



Connect

NEWSLETTER OF THE WESTCHESTER COMMUNITY COLLEGE FEDERATION OF TEACHERS / Nº 16 / DECEMBER 2019

MEMBERSHIP



MATTERS

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A MESSAGE FROM PRESIDENT

JIM WERNER

Last month, I travelled up to Cooperstown, along with my fellow Executive Committee members Rowan Lindley and Raji Karve, to attend and participate in NYSUT's Community College Conference. The theme was "Membership Matters," and that seems an apt note to strike as we come to the end of 2019.

Our members matter, first and foremost, in the lives of our students. You can see this everywhere you look on our campus; they are at the very heart of the work we do, as has been abundantly evident throughout the "Day in the Life" series we've been featuring in this and recent issues of FTConnect. This month's installment, Yvonne Rode's "A Day in the Life of an Academic Librarian," drives the point home forcefully. A "word cloud" of that article's text reveals that "students" is the most frequently used term, appearing no fewer than 15 times (an average of once every two sentences). Our membership cares deeply about our students and strives to support them in myriad ways every day. Beyond classroom and individual instruction, assistance with research and information literacy, counseling and advisement, and academic support, that dedication to student success even extends to financial assistance—see the article about the WCCFT Scholarship, which aims to help them defray the costs of their education while calling to mind the pivotal role unions have played in improving their quality of life. As the union strives to pare down its operational expenses, deserving students are counting on our members more than ever to step up and contribute to the best of their ability. Please help if you can!

Now, as always, we stand ready to do this work—the work that we love—on behalf of our students, as the semester winds down and we look ahead to the spring. That commitment demands that we also stand ready to fight for the working conditions that will enable us to help

students succeed. So membership matters to the union, as well. As I pointed out at the most recent meeting, our membership is the single greatest asset we have: the formidable strength of more than 700 full- and part-time instructional faculty, librarians, counselors, and Academic Support Center coordinators, undiminished and even thriving, despite the Janus decision and its prophesied thinning of our ranks. But impressive numbers alone are not enough. Our members matter most—and make the biggest difference in the working conditions of our faculty and the learning conditions of our students—when they are **engaged** and **active** in the union. I'm deeply

gratified by the positive responses to our newly transparent approach in the ongoing contract negotiations; engagement among our membership has increased exponentially. As bargaining continues, and especially on the days when it seems like progress is hard to find, we'll see (and show) how much membership matters when a united, energized and mobilized union stands ready to demonstrate its steadfast commitment to faculty rights and a work environment that supports student success in real and tangible ways.



WCCFT President Jim Werner talking at NYSUT Community College Conference, November 8-10, 2019. Photo CCC 036 NYSUT.

Finally, let me close by saying that as members of the WCCFT, you matter to me personally; as we come to the end of my first semester as President, I am deeply grateful for all the confidence and support you've given me, for the outstanding dedication and exemplary work of the WCCFT Executive Committee and our Negotiating Team, and for the opportunity to serve colleagues so eminently deserving as yourselves. Each and every one of you matters, in more ways than you might know. I wish you and your loved ones a holiday season filled with good cheer, and I look forward to joining with you once again in our collective efforts come spring.

In solidarity,
Jim

The Harold L. Drimmer Library is open 7 days a week during the Fall and Spring semesters, including hours until 9:30pm Monday-Thursday. Every hour the library is open, there is a librarian (full-time or adjunct) available to assist students and others (as a county institution we are open to the public) with their research needs. Currently, the library has 8 full-time librarians and 4 adjuncts. Several times this semester, I have been asked to justify why the library needs “so many” librarians. What could we possibly be doing all day?

On a typical day, a librarian will be scheduled to spend time on the Reference Desk, teach one or more information literacy sessions on or off-campus, and attend to other duties that keep the library functioning.

At the Reference Desk, librarians provide point-of-need service in person and via phone and instant message. Questions range from simple inquiries about the college and its services to more complex transactions about specific research assignments, the process of conducting research, or proper citation of sources. We also offer help via scheduled appointments (or walk-ins) in our offices where we can spend more time with students one-on-one to make sure they understand what it is they need to do and how to do it. Sometimes students just need to be reassured they are on the right track or need to work out their ideas with someone who is not their teacher. At other times, students may need extensive help in honing their topics and research questions or using the databases.

In Fall 2019, the librarians collectively taught 174 information literacy classes, 45 of which were at off-campus locations. The majority of sessions were for English (42%) and Reading (24%), but they also included everything from Anthropology, Human Services, Corrections, and Psychology to Math and Office Technologies. These classes may entail showing students how to formulate a good research topic, how to search the library databases, catalog and internet to find sources, and how to determine that the sources they find are reliable and useful for their assignment. In addition, we may go over citations in MLA, APA, Chicago or other formats, depending on the discipline. In order to effectively help students find the materials they require, librarians may need to brush up on sociological theories, curate a collection of primary sources in 18th century Caribbean history, or understand stages of cognitive development before the session even begins. In addition, we will consult with the faculty member to make sure we understand clearly what their students are being asked to do for their projects. Most librarians also create online Research Guides for students to return to after the information literacy sessions to reinforce what they learned in their session and find additional resources. We also offer faculty the opportunity to embed us directly into their Blackboard shells to provide help where their students can easily contact us. Knowing they have a “personal” librarian familiar with their course assignments can make students more comfortable asking for help.

In addition to helping individuals with their research needs, librarians are continually reviewing the collections (print, e-resources, and streaming) to ensure we have the materials needed to support the curricular needs of our community. Through faculty recommendations and review of past usage, materials are added (or removed) on a regular basis. Several librarians work directly with SUNY and other vendors to ensure that our library system (ALMA/Primo) and databases are functioning properly. Such duties include uploading patron information from PeopleSoft to the library system so that student records are up to date each semester or ensuring that vendor invoices are paid from the correct budget lines. While it is convenient that no one needs to physically come to the library to conduct research, there is quite a bit of technical work that goes on behind the scenes to keep everything up and running.

Editor's Note:

Our “Day in the Life” series is intended to build solidarity throughout our ranks by sharing information about the day-to-day working lives and challenges of colleagues in the different constituencies that make up WCCFT. Past issues described the work of academic counselors and adjunct instructors. Yvonne Rode’s article now takes us behind the desks and into the offices, stacks, and classrooms where our librarian colleagues do their part to ensure student success.

HISTORY OF THE WCCFT SCHOLARSHIP

WHY WE NEED YOUR HELP NOW



In 2007 the Westchester College Federation of Teachers agreed to give four graduating students at WCC a scholarship founded on the principles of unionism. The scholarships were designed to reflect a belief in the value and contribution of unions to workers' rights, health and safety in the workplace, the struggle for equality of labor and social justice.

Built into the requirements for receiving a scholarship was a substantial essay detailing first-hand and researched experience with a union, research and knowledge of what a union stands for, the purpose and promise of unionism, and union history. We encouraged students to take time to address current labor issues in a positive and constructive way.

Above all, it was an effort on the part of the WCCFT to reward students for focusing on our mission as an organization representing the interests of workers. It was to be unique to our cause, not just another reward for scholastic achievement. Although scholastic achievement was one of the criteria used by the committee for decision making, the voice and written component of the application was prime. There were many other scholarships of a general nature for students to seek.

Over the years, many applications conformed to these requirements. They told of individual experiences of the students, their families, and their cultures. Students from the United States as well as from other countries wrote about organizing efforts and strikes of local workers. They commented on how much unions meant to the welfare of their families; they speculated about the future of unionism. In short, they found a way to relate the labor movement to their personal lives as children of union members and as future workers themselves.

We are now asking for your support to continue this work with our students. Due to WCCFT budget cuts, the scholarship award is greatly reduced (\$6000.00 to \$500.00). By raising additional funds, we can continue to empower more students to apply, to write and research about unionism, and to move forward in their higher educational journeys. Please consider donating by January 15, 2020. Checks can be made out to WCCFT and sent to Robin Graff or the Union Office (TEC32).

***Respectfully submitted by
Anne D'Orazio, Beth Holden and Joanna Peters,
for the WCCFT Scholarship Committee***

**A DAY IN THE
LIFE OF AN
ACADEMIC
LIBRARIAN**

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All full-time librarians work evenings and weekends and teach information literacy sessions on and off-campus. Without the flexibility of payback hours (see CBA section 4.5.a http://www.sunywccft.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/contract_04.pdf), it would be impossible to provide services to our students and faculty at the extension centers or at any campus in the evening or on weekends. According to the Spring 2019 Student Profile, 48% of our students are over the age of 21 and 61% of our degree-seeking students are part-time. These students often are not able to be on campus during the day Monday through Friday. They deserve access to the same services traditional students have, yet the librarians have had to fight each year to ensure that we are able to stay open and serve ALL our students.

BUDGET COMMITTEE:

Treasurer Matt Sokol reports: "We performed our yearly financial review on Thursday, December 5, and will be filing our report to the IRS in January. Once the yearly financial review is complete, we plan to share it with the membership."

ELECTIONS COMMITTEE:

Early in the spring semester, WCCFT will hold an election to select additional delegates to the annual NYSUT Representative Assembly, which sets NYSUT policy on education, labor, social justice, and legislative issues. Four WCCFT members have volunteered to serve on an ad hoc committee to oversee our election: Sheldon Malev, Janet Ranucci, Yvonne Rode, and Maria Vittoria (alternate).

FACULTY DEVELOPMENT FUND:

As part of an ongoing effort to encourage more adjuncts to apply for funds for professional development, the Executive Committee voted on December 5 to allocate Faculty Development Funds to adjuncts twice a year instead of the current once in October. Funds will be allocated once in the spring semester and once in the fall semester. This will mean that adjuncts will not have to wait so long to be reimbursed for the money that they have spent on professional development activities. Details will be sent campus wide.



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)

UPCOMING EVENTS

MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS TEC 107

Feb 5, March 4, April 1, May 6 11am

EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETINGS

Jan 29, Feb 27, March 18, April 23, May 13

NYSUT REPRESENTATIVE ASSEMBLY

May 1-2, 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 richardcwccft@gmail.com.

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