



# Connect

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NEWSLETTER OF THE WESTCHESTER COMMUNITY COLLEGE FEDERATION OF TEACHERS / Nº 20 / FEBRUARY 2021



# IT'S YOUR UNION. GET INTO IT!

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# A MESSAGE FROM WCCFT PRESIDENT

**JIM WERNER**



*"It was working men and women who made the 20th century the American century. It was the labor movement that helped secure so much of what we take for granted today. The 40-hour work week, the minimum wage, family leave, health insurance, Social Security, Medicare, retirement plans. The cornerstones of the middle-class security all bear the union label."*

President Barack Obama.

Unions have a long and distinguished history of taking on big issues and making everyday life better for Americans and for people around the globe. Still, it's misleading to think of them as merely "historical"—or even as "them."

Unions are living, breathing, LOCAL entities. They are US. They are YOU. Unions are comprised of, and led by, ordinary people

just like you (and me—until fairly recently, I would never have considered myself material for union leadership!). Union leaders, in the main, are simply people who just wanted to help make things better for themselves and their colleagues and decided to step up to the challenge.

## WHAT ABOUT YOU? (YES, YOU!)

There is certainly no shortage of pressing issues on the minds of our members—COVID vaccines and testing, prospects for a safe campus re-entry and effective delivery of services to our students, federal stimulus money and state aid, not to mention social justice issues, fair labor practices, and decent working conditions—and, oh yes, contract negotiations.

Almost two years ago, the current officers and Executive Committee of the WCCFT stepped up. Since then (and much longer for several of them), they have been hard at work addressing these issues and others on behalf of our membership. I can't begin to tell you how proud I am of the terrific work they've done since their election in 2019, and how grateful I am for the way they've consistently advocated for our best interests as faculty.

But, as I announced at the membership meeting on February 3, our current officers, executive committee members, and NYSUT RA delegates are coming to the end of their two-year terms at the close of this semester, which means we will be holding an election. I know that some of them are planning to step down, making room for other members to become WCCFT leaders and bring fresh ideas and broader skill sets.

**THIS IS AN IMPORTANT OPPORTUNITY FOR YOU TO  
BECOME MORE INVOLVED AND ACTIVE IN YOUR UNION!**

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# A MESSAGE FROM PRESIDENT JIM WERNER

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We have four officer positions (President, Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer), plus eight at-large E-board member positions. All WCCFT members—full-time or part-time, teaching or non-teaching—are entitled to run for a position, either as an officer or an at-large member of the E-board. As many as two officer positions (Secretary and Treasurer) are slated to become available, as well as one at-large position!

## NOT FEELING READY FOR E-BOARD MEMBERSHIP OR OFFICE JUST YET?

Another way to be more active and involved in union issues is to become a delegate to the annual Representative Assembly (RA) of the New York State United Teachers (NYSUT, our state affiliate union). The RA is NYSUT's highest policy-making body, comprised of delegates elected from its locals. Those delegates discuss, debate, and vote on proposed amendments to NYSUT's Constitutional and Bylaws and many other business items.

RA delegates are critically important as the voice of local NYSUT members. That said, the commitment is a relatively light one in terms of expectations: delegates simply attend the RA on April 30-May 1, participate in the

discussions if they wish, and vote on motions made in session. We are entitled to as many as nine (9) delegates to the RA, but we currently have two members elected last year who are serving the second year of their term. So we have openings for seven delegates and one alternate. I hope I'll see you as one of them! (The deadline for nominations is Monday March 1.)

There are plenty of other ways to get more involved in your union, as well. You can join union committees—like the Adjunct, Constitution, Faculty Development, Grievance, Solidarity, or Health and Safety Committees. You can help get others to join our union, especially adjuncts: we want to—and need to—hear adjunct voices bringing our attention to adjunct issues. Or just let me know you'd like to help out.

As President Obama has said, unions helped make the 20th Century "the American century." The 21st century is well under way, with new problems and issues, global and local, that need our attention—that need you. Now's your chance to pitch in!

*In solidarity,*

**Jim**



## ADJUNCT COMMITTEE:

Committee chair Raji Karve reports: "Many of our adjuncts have lost their course assignments and have been contemplating or are in the process of filing for unemployment insurance benefits. Scarcity of classes means more pressure on our adjunct faculty through bumping, so we are mostly busy dealing with those issues."

"Like everyone else, COVID19 vaccines are very much on our minds. Some adjuncts have been successful in their quest while others are still longingly looking for an available appointment. The pandemic keeps us from getting together in person, and many people seem to have grown weary of Zoom overload."

"Through the Constitution Committee, we are trying to improve the status and the role of the union majority, who happen to be adjunct faculty inching forward toward equality."

## FACULTY DEVELOPMENT FUND:

Committee chair Rowan Lindley reports: "The WCCFT provides faculty development funds for professional activities conducted during each academic year. Please refer to the appropriate form posted on our website for details of what is covered and how to apply. Applications for the period September 1, 2020, to August 31, 2021, will be accepted in September 2021 from full-time faculty and in March and October from part-time colleagues."

**Adjunct faculty** development application form:

[http://www.sunywccft.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/WCCFT\\_ADJ\\_Development\\_Fund\\_Application\\_2021.pdf](http://www.sunywccft.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/WCCFT_ADJ_Development_Fund_Application_2021.pdf)

**Full-time faculty** development application form:

[http://www.sunywccft.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/WCCFT\\_FT\\_Development\\_Fund\\_Application\\_2021.pdf](http://www.sunywccft.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/WCCFT_FT_Development_Fund_Application_2021.pdf)

**"FACULTY MUST BE UNION MEMBERS AT THE TIME OF THE ACTIVITY FOR WHICH FUNDS ARE REQUESTED."**

## POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE:

Committee chair Ellen Zendman wishes everyone a "Happy Spring Semester!"

"As we move forward during these unprecedented times, we remain focused on staying strong and continuing to count our blessings. As we face the changes going on around us, it is important to continue to support and commit to our Vote-Cope, the nonpartisan political fundraising arm of NYSUT, which allows our voices to be heard in the political arena as we continue to navigate these uniquely challenging times."

"Your support for Vote-Cope through voluntary donations is not only appreciated, but necessary. Your contribution enables us to support local and state legislators who are pro-education and pro-labor and who have a commitment to our campus. If you have not done so already, please consider contributing. You can authorize the Westchester Community College's payroll office to deduct any amount you specify from each of your regular paychecks (or from one paycheck as directed on a specific date) by completing this form: <http://wcc.votecope.org>. This electronic form has replaced the hard-copy payroll deduction card previously used."

"If you have any questions, please contact me at [ellenzwccft@gmail.com](mailto:ellenzwccft@gmail.com). Stay well. Stay Safe."

## SCHOLARSHIP COMMITTEE:

Committee chair Robin Graff expresses "Gratitude to the WCCFT E-board for approving a \$1500 budget line for this year's scholarship awards. We have decided to suspend fundraising for this year and award three scholarships again in the amount of \$500 each. An announcement will be sent to eligible students by March 1 with the link to apply. I will once again be asking for volunteers from the Scholarship Committee to read applications and choose recipients. If anyone has questions, please reach out to me directly at [robingwccft@gmail.com](mailto:robingwccft@gmail.com)."



# 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

### GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS

March 3, April 7, May 5  
11am–12:50pm via Zoom

### NYSUT REPRESENTATIVE ASSEMBLY

April 30–May 1

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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