



# Connect

NEWSLETTER OF THE WESTCHESTER COMMUNITY COLLEGE FEDERATION OF TEACHERS / Nº 11 / FEBRUARY-MARCH 2019



## WE MOURN THEIR LOSS

WCC faculty and staff were shocked and saddened by the deaths—just a week apart in January—of former President Joseph N. Hankin (1940-2019) and CSEA9202 President Carol Ann Zavarella-Vasta (1953-2019).

**JOSEPH N. HANKIN** was WCC President from 1971 to 2013, but he was far more than that to many faculty. "We have lost a member of the family," wrote senior English adjunct Christine Bobkoff. To Rick Hyland, "he was an exemplary leader, advisor, and mentor to me and many others." Julius Ford described him as "the smartest, most compassionate, most humble, and most energetic man I HAVE EVER KNOWN."

Sheldon Malev remembered that "Joe Hankin and I arrived on campus at the same time in September 1971. He formed a committee of new faculty, and I served as its secretary. Today, Iris Cook and I are the only members of that committee still here on campus. We will always remember him because he was so much a part of our lives, a true friend and a warm, caring individual." Iris Cook recalled how "He walked around the campus getting to know EVERYONE on a personal level. I received a call from him the night before I defended my dissertation, saying 'I know you will do well.' My nervousness left me at that point."

"He never saw an idea that he did not like," observed John Flynn, "and he always wanted to know how it could be implemented at WCC to improve the way the College served students and the community." Recalling Hankin's "exhausting" pace, Flynn noted that "For 42 years he personally hired every full-time faculty member and administrator, he signed every diploma, he never missed a beat. A man of great personal integrity—challenging

us, nurturing us, pointing the way forward—we were lucky to have him in our personal and professional lives."

**CAROL ANN ZAVARELLA-VASTA** served for seventeen years in the Office of Student Life and was president of our staff union.

She was remembered by her colleague and close friend Suzanne Paribello as someone who "cared about staff and students and always wanted to help. She did so many things for us and often we didn't even know it at the time. As CSEA president, she met lots of hostility, but she fought for the union and was instrumental in putting together two agreements."

Ellen Zendman recalled how "Carol Ann supported each and every counselor with whatever was needed. 'No' was not in her vocabulary. She was a positive, supportive, happy person, and a great cook." "Our hearts are broken," wrote Robin Graff, remembering "the smiles, the laughter, the friendship, and the light that emanated from her beautiful soul."

President Mel Bienenfeld stated, "WCCFT will deeply miss Carol Ann, our friend and collaborator. As leader of our 'sister union' at the College, she was always available to chat, share information, and plan joint events."



# WCCFT NEWS

**ADJUNCT COMMITTEE** chair Gretchen Sancher reports that the committee will continue hosting get-togethers the first Friday of every month. These social gatherings are an opportunity to share information, snacks, and stories about surviving adjunct life. Gretchen also notes that Associate Registrar David Byrnes presented a workshop orienting new adjuncts on attendance reporting in PeopleSoft.

**GRIEVANCE COMMITTEE** chair Jim Werner describes two recent grievances with broad implications. In one, a part-time instructor did not have the opportunity to bump a junior adjunct for a fall course, even though the instructor had completed twenty semesters the previous summer. The issue was the exact point at which senior adjunct status is attained: on the last day of the twentieth semester or first day of the twenty-first. We were able to secure payment for the course the instructor should have taught and to establish that, going forward, adjuncts officially attain senior status at the end of their twentieth semester.

In another grievance, a full-time untenured instructor who was not reappointed was removed from a course the following summer. Administration argued that, without reappointment, the instructor was an at-will employee, and the College could reassign the course without violating contract section 3.9. We argued that the instructor was in fact still considered a full-time faculty member and could not have the summer course reassigned except for cause. A Step II panel was convened and found in favor of Administration; however, as we indicated willingness to pursue arbitration, the College agreed to a settlement. The instructor was paid for the reassigned course, and both sides agreed that, in future, untenured full-time faculty who are not reappointed lose priority rights "at the conclusion of the appointment that was not renewed." For example, if an untenured colleague receives timely notice of non-reappointment in the Fall semester, their priority rights expire at the end of the Spring semester.

Colleagues in need of assistance or confidential advice regarding a potential grievance should contact Jim at [jimwwccft@gmail.com](mailto:jimwwccft@gmail.com)



**SOLIDARITY COMMITTEE** presents the new Solidarity button for Button Thursday campaign.

According to **SCHOLARSHIP COMMITTEE** chair Joanna Peters, "Once again, our members' generosity will provide a \$1500 scholarship to each of four students, either to continue at WCC or transfer to a four-year college. The application deadline is March 29." Further details are available at: <http://researchguides.sunywcc.edu/unionscholarship>

**TEACHERS RETIREMENT SYSTEM AD HOC COMMITTEE** member John Torrieri reports that WCCFT and Administration representatives met on February 5 to address long-standing problems in how adjuncts' hours are reported to TRS. Part-time teaching faculty have their time reported as one hour per credit hour taught whereas full-timers have their 15 credit hours submitted as fulltime service. This makes it nearly impossible for adjuncts to accumulate enough time for a pension of any kind. Despite recent efforts to solve the problem, there is still no viable solution in place, and the timetable for resolving the issue remains unclear. A follow-up meeting will occur in late February.

**JOIN  
WCCFT!**

**SUPPORT YOUR FACULTY UNION!**

ENROLL ONLINE AT [HTTP://WWW.SUNYWCCFT.ORG/MEMBERSHIP-FORM/](http://www.sunywccft.org/membership-form/)  
UNSURE OF YOUR MEMBERSHIP STATUS? CONTACT [ROWANLWCCFT@GMAIL.COM](mailto:ROWANLWCCFT@GMAIL.COM)

# Message from the President

Mel Bienenfeld

In early February, the Westchester County Board of Legislators approved the one-year contract that we negotiated last summer. We anticipate County Executive Latimer's signature shortly, and the implementation of our 2% across-the-board increase not long thereafter. Raises are retroactive to September 1, 2018.

This agreement will expire on August 31. By the time you read this, the Negotiating Team our members elected this past fall will have had its third meeting to prepare proposals for the bargaining table. Most likely, those of you who are full-time members will also have received our negotiations survey (parallel to last year's survey of adjunct colleagues <http://www.sunywccft.org/2018/09/spring-2018-adjunct-survey/>). **Be on the lookout for the survey!**

We expect to be at the bargaining table in early April. You will be informed about the content of our bargaining proposals as we present them to the Administration. We'll also be counting on you to show our unity and strength, and for that we don't need to wait for that first bargaining session.

We can begin a member-based contract campaign right now. In fact, we've already begun. Please pick up one of our new solidarity buttons, either as we distribute them to each work area, at the union office (TEC32), or write to us and we'll get you one. We've already begun our series of "button Thursdays." Please wear the button every Thursday. The more visible these are, and the more of us who wear them, the more the Administration will see that members are united.

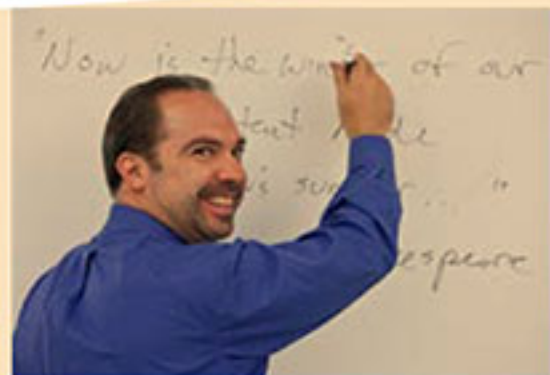
The buttons aren't "protesting" anything – at least not yet! They are a show of solidarity and determination to win a good contract for all our members, full-time and part-time, teaching and nonteaching faculty alike.

Buttons aren't the only way to show solidarity. And we on the WCCFT Executive Board and Negotiating Team don't have a monopoly on good ideas. Members can find their own ways to express themselves.

Got an idea? Share it!

In solidarity, Mel

## MEET THE VEEP



Jim Werner, WCCFT Vice President and Grievance Chair

As we honor Judy Langer's decades of service to WCCFT and wish her a happy retirement, we welcome new WCCFT Vice President Jim Werner. Jim joined the WCC English Department in 2003 after teaching fifteen years for CUNY. He has served as Chair of the English faculty for the past five years and was previously Co-Director of the Honors Program. With a Ph.D. in American Literature, a book on Edgar Allan Poe, and numerous journal articles to his credit, Jim has won awards for Excellence in Scholarship and Excellence in Service from both the SUNY Chancellor and WCC Foundation.

Jim joined the WCCFT Executive Board two years ago and assumed ongoing responsibility for grievance resolution. In fighting for members' rights, he has helped ensure that due process is followed, protected faculty from being wrongfully removed from the classroom, worked to clarify the College's policy on senior adjunct status, helped ensure that student advisement is performed only by qualified professionals, and investigated environmental conditions and health concerns in the Library.

Jim has studied philosophies of leadership and created and taught a course on the subject. He candidly assesses his own leadership strengths as "abiding belief in the talent and potential of our faculty and students; patience, fairness and empathy; strong organizational skills and ability to manage details; and expertise gained through 25 years in the field of higher education."

# WCC STUDENTS EMBRACE UNION FIGHT FOR DEMOCRACY

By Patti Schulster

The 2018 winners of the WCCFT Richard Rosell and Rafael Rodriguez Memorial Scholarships believe in unions as implements of democracy and have experienced union assistance when they most needed it.

For Bshara Dababneh, who worked part-time at a grocery store, the need arose right after high school. "The unskilled workers used to do most of the work... [but] received very little payment compared to the permanent staff." Fortunately, after joining a union, young part-timers received "a pay increase and they got paid when they worked overtime." Bshara learned that "unions play an essential role today in promoting vibrant democracy and a prosperous and fair economy."

John Cardenas, too, believes unions "play a pivotal role in keep[ing] an honest eye on injustice regarding gender, race, and work conditions." He adds that union influence goes beyond pay, equal treatment, and safety to include "improving morale, staff retention, and company productivity."

Utilizing these union roles, Maria Guadalupe Ibanez's family needed help when her mother suffered a debilitating injury, re-

quiring major surgery, hospitalization, and six months of therapy. "Alone," Maria said, "we would not have had the resources" to ensure that her mother "would heal properly and recover to her full potential." Yet, Local 1199 SEIU stepped in immediately to ensure her mother was provided with everything necessary, and its delegate even "called periodically" to follow up.

Angel Dario Cabrera Pereira perceives that such union delegates "give the silenced ones a voice." In a world in which "powerful companies have CEO's and managers who advocate for their own interests alone," unions offer the "basis for substantial equal opportunities for all people in the work place." Public servants such as teachers especially need unions to "speak their truth." Angel is convinced that, "Unionization increases income not just for the union workers, but also for the entire middle class."

As these students move forward to new classes, new colleges, and different lives, we can rest assured that they will acknowledge the value of unions not only in their own lives, but also in American society as a whole.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS TEC 107

March 6, April 3, May 1

### EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETINGS

Feb 20, March 20, April 4 and 17, May 15

### NYSUT REPRESENTATIVE ASSEMBLY

May 3-4, Albany, NY

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 [richardwccft@gmail.com](mailto:richardwccft@gmail.com).

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