



# Connect

NEWSLETTER OF THE WESTCHESTER COMMUNITY COLLEGE FEDERATION OF TEACHERS / Nº 21 / APRIL 2021



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# A MESSAGE FROM WCCFT PRESIDENT

**JIM WERNER**



*“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has.”*

MARGARET MEADE

The only thing better than “a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens”—I would argue—is a bigger group!

Last issue I urged everyone to get “into” your union—to get more involved. I was delighted to see a full cadre of delegates nominated to the NYSUT Representative Assembly, including some brand new faces! The following dedicated union members will be joining me, along with Richard Courage and Claudia Jacques de Moraes Cardoso (serving the second year of their current term) at NYSUT’s annual policy meeting: Carole Browne, Linda Burns, David Fritz, Raji Karve, Kimberly Mallory, and John Milmore. Kudos to them for stepping up (in some cases, keeping up) their active WCCFT participation!

As I also mentioned last issue, there are all sorts of ways to contribute your efforts to the benefit of all your colleagues here on campus (virtual or not). In our union, that could mean running for an elected office or a seat on our Executive Committee, serving on one of our other union committees, or just spreading the word about how union membership makes the working conditions at WCC better for all. But there are plenty of other opportunities to change our world at the college, as we fulfill our prime directive of providing excellent instruction and services to our students.

Among the most notable of these is our major shared governance body, the Faculty Senate, a critically important forum for the free articulation of faculty opinion and the main channel for us to make academic policy recommendations. With the landscape of higher education transforming all around us, there has never been a more pressing need for the energy, expertise, and insight that

you can bring. If you have at least one full year of service at the college already completed, you are eligible to run for a Senate seat if one is coming available in your department—I encourage you to do so!

That need for your intelligent, informed, and energized contribution extends beyond our college to the state level. I’ve alerted you to the proposed cuts to public higher education funding under the Governor’s Executive Budget, and the Budget Director’s withholding of our base aid, just as we’re struggling with a 14% decline in enrollments due to COVID. Recently I asked you to contact your representatives in the NYS Senate and Assembly to bolster their support for SUNY’s community colleges. Speak out on legislative and budgetary issues like these—it really does make a difference!

You can also support the election of representatives who know the value of public higher education and are going to fight for working people. One key way you can do that is to contribute to VOTE-COPE, NYSUT’s non-partisan political action fund, which supports the campaigns of NYSUT-endorsed candidates who are pro-public education and pro-labor. (We all saw what a difference that can make when George Latimer became Westchester County Executive—and approved our contract within days.) Contact our Political Action Chair Ellen Zendman to find out more ([ellen.zendman@sunywcc.edu](mailto:ellen.zendman@sunywcc.edu))!

Finally, we need people to step up in taking on the host of social justice causes that call for our attention and active engagement. From the incidents prompting the Black Lives Matter movement to the alarming recent explosion of attacks on Asian Americans (including the

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# A MESSAGE FROM PRESIDENT JIM WERNER

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murders of six Asian American women in Atlanta), we've seen cases of racial hatred and discrimination spiking in recent years. We've also seen episodes indicating that sexism, misogyny, and xenophobia continue to fester. These attitudes constitute a profound threat to the well-being of all—not only our students and colleagues, but also our neighbors and people across the nation. We simply can't stand by idly or remain silent; pick a cause and get involved!

In a recent Common Read book titled *My Beloved World*, Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor wrote, "Our humanity makes us each a part of something greater than ourselves." While we all need to take special care of ourselves and our loved ones these days, let's not forget the opportunities—and, I would say, the obligation—that we have to make things better for everyone else, too.

*In solidarity,*  
**Jim**

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## WCCFT NEWS & UPDATES

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### CONSTITUTION COMMITTEE:

Committee chair Joyce Cassidy reports: "The Constitution Committee continues to meet with interested members of the WCCFT, the Executive Committee, and Amanda Velazquez from NYSUT to review multiple items in the WCCFT Constitution, including membership, structure, and elections, including election of the Negotiating Team.

Notable topics of discussion include membership in good standing, retirees, and restructuring of the Executive Committee to have greater representation of adjunct faculty. As these are not mutually exclusive matters, we continue to examine these areas.

Our next meeting is scheduled for Friday, April 9.

### POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE:

Committee chair Ellen Zendman reminds members that "YOUR contribution makes all the difference! Once again, we are asking you to contribute to Vote-Cope, NYSUT's nonpartisan political action fund, which is dependent upon your voluntary donations. Funding this initiative supports pro-labor and pro-public education candidates and helps our voices be heard at the county and state level. Please consider participation."

"To contribute, please go to <http://wcc.votecope.org/>, complete and submit the form. (In the past, we used a hard copy payroll deduction card; however, there is now

a convenient online version.) If you have any questions, please let me know. Stay well. Stay Safe."

### SPECIAL ELECTIONS COMMITTEE:

The two-year terms of all WCCFT officers, E-board members, and Sick Bank Trustees expire at the end of the current academic year. In accordance with the WCCFT Constitution, a special three-person Election Committee was formed at the February 3 membership meeting. Its main function is to ensure that elections are administered in accordance with all published rules and timetables. The committee members are Mary Lou Sgro (chair), Laura Milhaven, and Christine Timm. Nominations for officers, E-board members, and trustees were invited at the March 3 meeting and subsequently announced to all members via email.

The nomination period ended on March 31. Election Committee chair Mary Lou Sgro and WCCFT President Jim Werner received all nominations in writing via email. The names of candidates were announced at the April 7 membership meeting, and candidates were given an opportunity to address the membership about their qualifications and their reasons for seeking union office. We reprint their candidate statements below.

The nomination process yielded one candidate for each union leadership position, but no position was contested. Consequently, this eliminated the necessity of balloting, and the Special Election Committee has concluded its work.

# 2021 ELECTION

## CANDIDATE STATEMENTS

**“The Elections Committee is pleased to present the following slate of candidates for the 2021-23 E-board positions. The nominations are uncontested and we thank everyone who volunteered to participate in the important work of our union to advocate for fair and equal benefits for all faculty, full and part time.”**

Mary Lou Sgro, Election Committee Chair

### OFFICERS 4 POSITIONS, 4 CANDIDATES

#### **PRESIDENT: JIM WERNER**

I feel both proud and privileged to have served the members of the WCCFT as union President for the past two years, during what can only be called extraordinary times. In that period, we have successfully negotiated two Memos of Agreement on Remote Teaching that protected faculty jobs, and a Memo of Understanding on Mandatory COVID Testing to ensure the safety of our workplace. We also negotiated a partial settlement raise for faculty at a time when many institutions are losing faculty to layoffs and furloughs. We’ve stood with chairs and counselors on working conditions issues, resolved multiple grievances, and provided information sessions on the priority list and unemployment benefits.

If I’m fortunate enough to win another term, I will continue to fight for the rights, fair compensation, and working conditions of all our members—full-time and adjunct, teaching and non-teaching—and to serve their interests as best I can.

#### **VICE-PRESIDENT: DEIRDRE VERNE**

I cannot think of a more important responsibility than representing my colleagues in our collective effort to improve work conditions at WCC. I have learned so much

in my role as Vice President and Grievance Chair and I hope to continue contributing to the important work we have accomplished over the past two years. In addition to regular salary increases, the officers have worked hard to ensure our members’ safety during these unprecedented times.

As a former Department Chair and Curriculum Chair, I am also very familiar with the pressure currently being placed on departments and faculty, both full time and adjunct, as we continue to be asked to do more with less. Working with Professor Jim Werner, the negotiating team and the E-board, I will continue to seek solutions that benefit all members of the bargaining unit.

#### **TREASURER: DORIS WARMFLASH**

I started teaching at WCC in 2001. I have represented the Accounting Department in the Faculty Senate since then and I have served as the Treasurer since 2005. As part of the Senate Executive Committee, we meet regularly with the President’s Communication Council. I have chaired the faculty personnel policies and served on the shared governance committees. I have chaired Middle States committees and I am the curriculum chair of the Accounting Department and serve now as acting department chair while the chair is on sabbatical.

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I have decided to stop being Senate treasurer so that I could serve as treasurer of the union. I believe my background and my professional training will be a great asset that I can bring to our union. The financial stability and proper reporting of union budgets is a priority for me. I will do my best to keep our union strong.

### SECRETARY: JENNIFER GURAHIAN

I began teaching at WCC in 1999. I taught Anthropology, Sociology and Marriage and Family. I was nervous. I will always remember the words of Professor John Woods:

“Teach to your strength.” I still repeat those words to myself, regularly.

My strength for the WCC union is my bred-in-my-bones love of teaching and my commitment to equity. As a single mom, I received help from many of the same Westchester County social service programs that serve (or don't serve) our students and their families. I know that the stress of poverty does not facilitate either teaching, or learning. I would respectfully request to be a part of the work of the WCCFT to facilitate a better teaching and learning environment.

## EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBERS AT LARGE 8 POSITIONS, 8 CANDIDATES

### JOYCE CASSIDY

Recently, I celebrated thirty years of service at WCC. I began as a Senior Tutor in the ASC and progressed to faculty roles ranging from Senior Adjunct to Professor of Mathematics. Within that time, I have been fortunate to serve as Department Chair, Assistant Chair, Adjunct Coordinator and Off-Campus Liaison.

My twelve years of experience with the WCCFT included work on faculty development, negotiations, MOUs, grievance training, budget/treasury, and more recently, the Constitution Committee.

The WCCFT has been responsible for many wonderful gains for faculty. As a collective, we have an opportunity and an obligation to continue that pursuit for all members including part- and full-time, teaching and non-teaching faculty. While working together, and with your vote, my goal is to use my strong commitment to the betterment of WCC and the breadth of my experience to help faculty define and achieve goals towards an increasingly desirable workplace for all.

### RICHARD A. COURAGE

I have served on the Executive Committee under three different union presidents. In 2016, I was invited to become Communications Director. In that role, I redesigned and continue to manage our union website. I launched a newsletter, FTConnect, and have edited twenty-one issues to date. I also maintain the WCCFT Facebook page.

As part of union leadership, I am acutely aware of how large and diverse our membership is. Some of us are brand-new faculty; some have been here for decades; others are in-between. We are:

- fulltime teaching faculty
- part-time teaching faculty
- non-teaching faculty
- Continuing Education faculty

Each segment of our membership has different (sometimes very different) working conditions, compensation and benefits, relationships with professional peers and the college as a whole. The challenge of WCCFT leadership is to understand the full range of these differences and to fully and equitably represent all our constituencies and their diverse needs.

### ERIC DE SENA

I am a Classical Archaeologist who has been teaching History and Art History at WCC and other colleges in the region since 2018. I spent the better part of my adult life in Europe, associated with American colleges and institutes. In addition to teaching, I served as Department Chairman at John Cabot University in Rome, Italy, and as Director of the American Research Center in Sofia, Bulgaria.

I am currently a member of WCC's ASPEN Strategic Planning Committee. As adjunct-at-large member of the WCCFT E-board, I will serve the interests and concerns

of adjunct professors at WCC with an open mind and a strong voice.

### ROBIN GRAFF

For the past 30 years, Westchester Community College has been my second home. I have worked as an adjunct, as a staff member, and for the past 15 years I have been a full-time member of the Counseling family. I am currently a member of the E-board and coordinate the WCCFT Scholarship. If re-elected, I am committed to addressing and resolving the concerns of the membership alongside my fellow E-board members.

### CRAIG PADAWER

As a member of the WCCFT E-board, I have concentrated my efforts over the past two years on continuing to negotiate reasonable job descriptions for faculty positions and fair release time allocations for work being performed, including summer pay where applicable. Progress has been made, but the pandemic and the slow pace at which the administration moves have left us in a situation where work remains to be completed.

I also chair the Health and Safety Committee. Prior to the pandemic, I began meeting with faculty members who were experiencing health-related issues that they attributed to conditions in various campus buildings. Unfortunately, once COVID hit, this investigation had to be put on hold. The committee's focus shifted to the question of how faculty members might safely return to teaching on campus in the wake of the pandemic.

I look forward to the opportunity to complete work in these vital areas.

### GWEN ROUNDTREE EVANS

I have worked in the field of higher education for over forty years. I am a Full Professor and Director of the Educational Opportunity Program, and I have served as a member of the counseling and teaching faculty for almost thirty years. I am also a member of the following entities: Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee, Black History Month Committee, Faculty Personnel and Policies Committee, the Central Committee, and Co-Convener of ASPEN.

I have also been a member of the WCCFT Executive Board for several years. I originally helped to establish

the Adjunct Committee and the WCCFT recognition of adjuncts during Adjunct Month. As a counselor and mentor, I am a staunch advocate for the equitable treatment of faculty and students. I believe that unions give "voice" to their constituents and a sense of agency. I would be honored to continue serving on the WCCFT Executive Board.

### JOE SGAMMATO

I would guess the majority of you do not know me. I came to WCC as an adjunct in the English Department in 2008. Six years ago I began dividing my teaching hours between two departments, English and Film. In addition to this, I am now in my fifth year as an instructor at the Collegium for Lifelong Learning, my fourth year as faculty advisor to The Viking News, my third as a member of a Senate committee devoted to adjunct issues, and my first as an alternate adjunct senator, a new position.

Adjunct issues constitute an important focal point of my interest and energy. We are all deeply indebted to adjuncts, but severely restricted in how we can repay that debt. Finding ways is a task I accept. It is why my name is before you: as a candidate for the position of adjunct representative on the union E-board.

### ELLEN ZENDMAN

We are living in unprecedented times and now more than ever our voices need to continue to be heard. As challenges continue, I hope I will have the continued opportunity to be part of the WCCFT E-board team--a team that represents our committed, dedicated and hardworking faculty members.

I am one of the senior members of the Academic Counseling Department here at WCC, and I have worn many hats at the College. I hope that my knowledge and insight will benefit all of our union members. If re-elected, I will continue to work on positive change that already exists--to listen, learn, be responsive and be a voice representing each of our needs so together we preserve and protect what has already been accomplished.

I am proud to be a member of the current E-board and part of a team that has a strong and transparent voice embedded in shared goals and hope for the future.

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### SICK BANK TRUSTEE 3 POSITIONS, 3 CANDIDATES

#### JANET RANUCCI

I've been at the college for 30 years and have served as a Sick Bank Trustee for the past two years. I'm happy to continue serving in this capacity.

#### SEAN SIMPSON

Hello fellow union members. I am seeking the role of Sick Bank Trustee. I have been with the college since 2002 and a member of the Sick Bank the entire time. I hope to serve the union in this new role, and I wish the best to all the candidates running for positions with the WCCFT.

#### SHEELA WHELAN

I have been a Sick Bank Trustee for the last 10 years and I am happy to serve for another 2 year term. I think having a Sick Bank is a valuable benefit, and I encourage all fulltime faculty to join and contribute to it.

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### WCCFT DELEGATES TO NYSUT REPRESENTATIVE ASSEMBLY

CAROLE BROWNE

LINDA BURNS

RICHARD COURAGE

DAVID FRITZ

CLAUDIA JACQUES DE MORAES CARDOSO

RAJI KARVE

KIMBERLY MALLORY

JOHN MILMORE

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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](mailto:richardcwccft@gmail.com).

## WHAT MIGHT "PROPOSITION 22" MEAN BEYOND CALIFORNIA?

What could prompt Uber, Lyft, Door Dash, Instacart, and Postmate, all app-based services, to combine forces to spend a record-setting \$225 million to help secure a win for California's "Proposition 22"? The idea of record-setting profits—a combined \$13 billion dollars so far—could. But as they so often do, those increases will come not for the employees, but only for the companies' CEOs, stock-holders, and owners.

Employees lose a lot; they are, in fact, no longer employees, but "independent contractors." As such, they can no longer collect unemployment or have health benefits, wage protections, sick leave, workers' compensation, the right to organize, or many other benefits to which employees are entitled by federal law, but contract workers are not. As such, these workers and not the companies, also become responsible for filing tax and Social Security forms, etc.

### WHY SHOULD WE CARE ABOUT A CALIFORNIA LAW?

It can't affect us, right? It can indeed affect us, for it sets a precedent: a legally sanctioned way to avoid federal or state minimum wage laws, to treat workers unfairly, to discriminate unchecked, and to relegate workers to the status of not employees (W2 workers) but independent contractors (1099 workers) just ripe for exploitation.

The bill passed in November; already many other Behemoths, including companies such as Amazon, plan to adopt a similar business model, and large grocery store chains have already cancelled their delivery service providers to move to the use of Door Dash or Instacart. Could colleges and universities, especially those currently cash-strapped because of the changes wrought by the pandemic, have similar plans?

Enacting such plans has contended for years with one major obstacle: IRS rules about the differences between 1099 workers and W2 workers. But since 2004, those rules have come under scrutiny and court case attacks. In cases involving college adjuncts and professors, the decisions have gone 50-50; sometimes the court ruled the adjunct or professor an independent contractor and sometimes an employee.

With the passage of "Proposition 22," however, new ways to thwart the standard, so-called IRS "ABC Test," have surfaced. "Proposition 22" has based much of its foundation on the fact that such companies are all app-based/online only and on their classification not as transportation industries but as delivery services. Could colleges and universities follow similar patterns by labeling adjuncts and lecturers—and maybe even full professors—of online classes "education delivery services"? Would such a change offer any advantages for the "independent contract worker"?

Yes, independent contractors can deduct certain portions of certain expenses—books, paper, copies, etc. for adjuncts, for example – but, they cannot collectively bargain, cannot have senior-



## WHAT MIGHT "PROPOSITION 22" MEAN BEYOND CALIFORNIA?

PATTI SEHULSTER

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ity or sick days, office space, or even a guaranteed wage. Labor unions, alarmed by this trend, an increasingly anti-labor legal maneuvering on the part of companies, fought against "Proposition 22" and several other, similar attempts in New Jersey. According to labor official Bob Schoonover, these types of laws are actually unconstitutional because they "deny workers' rights" and make it almost "impossible for law-makers to fix the problem."

This problem dashes the once shining hopes of the so-called gig economy, initially viewed as a promise of flexibility, freedom, independence, and great increases in income. Instead, that economy is delivering lower wages and a sweeping attempt to banish all protections for workers by categorizing them as something other than employees. The movement threatens not just those typically viewed as gig workers, but all part-time labor, including adjuncts. It threatens to devalue work and workers to such an extreme that employers alone will make all of the rules and reap all of the benefits.

# 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

April 7, May 5  
11am-12:50pm via Zoom

### NYSUT REPRESENTATIVE ASSEMBLY

April 30-May 1

*Editor:* Richard A. Courage

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