



Connect

NEWSLETTER OF THE WESTCHESTER COMMUNITY COLLEGE FEDERATION OF TEACHERS / Nº 18 / OCTOBER 2020



THE POWER OF UNION: NOW MORE THAN EVER

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A MESSAGE FROM PRESIDENT

JIM WERNER



Now, as we move closer to the possibility of a broader campus re-opening, health and safety are certainly going to be uppermost in our minds—and your Union will be involved in this process. The WCCFT Executive Committee voted to authorize the creation of a “Special Committee on Pandemic Recovery and Campus Re-entry,” charged with reviewing the College’s Pandemic Recovery Plan, identifying any areas in need of revision or more detail, and advising the WCCFT leadership on matters related to campus re-opening health and safety during the pandemic. Faculty members with relevant expertise (in science/health sciences, nursing, engineering, etc.) are urged to participate.

Welcome back, one and all, to a semester like no other. I hope you and your family and friends are all safe, healthy, and in (relatively) good spirits during these days of turbulence and change. Now more than ever, with so much uncertainty and anxiety, the real value of having a union becomes crystal-clear.

First, I am pleased to announce that the Board of Trustees approved the 1% across-the-board salary increases for 2019-20 (retroactive) and an additional 1% for 2020-21, as a partial settlement of our current contract negotiations. (This is NOT a conclusion to our current round of bargaining; negotiations continue, and all items-- including additional salary increases, retro and going forward--remain on the table!) We now await County approval of this agreement, which promises to put money in the pockets of our faculty just when many of us need it most. It’s also thanks to the hard work of your Union (with lots of help from our NYSUT Labor Relations Specialist Amanda Velazquez) that we established the Remote Teaching MOA, providing a framework for delivery of remote instruction this semester. Though this modality is by no means ideal, the MOA put our membership and the College in a much better place than many other institutions. In creating and proposing this MOA, we protected faculty rights, enabled proactive planning, and ensured that as many faculty as possible got the training, technology, and support they need to teach online effectively.

We also see the value and power of unions on a State level. As you know, last year the Director of the NYS Budget Office was authorized to make revisions to the 2020-21 Budget (which already had flat funding levels for SUNY) throughout the year. The State withheld 20% of the June base aid payment for SUNY’s colleges (including WCC), and it’s likely that the payment scheduled for September will be similarly cut. NYSUT (our State affiliate) has pushed back hard, with a lawsuit arguing that giving the Budget Director power to make such cuts is unconstitutional.

WCCFT members have been stepping up and taking a more active role in this State-wide struggle as well. Last month, members of WCCFT met via Zoom with State senators and assemblypersons, County legislators and their staff, urging them to make sure we receive 100% of the funding we have coming, and to support bills in Albany proposing new streams of revenue for public higher education. And I’m proud to announce that six WCCFT members volunteered to serve on NYSUT committees for the next three years—leading to a record level of community college representation.

We’ve all heard the truism that we are living in “unprecedented times” by now—probably too often. But what does deserve re-statement is how absolutely essential a union is in times of uncertainty and

FACULTY DEVELOPMENT FUND:

Applications are currently being accepted for reimbursement of professional development expenses by adjunct faculty. Faculty development activities must have been completed between September 1, 2019, and August 31, 2020.

Adjunct faculty must have completed a minimum of three (3) years with Westchester Community College, with at least one teaching/counseling/librarian/Academic Support Center assignment per academic year, and have been employed at least one semester during the academic year for which this application is being made. (It need not be the semester in which the activity was completed).

Verification of these criteria must be obtained by the appropriate School Dean in order for the application to be considered. The part-time faculty colleague must have been a member of WCCFT at the time of the activity.

The application form for adjunct faculty and further information are available at: http://www.sunywccft.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/WCCFT_ADJ_Development_Fund_Application_2020.pdf

Submission deadline for adjunct faculty development is October 31, 2020. (The deadline for full-timers has passed.) Maximum reimbursement is \$750.

Please direct questions to WCCFT Secretary Rowan Lindley at rowanlwccft@gmail.com.

POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE:

"Today, making our voices heard in the political arena is critical," says Political Action Committee chair Ellen Zendman. "One way we can do that is by contributing to Vote-Cope, NYSUT's non-partisan political action and fund-raising arm."

Through Vote-Cope, WCCFT members can voluntarily contribute funds to support candidates for public office who back the goals of our local union and, more generally, support public education, good jobs at decent wages, affordable and accessible health care for everyone, and an end to discrimination, hatred and bigotry.

Enrollment in Vote-Cope has become quick and easy since an online payroll deduction form has replaced the printed cards previously used. To authorize the WCC payroll office to deduct any amount you choose, please go to <http://wcc.votecope.org>, complete and submit the form.

SCHOLARSHIP COMMITTEE:

Robin Graff reports that "Thanks to generous donations from WCCFT members, we were able to award three \$500 scholarships to deserving students in the spring semester. As a reminder, two of these scholarships are given in memory of Professors Richard Rosell and Rafael Rodriguez.

The scholarship recipients were:

Monica Manghisi--Liberal Arts: Math and Science
Dana Solitaire--Computer Science
Megumi Imaizumi--Liberal Arts: Math and Science

These students submitted excellent essays on the value of unions in today's workplace. They are all currently enrolled at WCC and are well on their way to degree completion with impressive GPAs.

A special thank you to the following members of the Committee who served as readers and were instrumental in choosing the recipients: Ellen Zendman, Patricia Sehlster, Mary Lou Sgro, Rosemary Diaz, Rebecca Steere, and Yvonne Rhode.

Robin adds that "There will be a fundraising campaign again this year to support the WCCFT Scholarship Fund. We do hope you are able to contribute and once again, a big "THANK YOU!" to all our donors."

SICK LEAVE BANK:

Rowan Lindley reports that the enrollment period for the WCCFT sick leave bank is open for full-time faculty until October 31.

For more information, write to rowanlwccft@gmail.com

MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT

IN PARTIAL SETTLEMENT OF CURRENT CONTRACT NEGOTIATION

The following MOA was ratified at the September 9 membership meeting and subsequently approved by the Board of Trustees.

MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT BY AND BETWEEN THE COUNTY OF WESTCHESTER, WESTCHESTER COMMUNITY COLLEGE, AND THE WESTCHESTER COMMUNITY COLLEGE FEDERATION OF TEACHERS

WHEREAS, the County of Westchester ("County"), Westchester Community College ("College") (hereinafter collectively referred to as "Employer") and the Westchester Community College Federation of Teachers ("Union") are parties to a collective bargaining agreement ("CBA") which expired on August 31, 2019;

WHEREAS, the Employer and Union have engaged in collective bargaining for a successor agreement and have reached a tentative agreement, subject to ratification by the Union membership and approval of the terms hereof by the College Board of Trustees and County Board of Legislators; and

NOW THEREFORE, in partial settlement of the successor agreement effective September 1, 2019, the Parties agree as follows:

1. Compensation (Section Five):

- a. Effective September 1, 2019, all salary schedules (including longevity) shall be increased by 1%.
 - i. Eligibility for retroactive compensation is limited to:
 1. Unit members on payroll effective at the date of ratification by the Union membership.
 - a. With respect to adjuncts, the phrase "on payroll" above shall be interpreted as those who worked for the Employer during the term of this Agreement.
 2. Unit members who retired during the term of this Agreement.
 - a. For purposes of this provision "retired" covers unit members who would have been eligible to receive retirement benefit payments from the NYS Teacher Retirement System ("NYSTRS") on the day after s/he left service from the college. Notwithstanding this definition, retroactivity shall not be limited to individuals enrolled in NYSTRS.
 - b. Effective September 1, 2020, all salary schedules (including longevity) shall be increased by an additional 1%. To the extent delays in implementation require retroactive payments, eligibility for such payments shall be governed by the same terms as section (1)(a)(i) above.
2. Because the parties wish to implement their agreement with respect to compensation as soon as possible pursuant to the provisions of this Memorandum of Agreement, they acknowledge their obligation and reserve their right to

continue negotiating all new or modified terms and conditions of employment previously proposed during the current negotiations, to be effective on or after September 1, 2019.

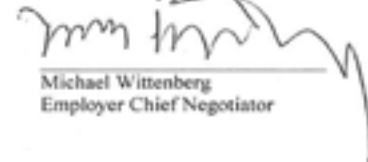
3. This Agreement shall be construed as if the parties jointly prepared it, and any uncertainty or ambiguity shall not be interpreted against one party and in favor of the other. Accordingly, it is agreed that no rule of construction shall apply against any party or in favor of any party.

Agreed this 27th day of August 2020.

For the Union


James Werner
Union President

For the Employer


Michael Wittenberg
Employer Chief Negotiator

A MESSAGE FROM PRESIDENT JIM WERNER

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change. Because we have a union, we were able to get out in front of the COVID-19 pandemic, protecting the rights of our faculty so they could continue to provide high quality instruction for our students. Because we have a union, we negotiated a hard-earned salary increase that couldn't come at a better time. Because we have a union, last year we were able to share guidelines on adjunct/overload course assignments and provide assistance for adjuncts in applying for unemployment when necessary.

But our union is only as strong as it is representative of our faculty—now more than ever, we need to renew our efforts to build our ranks. Last year I

kicked off our first membership meeting by asking for “each one to reach one,” for each member to bring JUST ONE other person into the Union. I’m issuing that call to arms once again, with a particular focus on bringing more of our adjunct colleagues into the Union. If you see as clearly as I do the value and power of having a union, please find a part-time colleague who is not yet a member—point them to the Membership tab at sunywccft.org, and let them hear how important it is for them to join—now more than ever!

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](mailto:rowanlwccft@gmail.com)

UPCOMING EVENTS

MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS ZOOM

October 7, November 4, December
11am-12:45pm

EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETINGS

October 21, November 18, December 3

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.

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2020-2021

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