



Connect

NEWSLETTER OF THE WESTCHESTER COMMUNITY COLLEGE FEDERATION OF TEACHERS

Nº 17

FEBRUARY 2020



FOR OUR STEPPING UP STUDENTS

IN THIS ISSUE:

A MESSAGE FROM PRESIDENT JIM WERNER **P2**

ATTENTION: ADJUNCTS IN TRS **P3**

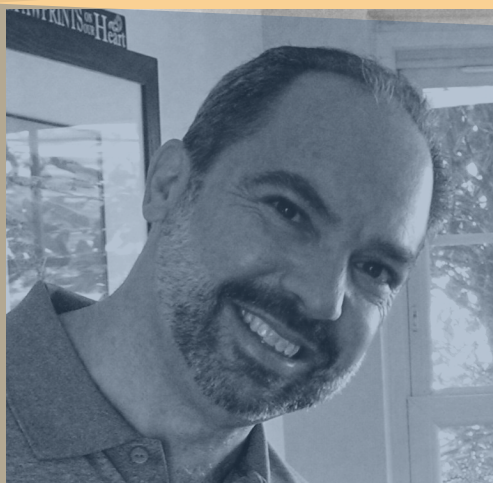
WCCFT NEWS & UPDATES **P3**

2019 WCCFT SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS **P4**

UPCOMING EVENTS **P5**

A MESSAGE FROM PRESIDENT

JIM WERNER



This faculty is deeply committed—as is this union—to providing students what they need to succeed, academically and beyond. There are exciting ideas circulating about how we might improve our ability to do this. But the successful implementation of these ideas hinges on faculty being provided with the resources, support, respect, and fair compensation they need and deserve.

In December the College held an “Advisement Re-design Day,” an opportunity to brainstorm ways to improve our advisement model, attended by personnel from across the campus. A report on the event made suggestions about a “straw design,” with teams (counselors, curriculum chairs, deans, etc.) assigned to each school to provide sustained advisement from initial outreach and onboarding, through the first semester, and on to completion.

Our contract negotiating team found several ideas in this document promising—not only in meeting our students’ needs, but also in addressing some of the bargaining issues that have thus far been challenging, among them proposed changes to counselor schedules and faculty advisement responsibilities. Instead of holding a full negotiation session in January, team members Laura Milhaven, Deirdre Verne, and I met with key administrators to discuss the possibilities, such as faculty receiving credit for office hours when they attend recruitment or advisement events or additional per-diem payments

for curriculum or department chairs to participate in summer events.

From our perspective, this seemed to be a productive, pragmatic, and collegial conversation. We are hopeful that discussions like this will point toward possible resolutions of our differences at the bargaining table when we resume formal negotiations later this month.

But this kind of initiative involves not just careful planning, widespread input, and fairly compensated labor; it also requires financial resources, at a time of declining enrollments. And from what I saw in attending several recent NYSUT events (Higher Ed Lobby Day in Albany, the Community College Luncheon, and a meeting of the Higher Education Policy Council), SUNY’s community colleges are being told yet again to do more with less.

State funding for SUNY community colleges is once again FLAT in Governor Cuomo’s proposed Executive Budget (\$2947 per FTE). Because enrollments are down, this actually amounts to a cut. And this cut continues a decade-long pattern of underfunding SUNY at the state level. New York State currently funds approximately 25% of community college operations (down from 31% ten years ago). That’s abysmally short of the 40% stipulated by education law. The lion’s share of the cost (currently 41%) now falls on the backs of those least able to sustain it: our students. Further tuition increases will only add to that burden.

Meanwhile, tuition at a number of community colleges in SUNY is now higher than the maximum TAP award—creating a so-called “TAP gap.” SUNY’s four-year colleges have had to fund the difference (at a current cost of \$150 million) for their students. The problem has now come to SUNY’s community colleges as five of them have “pierced” the maximum TAP award. So far, it’s unclear whether SUNY’s community colleges will be required to cover this gap.

The Governor’s proposed Executive Budget also removes language from last year’s budget that guar-

>> CONT ON PAGE FIVE

ADJUNCTS IN THE TEACHERS' RETIREMENT SYSTEM!

ATTENTION:

WCCFT has been working for many years to persuade the College to report service to TRS fairly for our teaching adjuncts. Administration is currently working with us to see if the change is feasible. We have recently been told that if the college changes to the "Per Credit Hour" method of reporting service, that might decrease the amount of pension received by anyone who vests. Of course, this possibility is balanced against the much longer time it takes to vest using the current method (in which service credit is reported per actual hour of teaching). WCCFT and Administration are jointly gathering more detailed information from TRS about the actual effect of the change, and we will keep our members informed. It is important that adjunct teaching faculty who belong to TRS stay tuned to their sunywcc email since we may need to ask them individually for information.

WCCFT

NEWS & UPDATES

FACULTY DEVELOPMENT FUND:

Rowan Lindley reports: "In order to encourage more adjunct faculty to use Faculty Development funds, the WCCFT Executive Committee decided to release adjunct FD funds twice each year, once in March and again in October. This will mean that adjuncts will not have to wait so long to be reimbursed. Applications covering FD activities conducted between September 1, 2019, and February 28, 2020, will be accepted starting March 1, 2020, and are due by March 31, 2020. Please refer to the [form posted on our website](#) for details of what is covered and how to apply. (NB: you must be a WCCFT member at the time of the activity.)"

POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE:

Ellen Zendman reports: "As the semester gets underway, our voice must continue to be heard in the political arena. In order that we be heard, WCCFT will continue working toward 100% participation in VOTE-COPE, which enables us to support local and state legislators who share our values.

"We must provide support for those involved in politics who are committed to supporting our effort to graduate more students with the skills and credentials that will enable them to become productive citizens and taxpayers. Community colleges are being recognized nationally as

the front line in the effort to involve more people in higher education. At the local level, it depends on us. We need the funds to tell our story to our fellow voters and our political representatives.

"Our faculty union recognizes that we are living through turbulent times, and we have a message to deliver to elected officials about the critical importance community colleges play in the future of our county, state, and nation. Let's make sure we are able to continue to financially support legislators who have a commitment to our mission. Contributions can be made through payroll deduction or as a direct contribution. Pre-printed enrollment cards are available to fill out in the union office: TEC32."

SCHOLARSHIP COMMITTEE:

Robin Graff reports: "In December, we shared the history of the WCCFT Scholarship and urged faculty to donate in order to supplement the drastically reduced amount (\$500) allocated for scholarships in the current [WCCFT budget](#).

Members' generous donations have raised an additional \$1000, which brings our current total to \$1500 and will allow us to offer three \$500 scholarships. Many thanks to all those who donated. Please check WCC email and [sunywccft.org](#) for information on this year's scholarship application process."

2019 WCCFT SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS: NEW FIGHTERS FOR SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC JUSTICE

BY PATTI SEHULSTER



The Spring 2019 WCCFT scholarship winners were continuing students **Brandon Fernandez** and **Maajeek Flores** and graduating students **Kyle Piloco** and **Abdul Choudary**. Each of them believes strongly that labor unions provide a powerful tool in the fight for social and economic justice.

Brandon Fernandez views union work in such fights as “not something new, but ongoing,” and as an effort that has “brought justice and equality.” His own grandparents were migrant workers who experienced the benefits of union organizing when they won such benefits as “required rest periods, toilets in the fields, clean drinking water, hand-washing facilities, and the banning of discrimination.” Brandon recognizes that while these rights seem practical and necessary for safe food production, they would not have existed without unions.

Maajeek Flores, too, has experienced union benefits in her own family. Her father, a teacher, calls membership in the UFT “the greatest privilege and right he has ever received.” He and Maajeek acknowledge that the union has provided her dad not just “improved pay and pro-

ductivity in schools,” but also a positive influence on the students and on society in general by “helping keep jobs safe and equal” for all, no matter how diverse.

Kyle Piloco has never experienced the effects of a union personally, but he has borne witness to them. He has seen that unions “secure economic justice for workers [that has] a ripple effect on the workers’ families.” His friends’ families faced the uncertainty of mandated transfers and lack of health benefits because of the “whim of large corporations looking to cut costs.” Unions stepped in to ensure protections that ultimately created “a more stress-free home for workers’ families.”

Abdul Choudary has lived without such protections by holding several nonunion jobs. He lost one position because he took a single sick day. He held three jobs that paid below minimum wage. He has never enjoyed a paid holiday or received a bonus. Often, he has wished he were a member of a union that is “so necessary to protect workers from these unfair labor practices.” He thinks union power matters in the fight for the justice that workers deserve.

EDITOR'S NOTE

We are very grateful to Patti Sehulster for her latest article on the WCCFT scholarship program. As a contributing writer, Patti has been a stalwart of our current union newsletter, FTConnect, and of its predecessor publication, WCCFT Union News. As her piece about last year’s winning essays suggests, the WCCFT scholarship uniquely helps advance the educational goals of individual WCC students while also reflecting a belief in the value and contribution of unions to workers’ rights, workplace health and safety, and the struggle for equality and social justice.

A MESSAGE FROM PRESIDENT JIM WERNER

>> CONT FROM PAGE TWO

anteed a "floor" of minimum state aid set at 98% of the previous year's funding. NYSUT is proposing that the Budget permanently include such a "floor" (either equivalent to last year's funding or the highest of the past three years, whichever is greater). NYSUT is also asking for an increase in FTE aid of \$250 per student, to \$3197.

What can you do? Get involved, on any level you feel you could be useful! But at the very least, contribute to VOTE-COPE (Voices of Teachers in Education/Committee on Political Education). Frank Frisenda, President of the Nassau Community College Federation of Teachers, spoke forcefully about this at our February membership meeting. One point especially resounded: much as we might like to consider ourselves "apolitical," we are a public institution, dependent on public dollars to deliver a public good to our students. Your VOTE-COPE dollars can help elect people who share our values, regardless of political party. I urge you to donate TODAY, ei-

ther online at <https://www.nysut.org/resources/special-resources/sites/legislation/vote-cope> or by payroll deduction (contact Political Action Committee Chair Ellen Zendman at ellenzwccft@gmail.com for the form). You can choose to give any amount (\$4 per paycheck suggested). NYSUT uses that money for political action on the state level, but also rebates up to 40% to us for action on the county level.

State disinvestment is making it harder for students to attend SUNY colleges and harder for dedicated professionals like ourselves to serve our students better. We urgently need our elected officials to prioritize public spending on higher education, and we need our College administration to provide us with the fair compensation and support necessary for us to give our students the education and the opportunities they deserve.

In solidarity,
Jim

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

UPCOMING EVENTS

MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS TEC 107

March 4, April 1, May 6 11am

EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETINGS

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.

Editor: Richard A. Courage

Art & Web Editor: Claudia Jacques de Moraes Cardoso

Contributing Writers: Jim Werner, Patti Sehulster

Proofreading: Rowan Lindley

2019-2020

WCCFT OFFICERS

President:

Jim Werner

jjmwwccft@gmail.com
914-606-6840 SCI-301

Vice-President:

Deirdre Verne

deirdrevwccft@gmail.com
914-400-3310 GTW-438

Secretary:

Rowan Lindley

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

Treasurer:

Matt Sokol

mattswccft@gmail.com
914-606-7914 TEC-30

EXECUTIVE BOARD

Joyce Cassidy

joycecwccft@gmail.com
914-606-7804 TEC-139

Richard Courage

richardcwccft@gmail.com
914-606-6106 SCI-362

Robin Graff

robingwccft@gmail.com
914-606-7756 SCI-290

Raji Karve

rajikwccft@gmail.com
914-345-8856 TEC-32

Frank Maddalena

frankmwccft@gmail.com
914-606-6794 GTW-233B

Craig Padawer

craigpwccft@gmail.com
914-924-9446 HAAB-202/203

Gwen Roundtree Evans

gwenrewccft@gmail.com
914-606-6581 STC-209

Ellen Zendman

ellenzwccft@gmail.com
914-606-6733 STC-206

WWW.SUNYWCCFT.ORG



WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/WCCFT

