed to engaging in a worthwhile activity closer to home? It all started with my son, David. While still obtaining his M.A. in education from UCLA, David was hired to teach for Extera Public School, an elementary school in Boyle Heights. I loved that David was excited about this teaching opportunity. Boyle Heights is 95% Latino. This demographic guaranteed that all of David's students would be Latino, primarily Mexican-American. Given my own history as a Latino educator whose Latino heritage, in part derived from Southern California, I was proud that David was reconnecting with his cultural roots. I was proud that David would be helping young Latino children move ahead in their lives.

For many years I was aware of the Boyle Heights community. At one time Boyle Heights was the center of the Jewish community in L.A. At another time Boyle Heights was a Japanese American community. More recently, Boyle Heights, like its neighbor East L.A., has become legendary for both high levels of poverty and gang activity. One current assessment of Latino gangs identifies 21 active street gangs in Boyle Heights. Just down the street from David's school

are the offices of Homeboy Industries. A couple of years ago CNN aired an hour-long documentary about Homeboy Industries. Homeboy Industries focuses on helping former gang members lead more successful lives primarily through employment assistance programs.

When I learned that David would be teaching third and fourth grade students in Boyle Heights I was thrilled that he would be working with the Mexican-American community. I also knew that most of these children would come into his classes already seriously behind in academic achievement. As a Latino educator, I had for many years been aware of the

demographics related to ethnicity and educational achievement in California. Years ago I attended a conference with a terrible name, "the Re-Hispanization of California Conference". This conference made me aware of the fact that much of the future economic well-being of the state of California depends on how successful Latino students are in obtaining an educa-



Ernie Rodriguez with one of the Boyle Heights students

tion. The conference theme emphasized that demographic indicators point to a future California where a majority of the working population will be Latino. Currently, according to kidsdata.org, 52.7% of California elementary school students are Hispanic/Latino. The next highest ethnic group are white students who account for only 25.5% of the statewide elementary school population. In L.A., 64.6% of elementary school students are Latino. So it does seem pretty clear that for California to prosper Latino students must also prosper.

The young students David works with face a whole host of barriers to educational achievement. They come from a community mired in poverty, where typically English is a second language, and where caring parents often struggle to earn a living and often have little energy left to devote to supporting their children's efforts in school. Anyone who knows educational research outcomes knows that we continue to face a crisis regarding the failure of the school system to adequately educate Latino students.

Since retiring, I have traveled to Southern California a number of times to help David as his classroom aide. On

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each visit I have been deeply and profoundly moved by the love and generosity shown to me by the children and their parents. The smiling faces, cheers and hugs from students always warm my heart. The fact that these young students are so wonderful motivates David in his work as a teacher. He feels a determination to help these students succeed. They are so innocent and don't yet realize the many challenges that lie ahead. Just in the short time I have spent with them I always feel protective and desperately want them to succeed. Having come from a very similar background, I identify with these students.

My most recent visit to David's school was planned to coincide with Dia de Los Muertos. Allyson and I spent a week working with

David's fourth graders on Day of the Dead activities. To avoid any confusion, it is important to note that Dia de Los Muertos is not a religious activity. Pre-Columbian and Mexican cultural beliefs value the Day of the Dead as a time of year when there is a greater connection between the world of the living and the world of the dead. Because of this natural relaxation of the boundary that separates living from dead, the belief is that

this time of year presents a special opportunity to celebrate our connection with loved ones who have passed on and to honor death as a normal part of life.

During the week leading up to Dia de Los Muertos there are many celebrations and observances in Boyle Heights, East L.A. and in L.A. in general. The children and parents David teaches are familiar with and typically celebrate Dia de Los Muertos. While Allyson and I were there we helped the students build an altar, helped them make a Catrina, helped in the making of decorated sugar skulls, taught the students how to make paper flowers, engaged in story telling and sharing around the topic of death and Day of the Dead and helped students with reading and academic assignments related to Dia de Los Muertos. We also supported David's students in constructing a second altar honoring endangered and extinct animals.

It was a touching and powerful experience to see how these young students expressed their beliefs and experiences related to death. Western culture is so phobic about death

that a number of books, such as Becker's classic "Denial of Death", have addressed this fear. I always find it refreshing and healing to be able to openly embrace the normalcy of death in the context of a supportive community. There were many examples of sharing by David's students that touched my heart. Just to mention one, a girl named Angelica brought an empty wooden box to place on the altar in honor of her family. She told the story that this box was first owned by her abuelita and had been passed down to her for safekeeping. The box was both a concrete and symbolic representation of Angelica's family history, of the narrative of her family's journey across generations.

When I tell people that David teaches in Boyle Heights the general reaction ranges from horror to sympathy that

David is working in such a terrible place. I feel a great sense of sadness when I hear such comments. My sadness comes from knowing that the children and families David works with are wonderful. Despite living in difficult circumstances, these children are warm, loving and enthusiastic. They deserve our very best. David has been designated as the curriculum specialist at his school. He has been amazingly creative in



*Ernie's son, David, teaching in his classroom*

working to build a culturally relevant curriculum designed to help these students realize success in the context of the new Common Core standards. This is no small task. I am very proud of David and of his students. Hopefully, some of the photos accompanying this article will communicate the vitality and positive energy of these students, whose success or failure represents not only their own individual futures, but our collective future.

On a final note, I have never really liked the term "retirement". Recently, I read an article that talked about this stage of life as our "second adulthood". I like this concept much better. While I loved my teaching career in the San Mateo Community College District, I think it is important to keep in mind that the world is a very large place with many worthwhile and important activities and options. It has always puzzled me that some people can't stand retirement. There is so much of value to do in the world. My life has been enriched and fulfilled by the opportunity to work with my son, David, and his wonderful students.

**Part-timers need better medical benefits***continued from page 1***“Maternity-friendly” plan: \$375/mo., \$5000 deductible**

Kim’s husband’s job, as an independent contractor, does not offer insurance either. Kim and her husband have two sons: “One is 15 and permanently disabled and therefore qualifies for and has been on Medi-Cal for many years. The other is 21 months old and spent the last six months of 2014 uninsured and unvaccinated as we couldn’t afford Covered California, but made too much to qualify for Medi-Cal.” She went on to describe her experience with Kaiser: “In 2012, I purchased a private ‘maternity-friendly’ plan through Kaiser -- just for myself -- that included maternity visits and delivery. My premium was \$375 a month—and my deductible was \$5,000. We slowly learned that many basic services (like ultrasounds) were not covered by our insurance policy. After an issue-free natural birth we were left with a bill for the full \$5000 plus the \$375 premium. To add my newborn son onto my plan would cost an additional \$250 a month. I couldn’t afford to pay the \$625 a month in premiums and pay the bill for the \$5000 deductible. The district’s current total semester reimbursement would have only covered one month of that premium.”

Kim said the baby is now covered at the cost of \$200 a month, but she and her husband are currently uninsured. She ended with this admonition: “If the district wants its 700+ part-time faculty to teach effectively, participate on campus, and stay healthy, then it should, like any moral employer, provide faculty medical assistance that keeps us on campus doing our jobs.”

The third part-time professor who spoke was Michelle Kern, a proud alum from CSM. Michelle has taught ceramics at a local high school for nine years through Concurrent Education at CSM. Prior to teaching in the district, Michelle worked as an artist, a teacher and an arts community organizer in the East Bay. She was never offered health coverage in any of her arts-related positions. Michelle described her disappointment when she learned that she wouldn’t get coverage working for SMCCD either: “I had hoped the move in 2006 to a college environment would make me eligible for benefits that I might find affordable, but realized after I was hired as an adjunct at CSM that this was not the case. San Mateo Community College District did not have a plan that was accessible to a part-timer, except for a small medical stipend to reimburse some of your costs if you had a medical plan from elsewhere. My husband also works in fields that do not offer health benefits, so like many other artists and teachers in the Bay Area, I just hoped nothing bad would happen to me, and went without insurance.”

**Not having health insurance is “irresponsible”**

Michelle’s story continues: “Right after I started work, a small cut on my foot blew up into an infection that turned into a red streak going up toward my ankle. I hemmed and hawed, trying to soak it in hot water and put Neosporin on it, even though I knew that red streak was a bad sign, until my mother insisted that I go to the ER at San Mateo County Hospital. I was checked in and let them know my uninsured status. When the doctor came in to see me, he demanded to know why I didn’t have health insurance. He told me that it was ‘irresponsible’ of me, since women my age need annual health check-ups and cancer screenings. He asked how someone who said they were a college teacher could possibly not have health insurance, since it’s a ‘respectable job’. I started crying, and told him, ‘Part-time college teachers don’t get health insurance at my school.’”

After a car accident, and with the words of the doctor about women “her age” and cancer screenings echoing in her head, Michelle decided she had better look for private insurance. “I plugged in my income and my husband’s income, hoping that I’d be eligible for some kind of subsidy, as the Kaiser silver plan I had selected was over \$400 a month. I was dismayed to find out that our combined income of \$64,000 put us over federal poverty guidelines for two people.” She continued: “If I divorced my husband, I would get a very good subsidy. But I’d miss my husband, whom I love.” This brought a smile to many in the audience, followed by a pang of sadness at the bitter ironies surrounding health-care in this country -- and in our district.

Michael Hoffman, a full time math professor at Cañada, was the final presenter of the evening. Michael is the Basic Skills and Student Equity Coordinator at Cañada. He also works with the college’s STEM Center programs, Math Jam, the Accelerated Math Program and he’s involved with embedded tutoring management and tutor training. Michael, like Paul, had worked as a part-time teacher in our district for many years and spoke about the “uselessness” of the medical stipend. Michael said the stipend wasn’t enough to cover the cost of his healthcare, even when combined with support from other districts where he taught. He also made the point that there’s no coverage for vision and dental, which was where he needed the most help.

**Good pay & benefits will attract talented part-timers**

Michael cautioned the Trustees that just as it is important to offer good wage and benefits’ packages for administrators in order to attract the best talent to our district, it’s the same for teachers: “For the past two semesters we’ve been struggling to expand our accelerated math program because the teachers with the training and enthusiasm refuse to give up their commitments at other schools to come to Cañada. Our part-time instructors teach the majority of our students, and

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## Disproportionate workload of one-person departments gets limited support from Cañada's Academic Senate

by Lezlee Ware, Cañada AFT Chapter Co-Chair, Political Science

Having attended the Academic Senate General Counsel (ASGC) meeting on March 19, 2015, and listened to and participated in the discussion and ranking of hiring justifications, a number of troubling questions came to mind. It seemed, from the method of prioritization utilized by ASGC representatives, that the only thing that matters in determining program need in terms of additional faculty, is FTEs. Which begs the question: Should we not, as members of one-full-time-faculty departments in the Social Sciences at Cañada, continue to:

1. Coordinate the Honors Program
2. Coordinate the Social Sciences Sub-Division
3. Represent the division on the Curriculum Committee
4. Be a union chair
5. Coordinate the COLTS Academy
6. Establish and coordinate Blacademia
7. Advise PTK
8. Establish and coordinate the Philosophy Club
9. Be a union representative on PBC
10. Be a division representative on IPC

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offering competitive benefits has a real impact on the quality and stability of our programs and, therefore, the outcomes for our students."

Each of the teachers who spoke contributes in essential ways to our district's programs and to our students, as do so many of our part-time faculty members. They are passionate about education, and their dedication to students extends well beyond classroom teaching, into essential programs, campus community building and mentorship.

Lisa Melnick, a part-time instructor in kinesiology at CSM, sent this message to me after she attended the presentation: "As I was driving home, I had such a feeling of satisfaction in my heart for having been present at last night's BOT meeting. I was deeply moved by the detailed and close-up stories of the various ways part-timers lives are painfully impacted by the lack of decent health coverage."

As I drove home that Wednesday evening, the word "uninsured" echoed in my mind. What would it feel like to know you couldn't make an appointment with a doctor when you're sick, or hurt, or just worried about a symptom? What if you can't afford health coverage for your child? And what kind of district are we if we don't care enough about the health of ALL of our faculty members to offer a useful amount of support. Are we, in Kim's words, "a moral employer?"

*View the faculty presentations on the AFT 1493 website*

11. Work to establish GE Pathways
12. Serve on the Honors Advisory committee
13. Act as faculty lead for A2B
14. Serve on screening committees?

Given all of the responsibilities that members of one-full-time-faculty departments have willingly taken up, it was very disappointing to see the voting results from our Academic Senate ranking the collaborative multiple one-person-department faculty's request for a Social Sciences/CWA Coordinator last out of 5 total hiring requests. The data emphasized and presented (FTEs as opposed to load and ratio of full-timers to part-timers in one-full-time-faculty departments) favored the departments who already have more than one full-timer, as if the data doesn't support the fact that, of course, if you have more than one full-timer, your department shows an increased demonstrated support of FTEs.

The Academic Senate's failure to oppose one-person departments in principle is disappointing. While faculty continued to argue that there needs to be more full-time faculty hired, period, not one was willing to say, "Wow, let's at least make sure all of our departments do not struggle with ONLY ONE full-timer." No. Instead, people were happy to just continue to leave behind their colleagues in one-full-time-faculty departments. In order for a one-full-time-faculty department to mirror the FTEs of multiple-full-time-faculty department, we would have to hire, manage, and evaluate 10+ adjunct faculty. As it is, our loads are significantly above the college average (500 and greater). And this does not even take into account the additional work that we do.

Since the Academic Senate does not want to take a stance against one-full-time-faculty departments, they should act to limit the responsibilities of one-full-time-faculty departments outside of teaching. They should advocate that the union contract be amended so that one-full-time-faculty departments not be required to serve on committees, to complete program review, to update CORs, or to evaluate adjunct faculty. Multiple full-time faculty departments can shoulder the responsibility of managing and leading on those responsibilities. If they are not willing to do so, then all I can say is that it is unfortunate that our colleagues are comfortable with one-full-time-faculty departments doing a disproportionate amount of work to support the college.

Did they ever stop and think what their department would look like with only one full-time faculty member? Or what it would be like if THEY were the only full-time faculty member?

For example, what would you do if the five full-time-faculty in your department had to evaluate nineteen adjuncts in one semester, an average of four evaluations per faculty member per semester.

It would seem that the greater good has gone by the wayside.

## AFT 1493 wins 9 statewide communications awards

The 73rd annual California Federation of Teachers' convention, held over the weekend of March 20-22 in Manhattan Beach, was attended by five hundred delegates—community college instructors, K-12 teachers, early childhood educators, classified employees, and UC librarians and lecturers—from all corners of California. AFT 1493 was represented by 5 delegates: Teeka James, Katharine Harer, Joaquin Rivera, Monica Malamud, and Dan Kaplan.

A full convention report will be published in the next Advocate, but we want to announce one major news item from the convention: AFT Local 1493 won an amazing total of 9 state-wide Communications Awards, more than any other Local in the CFT! We won the following awards:

- **First Place** in the category of **Best Website** for locals with more than 500 unit members for the newly-redesigned [aft1493.org](http://aft1493.org), by **Eric Brenner**, Webmaster. Judges commented that the website had a "well organized, attractive home page. Reader-friendly typographical visual hierarchy and use of color give contrast to headlines and navigation links. Good top and secondary level navigation. Easy to read."
- **First Place** in the category of **Best News Writing** for "New Media Policy Restricts Employees Rights to Free Speech" by **Robert Bezemek**, attorney. Judges called the article, "a legal news story that addresses a contemporary issue, but is not written in legalese. It also illustrates how settled law is never settled."
- **First Place** in the category of **Best Feature Writing** for "Project Change at CSM" by **Katie Bliss**, CSM English Instructor. One judge called Katie's article "a very moving story about incarceration...and to find out at the end of the

article that she herself was incarcerated." "I was captivated," said another judge, "underscoring the fact that there's no end to what we can learn about labor and our movement."

- **First Place** in the category of **Best Single Effort** for locals with more than 500 unit members for the Member Outreach Campaign by **Katharine Harer**, Co-Vice President and Lead Organizer and **Michelle Kern**, Part-Time Representative and Organizer. Judges said that the Katharine and Michelle produced a "powerful packet that illustrates the impact a member can have on his or her work life. Effective use of member testimonials and photos. Provides new members a way to immediately identify with the union."
- **Second Place** in the category of **Best Email Newsletter** for locals with more than 500 unit members for *The Advocate* by **Eric Brenner**, Editor.
- **Second Place** in the category of **Best Six-or-more-Page Newsletter** for locals with more than 500 unit members for *The Advocate* by **Eric Brenner**, Editor.
- **Third Place** in the category of **Best Original Art or Photograph** for "Skyline Faculty Invitation" by **Paul Bridenbaugh**, Skyline Art Professor.
- **Honorable Mention** in the category of **Best Use of Graphics** for "AFT 1493 logo and graphics for AFT 1493 information packet" by **Michelle Kern**, CSM Part-Time Representative and SCI Organizer.
- **Honorable Mention** in the category of **Best Use of Social Media** for locals with more than 500 unit members for the AFT 1493 Facebook page by **Michelle Kern**, CSM Part-Time Representative.

## Cañada College hosts social justice events

by *Doniella Maher, Cañada AFT Executive Committee Co-Rep.*

On Thursday, March 12, Cañada College hosted two events to talk about activism and the fight for justice and equality in the past and present. Colia Lafayette Clark led a discussion about her role in the civil rights struggle and its relationship to struggles today and Favianna Rodriguez led the second of two art workshops to celebrate migration.

Colia Lafayette Clark was an early organizer of SNCC (Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee) in the Deep South, which mobilized to do the dangerous work of voter registration. In her discussion with students she emphasized the role that ordinary people played in the Civil Rights movement. While films like *Selma* reinforce the narrative that a few, great leaders led the great changes made in the 1960s and 1970s, Clark emphasizes the role that students and other regular people had on the direction of the movement.

Later in the day, Favianna Rodriguez, a local artist and activist, led the second of two art workshops focusing on migration, global politics, and social justice. She led the students in poster-making and linoleum block printing to de-



*Colia Lafayette Clark*



*Favianna Rodriguez*

velop art that encouraged students to think critically about social justice issues. Her project was of a series of workshops around the Bay Area prefaced on the idea that migration is beautiful.

Over the course of the day, nearly 300 students participated in the unique opportunity to discuss and raise important questions about the history of the fight for social justice and the ongoing struggles today. The activities were hosted by the Cañada Student Dreamers Club and Task Force and the English and History departments, and they were sponsored by AFT 1493, the Initiative for Men of Color, the Associated Students of Cañada College and the Vending Commission Fund.