

THE SPARK

HARPER FACULTY ~ UNITY BULLETIN

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Harper Faculty Senate Executive

President: Tom Dowd
847.925.6695
tdowd@harpercollege.edu

Vice President: Sean Noonan
847.925.6432
snoonan@harpercollege.edu

Secretary: Anne Abasolo
847.925.6393
aabasolo@harpercollege.edu

Treasurer: Linda Campbell
847.925.6496
lcampbel@harpercollege.edu

Grievance Officer:
David Richmond
847.925.6845
drichmon@harpercollege.edu

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Welcome back! I hope you had a restful winter break and are excited to be back for the spring semester. The Presidential Search is on schedule and going well. The Search Committee has narrowed the search to 11 applicants and is checking references. The Committee will meet in person with those candidates in February. Then in early March, 3-5 candidates will be invited to campus. Look for more information on opportunities to meet and interview potential presidents and provide your feedback to the Board of Trustees. The Faculty Senate continues to build on our relationships with the administration and Board in an effort to grow our leadership role in setting the vision and direction of the college. All of the innovative and valuable programs and initiatives that faculty create, support, and maintain for the College, the students, and the community make these efforts generally well-received at this time. Thank you for all of your hard work. Your work makes us all look good. Please contact your Faculty Senator or a Senate Officer as issues arise that need Senate attention.

I wish you all a great semester. — Tom Dowd

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Scholarship Reminder

Colleagues, please remember that a portion of our union dues supports our student scholarships. Contact Kathy Hock ext 6543, for a student application and look for the student application to be placed on our faculty website soon! Local 1600 have another student scholarship opportunity, The Norm Swenson Scholarship. Details and applications will be available after January 16. — Linda Campbell

HARPER WORKS BECAUSE WE WORK AFT Local 1600

News from the Senate...

Dual Credit Programs & Credentials

At a Senate Chairs and Coordinators meeting last semester, several faculty members raised concerns on the college's new dual credit programs. Faculty were particularly alarmed about programs taught for college credit in high schools by high school teachers, some of whom did not meet credentials to teach at Harper College. The issue was brought to the Faculty Senate and the Senate passed a resolution on teaching credentials. (The Resolution on Teaching Credentials was published in the last issue of **The Spark**) After meeting with the Faculty Senate Executive Officers, the administration informed the superintendents and other representatives from the area high schools that all courses that receive college credit must be taught by instructors who meet Harper's credentials statements. Although the Faculty Senate (and the Illinois Community College Board and the Illinois State Legislature) still has concerns about the pedagogy of college courses being fitted to a high school format, at this time these programs will continue as long as they have properly credentialed teachers.

One side effect of this issue is that the college will also be looking to make sure that adjuncts who are teaching at Harper are properly credentialed. Maintaining teaching credentials is very important part of the professionalism of the college teaching environment. The full-time faculty in a department should regularly examine the department's credentials, which can be found online at the Academic Affairs Page, and recommend changes to their dean as the needs of the discipline change. Be sure to regularly check out www.harperfacultysenate.org for other updates on Senate activities. — David Richmond

Highlighting Shared Governance

*Editor's note: In addition to tenure law, collective bargaining and the norms that govern our various professions, shared governance is an important avenue for promoting quality education and advancing the interests of full-time faculty. Please consider submitting regular updates of your work in the shared governance committees to **The Spark** so that your colleagues can stay informed. — SN*

Academic Standards Committee

The Academic Standards Committee meets one Friday per month at 1:15 pm. Sub-committees meet on alternate Fridays, or as needed. Our charge is to establish and maintain high academic standards and provide systems for faculty and students to monitor student achievement. We make recommendations to the Faculty Senate and Deans Council. Our most recent recommendations have been a standards and modalities statement which will be placed in our college catalog and a catalog retirement policy. We have developed three items designed to assist faculty. They are located at the faculty development web site; syllabus checklist, outcomes assessment adjustment form and academic honesty tip sheet. Currently we are investigating Internationalization, withdrawal/grading policy, and graduation requirements. Academic Standards is a dynamic committee. Being a member offers one an amazing opportunity to collaborate with colleagues. — Linda Campbell

visit: <http://www.harpercollege.edu/facdev/orienweek.htm>

Staying Safe in the Classroom, Lesson 2: Gardening Thorny Student Situations

Close encounters of the disruptive kind...teach long enough and odds are good you'll have them. Although disruptive students can be great ingredients in the salad of self-doubt, encountering a disruptive student is simply a roll of the dice...no more, no less. While in some cases, challenging verbal disruptions can be deflected, and, at best, can lead to engaging discourse, in other cases, disruption simply serves as a barrier to completion of the course materials. Even more so, with media reports of escalating incidences of violence in the classroom, it behooves all of us to think proactively rather than reactively, and take a few minutes to remind ourselves of our rights and responsibilities as instructors when faced with thorny disruptive student situations.

A disruptive student can simply be defined as a student who has potentially violated the institutional student code of conduct. **Examples of disruptive behaviors include, but are not limited to:** continual interruptions and side commentaries in class, sleeping in class, repeatedly entering class late, sexual harassment, verbal threats, coming to class inebriated or stoned, texting or cell phone use during class, constantly arguing about assignments, making disrespectful comments or demeaning gestures towards classmates, etc...

Recommended steps toward resolution:

- Share your feedback with the student in a reasonably private area as soon as possible after the disruptive incidences occurred, noting the specific behavior(s) you have observed and how these behaviors are in violation of the conduct code. Suggest examples of more appropriate actions. Try to do so in a non-judgmental, neutral manner. Document the incident(s) and your response(s) and maintain these records in a locked, secure area.
- If the disruptive behavior continues after this, delineate the consequences of persisting in these actions to the student. Make it clear that the student is responsible for cessation of the disruptive acts regardless of extenuating circumstances, such as whether s/he is in psychological distress and/or whether s/he has a disability.
- To these ends, a student who is disruptive is not necessarily impaired or disturbed. The behavior of the student rather than any alleged or actual disability or distressed status of the student should be addressed. When a student is in need, though, it's always good practice to refer the student to services like *Access and Disability Services, Health and Psychological Services, or Academic Advising and Counseling*. Bear in mind that these are *voluntary* services for students and making these types of referrals may or may not serve to end the disruptive classroom behaviors, so it's always best to address disruption from both fronts (i.e. with a referral for help, and with setting limits in your class).
- Remember that you have the right to set behavioral as well as academic standards in the classroom. It's strongly recommended that you specifically describe the academic and behavioral standards for your classes in your syllabus. This protects faculty members and lets students know exactly what is expected of them.

Whenever you have safety-related concerns, confer with **Campus Police (x6330)** to obtain feedback and assistance. Consultation is available from the **Judicial Officer (x6483)**, the **Harper Early Alert Team (HEAT@harpercollege.edu)**, and from myself in **Health and Psychological Services (x6272)**. Additional venues include Department Chairs/Coordinators, colleagues, Student Development Faculty.

Finally, if you are interested in attending a program on this topic – drop me a note.

Caryn Levington, x6272, clevingt@harpercollege.edu,
Professor, Health and Psychological Services

Helping Students with the Cost of Textbooks

College textbook affordability has been in the news for several years, and it continues to be a big concern with today's students. Across the country colleges, universities and local governments are searching for ways to control the cost of textbooks and help students save money. The federal government has stepped in by adding language to the reauthorization of the Higher Education Opportunity Act which will affect the faculty textbook adoption process. The following sections of the act will become law in July 2010:

Sec 133(d) - Institutions of Higher Education will be required to publish information regarding textbooks required for classes with the on-line course schedule when students are registering or pre-registering for classes.

Sec 133(e) - Institutions of Higher Education will be required to provide campus bookstores with information regarding textbooks required for classes in a timely manner.

The language for these sections is loosely written and institutions are in the process of determining what actions are needed to be in compliance with the law.

How can faculty help lower the cost of textbooks for students? Students obtain the biggest savings for textbooks when purchasing used copies, and when selling them back for premium prices at the end of the semester. For example, a \$100 new textbook which is purchased used will initially cost \$75, and if used on campus again for the next semester will have a buyback price of \$50. This reduces the end cost of the \$100 textbook to \$25. Faculty can assist with maximizing used textbook availability by:

Submitting textbook adoption information as close to the due date as possible. The first four (4) weeks after the due date is when used textbook inventory is at a peak with wholesalers. Harper Bookstore competes with other stores across the country to purchase this inventory which can account for over 50% of the used textbooks available on campus. As we move further from the due date supplies are drastically reduced and used inventory quickly becomes unavailable.

Use the same textbook as long as possible. Reusing a textbook for a future semester allows the bookstore to pay students the premium buyback price. Books not reused on campus are purchased by used textbook wholesalers at much lower prices and are shipped off campus.

Avoid using bundles unless all of the material is actually used in class. Studies have shown that bundles actually increase the cost of course materials for students by requiring them to purchase components that are not always used in class. Students typically cannot sell these back at the end of the semester and used inventory is hard to find.

I also encourage faculty to notify the bookstore if they intend to use a textbook for several semesters. Programs have been implemented for these textbooks that will reduce costs for students. This includes guaranteeing a 50% buyback price when students purchase their textbooks, and expanded search capabilities for obtaining used inventory.

Prescription Plans

The benefit regarding mail-in prescriptions is that the participant will receive a 90 day supply of medication for the price of the 30 day prescription. So, if someone usually paid \$20 for a 30 day supply of medication, they would pay \$20 and receive a 90 day supply of the medication with the mail in. In other words, whatever the cost of the 30 day supply, the employee would receive a 90 day supply. The employee does have to contact their physician to write a prescription for the 90 day supply (generally with 3 or 4 refills) and usually this can be done with a phone call and the prescription could be mailed to the employee's home. It does not necessarily mean a doctor office visit (but that would be up to the physician). Refills can be called in or done on-line or through the mail. This benefit is cost saving for the employee and a cost saving for the college because there is a savings to the amount that must be paid from our insurance plan to cover prescriptions (more money remains in the "pot" which in turn keeps the percentage lower so we won't have to pay a higher premium out of our pockets).

— Carole Bomba

Union Solidarity

Below is a letter, reprinted with permission, written by our own Professor of Music Greg Clemons to the Midwest Clinic, a professional musicians' organization. Greg wrote the letter after learning that his professional organization was crossing a strike line to hold their annual conference, despite the fact that many of the attendees are union members themselves. Thanks, Greg, for setting a great example of union support and solidarity! — SN

Colleagues,

I first started attending The Midwest Clinic in the early 1980's. For the first twenty years of my university teaching career, I always looked forward to my annual journey to Chicago for the conference. Now, I live in suburban Chicago, but still look forward to the conference with the same excitement and anticipation each year. In past years, I frequently wrote a letter after the conference in praise of yet another wonderful program of events. I still feel that way about this marvelous gathering of students and music educators. However, I am writing to you now, the administration of The Midwest Clinic, to voice my profound disappointment in your decision to use the facilities of the Congress Plaza Hotel for this year's conference.

As all of you must know, the workers at the Congress have been involved in a contentious labor dispute that has resulted in a strike lasting more than five years. In the Conference News Bulletin you circulated to conference registrants, you stated that "the Midwest Clinic explored every possible alternative to using the Congress for clinics, but no other site could provide rooms large enough and in close enough proximity to the Hilton to allow travel time between events." After reading that statement, it became clear to me that you had collectively missed the point of a strike altogether. In essence, you turned each of us who registered for the clinic into a scab, whether or not we actually crossed that picket line to attend an event in the Congress Hotel.

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.....As you contemplated the inconvenience posed to The Midwest Clinic by the strike, perhaps you could have considered the inconvenience of all the workers walking that picket line for more than five years, workers who are only seeking fair wages and working conditions.

Every member of the AF of M, NEA, AFT, or other collective bargaining unit should have been told about this situation beforehand and given the opportunity to pass on attending the conference this year. As it is, I have refused to attend any events of The Midwest Clinic for the first time in more than twenty-five years. Had I known of these circumstances beforehand, I would have also refused to register. I prefer to believe that the omission of this important information was an oversight and not a plan to keep it under wraps until after registration. Either way, it is equally damaging to those union workers on the picket line.

Please understand, I am not asking for a refund. A refund will not repair the damage already done, so keep the money. Perhaps your organization can use it to help finance a workshop in fair labor practices and labor relations.

Sincerely,

Gregory Clemons, Professor of Music
Harper College
Member, Cook County College Teachers Union, IFT, AFT.

Union Victory at Republic Windows

The recent sit-down by workers at the Republic Windows and Doors plant in Goose Island in Chicago serves everyone in organized labor with an important reminder of the benefits of solidarity and coordinated action. The tale began on December 4th, when the *Chicago Tribune* reported that Republic Windows and Doors was scheduled to shut its doors the following day, putting some 300 workers out on the street. This in spite of the federal Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification (WARN) Act, which since 1989 has required that “employers with 100 or more workers must give at least 60 days' advance notice of a plant closing or mass layoff to affected workers or their representatives, to the state dislocated workers' unit, and to the local government unit.” Additionally, the laid-off workers faced the loss of both their severance pay and their earned vacation pay.

On Friday, December 5th, the workers, members of Local 1110 of the United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers, staged a sit-in at the plant to bring attention to this crisis. They were almost immediately joined by members of other local unions and public officials such as Rep. Luis Gutierrez (D-Ill.). President-elect Barack Obama voiced his support for the workers at a press conference, commenting: “I think that these workers, if they have earned these benefits and their pay, then these companies need to follow through on those commitments.”

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Illinois Attorney General Lisa Madigan announced that her office would investigate the plant closing, and Cook County Commissioner Mike Quigley introduced a resolution for the county to cut all ties with Bank of America, which in cutting off the company's line of credit had contributed to the layoffs.

With pressure mounting and national and international support for the Republic workers continuing unabated, on the evening of December 10th, the company and Bank of America finalized a settlement with the union that resulted in severance payouts averaging \$6,000.00 per worker, money for earned vacation pay and two months' health care. President Armando Robles declared: "The occupation is over. We have achieved victory. We said we will not go until we get justice and we have it."

***Congratulations to our brothers and sisters in UE Local 1110
on their hard-fought and well-deserved victory!***

— Jim Edstrom

In The News... The Auto Industry Bailout and Unions

The off-again/on-again government bailout of the car manufacturing industry has been in the news for weeks. Whether you believe that the auto industry brought about its own near demise through mismanagement and poor decisions or you believe that the manufacturers were victims of "neoconservative" economic policies and a global recession, nearly everyone agrees that the collapse of the auto manufacturing sector would result in millions of lost jobs in the United States. In order to forestall and hopefully prevent the loss of those jobs, General Motors and Chrysler were asking for government loans, whereas Ford was asking for the government to guarantee loans would be available should they need them so the company could use the guarantee as collateral in order to get loans from commercial banks. The total value of these loans amounted to just over \$17 billion. Why would loaning \$17 billion dollars to auto companies be so much more controversial than handing nearly \$800 billion to the financial sector? The answer is that the banking sector is not unionized.

Many Southern (and a few Northern) politicians in Congress couched their opposition to the loans in terms of free market principles, yet they voted for the government handouts to AIG, Goldman-Sachs, and other banking/insurance industries. In addition, the states represented by these vocal politicians have already given nearly \$4 billion in direct government subsidies to German, Japanese, and Korean car manufacturers in their own states.

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They said it would be “fiscally irresponsible” to make the loans, and yet the government’s own figures state that the loans would save government agencies from having to pay out more than \$14 billion in unemployment and temporary assistance benefits, not to mention lost government revenue from income taxes that would not be collected if workers are not earning paychecks. Citing the need for economic efficiency, they demanded major concessions and give-backs from workers in order for the companies to receive the loans, yet no such concessions were required of the financial industry to receive government handouts. This despite the fact that labor costs amount to 10-15% of the operating budget of the American car manufacturers, while labor amounts to approximately 70% of costs in the financial sectors.

The real issue that caused such vehement opposition to the auto industry bailout was an attempt to weaken the United Auto Workers Union (UAW). It is too simple to say that they were trying to destroy the UAW; in the current legal environment it is actually easier, although far from impossible, to damage unions at the state level of government than at the federal level. (As an aside, that is why Local 1600 spends nearly 100% of our political funds (C.O.P.E.) on local and state elections rather than on national campaigns.) The real goal was to reduce the unionized workers’ contracts to the same pay and benefits levels as those workers in the non-unionized South. That way, if wages and benefits were identical, Southern workers would have little incentive to unionize.

While these Southern factory owners certainly want to save the few dollars per hour they currently pocket using non-unionized employees, the overall purpose is much larger. The desire to keep unions out of these states is predicated on the aim of keeping progressive political institutions out. Organizing the workplace remains the most effective way to create progressive political change. Labor unions stand as a political barrier to interest groups that attempt to eliminate public services and social spending. Labor unions are one of the last champions of the middle class and a more equitable distribution of wealth. These are the last things that some very well-funded and politically-connected people want to see in the “Solid South”.

Labor unions matter. With the Democrat-controlled Congress considering a The Employee Free Choice Act that would make it easier to organize workers, some politicians were willing to financially destroy millions of American families to try to prevent the spread of unions to their states. Your vote also matters. Support only those politicians who support unions. It’s in your own best interests.
— David Richmond

"The strongest bond of human sympathy, outside of the family relation, should be one uniting all working people, of all nations, and tongues, and kindreds."

"If the Almighty had ever made a set of men that should do all the eating and none of the work, He would have made them with mouths only and no hands."

— Abraham Lincoln