

# Association Notes



November / December 2008

## Looking Back / Moving Forward

The last month or so has been quite interesting at the national, state, and local levels. Barack Obama was elected president, Arnold Schwarzenegger and the California legislature finally adopted a budget, and Rio Hondo received a preliminary accreditation report. Locally, the Association began the negotiations process in October, meeting two times with the District. All of these events will impact our unit members in one way or another. Will the president-elect's desire to overhaul the health care system influence our coverage? How will the state's budget woes affect Rio Hondo? What is in store for us when WASC issues their accreditation report in January? We will have to be patient for all of these events to unfold.

## Bargaining News

The Association and District met twice in October at the bargaining table. Despite initial optimism on the part of our side that a relatively rapid settlement could occur, the District appeared content with maintaining a rather slow pace. The initial meeting proved promising with ground rules being laid and presentations by both the District and the Association, all in under three hours.

Unfortunately the process slowed during our next meeting, scheduled for five hours. After subtracting the hour it took the District to get set up and the time we spent contacting CalPERS about a health-care matter, we did not have sufficient time to flush out all of the issues at table.

Most notable among these was health care. As has been the case in the past, the District showed little desire to move forward. One problem was that the District argued that the dollar amount agreed upon (five or so months ago) to drop the two-tier system needed to be adjusted upwards. A substitute figure, however,

was not supplied. The District team also mentioned that they had come up with a new plan to drop the two-tier system. The Association team expressed concern about this since we had already spent months looking over dozens of options in the health benefits committee.

The District appeared to be applying a double standard with respect to data required to make decisions about negotiations. For example, the Association team presented data from about two-thirds of California districts showing that granting release time to union officers and negotiators was common practice. This was not sufficient data as far as the District was concerned, as they sought information from **all** California colleges. However, when they proposed changing evaluation procedures for tenured faculty, they were content with their assertion that some other colleges already do this.

We are still waiting to hear from the District about when our next meeting will be. The negotiations team will keep you posted.

## More on Negotiations and Other Issues

### Show me the Money

Perhaps you noticed that salary was not mentioned in the discussions about negotiations. Remember the adage that if you do not have something nice to say, then you should not say it? That applies here. The District noted that there was a great deal of concern about what the Governor would do after the election. When pressed, they said that they could offer no raise at this time. This is below the 0.68% COLA and far below the 5.5% or so inflation rate. Obviously, this is of great concern for the RHCFA leadership and we will continue to push for a salary increase.



### Watching Our Money

Angela Medina from Communications has assumed the role of treasurer for the Association, replacing Matt Koutroulis who resigned.

### Error Correction

In the last newsletter it was reported that Rio Hondo's administrators ranked 10th in average salary in the California. Further examination of the data has revealed that this figure was incorrect. They are actually 8th in the state.



### Two-Tier Troubles

What is the basis of the District's claim that the dollar amount required to remove the two-tier system is now inadequate? The amount had been agreed on by the Association bargaining team and Teresa Dreyfuss, Vice-President of Finance and Business after consultation with the school's actuary. Nonetheless, Jackson Parham argued that circumstances had changed, requiring an upward adjustment of the figure.

The claim is based upon the fact that many new faculty have opted out of lifetime medical benefits. This means the District does not have to match the 3.75% of salary to fund the liability. Therefore, the District is "saving" money by faculty opting out of the plan.

Such logic is outrageous. Essentially, the claim is "we have done better than anticipated under the system, so it will now cost you more to get rid of it." The plan was established in the first place to ensure continued viability for lifetime medical benefits for all faculty. Erecting further barriers for the elimination of the system is therefore unconscionable.

### Care vs. Choice

One more time, what is the difference between PersCare and PersChoice? There are two differences of note. The first pertains to lifetime medical payouts. Whereas PersChoice is limited to \$2 million during an individual's lifetime, PersCare has no limit. This is not a major concern, however, since anyone in PersChoice will be automatically switched to the higher plan if the limit is reached. Also, only one person in California has hit \$2 million.

A second difference involves copays and deductibles. PersCare has a 10% copay for items like hospital visits and a \$2,000 yearly maximum out-of-pocket payout per individual, compared to 20% and \$3,000 for PersChoice. Detailed information about coverage can be found at the Association website ([www.rhcf.org](http://www.rhcf.org)).

### Hooray CCA



In case you did not know, our very own Lynette Nyaggah is the Vice President for our umbrella organization, the Community College Association. Confidential sources have suggested that she will run again in 2009 and run for president in 2010.

## Looking Ahead

Several noteworthy events are coming up in the next couple of months that are of interest to Association members. For further information contact President Jennifer Fernandez ([jfernandez@riohondo.edu](mailto:jfernandez@riohondo.edu)).

### Upcoming Events



The Rio Hondo College Faculty Association has been working hard to provide social outlets for members (beyond having lunch together once a month at meetings). The September Camacho's mixer gave new faculty a chance to form lasting friendships with those who have been around for a while. This month, a large contingent will attend a Ducks vs. Kings hockey game in Anaheim. December will see a holiday get-together at Swiss Park. Plans are being formulated for events to be held next semester as well. One in the works will involve a museum tour. Also, a new tradition will be started this coming March when we hold our first annual celebration for newly-tenured faculty. Stay tuned for information on all of these events or contact Angela Medina ([amedina@riohondo.edu](mailto:amedina@riohondo.edu)) for details.

### Start PAC(K)ing



Even though we just finished an election cycle, we need to start thinking about one that is very close to us. Next year, three Board of Trustee seats will be up for election, those held by Angela Acosta-Salazar, Garry Couso-Vasquez, and Andre Quintero. Remember that your local dues fund our Community Involvement Fund. They are used by our Political Action Committee (PAC) to support candidates we believe will be sympathetic to the plight of faculty. We will be gearing up our efforts as early as February to identify candidates and help them get elected. This process can have a profound impact on our goals as an association. You will be asked to get involved in the process by serving on the PAC committee, voting on who to support, and helping individuals get elected. Through our collective actions, we truly can make a difference.

### Coming Next Issue



Shortly after the visiting accreditation team from WASC provided their initial report, Dr. Ted Martinez was kind enough to spend some time with Adam Wetsman to discuss various aspects of the process. This discussion shed some light on the tremendous efforts of many at Rio Hondo College who devoted a good deal of time to accreditation. Details will be provided in the next newsletter, once the final report is issued from WASC. This will allow the information provided by Dr. Martinez to be put into clearer perspective.