Labor Day 2017!

Faculty Guild members participated in the annual Labor Day parade in Wilmington on Sept. 4. Los Angeles Trade-Tech College President Larry Frank (left) and Los Angeles Federation of Labor Executive Secretary-Treasurer Rusty Hicks (right) spoke to attendees at a post-parade barbecue.

NEGOTIATIONS STALLED

Despite earnest efforts to conclude negotiations for the 2017-2020 collective bargaining agreement, the faculty contract is still not finalized.

“Our faculty team has been diligently researching and preparing our proposals,” says Chief Negotiator Louise Barbato (Mission). “We have been eager to meet with management, but several recent sessions have been cancelled.”

At the last session, management drew a line in the sand regarding salary. “It was a slap in the face to our hard-working professionals,” Barbato said. “Faculty salaries in our district rank 30th among community colleges statewide. The high cost of living in L.A. is a crucial factor that needs to be taken into account.”

Benefits negotiations, handled separately by the Labor Caucus of the Joint Labor Management Benefits Committee, are similarly stalled. “The caucus, comprising representatives from all employee groups, signed on to a statement of solidarity,” said Bill Elarton, Chair of the JLMBC. “Management’s efforts to pit us against each other is not working.”

The central issues in these talks are increased premium contributions for qualifying adjunct faculty and the Health Reimbursement Account (HRA). “The Board members have stated that they care about wellness,” said Elarton. “But their failure to act in the best interests of their employees are not consistent with their actions.”

Again, the Guild and representatives of other employee unions plan to show up in force at the next Board of Trustees meeting on October 4 at Southwest College. Watch for more information and join us!

Enrollment Drop Causes Concern

The local news media is picking up the story of the LACCD’s enrollment decline, further emphasizing the seriousness of the issue. KPCC ran a piece on September 7 that explained the situation. “Administrators say three of the nine campuses in the L.A. Community College District are facing double digit enrollment drops this year,” reporter Adolfo Guzman Lopez said. “But Los Angeles community college faculty leaders said they’ve been ringing the enrollment decline alarm for a few years for administrators to improve the way they attract students.”

“Unfortunately, we’ve not seen those plans and strategies and tactics come about. So now we’re in a crisis and hopefully our bell will be heard now,” said Joanne Waddell, President of the Los Angeles College Faculty Guild.

GUILD RECEPTION FEATURES LABOR HISTORY AUTHOR

Join the Los Angeles College Faculty Guild for a stimulating discussion with Fred Glass, Communications Director, California Federation of Labor (CFT)

“What California Labor History Tells Us About Resistance in the Age of Trump”
Wednesday, September 27
5:30 to 6:15 pm Reception
6:15 to 7:15 Program
Los Angeles Valley College, Administration Bldg., ACA 2504

Fred will highlight several events in California history that may shed light on our efforts to overcome injustice. Copies of his recent book, From Mission to Microchip: A History of the California Labor Movement (now in paperback), will be available.

Faculty: Consider offering extra credit for your students.
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s we start the semester, we are cognizant of our roles – to help students in meaningful ways and work to make our colleges even better.

But this fall, we are faced with a challenge that is having an impact on the lives of many faculty, as well as students -- a serious drop in enrollment across our district. District enrollment data indicate that we are continuing to lose FTES, a situation that began on one campus three years ago. Warning signs were evident last year on all our campuses. Instead of growing by 2 or 3%, our enrollment is down by close to 10%. That means only one thing for faculty – fewer resources as our source of revenue declines.

Administrators have said, “There’s no crisis” and “We’re working on it day and night.” But tell that to the part-timers who have seen all their classes cut or who just lost eligibility for benefits. Tell that to the full-timers who lost the capstone classes or programs they’d spent time developing over the past several years.

Enrollment management is a complex art and science. It’s more than just data, more than just ideas. We rang the declining enrollment warning bell three years ago, when we had one-time money for marketing, branding, and outreach. We’ve also had access to funding from external sources – the L.A. College Promise, Dual Enrollment, Adult Ed, the SSSP. We should be showing returns on investment from those programs and we’re not. Increased enrollment should be evident in many programs on your campus. Is it? Though we did see 5,000 college promise students enroll for fall when only 3500 were anticipated, it has not been enough to offset the decline in the overall schedule of classes.

We need to pay attention to changing demographics in which the challenges of housing costs, transportation, and food insecurity – let alone the cost of books, tools, and tuition – have forced students to take on more hours of work instead of attending school.

Just last spring, the Board of Trustees finally took the step of hiring a marketing firm to create a plan; that plan was completed but has yet to be implemented by the District. The time has passed to make a difference for fall, but we are urging the District to move ahead to implement it for spring. Decisions need to be made and actions need to be taken immediately if we are to avoid stabilization, the first step in reduced budget allocation from the state.

Our Guild theme this year is Faculty Strong. We know that when faculty speak in a unified voice, their message is heard. What can you do? Stay engaged on your campuses. Your campus committees (Budget, Educational Planning, Hiring Prioritization) should all be part of the process to come up with strategies to increase enrollment. You don’t have to be a committee member to attend those meetings and you don’t have to be an expert. Just bring your experience, your ideas, and your voice to the planning on your campus. Doing the same thing in the same way and expecting different results will not help us change course.

Make sure your faculty colleagues are aware of these issues and get involved. As a first step, make sure your colleagues are union members and ask new faculty to sign membership cards. Membership is the core of union strength. The stronger the faculty, the stronger the union voice.

Of all employees in the District, only faculty lose benefits and jobs when enrollment declines. As the ones most affected, we can’t afford to sit back and wait for others to act. The “same old, same old” will only lead us further into the downward spiral.

In unity,
Joanne

Free Community College Hangs in the Balance

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t the current time, the fate of Assembly Bill 19 is still in question. The legislation, sponsored by Assemblymember Miguel Santiago, formerly an LACCD trustee, would authorize community colleges to waive enrollment fees for all first-time, full-time students, creating a statewide Community College Promise Program. While the State Chancellor’s Office is now on board with the bill, the Governor’s office has not been supportive. Call Governor Brown at (916) 445-2841 and tell him to support AB 19 (Santiago)—the College Promise!

Svonkin Given ‘Stern Warning’

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t its board meeting on Sept. 6, the Los Angeles Community College Board of Trustees voted 6-1 to issue a “stern warning” to board member Scott Svonkin for “aggressive, inappropriate behavior.”

In approving the motion, board members said future incidents of inappropriate behavior would result in further disciplinary action.

Earlier, the board split 3-3, with trustee Mike Fong abstaining, on holding a hearing into formally sanctioning Svonkin. That motion was introduced by Trustee Andra Hoffman and supported by trustees Gabriel Buelna and Steve Veres. Board president Sydney Kamlager-Dove, Ernest Moreno and Svonkin voted against the motion.

Hoffman had formally accused Svonkin of threats and intimidation in a formal motion to sanction earlier this summer.

“For nearly two decades Scott Svonkin has threatened and intimidated colleagues and others in various settings,” Hoffman said in a statement. “While I am disappointed that today’s compromise was the maximum I could hope to achieve regarding this matter, I am satisfied that we have sent a strong message to Mr. Svonkin that the kind of behavior we have witnessed too frequently in the past will no longer be tolerated. We have sent that same message to the administrators, faculty staff, students, and vendors of the district and others who have been targets of Mr. Svonkin’s threats, intimidation and bullying in the past.”