

## PART-TIMER MEDICAL STIPEND SURVEY

# How much do adjuncts spend on healthcare? How little does the District cover?

by Paul Rueckhaus, Skyline AFT 1493 Part-Timer Co-Rep.  
& Katharine Harer, AFT 1493 Co-Vice President

\$600 per semester – this is the amount the District currently offers our part-time faculty members as reimbursement for the cost of their medical benefits. For many of our part-time instructors, the medical stipend covers less than two months of the cost of their health benefits. On top of that, you can only qualify for the stipend if you work at least 40% -- 6 units. If your load is any less, you are not qualified to apply for the stipend.

As part of a new campaign to advocate for expanded health benefits for part-time faculty, Local 1493 distributed an online survey to all part-time faculty in the District to gauge the usefulness of the current stipend. This survey was timed to

gather feedback for contract negotiations, which resume in late February. The survey closed Wednesday, February

11, with 201 total respondents representing almost 1/3 of all part-timers in the District! Thanks to all of the faculty who completed the survey. Not only will the responses inform our negotiations of the health benefits stipend, but the aggregate data paint a rich and complex picture of the struggle many of our adjunct faculty members have with regards to paying for their healthcare.

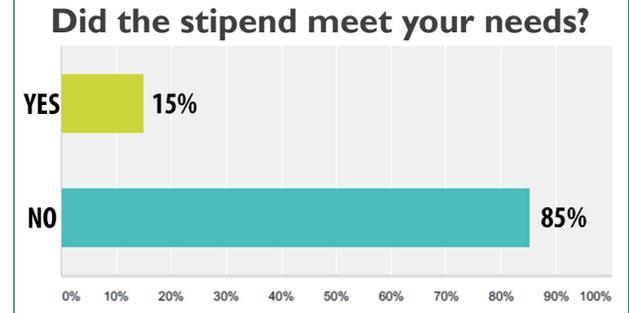
### 40% load (6 units) required to qualify

As the results of the survey are still fresh, we have not analyzed the finer points of the responses, but some notable findings jump out. Of the 200 faculty members completing the survey, 62% qualified for the part-time medical stipend—meaning they taught at least 6 units or worked at least a 40% load. About half of those respondents used the medical stipend at any time in the past.

### 85% say stipend did not meet needs

Of those who have received the stipend, 85% reported that it did not meet their needs. This was a telling finding for us, reinforcing the union's position that we must take action to make this stipend more meaningful. Based on faculty responses, annual out-of-pocket healthcare premiums for adjuncts run from \$2400-\$7,200 with outliers as high as \$24,000. Many survey respondents

**"I stopped buying medical coverage because, even with the stipend, I couldn't afford the premiums."**



stated that the once-a-semester stipend doesn't come close to covering their premiums: "It is equivalent to my monthly premium." "My premium was almost \$500 per month. And we don't qualify for dental, so my broken crown from 1.5 years ago still isn't fixed."

Even among faculty with the most modest out-of-pocket payments, the stipend only covers ½ of their annual premiums. This does not include copays and other fees. As one respondent put it: "It only covers about half of the cost of my insurance premium (bought through Covered CA) for the months I was teaching 8 units. Then, on top of that is the actual expense of seeing a doctor (as the lower cost plans that I can afford have a high deductible)."

If we were to use the Covered California Insurance Exchange as a measuring stick to estimate average annual medical costs, we'd see that the cost of coverage is far from affordable and the current stipend is a mere drop in the bucket. Approximately 15% of participating faculty reported getting their insurance through the on-line exchange, Covered California. Based on a single salary of \$45,000 (a teaching load of 10-courses annually at the average adjunct rate) in San Mateo County, a "silver" HMO plan would cost an individual \$4,658 in annual premiums. That's with a \$2000 deductible and a \$45 copay for primary care visits. In fact, a significant portion of our part-time faculty either pay entirely out of pocket for health insurance or are uninsured or underinsured. Numerous re-

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# Skyline Auto Tech program supports repeatability for CTE courses

*In the December 2014 issue of the Advocate, we published an article from the Cabrillo College Federation of Teachers that discussed the destructive effects repeatability regulations are having on community college programs and students around the state. Subsequently, the Skyline College Automotive Advisory Board sent us the following letter on how these same regulations are hurting their program.*

The Skyline College Automotive Technology Advisory Board is concerned about the inability of our technicians to repeat automotive classes. The lack of

repeatability is having a negative impact on our industry because we rely on Skyline College to provide current and relevant information to our technicians.

The content of the courses offered at Skyline College is constantly being updated to address the changes taking place in the industry. Our technicians

should not be blocked from repeating courses. The department should not have to submit new course offerings every few years so our technicians can take a similar class with a new name and number.

In summary, the Advisory Board supports course repeatability for Career Technical Education courses. It is of benefit to the automotive repair industry to have automotive programs that conduct training that is on the leading edge of technology.

The Skyline College Automotive Technology Advisory Board has read and recommends changes

to course repeatability and asks that these changes be implemented by the State of California Chancellor's Office as soon as possible.

Sincerely,

*Skyline College Automotive Advisory Board*



## 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.**

# An argument for free higher education in the U.S.

by Monica Malamud, AFT 1493 Secretary

Back in the spring of 2011, when per unit fees at the California Community Colleges were scheduled to increase by \$10 by the beginning of the 2011-2012 academic year, and by another \$10/per unit in 2012, I often heard that “California Community Colleges are the best deal in the world”. That would only be true if “the world” had the same meaning as in “the World Series”.

In the real world, there are countries that have public higher education which is free to students, such as Argentina, Brazil, Croatia, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, Mexico, Norway, Saudi Arabia, Serbia and Sweden. In some countries admission to free education is competitive, but in others they have an open-access system, just like in the California Community College system. In many places, free public higher education is not only high in quality, but it is also considered reliably better than a private education. These examples show that if public education (including post-secondary levels) is valued as a high priority, governments find a way to fund it.

Other countries can offer free higher education, and California also offered it not so long ago. So the idea of free higher education is not foreign to California. When the California Community College (CCC) system was established in the sixties, in order “to provide an appropriate place in California public higher education for every student who is willing and able to benefit from attendance” (Ed. Code §66201), the CCCs were free, as were the UC and CSU systems. But after the passage of Proposition 13 in 1978 and the recession in the early 80s, the CCC started to charge \$5 per unit. Then fees went up to \$11 and \$13 per unit during the 90s, \$18 in 2003, \$26 in 2004, down to \$20 in 2007, back up to \$26 in 2009, \$36 in 2011 and \$46 in 2012. Instead of charging students more and more, how about realigning priorities and revenue streams so that free public education can be funded? It can be done and it should be done, for many reasons.

K-12 education is free in the United States, and has been for many decades. As a country we believe that a K-12 education is necessary for all children, and therefore it is offered free of charge, regardless of the students’ nationality or their parents’ economic status. But while several decades ago a K-12 education may have been sufficient to get a job that allowed a high school graduate to live independently and support a family, nowadays such jobs tend to require education and/or training at the post-secondary level.

And we do have such education and training available, but it comes at a cost that an 18-year-old cannot afford. So either his parents are financially responsible, the college student goes into debt, or he tries to obtain scholarships and grants.

Student debt in the United States has reached unprecedented levels, and continues to rise. I believe it is unfair

and unreasonable for a young adult to be forced into debt in order to pay for an education. Parents spend years trying to teach kids that if they want to buy something they need to save until they have enough money to pay for it, but the whole idea must go out the window when they graduate from high school and there is no way that babysitting or working at a coffee shop will put them through college.

Why not just make sure that education is “affordable” to each student? After all, there is financial aid available, and in the CCCs 45% of the students qualify for a BOG waiver, for example. In my opinion, “affordable” is not good enough. Financial aid is available only to those who heard about it and are savvy enough to deal with the bureaucratic maze. The only way to guarantee that education is affordable to all is to make it free.

Researching and applying for grants, scholarships or other forms of financial assistance is also an unfair and unreasonable burden for needy students who want to pursue an education. Oftentimes, students with greater financial needs are the first in their families to aspire to higher education, so they do not have a network of support with knowledgeable adults who can mentor and assist them in navigating the higher education system. There is paperwork to be filled and deadlines to be met when applying for college, and the difficulties are compounded when the student needs to complete paperwork and meet deadlines for financial aid as well. To make matters worse, students who are not proficient in English face language challenges when exploring ways to pay for higher education and applying for financial aid, thus jeopardizing their educational pursuits, as well as their successful integration as productive members of society. Help may be available, but it is only helpful if the student knows it exists in the first place.

When students must pay for higher education, those who come from wealthier families inevitably have more options and encounter fewer hurdles, so students born into richer families can become richer. The income gap between the rich and the poor in the United States has been widening for some time and will probably continue with this trend, unless we are able to provide access to free higher education. Education is the best way to provide equal opportunities for a better future.

Better education benefits the entire country, not just individuals. College graduates have lower unemployment rates and typically earn higher salaries, which has a positive impact on economic development. They also tend to be more civically engaged, which contributes to a healthier democracy.

So should public higher education be free? And can it be free? In my opinion, the answer to both questions is an unequivocal YES.

## FACULTY VIEWPOINTS

## Should District adjuncts get priority in full-time hiring?

In the previous issue of the *Advocate* (December 2014), an article reported on a proposal made to the November AFT 1493 Executive Committee meeting that adjunct faculty should receive priority status for full-time job interviews. The proposal began as follows: "All Adjunct Faculty who have been teaching within the district for a minimum of 5 years and meet all evaluation expectations be given a 'Priority Interview Status.'" The article, which was titled: "Should District adjunct faculty have an advantage in hiring for full-time positions? Let us know what you think", also stated that there were varying opinions on this issue among the Executive Committee members and asked *Advocate* readers to submit their viewpoints on the question. We received about 25 responses from faculty members, mostly from within our district, but also a few from other districts around the state who read the article online.

### Majority support priority interview status

About 15 faculty members each sent in an identical brief statement that they "would like to see contract wordage regarding preferred interview status for part timers similar to what is in the [December] issue of the *Advocate* negotiated with the district in hopes it will be permanent in our contract." Thus, the majority of respondents gave a clear endorsement for giving in-district adjuncts some kind of preference in being selected for interviews for full-time positions.

We received a smaller number of more extensive responses that presented a range of perspectives on the issue. Below are selections from these longer responses; the first two support the proposal, while the second two oppose the idea.

### A CSM full-timer hired from outside district believes priority status is only fair

As a former adjunct at other community colleges, I definitely agree that the current system needs to be changed. It has always seemed odd to me that other members of our college community are granted in-house hiring status before the position is opened to the public. I see no reason why it should not be the same for part-time faculty when full-time teaching positions arrive. If part-timers are good enough to work part-time (and get paid half as much for equal work and without job security or benefits), why aren't they good enough to be given the first chance at interviewing for full-time positions.

It simply isn't fair that adjuncts already teach 40-60% of our classes yet are not given some sort of priority during the hiring process. They do the same work and are evaluated with the same rigorous standards. The only difference is that they are not technically required to do committee

and other non-teaching work. However, as a part-timer, it is a requirement because you need those things on your resume to get hired for a full-time job, so we do them and it's one more thing we don't get paid for.

As an outsider coming to CSM, I was thrilled at my good fortune, but I felt so bad for the part-timers whom I had taken a full-time job from. Working part-time pays so little, in fact, and my debt from college so large, that I almost couldn't afford to take this job because it costs so much to live here. I had to borrow money to rent an apartment and lived on Dollar Store food until my first paycheck. I wondered how adjuncts who live here managed to live at all.

I know it is a complex issue with no simple solutions, but I certainly hope that my union will give it the attention and priority it deserves.

In appreciation and unity,

*Autumn Newman,*  
*Assistant Professor of English, College of San Mateo*

### What if full-timers had to reapply for their positions every 5 years?

There is nothing temporary (Ed. Code notwithstanding) in the employment status of someone who has been on the job for 5 or more years. Pitting such long standing adjuncts against new applicants in an interview process potentially becomes less about interviewing for a new job and more about interviewing so as not to lose your current job.

How would full-time faculty feel if, say, every 5 years they had to put their hat into a hiring process to see if any new potential hires are a better choice for their position and, of course, if a new candidate is deemed a better fit, the applicant is hired to replace the current full-timer. Treat full-timers this way and the AFT would go to war. But members of your Exec Committee argue that this same treatment is OK when applied to Adjuncts – shame on them!

Making sure that long standing Adjuncts have interview preference is a small step in the right direction but it is far short of what should be the standard: PROMOTE FROM WITHIN current adjuncts into full time positions! Do not interview new candidates when you already have too many employees.

*Scott Douglas, Adjunct Faculty,*  
*Palomar College, San Diego Community College District*

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## Location is not a qualification

I have been hired as an “outsider” in that not only have my adjunct days been outside the district, they have been outside the state. I have not just accumulated experience through teaching as an adjunct in my field, but also because I went out of my way to further my qualifications through actively pursuing professional development during those years.

The recent debate whether qualified part-timers within the district should have special treatment by granting them automatic interview for full time positions is puzzling at best and detrimental at worst, not just for the students, but the very part-time faculty themselves.

Part-timers within the district are already granted additional face time in the district through 1) they have already interviewed as adjuncts, 2) they have been observed through review committees, 3) they have had all opportunities to interact with all students and staff on campus to make their qualifications known. If anything, it is outsiders who have grounds to complain about disproportionate time.

## How do our hiring practices best serve the students?

As a public institution we are under scrutiny of accrediting institutions and the state. We must answer the question “How do our hiring practices best serve the students?” Citing “the applicant was already in our district” is hardly a satisfactory answer.

In the debate it has been revealed that up to 70% of full-time hiring is within the district. If anything, that is an alarming statistic that already opens the district to criticism along the question: “with over 100 applicants for each full-time position, is it plausible that 70% of the time the best qualified person was already working in the district?”

Awarding qualification based on location is, if anything, detrimental to our own part-time faculty. It gives them the false impression that they could be “promoted” based solely on just being qualified based on part-timer job requirements and staying around for a number of years. It reduces the incentive for part-timers to better their teaching practices through professional development, and to explore their employment options in surrounding districts.

Take my example: after I was hired from the outside I had to spend many awkward moments trying to repair the relationship (that I didn’t break) with the local adjuncts for “taking their job”. These adjuncts were granted an interview, so they certainly had more than fair treatment by the district. Still, they were upset at the district because they didn’t get selected. So my example demonstrates that propagating the

misunderstanding to the next level does not result in less complaints. It also poisons departments, pitting part-timers against outsiders, making cooperation more difficult.

Ultimately, the question must be answered is: “Is this the best for the students?” When a hiring committee must face that question, they should not be constrained by the irrelevant question “is this person local?”

Rewarding location as a qualification solves the wrong problem. It puts faculty career aspirations ahead of what is best for students. It assumes that applicants outside the district are less qualified solely based on their geographical location. These applicants have been adjuncts as well, they too have had years of teaching experience, and they too have gone through professional development. If you are a part-timer who applied in an outside district, wouldn’t you deduce it as unfair if that district put its own employees ahead of you in line solely based on their location?

Sincerely,

*An “outsider” full-timer in SMCCCD*

## Part-time faculty hiring & evaluation is not rigorous or consistent so they shouldn’t get priority status

I wanted to give you my two cents. I don’t feel that district part-time faculty should have an advantage in the hiring process. Many part-time faculty are called in the last minute by the division dean, and don’t necessarily participate in other collegial activities that full-time faculty are required to do. I understand that part-time faculty are supposed to be evaluated but I don’t have faith that this is actually taking place. When I was a part-time faculty, I never once went through an evaluation of any kind. If part-time faculty do participate in other collegial activities or take on other roles on campus, this will show up in the ratings that are already done with all applicants. I feel interviews for full-time faculty should remain focused on finding the best applicants for the job, as opposed to giving an advantage to individuals who have had the good fortune of being given a job by the division dean. District part-time faculty who are going to be top applicants in an applicant pool will likely have begun to stand out on their campuses already which will come out in the interview process as it stands now. I don’t see any benefit of giving part-time faculty an added advantage in the hiring process.

*Full-time faculty member, College of San Mateo*

# Student Success: By Any Means Necessary?

by Merle Cutler, College of San Mateo

He sat in the front row of my freshman composition class, to my right. He was about forty, Latino, with a shaved head, combat fatigues and a tightly muscled body, wider than tall. His impression spoke to what he was: an ex-Marine with special combat training. His gaze was intense, a word he would use in future essays about himself. In terms of the current educational catch phrase at my college, he was a perfect candidate for “student success.”

I have had many veterans over the past few decades of teaching, but after 37 years of a satisfying career in the classroom, I would find myself flummoxed and demoralized by how this latest imperative would shape my college’s response to this student.

## *Focusing on passing and retaining students*

Front-line educators regularly encounter new jargon promoted by administrators as they rewrite and rearticulate institutional goals. In the penultimate semester and final year of my college teaching, the mantra has become “student success.” Perhaps this label is designed to inspire educators to do whatever it takes to provide more services for marginal students and, ultimately, to pass them. Passing and retaining students means a lot to the institution and is a focus for administration.

But back to John, my ex-Marine. He had a wife, a couple of kids and full-time employment at a local university where he worked at night in a quality-control job. I would find this out later, though, because he missed the first day of class, one of many, because of work-related conflicts. What John missed that day was the traditional first meeting of instructor and class, involving the giving out of the class syllabus, a document that would later turn out to be a problem for him.

In the past ten years or so, the traditional class syllabus has been substantially altered, mostly at the urging of administrators who are fearful of lawsuits and state scrutiny (for those receiving funds from the state) and of visits from accrediting institutions (like those who recently took away City College of San Francisco’s accreditation). Syllabi can now take up five or more pages describing, in excruciating detail, an instructor’s grading calculus, attendance policy, number of assignments, plagiarism policies, and availability of student services—from psychological counseling to disabled students’ rights under the law.

Instructors are told that this will protect us, should there ever be a conflict or complaint, as well as cover the college’s need should any accreditation team, at random, do a spot check on their next visit. But this guarantee of clarity and

protection would prove useless when faced with the latest priority of student success at any cost.

John did show up in my office before the next class, apologetic, and I gave him a copy of the syllabus. He discussed the impossibility of his work/school situation. He was receiving veterans’ benefits for returning to school and needed to maintain enrollment in three classes. Should he fail to do so, he told me, he would have to give the money back, and should he do it twice, the Office of Veteran Affairs would refuse to give him any more funds towards his college degree. I reminded him of the rigor of college classes, suggested online courses as a possible alternative, and explained to him that my standards were high and he would be expected to meet these standards to pass the class. I encouraged him to read the syllabus, and to ask me if anything were unclear to him.

As the semester progressed, John began to miss enough classes to warrant my concern, so I decided to speak with him about it. John assured me that he would miss no more classes; he had spoken to Human Resources at his work and asked for their understanding of his situation.

Students, either from naiveté or financial pressure, often make the same mistake as John in signing up for too much, and by mid-semester John’s tension was mounting. When he failed to show up for another class, this one a required in-class peer editing session on his rough draft, he was beside himself. He came up to my office after the class, waving the rough draft in his hand and demanding credit for showing up, albeit late. But the point of the exercise was to have students participate in a peer review, and the requirement for attendance in the class to participate was clearly on the syllabus. John had, once again, been unable to get away from work and was asking for special status because of his work situation. I met him in the hallway and explained that in the end, all it meant was that if the paper warranted a B grade, for example, he would receive a B- grade instead.

I watched as his body reacted to my reiteration of the course policy. He looked incredulous, seemed to gather size on an intake of air and grow taller, his eyes widening as he spun around and headed down the hall away from me. I saw rage, and for the first time in my life I began to think about the need for security, something I have never asked for before.

My fear escalated as I thought back to the content of his essays, one on special combat techniques elite Marines practice on the weekend, to toughen up and prepare the body and mind for potential capture. In another essay he attacked a psychological theory by saying that the psychologist who promoted it “shouldn’t be allowed to have children,” be-

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cause she espoused more of those “empty-headed liberal attitudes.” “Any rational person,” John had said, “would understand how insane her ideas were.” What I had perceived before to be a person in need of the discipline of critical thinking had now become someone threatening.

### *Frailty, Thy Name is Leadership*

John left my office and went directly to my newly hired Dean to complain, and soon, the Dean arrived in my office to let me know about it. I have been teaching since 1977, and in that time had received only three complaints, John’s included. I don’t know how leadership parses these things, but since John was complaining halfway into the semester about clearly articulated class policies, I expected that the Dean would re-explain the policies and suggest that John either drop the course, transfer to another class if possible, or learn to live with them. As I mentioned, the attendance policy was standard across the college.

Instead, my Dean came to my office saying that John was older, uncomfortable in the college environment, a veteran pressured with a difficult job, trying to make his way here. The Dean tried to move him into another class, but it was not to be. He ended his conversation with me in a later email by saying that I should try “to find strategies so that John could end the semester successfully.”

But if student success is defined as learning, everything in the class available to John was already designed to promote his success: my twelve hours a week of availability for consultation on essays both in my office and at our Writing Center, an attendance policy that guarantees students stay on top of their classwork, a one-late-paper option, a peer review policy that insures that students not begin work on an essay the night before, and mandatory tutorials in the Writing Center for upcoming essays. The structure to promote genuine student success was built into the course. John was responsible for the work to meet those standards of success.

John’s complaint about being required to meet the course requirements had no merit. But he had the Dean’s attention and sympathy. It was clear that the Dean did not have my back. And the Dean’s unwillingness to end the complaint, by simply backing standard policies laid out in the syllabus, would lead to a cascade of very unpleasant events.

### *The Contract/The Dean*

My Dean emailed me again, announcing that he and John had worked out a contract and “it would be great if I signed it, too.” John brought me the contract and lost no time dropping the Dean’s name, as often as possible, for the remainder of our time together that semester. This contract listed four or

five items:

- 1) I will withdraw from my math class.
- 2) I will talk to Human Resources at work so I can attend my English class regularly
- 3) I will check in with my professor once a week to get help on my essays.
- 4) I will . . .

I stopped reading.

I have a friend who teaches English at a local high school and was a former guidance counselor. She told me that these “contracts” are strategies often used by high school counselors and principals in inner city schools. But John was 40 and a college student, and just like John, most community college students also work. Many support their families and are under extreme pressure in terms of completing their education. Some are forced to work 40 hour-a-week jobs. Some of them are veterans, and many are minority students.

I refused to sign a contract that bypassed me in its creation and created a privileged single student. College isn’t set up so that every unhappy student gets a contract from the Dean.

Never before have I had a student go to the Dean claiming that his circumstances warranted a special contract and the circumvention of his instructor’s authority. And his wish was granted! Aside from infantilizing a middle-aged man with such a contract, the Dean sent a damaging message to this returning veteran who needed to learn how to be a student: John was special and the Dean’s contract proved it. As it turned out, John had conned the Dean and never did honor the contract, but that was to come later.

This Dean who, before deanship, had given one of my peer evaluations a special commendation for “inspiring her students,” had now abandoned me entirely. I could not expect any support from him.

### *Next Complaint*

The semester was coming to an end, and John realized that he had not yet fulfilled the requirement for mandatory tutorial conferences in the Writing Center. He needed five. Upon failing to secure his first required conference, John came to my office saying, “I don’t like the Writing Center! I waited for 45 minutes and I couldn’t get a conference with you! I’ve filed a complaint about the Writing Center, and I’m not going and will work with you in your office instead.” I told him that the Writing Center conferences were part of the course’s requirements, clearly stated on the syllabus, and if he didn’t complete this part of the require-

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**Student success: By any means necessary?***continued from the previous page*

ment, his grade would be docked to some degree (about seven percent).

Again I watched the “puffing up” of his body, the flare of the nostrils, the widening of the eyes and the takeoff down the hallway. Again I saw rage, and again I wanted security. I was scared.

John went straight to my Dean again, who told him that the Writing Center was a limited resource. Unhappy with this answer, John went over the Dean’s head.

**Vice President of Instruction: Withdrawal**

The Vice President would tell me later that John had complained, yet again, about the course policies that made it so difficult for him to be successful in the class, and having also missed a required essay at this point, he asked to be withdrawn from the class. I certainly had no objection, but the college deadline for withdrawal had passed. “No problem,” said the Vice President, and bypassing protocol, she immediately saw to it that John was gone. So was the security detail I had asked for and felt comforted by. A week later, I would meet with the Vice President about this whole incident, basically to say how upsetting it had all been, particularly the part about being utterly unsupported by the Dean. But by that time, the situation had changed again.

**Vice President of Instruction: Reinstatement**

It would turn out that John had never dropped his math class as per the requirements of his contract with the Dean, and by withdrawing from my class now, he would lose his veterans’ benefits. He told the Vice President this as though the information were new to him, and he now wanted to be reinstated in the class. She should have dismissed his request without any thought: she had already done him a favor by withdrawing him so late in the semester.

Instead, she offered John the option of being re-enrolled in my class. But because he had exceeded the number of allowed absences, not done the required work in the Writing Center and had missed a paper which he could not make up, he would receive an “F” in the course and could not take the final. Or he could also choose to continue his withdrawal from the class. John chose the F option with reinstatement so that he could retain his veteran’s benefits.

The Vice President assured me that I would not need to see John again, and that I could have security at the final, in case John tried to appear. It was over, she told me. Importantly (and for the first time) she said, “I’m sorry. I’m sorry this has happened to you.” It felt good to hear it, but it didn’t change the fact that she, like the Dean before her, had

caved to this student. At least she apologized. And she told me it was over. I would never see him again.

**Vice Chancellor, Human Resources and Employee Relations: The Final**

But it was not over. Unable to meet with the college president who, I was told, was in China, and apparently emboldened with his frighteningly successful attempts to come and go at will in the class, John sought out the next level of administration, the Vice Chancellor, Human Resources and Employee Relations. This time, John protested his inability to take the final and finish the class. He did this even though he had not appeared in class for about two weeks, having been withdrawn and only recently reinstated. Defying reason and overstepping the line between administration and faculty purview over academic matters, the Vice Chancellor said, I was told, “Aw, let him take the final.”

**The Email**

For over a month, John’s spectacularly successful manipulations had undermined any semblance of academic standards in my class. At the highest levels, everyone who had contact with him appeared to abandon reason and good sense. Did John plead his children, his war record, his efforts to survive in what was, to him, an alien environment? Other students at our college also had obligations of family and financial constraints, including other veterans. Perhaps John just had a unique willingness to demand special consideration.

I’ll never know, but I can speak to the effects this constant renegeing on the part of administration had on me. My Dean and the Vice President now told me that John would take the final, but in the Dean’s office, and I didn’t need to grade it if I didn’t want to. That was up to me. But, incredibly, I was still expected to calculate his grade for the course.

My stress levels were soaring, but at least the security detail was reinstated. My husband, disgusted by the sequence of events and fearful for my safety, wrote an email to both the Dean and the Vice President of Instruction, stating that if this student threatened me in any way, my husband would hold the Dean and the Vice President personally responsible. A copy of the email was forwarded to the college president. It took the astonishing power of an implied lawsuit to finally meet John’s equally astonishing success in garnering acquiescence from administration. Soon, the effects of this would alter the game.

As for me, I suddenly understood that this entire situation had ceased to be about my teaching and John’s learning, having gone clearly beyond the scope of any remotely

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## Next year's salary increase projected to be about 3.3%

By Masao Suzuki, AFT Representative on the District Committee on Budget & Finance

At the January 27 meeting of the District Committee on Budget and Finance, Kathy Blackwood (Executive Vice Chancellor) said that County property taxes were up 5.21% which would translate to a 3.3% salary increase ( $2\% + (5.21\% - 3\%) \times .6 = (2\% + 1.326\%)$ ). The number could go a bit higher before the summer if sales of property lead to even more increases in property taxes as the properties are re-assessed to market values.

On the other hand, Kathy said that the District "will have to" include benefits in the future increases because of the increasing cost of STRS and PERS.

On this issue, the STRS employee rate is rising 1.05% for 2015-2016 and another 1.05% for 2016-2017 (see [calstrs.com/calstrs-2014-funding-plan](http://calstrs.com/calstrs-2014-funding-plan)). This means that next year,



if there is a 3.3% salary increase, the after STRS increase will be only 2.25%, which is less than the 2.7% increase in consumer prices for the Bay Area (see [bls.gov/news.release/cpi.t04.htm](http://bls.gov/news.release/cpi.t04.htm) - note that the Bay Area has the **highest** rate of inflation of the ten metro areas that the Labor department reports on, and at 2.7% year over year is more than three times the all-city increase of 0.8%). If the same property tax increase, salary formula, and inflation hold in 2016-2017, we would again lose purchasing power, even though our paychecks would be larger.

Starting 2017-2018 for three years, to 2020-2021, the employee rate will stay the same (at 10.25% for current employees, less for new ones) but the employer rate will continue to rise, going up 1.85% a year for three years and .97% in the last year, topping out at 19.1%, about twice the current rate of 8.88%.

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"educational" endeavor. I had my epiphany. Based upon a flippant remark in my husband's email about "let the Dean just take over and pass John," I knew what I needed to do.

In an email to the Dean and Vice President, I said that I planned to turn over my grades and attendance records to my Dean. But after that, I told them, *I was out*. I would not read John's final, and I refused to grade him for the semester. After months of administrators sabotaging and violating the integrity of my class and then expecting me to undo the problem they created with a final grade, it made no sense for me to continue to participate. I would clearly be violating my contract, but it was the right thing to do. For the first time in months, my body relaxed when I said, in essence, "You did it. Now it's time for you to fix it."

### The Cabinet Responds

Apparently in response to my refusal to grade John and my husband's threat of a lawsuit, our "Cabinet" (the President and two Vice Presidents) convened and after discussion came up with the following solution: John was officially withdrawn from my class, but allowed to take the final (my final!) in a made-up section of the course, another English class of the same level (with only John in it). Based on my records and his final, the Dean would assign a grade to John.

John was also told I no longer was his instructor: it was all up to the Dean now, exactly where it started and should have stopped, so many months before. Did the Dean pass John? Probably. The Dean was known before his deanship as both an excellent instructor and easy grader. I doubt he would have been the first or last in this chain of events to say no.

### The Results

Very recently, President Obama has suggested that the government fund the first two years of community college for all students who wish to enroll. But I am certain that pandering to an empty slogan of "student success" or any other jargon is not what President Obama had in mind.

My own experience of this messy, disheartening situation has reaffirmed for me that colleges are fundamentally about teaching and learning, and adhering to standards is the only way that can happen with any kind of integrity. When colleges forget their primary role, students are cheated by being passed for all the wrong reasons, faculty are lost without support, and administrators are left with role confusion in the face of an empty imperative for "student success" at any cost.

No, President Obama could not have meant this. Nobody would.

**IN MEMORIAM**

**Irv Witt**

On December 24, Dr. Irv Witt, emeritus professor of sociology, passed away at the age of 93 in San Rafael, California. He retired in 1993 following 30 years of service to the college district.

Irv received a Ph.D. and bachelor's degree from U.C. Berkeley and a master's degree from the University of Chicago. He served in the U. S. Army as a lieutenant in Guadalcanal during World War II.

Prior to joining the faculty at CSM, Irv taught at San Francisco State College (now University). In 1963, Irv was hired at CSM just as the new College Heights campus opened its doors. During his tenure at CSM, he was regarded as a highly respected faculty member; he also served as the chair of the sociology department.

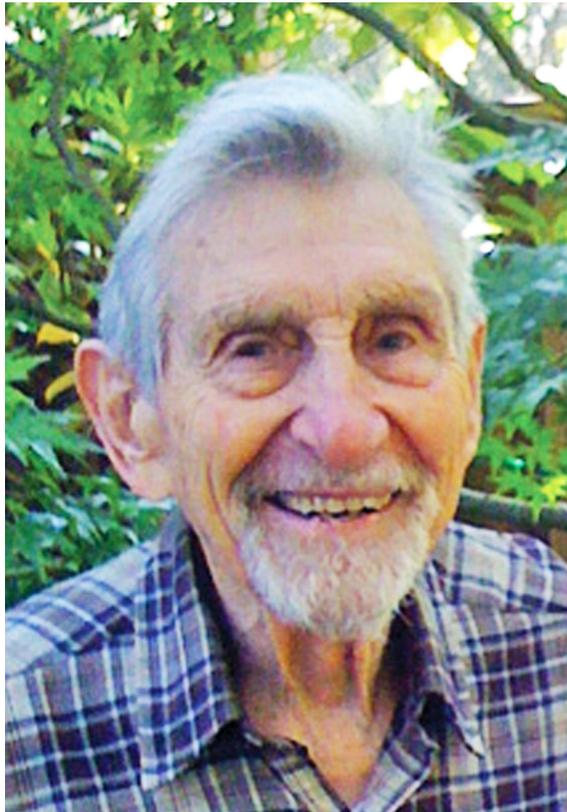
In retirement, Irv continued to teach part-time until his 80s. Al Acena, emeritus dean of social science, recalls his former colleague: "Irv was deeply devoted to the community, the college and its students, and his family."

Irv had a passion for local and national politics and was involved in many community organizations, including serving on the boards of the American Civil Liberties Union and the San Mateo Senior Commission.

Irv was involved in the early, founding days of AFT Local 1493, serving in various capacities in the leadership of the union. For example, Irv served for many years as a leader in the AFT's Committee on Political Education (COPE) group, always on the lookout for possible faculty-friendly candidates to run for the Board of Trustees.

He is survived by his wife, Josephine, sons Jeremy and Jordan, brother Melvin, and five grandchildren.

*Following are brief remembrances written by several of Irv's long-time colleagues:*



During the couple of semesters just prior to my own retirement, while the CSM campus was undergoing renovation, Social Science faculty were grouped together in cubical office space. This unusual arrangement gave me the opportunity

to spend quality time with Irv. He and I both had mid-morning classes and would generally arrive on campus around the same time. In the quiet of this early morning time, he and I shared many delightful conversations.

Having transferred to CSM late in my career, I did not have the opportunity to know Irv over a long period of time. Nevertheless, I quickly came to feel close to him and to treasure the time we shared. It was easy to feel close to Irv. That was just the kind of guy he was. His warmth, kindness, and gentleness of spirit led to an immediate sense of genuine, human connection. I remember being very impressed by Irv's gentle nature juxtaposed with his very passionate, unwavering commitment to a progressive social and political perspective.

As I got to know Irv better he came to feel like an old friend.

I felt very touched by his respect for me and my views. In hearing stories about Irv, at his memorial, it was clear that many others felt the same. It was not a surprise to hear about the deep love Irv shared with his lovely wife Jo. It was touching to realize that Jo and Irv's love story was the central theme of his life.

In closing, I would be remiss if I did not mention Irv's sense of humor. He always seemed upbeat and happy. I have repeated one of his jokes a number of times, "When a group of older people get together, it quickly becomes an organ recital." Perhaps only those of us up in years will get the humor. There are a few people in my life who I think of as role models of how to age with grace and dignity. Irv is certainly one of those people. My life is better for having known Irv as are the lives of his friends, family and the many students he worked with over a long and fruitful career.

*- Ernie Rodriguez, Emeritus Psychology Professor*

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Irv would on occasion place an article from the New York Times in my mail box. It was always on an issue pertaining to economics and was more often than not written by Paul Krugman. The next time we passed in the hall of building 15, he would ask me what I thought of the article. We would then have a conversation about the article. The problem with trying to have a conversation in the hall of building 15 was that anyone walking by could join in (actually that was not a problem but rather one of the most important benefits of having over 100 teachers in the same building). The discussion would then become an interdisciplinary free-for-all with historians, philosophers, anthropologists, geographers, political scientists, sociologists all contributing their two-cents worth.

Until Irv's memorial service, I did not know that besides a Ph.D. in sociology, he also had a B.A. degree from U.C. Berkeley in Economics!

- *John Kirk, Emeritus Economics Professor*

1. Words Irv Witt would never speak—"no more mr. nice guy". He was always a nice guy no matter how heated a discussion got. He loved the concept of free speech and expression, but he was never in one's face or confrontational.

2. Irv, unlike many of his colleagues, did not suffer from logorrhea. Sometimes at lunch or a meeting he would say nothing at all. But he was always alert, processing, and full of information if asked. He seemed to firmly resist the impulse to convince others of how smart he was.

3. Irv was a real family man, very proud of his wife, two sons and grandkids. Irv and wife Jo were hospitable people and made their home a happy place to be.

4. Irv loved to teach and he was a real mensch. It was so nice to have known him.

- *Anita Fisher, Emeritus Psychology Professor*

Were it not for Irv Witt I would have not had a career at San Mateo. I first met Irv when I was interviewing for a position as a sociology instructor at San Francisco City College. After meeting with several of the social science faculty at City College, I was informed that they were unanimously recommending me for the position but that I had an additional hurdle to clear. I was required to meet with the college president. I met with the president whose name I don't recall although I remember he was a big burly fellow and ex college football star. I felt I had done well in the interview, that the president liked me and I was all but assured the position. I was shocked to learn that the president had vetoed the faculty committee's recommendation. Irv informed me that the president thought that I was coming to San Francisco to do some "left wing organizing and stir up trouble." What had given him this false impression is that when he asked me what I thought of Saul Alinsky, I had said that I admired him. In my naivete I was unaware that he was asking a trick question. Irv, who was on the faculty of both schools, was indignant. Always willing to right injustice, he made sure that I was hired at CSM. Thank you, Irv. I remain grateful.

- *Walter Kaufmann, Emeritus Sociology Professor*

Irv Witt was an active and contributing member of the San Mateo community. He was active in the San Mateo County Democratic Club and Democratic politics, worked hard on behalf of Democratic candidates. He was also appointed as a member of the San Mateo Senior Commission and was honored by the city of San Mateo for his contributions to the community.

- *Sue Lempert, "friend and fan" and longtime San Mateo Mayor and City Council Member*

**AFT 1493  
Executive Committee/  
General Membership  
Meetings:**

**Wednesday, March 11, 2:15 p.m.,  
CSM, Building 10, Room 401**

**Wednesday, April 8, 2:15 p.m.,  
Cañada, Building 3, Room 104**

**Wednesday, May 13, 2:15 p.m.,  
Skyline, Room 6-203**

**CFT  
(California Federation of Teachers)  
Convention  
March 20-22,  
Manhattan Beach**

**CFT Lobby Day  
April 20-21,  
Sacramento**

STRATEGIC CAMPAIGN INITIATIVE NEWS

# Shaking things up in AFT 1493

by Katharine Harer, Strategic Campaign Initiative Organizer

A grant from CFT's Strategic Campaign Initiative has funded two faculty members, Katharine Harer (Skyline English) and Michelle Kern (CSM Art) to carry out union outreach and member organizing in our District. Katharine and Michelle are happily dispensing shirts, bags and a new packet of colorful and information-packed members' materials which they wrote and designed, as well as looking for opportunities to make good things happen for faculty. In each issue of *The Advocate*, we'll fill you in on what we're up to.

- **Part Time Medical Stipend Survey & Campaign** – Along with EC member and Skyline Health Science Instructor, Paul Rueckhaus, we created a survey distributed to all part-time faculty members during the first two and a half weeks of the spring semester (see article, page 1.) Data from the survey will help our AFT Negotiating Team work to improve the current stipend amount and application process when they return to the bargaining table at the end of February.
- **Member Outreach & Visits** – We are continuing our one-to-one visits with full and part-time faculty members who were hired in the last two-three years -- and we come bearing gifts! The purpose of the visits is to introduce newer instructors to the union, answer questions, listen to concerns

and leave everyone with a tote bag, a new members' packet, chocolates and a t-shirt.

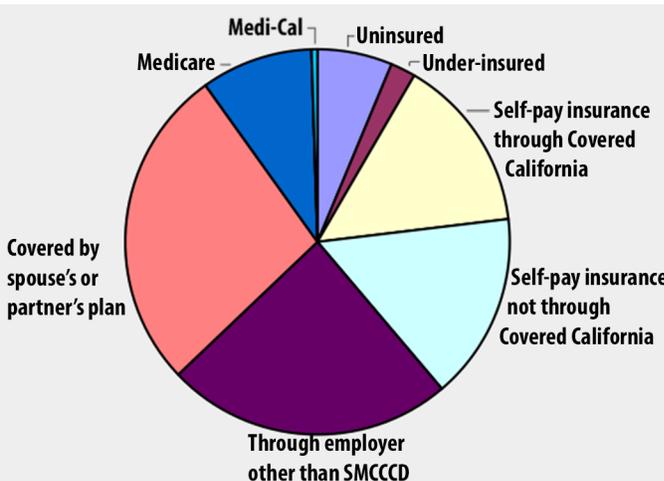
- **Building AFT 1493's COPE (Committee on Political Education) War Chest** -- Political campaigns cost money, and in order to support candidates who will be strong faculty and student advocates for District Board of Trustees' positions (two of which are opening up next year) the union has to raise some cash. Before the SCI project, our COPE fund wasn't big enough to run a hamster for office, but after just a month of members' visits in November/December, we've already tripled our monthly COPE contributions. If you're not contributing a little bit each month to COPE, let us know. We'll help make it happen.
- **SCI Organizers Asked to Present at CFT Leadership Conference** – We've been asked by CFT staff to present a workshop at the statewide Leadership Conference, February 11-12 in Los Angeles, where we will discuss our outreach campaign and show off the array of new materials we've created for AFT 1493 members.
- **Part-Time Appreciation Events** – We are looking forward to supporting our union Chapter Chairs as they organize gatherings on each campus to honor and create connections with our part-time colleagues.

## How much do adjuncts spend on healthcare? How little does the District cover?

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sponses reflected this instructor's comment: "I stopped buying medical coverage because, even with the stipend, I couldn't afford the premiums."

### What is your current healthcare coverage?



Another aspect of the medical benefit stipend that the Union will be looking at is the process of applying for the benefit. The way the system works now is that faculty members must compile receipts for qualified expenses and submit their applications to Human Resources with their Dean's

approval. As one faculty member described her experience: "The process for applying for the stipend is rather labor intensive, as paperwork needs to be filled out and sent to a Dean for approval and cancelled checks for proof of need are required. It's a lot of work for a small sum, which is probably one reason many have not taken advantage of this."

Currently the union is looking at both the process and the amount of the medical reimbursement. On the process side, we will want to identify any obstacles in order to streamline the application process and to optimize participation in the medical stipend program. As far as the amount is concerned, we are looking at a number of factors including benefits policies for adjuncts in comparable districts, market forces in healthcare and, of course, faculty input from the survey to prepare a fair, reasonable and evidence-based proposal as we resume contract negotiations.

Thank you to all part-time faculty members who participated in the survey. As we continue to sort and analyze your responses, we will publish further revelations. We look forward to sharing our findings and reporting on the progress of contract negotiations as we move forward. As things heat up, we may be calling on you to do more than fill out a survey. This is an issue of basic fairness that all of us should be able to support – part-time and full-time instructors alike.