



# Connect

NEWSLETTER OF THE WESTCHESTER COMMUNITY COLLEGE FEDERATION OF TEACHERS / FEBRUARY 2017



Welcome to FT Connect, newsletter of the Westchester Community College Federation of Teachers. Our goals are to keep you informed about significant events affecting you as a WCC faculty member, to advocate for your rights, and to provide a forum for your views.

This inaugural issue closely follows Administration's belated release of summary results of WCC's participation in The

Chronicle of Higher Education's 2016 "Great Colleges to Work For" national survey. In March and April, 170 randomly selected members of our college community—fulltime and adjunct faculty, exempt professional staff,

non-exempt staff, and administrators--answered questions about our job satisfaction. We joined 46,000 other respondents at 281 institutions, including 92 community colleges.

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**“When WCC [employees] are assured of confidentiality..., they express a remarkable degree of discontent, disillusionment, and demoralization.”**



# It's Official

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In July The Chronicle published its report and announced its Honor Roll of Great Colleges. In August the survey organization, ModernThink, transmitted individual campus results to participating institutions. WCC President Belinda S. Miles released our local report via email on December 14, one day after a formal request from WCCFT President Mel Bienenfeld. Why the four-month delay? Even a cursory glance at the official report answers the question.

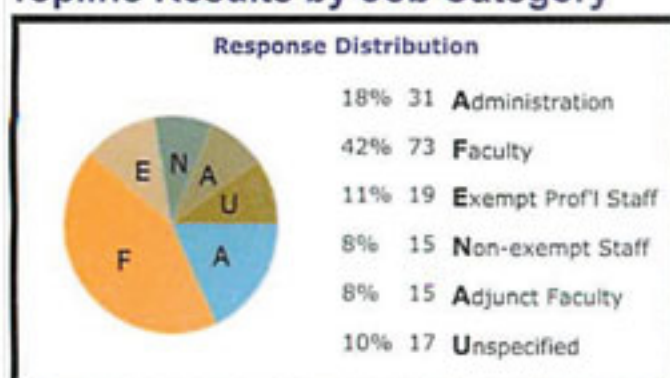
Our local scores are not just low, but EXTRAORDINARILY LOW! Survey questions covered fifteen different areas, and any result represented in light or dark red is problematic ("Poor" or "Warrants Attention"). Drenched in red, our report graphically reveals that when WCC faculty, staff, and even mid- and lower-tier administrators are assured of confidentiality and anonymity, i.e. when they are free from the fear of retribution by top administrators, they express a remarkable degree of discontent, disillusionment, and demoralization.

The lowest overall scores fell in three categories: Senior Leadership (only 25% positive responses), Shared Governance (only 23%), and Faculty, Administration, and Staff Relations (only 23%). Broken out by job category, an even more striking number emerges. Only 15% of 73 responding

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ModernThink

Westchester Community College  
ModernThink Higher Education Insight Survey 2016  
Topline Results by Job Category



THE CHRONICLE  
2016  
GREAT  
COLLEGES  
TO WORK FOR.

Poor		Warrants Attention		Fair to Mediocre		Good		Very Good to Excellent	
0% - 44%		45% - 54%		55% - 64%		65% - 74%		75% - 100%	
		OVERALL	Administration	Faculty	Exempt Prof'l Staff	Non-exempt Staff	Adjunct Faculty		
Job Satisfaction/Support		57%	65%	56%	47%	55%	57%		
Teaching Environment		45%	61%	45%	39%	36%	30%		
Professional Development		57%	62%	66%	47%	38%	35%		
Compensation, Benefits & Work/Life Balance		57%	61%	61%	53%	49%	41%		
Facilities		53%	66%	44%	53%	74%	53%		
Policies, Resources & Efficiency		40%	51%	38%	28%	43%	31%		
Shared Governance		23%	46%	16%	22%	28%	13%		
Pride		58%	74%	56%	51%	54%	52%		
Supervisors/Department Chairs		59%	70%	63%	41%	51%	54%		
Senior Leadership		25%	47%	15%	26%	34%	23%		
Faculty, Administration & Staff Relations		23%	27%	18%	22%	38%	23%		
Communication		37%	54%	39%	21%	33%	17%		
Collaboration		40%	50%	42%	31%	39%	30%		
Fairness		37%	58%	35%	27%	30%	26%		
Respect & Appreciation		48%	51%	50%	42%	43%	44%		
Survey Average		44%	57%	43%	36%	42%	36%		

\*Job Category response distributions have been truncated and may not total 100%. Please also note that data will not populate where there are fewer than five respondents.

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“ Only 15% of 73 responding fulltime faculty expressed confidence in ‘Senior Leadership’ of this institution. ”

fulltime faculty expressed confidence in “Senior Leadership” of this institution.

Readers may fairly ask whether it has always been this way. We can tell you that WCC has participated in the Chronicle’s survey almost from its inception nine years ago. A gauge of the severity of our

current institutional crisis is the fact that in 2010, WCC was identified — based on the responses of its own employees—as one of the nation’s Great Colleges To Work For. Future issues of FT Connect will examine the reasons why we have fallen so far and so fast. We also eagerly await the results of WCC’s participation in the 2017 survey.



# Message from the President

Mel Bienenfeld

I'm proud and delighted to share the first issue of FT Connect with my WCC faculty colleagues. I think you'll agree that editor Richard Courage and art editor Claudia Jacques de Moraes Cardoso have done a great job.

The contents of this issue remind us all too well of the struggle we find ourselves in. Our members' testimony at the December Trustees' meeting revealed two opposite tendencies. On one hand, Trustees appeared generally unsympathetic to our descriptions of the ways our work has become more difficult but less productive. They prefer to hear the soothing tale that WCC has magically entered a "New Era of Student Success."

On the other hand, our public comments at that meeting demonstrated our power to command attention simply by showing up, speaking out, and making our case for respect and fair treatment. The lead article in the November 29 Viking News, "Administration, Faculty, Staff Fail to Settle Contract Dispute," was a further demonstration of the power of publicity.

Publicity, constant pressure, and good community relations constitute our route to ultimate success. We get results only when we raise our collective voices, as we've shown many times in the past. Keep that in mind as we work together going forward!

In solidarity, Mel

## CONTRACT CORNER

Judy Langer, Vice-President

**NEGOTIATIONS?** Despite Administration repeatedly declaring its commitment to settle the contract, they are holding on tight to the money. In this tug of war, we need the entire faculty pulling on our side. It's a new year and a new semester. Make a resolution to do something to help us settle this contract! Make them give us what we deserve. Our team met again to strategize on January 18th and then back to the tug the following week. Update at the February 1 meeting.

**DID YOU KNOW?** Our current contract mandates that there be only ONE personnel file for each faculty member (fulltime and adjunct). Administration keeps this file in Human Resources. If you are aware of any other file with personnel information, please let us know. Any documents placed in your file must be signed by you or have your comments attached. With reasonable notice, you have the right to view your file in the HR office. You may bring an advisor of your choice and/or request copies of any documents for a small copying fee. See contract pages 14-15 (Personnel Records) on our website - [www.sunywccft.org](http://www.sunywccft.org).

## WCCFT NEWS

WCCFT members addressed the Board of Trustees during their December 21 meeting. Judy Langer, Mel Bienenfeld, Jodi Cotten, Don Shernoff, Richard Courage, Joanna Peters, and Sheldon Malev discussed the demoralizing effects of six years without a raise, the Chronicle survey on job satisfaction, pressures to lower academic standards, and the gap between the College's official commitment to shared governance and the reality experienced daily by faculty. Colleagues spoke out boldly and forcefully, telling a very different story than the rosy-tinted official narrative emanating from Hartford Hall.

**BENEFITS COMMITTEE** chair Rowan Lindley, reports they are working on inequities in WCC's reporting of time to the NYS Teachers Retirement System. Adjunct faculty have their time reported as one hour service per credit hour taught whereas full-time teaching faculty have their 15 credit hours reported as fulltime service. This makes it nearly impossible for adjuncts to accumulate enough time for a pension of any kind. Several adjuncts have pointed this out to the Payroll Office. Administration has told WCCFT that this practice will be investigated and, if possible, changed. The committee will follow up this semester.

**SCHOLARSHIP COMMITTEE** chair Joanna Peters reports: "Once again, our members' generosity will provide a \$1500 scholarship to each of four students, either to continue at WCC or to transfer to a four-year college for further study in their chosen field. Please encourage as many students as possible to apply." Information on the application process will be available soon via email, the WCCFT website, and the next issue of FT Connect.



**ADJUNCT COMMITTEE** Co-chair Donna DeCosa reports "a wonderful, positive resolution" in the case of a part-time instructor who claimed unemployment benefits during summer 2016. For most adjuncts, the sixteen weeks between spring and fall semesters are not an unpaid vacation but an extended period of financial difficulty followed by the uncertain possibility of future re-employment. In this case, the adjunct colleague submitted an application to the NYS Department of Labor (DoL), basing her claim on "lack of work" at the end of her contracts as hourly instructor at WCC and another local college.

The adjunct committee provided guidance in completing the online application and submitting required documentation, and the claimant soon began receiving benefit checks. Subsequently, a DoL case

manager challenged the veracity of her application, and her checks were stopped. She requested a hearing at which she was represented by our local NYSUT Labor Relations Specialist. In November, the case was heard by an administrative law judge, who determined that the presentation of facts was indeed accurate and complete and that the claimant's receipt of a "tentative teaching agreement" did not meet the legal standard for "reasonable assurance" of future employment. Her benefits were reinstated, and she received a lump sum payment for the balance of the summer.

In future issues, FT Connect will review the legal and political contexts of unemployment benefits for adjunct college faculty and will provide specific information about the application process.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS TEC 107

Feb. 1, March 1, April 5, May 3

### EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETINGS

Feb. 15 & 23, March 9 & 29, April 6 & 19

### NYSUT HIGHER ED. LOBBY DAY

Albany, March 2

### NEA HIGHER ED. CONFERENCE

Dallas, March 17-19

### NYSUT REPRESENTATIVE ASSEMBLY

New York Hilton, April 7-8

### AFT HIGHER ED. CONFERENCE

Detroit, April 28-30

## 2016-2017

### EXECUTIVE BOARD MEMBERS

#### Richard Courage

richardcwccft@gmail.com  
914-606-6656 SCI-362

#### Donna DeCosa

donnadwccft@gmail.com

#### Rowan Lindley

rowanlwccft@gmail.com  
914-606-8584 TEC-124

#### Joanna Peters

joannapwccft@gmail.com  
914-606-6234 Lib Ground-41

#### Gwen Roundtree

gwenrewccft@gmail.com  
914-606-6581 CLA-3

#### Rosemarie Serrano

rosemarieswccft@gmail.com  
914-606-7707 HAAB-114

#### Stephen Sewell

stephenswccft@gmail.com

#### Don Weigand

donalddwccft@gmail.com  
914-606-6572 STC-209

### WCCFT OFFICERS

#### President:

#### Mel Bienenfeld

melbwccft@gmail.com  
914-606-6631 TEC-122

#### Vice-President:

#### Judy Langer

judywccft@gmail.com  
914-606-8565 TEC-122

#### Secretary:

#### Rafael Rodriguez

rafaelwccft@gmail.com  
914-606-6904 STC-221

#### Treasurer:

#### Donald Shernoff

donswccft@gmail.com

# WWW.SUNYWCCFT.ORG



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**Westchester Community College Federation of Teachers**

Westchester Community College | Technology Building, Room 32, Valhalla, NY 10595

WCC System: 914-606-8421 | Independent WCCFT: 914-345-8856