Honoring MLK

Guild President Joanne Waddell, Assemblymember Miguel Santiago, City College Chapter President Sharon Hendricks and Valley College Chapter President Ruby Christian-Brougham at the LA Fed’s annual Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Labor Breakfast.

A Mighty Force: Internship Program Educates, Strengthens

By Paula Parisi

The innovative AFT 1521 internship program is the proverbial win-win: enriching the knowledge base and professional skills of student participants while providing the Faculty Guild with a strong workforce ready to mobilize when the union needs to make its voice heard.

“"The purpose of the internship program is to introduce community college students to political activism, but more specifically the Labor Movement," said AFT Internship Director Herlim Li, noting that the troop of 45 interns across nine campuses is gearing up for this spring’s state election with a voter registration drive and campaign work for AFT 1521-endorsed candidates. “Because politics are fluid, we are ready to organize and mobilize for anything that comes up,” Li added.

The program has a long list of worthy causes in its advocacy portfolio, including an increased minimum wage and the rights of all students – including those undocumented – to a quality education. “Know Your Rights” workshops on campuses including East and Valley are offered regularly as the AFT 1521 internship program positions itself at the forefront of “fighting for and protecting our undocumented classmates and students,” Li said. There are now more than 100 California school districts, including the LACCD, that have declared themselves sanctuaries for immigrant students since Donald Trump became president.

“We spent most of the 2016/2017 academic year advocating for ‘sanctuary campuses,’” Li said, explaining that the internship program multiplied its reach by organizing students to give testimony at every Board of Trustees meeting that year. “At first, there was real reluctance by the Board because of the fear of losing federal funding. However, we not only applied external pressure on the trustees to protect the most vulnerable students amongst us, but we were able to influence policy itself by fighting for a place at the table on the committees that drafted its resolutions.”

Such work is a beacon in a stormy national political climate that includes a proposed Department of Education budget cut of 10%, sharply reduces the income-based student loan repayment program and ends the public service loan forgiveness program. “Trump’s draconian cuts to the education budget will certainly have a negative impact on

Important Deadlines for 2018-2020 Guild Elections

Your union is only as strong as the support it receives from its members – you! Guild leaders take their responsibilities seriously in representing the faculty they serve, so voting and being involved in Guild elections is crucial.

Here are the deadlines you need to know to be able to participate:

- February 16 – Candidates declare their intention to run.
- February 26 – Candidate statements are due.
- March 9 – Last day for nonmembers to file a membership application if they wish to vote.
- March 23 – Candidates’ statements are mailed to your home address.
- April 9 – Ballots are mailed to members’ homes.
- April 16 – Last day to contact the Guild Office if you didn’t receive a ballot.
- April 30 at midnight – Ballots must be received at the American Arbitration Association in the envelope provided.
- May 2 – Results are counted and announced.
- May 7 to May 29 – Run-off election to be held if needed.
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onths of Guild efforts to reach out to faculty has resulted in 1,200 former fee payers becoming Faculty Guild members! There are still 900 current fee payers in the LACCD. But we have succeeded in bringing an organizing consciousness and culture back into the Guild. And we are ready to face our lives in a post-Janus world.

Janus v. AFSCME is a case financed by wealthy interests to further rig the system against working people. These are the same extremist voices that actively work to limit voting rights, roll back economic protections, and gut civil and labor rights laws. They have been preparing for over 60 years—since their opposition to Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka—to “defund and defang” unions, beginning with public sector unions. Their ultimate goal? To privatize public education.

If right-to-work advocates are successful, the Supreme Court decision will reverse 40 years of legal precedent and would eliminate “agency fees.” The outcome would be the creation of a class of nonmember faculty, who would receive the benefits of the Guild’s work (salary increases, benefits, working conditions, contract enforcement) without paying their fair share in dues. You got it—free-loaders.

All this brings us to February 26, 2018 when the Supreme Court will hear Janus v. AFSCME. A decision should be made between mid-April and June 30. Given the current composition of SCOTUS, we expect a ruling in favor of Janus.

What will happen to us? No single event or challenge has ever defined this union. Not recessions or attacks on our pensions or rogue accreditors, not enrollment decline or administrators who stay too long/leave too soon. Nor will Janus. As always, we will plan strategically, shape policies and legislation to help our students, and do the day-to-day work we do in the classrooms and clinics, in the libraries and laboratories, online, and on the stages, athletic fields, and competition courts.

We are not going away. We will continue to organize our “fee payer” colleagues, we will mobilize to amplify our voice in support of our students, and we will engage our communities and allies in support of public higher education.

We will fight for adequate funding. We will call out the corporate “de-formers” who would privatize public education, leaving students drowning in debt.

We will continue our work in shared governance, student success (and its ever-evolving initiatives), collective bargaining, and contract enforcement.

What can you do to help? The first thing is to show up in your AFT blue t-shirt at 11 am on Monday February 26 on the steps of County/USC Hospital. Join other public-sector union members and allies to make our message heard. Can’t get downtown? Join with faculty and staff on your campus to send a message that we will not let Janus destroy workers’ rights. Stay engaged. Attend your Chapter meetings, read AFT/CFT/Local 1521 communications, volunteer for committee work at the local and state levels. Make sure your voices are heard!

Ford 1521, thanks to the generosity of the families of some of our long-time union activists, as well as contributions from Guild members, will be offering a number of $1,000 scholarships again this year. Applications are due April 20th. Encourage your students to apply! Information and applications are posted on our website, www.aft1521.org.

Our intern, Leo Li, 40, is himself a graduate of the internship program. The experience not only exposed him to the principles of organized labor but also allowed him to network and connect to other community organizations, labor unions and elected officials. As one of three program staff, which includes coordinators Kenia Alcocer and Ruben Garcia, Li works with AFT 1521 to set messaging priorities.

“We are continuously fighting to keep community colleges affordable and accessible for everyone,” Li said.

A tentative schedule is posted at http://cft.org/convention-2018 – check back for updates on the program, including guest speakers and workshop sessions. For a taste of what the convention has to offer, visit www.cft.org.

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