

THE SPARK

HARPER FACULTY NEWSLETTER

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FROM THE PRESIDENT

There are a lot of people that deserve our thanks this year. It's a nice problem to have when there are more people whom you would like to acknowledge than you have space for. So let me say thank you to all of the faculty who have invested so much of their talents this year serving on search committees, advising student groups, overseeing department reaccreditation efforts, working in shared governance, and organizing educational opportunities both in and out of the classroom. All of you are what makes Harper great. The Faculty Senate Officers would like to extend a special and personal thank you to the Faculty Senate. This group works very hard to represent the interests of the faculty and does a great job, often with little public recognition. We'd also like to say thank you to those senators whose terms on the Senate have expired. Thank you for your years of selfless service on behalf of the faculty, Sue Bajt, Carol Bomba, Caryn Levington, and Kris Piepenberg. We would also like to congratulate and welcome the new senators who will take over this May – Bobby Summers, Barbara Anderson, Leslye Hess, and Greg Clemons. We look forward to working with you. Thank you for volunteering.

This will be the last edition of The Spark until August. I would like to thank all who contributed their time and efforts to the new faculty newsletter. I would particularly like to thank Sean Noonan for all of his work organizing and editing the newsletter. More than anyone else, this was his brainchild.

Next year promises to be a very exciting time at Harper. By the time we receive the next newsletter, we will have welcomed our new president, Dr. Ken Ender. I know he is aware that he is coming to a campus with great faculty who are enthusiastic about making Harper College an even better place to come to work and learn. I am confident we will prove that is true both early and often. Have a great summer. — Tom Dowd

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Letter from Dr. Ender

March 21, 2009

Dear Harper Faculty Colleagues,

I'm so pleased that I will be joining you in July as your 5th President. It is indeed an honor and a privilege. Your College search committee really ran an excellent search. Professional, positive, and polished would be the words that come to mind when thinking about the entire process. Your colleagues represented you and the entire Harper employee community excellently.

Cathy and I are looking forward to our move to the District. We bring with us our dog Sam, and cat, Cat. Sammy and Cat demand a large house and a big yard. I'm hopeful, once we are in that house, that many of you will meet us personally there. We intend to provide the faculty and many others in the Harper employee community an opportunity to get to know us and our "family" in our new home.

The challenges and opportunities that we will confront together in this 21st century global economy are enormous, for our Harper District, for Illinois and for the United States. These are tough, and yes, a little scary times. However, I am confident that if we work hard, and work together, we can provide real leadership for our college and our community so that we meet the challenges and leverage the opportunities. I look forward to taking up these tasks with you.

Harper College is named for the gentleman credited with the founding of the community college movement in America. This is no small legacy to live up to, but you have. And our task now is to build on the excellence that you have developed at Harper and build the community college of the 21st century. Harper defines success as making a difference in the lives of the students and community we serve.

See you soon.

KE

Teaching and Learning Minigrants

Get your Teaching and Learning minigrant applications in for FY09! The fiscal year is coming to a close but minigrant funds are still available. Funds are awarded for activities that support innovative curriculum development, projects, conference attendance and more. Awards are generally \$2,500 or less. (Funding is not provided for Harper College course development.) To be considered for FY09 funding you must submit the application by May 1st. Project completion reports are due May 18th. Fill out the attached application.

You can also download the application from the Faculty Development webpage:
<http://www.harpercollege.edu/facdev/grants.htm>

Good luck!

Kim Fournier, Teaching and Learning Minigrants Chair

Academics Show Support to Unionize!

I am proud to report that my professional organization, The American Anthropological Association has tried to be pro-active in supporting trade unions here and abroad. This position has not come without quite a bit of debate and discussion among the membership. As an organization, the AAA tries hard to promote an attitude among its membership to be unbiased observers of human behavior. Along with this important mind-set for anthropologists is the major tenant of our mission statement, which is to “do no harm.” In general, anthropologists see themselves as bystanders not activists. So imagine the dilemma when confronted with obvious examples of unethical behaviors on the part of part of Western corporations and nations, especially given their interaction with indigenous populations world wide. The following is a recent example of the AAA’s support to foreign local groups and their unions. This memo was sent out to all members November 2008 reminding us of the organization’s policy adopted in May of 2006 to boycott all Coca-Cola Company products as a result of company actions.

“Given the growing anthropological record of problems in communities where The Coca-Cola Company operates and with operations of The Coca-Cola Company globally, the American Anthropological Association endorses boycott actions against The Coca-Cola Company as specified below. Investigations thus far have created a scholarly record of the operations and impact of The Coca-Cola Company through interviews with eyewitnesses; union organizers, and other stakeholders; field observations; and archival research. Their findings indicate that The Coca-Cola Company has not been sufficiently proactive in protecting workers and their families from intimidation and violence that internationally recognized rights to organize unions have not been respected, and that information disclosure has been inadequate and insufficiently verified by independent sources. Based on these findings, the American Anthropological Association supports the Columbian union SINALTRAINAL’s call for a boycott of The Coca-Cola Company and its products, calls its members to do the same, until Coca-Cola agrees in good faith to negotiate with workers.”

In accordance with the above, Coca-Cola products were not served at AAA events scheduled at the Hilton San Francisco Hotel during the 2008 Annual meeting that took place last November. Additionally the AAA has also shown solidarity with American hotel unions refusing to cross picket lines at the Congress Hotel in Chicago, instead, choosing a new venue for their conference. In 2000, at considerable expense to the membership and the organization, AAA lived up to these obligations again by relocating the annual meeting from San Francisco to Atlanta in order to avoid crossing hotel worker picket lines there. This move was very costly to a fair number of members who had already purchased airline tickets and hotel accommodations not too mention for the association itself when attendance and revenues were severely impacted. Although it would have been far easier to sit-back and say, “*this is not our fight, we’re not involved, it doesn’t concern us,*” as individuals and as an organization with 9000 members world wide, sometimes it’s just the *right* thing to do. — Patricia Hamlen

Harper Works Because We Work
American Federation of Teachers Local 1600

From the Grievance Officer

There are many advantages to being part of a union. One of the main benefits is that unions provide some protection against arbitrary or discriminatory behavior by supervisors. I often get questions from faculty asking if the administration is allowed to do something. “Can the dean do that?” or “Is it OK if the VP does this?” or more generally, “Can they get away with that?” are common questions that grievance officers try to answer. Obviously, the first place we turn to is the Faculty Contract. However, in my experience, seldom is the issue an overt violation of contractual language. If it is not a contract violation, then we have to look at other factors such as Board Policy, past practice, ICCB regulations, and labor laws. Fortunately, as members of Local 1600 we have a lot of resources to draw on to get those questions answered. Not only do we have the knowledge and expertise of the faculty at Harper College, but we have access to the combined experience of the faculty of a dozen area community colleges. Furthermore, Perry Buckley and the Local 1600 executive officers provide a wealth of information and insight from years of dealing with the concerns of faculty. We also have access to attorneys, including Local 1600 Field Representative Brenda Pryor and Gil Feldman, the man who literally wrote the Illinois Tenure Act. Finally, through Local 1600 (<http://il.aft.org/local1600/>) we have access to the influence and abilities of the Illinois Federation of Teachers (<http://www.ift-aft.org/>), the American Federation of Teachers (<http://www.aft.org/>), as well as the Chicago Federation of Labor (<http://www.chicagolabor.org/>) and the AFL-CIO (<http://www.aflcio.org/>).

Recently, Interfaith Worker Justice (IWJ), an organization dedicated “*to educate, organize, and mobilize the religious community in the United States on issues and campaigns that will improve wages, benefits, and conditions for workers, and give voice to workers,*” created a valuable website called “Can My Boss Do That?” (www.canmybossthat.com) that is a great starting point for educating employees on their rights and the limits of the bosses’ powers. It provides tips on protecting and asserting your rights, providing for occupational safety, as well as information on federal and state labor laws. It is a relatively new site that is constantly growing. It’s worth checking out. You may find the answers you need quickly and easily. As all of us know, education is the key. But knowing where to get started is critical.

The good news is that we have a lot of options.

The bad news is that sometimes the answer is yes, the boss can do that.

— David Richmond

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

Kudos to the English Department

M. Glenn Taylor, English, has been named a finalist in the National Book Critics Circle Award for his novel *The Ballad of Trenchmouth Taggart*. The NBCC is one of the top three national book awards in the US: the other two are the National Book Awards in the fall and the Pulitzers in the spring. Glenn is among five international authors named as finalists for the NBCC in 2008. The other authors are Roberto Bolano for *2666* (Farrar, Straus), Marilynne Robinson for *Home* (Farrar, Straus), Aleksandar Hemon for *The Lazarus Project* (Riverhead), and Elizabeth Strout for *Olive Kitteridge* (Random). Chosen among novels published in 2008, Taylor's *Trenchmouth Taggart* is notable for beating out Toni Morrison's 2008 novel *A Mercy*. Glenn is in excellent company; previous finalists and winners include Joyce Carol Oates, E.L. Doctorow, John Updike, Toni Morrison, John Cheever, Phillip Roth, Jane Smiley, and Cormac McCarthy. The winner will be announced on March 12th! Perhaps of greatest interest to our union brothers and sisters, however, is Taylor's account of the Mingo County Coal Wars of 1919-21. Over several chapters in Book One of *Trenchmouth*, Taylor brilliantly weaves fiction and history together to represent the valiant struggles of the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) against the rapacious interest of coal mining companies.

Another luminary in the English department, Greg Herriges, has won praise for his latest project, *TC Boyle: The Art of the Story*. The film won Platinum, Best of Show at the Aurora Film Awards in Salt Lake City, in the category of Art /Culture. The film is a documentary written and produced by Greg and Tom Knoff of the Department of Instructional Technology. The film has been selected to be featured at the American/Pop Culture Association's National Conference in New Orleans on April 8, 2009. Herriges will appear to present the film and later for Q & A.

— Rich Johnson

Experts Wanted

The Harper College Experts List is a resource for media members seeking comments for news and trend stories – many of them dealing with a vast array of topics not directly related to Harper (or even education). As a result of our list, Harper faculty and staff have been interviewed by publications like *Crain's Chicago Business*, the *Daily Herald*, the *Chicago Sun-Times* and *Tribune*, *University Business*, *Community College Week* and *Chicago Parent* and featured on *CNBC.com* and *PBS' Nightly Business Report*.

Sharing your knowledge through the media can be a rewarding experience, and a great way to get Harper's name out locally and nationally in a positive way. Please give careful consideration to joining and becoming a part of our local media coverage. Experts are welcome in any field, and your area of expertise need not match the department with which you're currently affiliated. (A chemistry instructor with a passion for rock music, for instance, may want to be a rock expert instead.) Our goal is to create an accessible, exhaustive List reflective of Harper's diverse faculty and staff. And don't worry: Joining this list does not mean your personal contact info will be released to reporters, and does not mean you'll be inundated with media phone calls. Usually, a given expert is only contacted a few times in a year – unless your expertise lies in an area of sudden hot media interest (like the economy at this point in time).

Interested? Contact Media Relations Specialist Erin Brooks, 847.925.6159 or ebrooks@harpercollege.edu.

Technology Grants Still Available

Over \$15,000 in Harper College Technology Grants is still available just for you! Money is still available to attend conferences, present papers, receive technology tool training and take courses with monetary assistance provided by these grant funds available to you, Harper College's full-time faculty! This application can be submitted at any time. Applications are reviewed monthly from September through May at Instructional Technology Committee (ITC) meetings. Details about the application and submission process are included in the application form.

Get your application form at http://www.harpercollege.edu/facdev/tech_grant_app_fy09.doc

— Terry Morris

News from Springfield

Harper Faculty President Tom Dowd, Vice-President Sean Noonan, Senator Andy Kidwell, and I, along with dozens of our colleagues from other CCCTU schools, spent the first Saturday of spring break at the Illinois Federation of Teachers Headquarters in Westmont at a Union Leadership Conference. Part of the day was devoted to discussing Local 1600's lobbying activities in Springfield. The news out of Springfield is both good and bad.

First the good news: In the Governor's proposed budget, community colleges and Harper College in particular would see an increase in state funding for the first time in years. Even better, two Harper projects, the remodeling of the G and H Buildings and a new Student Admissions Center Building, rank very high on the capital improvements list and should get funded. Of course, that's all assuming that the final budget that is passed next month looks like the proposed budget that the governor announced. Keep your fingers crossed.

Now the bad news: As we all know, the state of Illinois faces huge budget shortfalls. Part of the governor's budget calls for increased income taxes and higher fees for state services. However, what is particularly troublesome is that the Illinois Legislature is planning to make up some of the budget deficit at the expense of teachers' pensions. The proposed change that affects anyone who is in the Traditional Plan is to increase the amount of employee contributions to SURS from the current 8% of your salary to 10%. There would NOT be a corresponding increase in benefits. In other words, each paycheck we would put more money into the system, but we would not receive any additional money during retirement. This is in effect a 2% cut in take home pay for community college employees (and other public employees). Right now, SURS is underfunded and has been for years. As it was explained at the meeting, this is because the state of Illinois has not properly funded the pension plans since 1939! Currently SURS is funded at a less than 50% rate. The state's goal is to increase that to 90% by 2045, but they are doing that not by fulfilling its obligation to the teachers of Illinois who have always fully funded our share of the pension system, but rather at the expense of those same teachers.

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The governor's plan calls for even more destructive changes to the pension system for any new employees. Basically, he wants to set up a two-tiered system: one set of pension rules for those of us who are current employees, and an even more restrictive set of rules for any new employees. For more information on the proposed changes to the pension system, check out www.ift-aft.org. The IFT has publicly announced that any legislator who votes in favor of these changes to SURS will never be endorsed by or receive funding from the IFT again. Local 1600 has echoed that position.

This directly affects you and you can help. These issues will most likely be voted on sometime in May. Several of us are joining the IFT in Springfield for Lobby Day on April 29th. Contact the Local 1600 Office (312.755.9400) if you would like to join us. Even if you can't attend Lobby Day, please call, email and/or write your state legislators and ask them not to balance the budget on the backs of the workers.

Visit www.votesmart.org to find the names and contact information of your state representatives and senators. Remind them that all of that money taken out of your paycheck is money that cannot be spent to support the Illinois economy. Insist that the state live up to its responsibilities to its public sector employees. But please remember the advice we always receive from our CCCTU Officers whenever we meet with elected officials, and that is, when you are talking to politicians, "don't whine, don't beg, and don't threaten." Just give them a brief synthesis of your position and don't forget to include your union affiliation. And of course, keep your fingers crossed. — David Richmond

SURS Crisis

Faculty Colleagues,

As many of you know, I sit on the Members Advisory Committee for the State Universities Retirement System (SURSMAC). As such, I will be attending a meeting of that committee at the SURS offices in Champaign tomorrow, Monday, April 13 and Tuesday, April 14. While I am gone, Gov. Quinn will be on the Harper College campus for a meeting with Harper students and employees at 4:30 p.m. on Monday afternoon. Because of my meeting in Champaign, I won't be there, but I urge all of you to attend the meeting and voice your concerns about the governor's initiatives to change our pension systems in Illinois. Among the many changes that are proposed, there are two that are most alarming:

1. An increase in the amount of the employee's contribution, without an increase in the employee's benefit.
2. Taking another "pension holiday."

The first change mentioned needs no explanation. The second, the concept of a "pension holiday", is even more disturbing.

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Taking a "pension holiday" means that while you continue to make your contribution to the pension system, the state will forgo its contribution and redirect the money saved to other areas of the budget. Simply put, its balancing the budget on the backs of the members of the state's various public pension systems. Frankly, it reminds me of the kind of shady practices that nearly destroyed America's financial system recently. Ironically, the practice of the state taking "pension holidays" in the past decade and in the mid-1980's is precisely what brought us to our current pension funding crisis in Illinois. The State Universities Retirement System is currently funded just under 50 per cent (the precise amount will be reported at our Tuesday meeting). In brief, that means that only about 50 per cent of the funding needed to pay annuitant benefits is generated by the system's financial investments. Because the state constitution guarantees that all pension benefits may not be altered and must be paid, the other 50 per cent must come directly from the state budget. The ideal funding amount would be 90 per cent from investments and 10 per cent from the state budget. The current imbalance is a direct result of the state's failure to make its contributions in the past. "Pension holidays" are mostly to blame, and it makes no sense to continue this unethical practice. As we put less and less into the system for investment, we will get less in return and the 50 per cent funding level will continue to decline making the state's percentage even larger. "Pension holidays" are NOT the long term solution. They will only make a bad situation worse.

By the way, now you know why many of us fought so hard against the Constitutional Convention in the November election. Can you imagine what would be happening if our pension benefits were no longer protected by the constitution? I believe Gov. Quinn, for all his good intentions, is advocating an unfair burden for the state's pension recipients. The road to hell is paved with good intentions. He needs to hear our voices. That's why I urge you to attend the Monday meeting and to contact your state legislators. Daunting as the task may be, trying to regain lost benefits will be even more difficult.

Regards,

Greg Clemons

Employee Free Choice Act

Over the past six months the national economic news has been particularly bad. Unemployment has risen to 8.5%, economic growth has stagnated, home values are falling, and 401K's are now effectively 201K's. Importantly, the current economic crisis comes after a decade of weak real growth in the economy and several decades of growing inequality and an increasingly ossified class structure. For the period of 2001 to 2008 for most Americans, real household incomes are lower at the end of this business cycle than they were when it started. Income inequality and wealth inequality have grown over the past 30 years. In 1979 households at the 95th percentile of the income scale captured 11.4 times more income than the 20th percentile households.

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In 2007 households at the 95th percentile of the income scale captured 19.7 times more income than the 20th percentile households. Between 1976 and 2004 the top 1% of all households in terms of wealth saw their share of total wealth grow from 17% to 34%. Over this same period the bottom 90% of households saw their share of total wealth fall from 58% to 29%. Unsurprisingly, over this same period, as income and wealth inequality have grown intergenerational social mobility (that is movement up and down the economic ladder) has declined. The American class structure has become more rigid since the 1970s, making it harder for the best and brightest born at the bottom to rise up the economic ladder and for the incompetent and indolent born at the top to fall down the economic ladder. In short, the gap between the rich and everyone else is growing and the American Dream is becoming more precarious and harder to achieve.

The causes of American capitalism becoming more “*lean-and-mean*” over the past three decades include factors such as the systematic rise in fixed costs for mature economies, technological innovations that expanded the geographic scale of markets, growing international competition, and changes in government policy that have tended to favor finance-over-industry, creditors-over-debtors, and management-over-labor. Declining unionization rates are one of the forces driving the growth in inequality and decline of equal opportunity in the U.S. In 1973 26% of American workers were covered by union contracts. Today, only 13% of American workers are unionized. Compared to non-unionized employees, workers protected by a collective bargaining agreement make 14% more income. Union women make 11% more. Unionized African Americans make 18% more. Unionized Latino Americans make 22% more. Also, unionized workers are 58% more likely to have employer-sponsored health care. Unions have the effect of providing employees with greater equity for their labor. Furthermore, unionized workers are protected from capricious and arbitrary treatment from employers and have an important voice in the workplace. Due process in disciplinary matters and a voice in shaping policy and practice in the work place are hallmarks of unionized workplaces. In other words, unions have the effect of providing employees with a modicum of fairness and a democratic voice in workplace decision making.

In light of the equity and voice that unionized workers benefit from it is unsurprising that survey research has repeatedly found that a majority of American workers would join a union if they could. And yet, only 13% of American workers are unionized. Employer resistance to unionization is the single most important obstacle that employees face when they are trying to start a union. According to Center for Urban Economic Development at UIC, during unionization campaign drives:

30% of Employers fire pro-union workers

91% of Employers force employees to attend anti-union meetings with their supervisors

49% of Employers threaten to close a worksite when workers try to form a union

82% of Employers hire union busting consultants to fight union organizing drives

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In response to these un-democratic practices that employers deploy in order to avoid unionization the AFL-CIO, Change to Win Coalition, and elements within the Democratic Party have proposed to amend the prevailing labor laws with the Employee Free Choice Act (EFCA) in order to make it easier for workers to join unions. EFCA has 3 main features:

- 1) Card Check – EFCA would compel employers to recognize a union if a majority of the members of the bargaining unit sign union authorization cards. The EFCA would reduce the power of employers to block unionization efforts.
- 2) Damages – employers could be ordered to pay triple damages to workers illegally fired for engaging in activities protected by the National Labor Relations Act.
- 3) First Contract — In order to get a first contract up and running a union could invoke binding interest arbitration, where an outside arbitrator would compel the parties to arrive at a first contract in an expeditious manner.

An EFCA bill was introduced in both the House and Senate on March 10th. You can support the EFCA by visiting: <http://www.aflcio.org/joinaunion/voiceatwork/efca/whatyoucando.cfm> and sign the petition for the EFCA. You can get involved in pro-EFCA actions in your community and you can contact your elected representatives and let them know that you support the EFCA. Visit www.votesmart.org to find the names and contact information of your state representatives and senators.

Making it easier for working people to form unions would be a significant step in rebuilding both the labor movement and the middle class in America. The EFCA would be economically beneficial for those Harper employees not currently organized, for working families in our communities and for our students. The economic hard times discussed above are even more difficult for generation Y and the Millennial generation we see on campus and will be seeing on campus in the future. It is time to restore a base line of equality and democratic voice in the American workplace.

– Sean Noonan

In our glorious fight for civil rights, we must guard against being fooled by false slogans, as 'right-to-work.' It provides no 'rights' and no 'works.' Its purpose is to destroy labor unions and the freedom of collective bargaining... We demand this fraud be stopped.

— Martin Luther King, Ph.D.