



# Connect

NEWSLETTER OF THE WESTCHESTER COMMUNITY COLLEGE FEDERATION OF TEACHERS / No 7 / FEBRUARY 2018



**What** tangible proof do we have that unions will not just slip away, lost to the ever-increasing anti-union sentiments of these times? Fortunately, such evidence radiates from the 2017 winners of WCCFT Richard Rosell and Rafael Rodriguez Memorial Scholarships. Timothy Kohany, Hannah Culliton, Juliana Macias, and Nattoina Miller all believe unions have a powerfully positive influence on workers' lives, and they plan to support them when they move from college into their professional careers.

These students' journeys before WCC brought them to a strong appreciation for unions. Timothy worked as an independently contracted carpenter whose bosses paid him only when they felt like doing so, implemented no safety measures at dangerous job sites, and "1099'd" all employees to save money. Not until Timothy became a member of Local 279, United Brotherhood of Carpenters, did he find his "life transformed" by "a weekly pay check ... [and] a standard

wage." He is happy to have left behind his days on crews of "non-union workers being cheated of rights granted to every union member."

Similarly, Hannah explains that "Unions have indirectly had a large impact on my life. They have protected my family and their jobs and helped them to put food on the table or pay medical bills." Almost everyone in Hannah's family belongs to a union, and they repeatedly emphasize that union benefits paid for the multiple operations her father needed to correct a severe disability.

Nattoina, too, comes from a union family, her husband belonging to 32BJ, Service Employees International Union. For reasons such as "the valuable benefits that allow us as a family to see top doctors, have low deductibles, little or no co-pays, and for awesome vision and dental plans," she is "grateful that ... we are part of this union." She also values



Jon Bloom addressing Dec. 7 adjunct meeting.  
Photo Credit: Rowan Lindley.

## SCHOLARSHIP COMMITTEE:

Chair Joanna Peters reports: "Our members' generosity provides \$1500 scholarships to four students, either to continue at WCC or to transfer to a four-year college for further study. Scholarships are named in memory of our late colleagues and union leaders Richard Rosell and Rafael Rodriguez. In 2017, we received 67 completed applications. Please encourage as many students as possible to apply this year." Information on the application process is available at <http://www.sunywccft.org/scholarship/>.

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the union's role in offering workers "a voice at work" and "job security and protection." As a mother, she especially values the benefits and security her children reap.

As a child, Juliana had a quite visible lesson in the differences between unionized and nonunionized work; her father's job came with union membership, and her mother's job offered no such option. She observed that her father earned considerably more money and concluded, "Unions are the most important feature in the workplace."

## BENEFITS COMMITTEE:

The committee has been working for several years on WCC's inequitable reporting of adjunct teaching hours to NYS Teachers Retirement System.

Adjunct faculty have their time reported as one hour service per credit hour taught whereas full-time faculty have their 15 credit hours reported as full-time service. ADMINISTRATION is investigating the problem and has requested assistance from SUNY Albany, which uses the fairer method.

WCCFT recently helped Payroll identify adjuncts already teaching full-time in another school district since that affects TRS reporting. When asked how close they are to remedying the situation, ADMINISTRATION cited these remaining issues:

- 1) linking information on credit load (currently in the Campus Solutions side of PeopleSoft) to the HR/Payroll side;
- 2) dealing with missed (unpaid) classes;
- 3) costs of changing the system. We expect to meet again in February with Payroll and IT.

## ADJUNCT COMMITTEE:

Co-chair Gretchen Sancher reports that twenty members met on December 7 to learn about the new contract and unemployment insurance (UI) benefits for adjuncts. Guest speaker Jon Bloom of the Workers Defense League described the conditions under which adjuncts with no or reduced course assignments are potentially eligible for UI. He also described what happens at hearings when UI claims are challenged. Further information is available at <http://www.sunywccft.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/Applying-for-Unemployment-Insurance-Benefits.pdf> and the Workers Defense League at 212 627 1931.

Today, Juliana strives "to have a job where unions are present," so that she will get "paid enough and receive health benefits."

Just as we supported these four students with scholarships, they too support us and offer a promise of future union participation and support.

Front page photo: 2017 Scholarship winners (L - R) Nattoina Miller, Hannah Culliton, Timothy Kohany, and Juliana Macias.  
Photo credit: Stephen Sewell.

# Message from the President

Mel Bienenfeld

This is a time to celebrate victories and prepare for sharp challenges ahead. At last, members can celebrate a newly negotiated contract speeding toward final approval. Without George Latimer's election – achieved with active WCCFT support – we'd be locked in a battle simply to have the contract submitted by the County Executive to the Board of Legislators.

The momentum of our contract information sessions and the October ratification meeting sparked strong interest in election of a new negotiating team. That election was contested, and a very large number of members sent in ballots. Such achievements reveal the strengths we need to build on if we are to meet the challenges of the current political moment.

At our December meeting, NYSUT Labor Relations Specialist Amanda Velazquez discussed the *Janus v AFSCME* case coming before the U.S. Supreme Court this year. Janus threatens the agency fee (also known as "fair share") provisions in public sector collective bargaining agreements, which allow unions to collect fees from all represented employees to cover the costs of workplace services that unions provide. Loss of the agency fee would trigger further assaults on the ability of unions to retain their members. The ideas, skills, actions, and commitment of members ARE a

union's strength. Declining membership means a loss of power and potentially loss of union representation.

The words of our student scholarship winners, reproduced in this issue, remind us of the fundamental importance of unions to decent salaries, benefits, and working conditions. There was a time within living memory when WCC employees suffered without union representation. What was won can be lost without our continued struggle and vigilance.

The biggest challenge in recruiting and maintaining members, as Don Shernoff's piece points out, is among adjunct faculty, many of whom are here only briefly and may feel little connection to the union. WCCFT is currently ramping up a full-scale membership drive. We will be listening carefully to what part-time colleagues have to say about their needs and pledging that our new contract campaign will include a vigorous fight to improve job security, salaries, and the professional status of adjuncts.

We need every member to play a role in this drive. **DO NOT TAKE YOUR UNION REPRESENTATION FOR GRANTED.** We are in new historical territory. Please attend monthly meetings and respond positively when we ask you to participate!

In solidarity, Mel

## CONTRACT CORNER

Judy Langer, Vice-President

A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step. But it ends with a single step too. We believe that we are on that last step. As you know, County Executive Latimer has submitted our contract to the Board of Legislators (BOL) for approval. At its January 22 meeting, the BOL – per standard operating procedures – sent our contract to its Budget and Appropriations Committee, chaired by Catherine Borgia, who has been very supportive of the College.

The Budget Committee will consider our contract at its meeting on Monday, February 5, at 10AM (streamed live on <http://westchesterlegislators.com>). Then it is on its way for a vote at a full BOL meeting, hopefully soon. So we are not yet where we want to be, but thankfully we are not where we used to be.

Now back to that journey of a thousand miles as we start preparing for the next round of contract negotiations. The new negotiating team held its first strategy meeting on Thursday, February 1. Please continue to send your concerns to me as we begin our journey. Hopefully this one will not be as long or as arduous as the last.

FT Connect strives 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. Please send your feedback, ideas for articles, or letters to [richardwocht@gmail.com](mailto:richardwocht@gmail.com).

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# FELLOW ADJUNCTS:

## DO YOU KNOW IF YOU ARE A MEMBER OF YOUR UNION?

Many adjuncts do not belong to WCCFT. Some mistakenly think they are members because they see a paycheck deduction labeled "Agency Fee." This actually means that you are NOT a union member. WCCFT members have a deduction called "Adjunct Faculty U." The same amount is deducted in both cases: 1% of gross pay. This money supports the activities of WCCFT and our statewide affiliate, NYSUT.

WCCFT membership does not change the net amount of your paycheck, but it does give the union more power when it negotiates on your behalf. Our contracts cover salary, working conditions, protocols for class assignment, and grievance resolution for both full-time and adjunct faculty. The latest contract covers the years 2011 to 2018 and includes signing bonuses, pay increases and retro-active pay, as well as important steps

toward improving job security and the professional status of adjuncts. Union rights and benefits, even the continuing existence of the union, are not permanently guaranteed. In these challenging times, a strong union can only be sustained if a majority of faculty belong and are actively involved. If you are not a member, join WCCFT/NYSUT and help us to help you! To verify your membership status, check your pay stub or contact union secretary Rowan Lindley at [rowanlwccft@gmail.com](mailto:rowanlwccft@gmail.com).

The membership form is available online at <http://www.sunywccft.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/MEMBERSHIP-ENROLLMENT-FOR.pdf> and should be returned to the WCCFT office, TEC32, or scanned and emailed to Rowan.

In solidarity, Don Shernoff  
WCCFT Treasurer | Adjunct Instructor of Mathematics

After-Tax Deduction	Current	YTD
NATIONAL SOCIETY U	10.34	51.73

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS TEC 107

February 7, March 7, April 4, May 2

### EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETINGS

January 31, February 13 & 21, March 21, April 18, April 26

### NYSUT HIGHER ED LOBBY DAYS

April 27-28, 2018, Buffalo.

### NEA HIGHER ED CONFERENCE

March 15-16, 2018, Chicago

### NYSUT REPRESENTATIVE ASSEMBLY

April 27-28, 2018, Buffalo.

## 2017-2018

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