

# Association Notes



February/March 2009

## Busy, Busy, Busy

Even though the new year seems to have just begun, there are several items to report on the Association and college front. Negotiations have been settled, the Accreditation Report has come out, conferences have been attended, and members have been honored. In the next month or so, we will have elections, more conferences, and then graduation.

## Accreditation

In early February, Rio Hondo received the much-anticipated report from ACCJC. As expected, we were placed on a “warning” status, something that appears to follow a trend among community colleges undergoing the process over the past few years. Six areas were identified for improvement. These ranged from relatively minor issues (such as including the college web address in the catalog) to more substantial recommendations (such as developing plans for institutional effectiveness). Without question, much work needs to be done prior to the accreditation team’s return in October.

Things could have been more critical had it not been for the focused efforts of President Ted Martinez, Jr. Adam Wetsman had an opportunity to discuss the accreditation process with Dr. Martinez late last year. Recognizing that his predecessor had not put the proper mechanisms in place to navigate some important hurdles in accreditation, the president began the ambitious project to correct the deficiencies when he started at Rio in Fall 2007.

A key area that had been neglected was institutional planning. This requires extensive links to

be established between college resources and goals, the many programs at Rio Hondo, student success, and other areas. Although this was an area cited in the report by the accreditation team as requiring improvement, the committee would have been significantly more critical had it not been for the work of Dr. Martinez over the last eighteen months.



There were a few other notable recommendations made by ACCJC. As expected, the continued development of SLOs was cited, something that probably will not go away any time soon. Another area of concern related to governance.

What now? The administration and faculty will be working together to prepare a response to the requests made by the accreditation report. We all look forward to correcting all issues by October.

# Local Happenings

## Tentative Agreement



The tentative agreement reached with the District on January 9th, 2009 was ratified by the faculty on February 26 by a vote of 175 to 12. Although we will not receive a pay increase for 2008-2009, there were no indications that a reduction in workforce will occur this year. The two-tier system of health benefits has been abolished. Starting in 2010, the District will cover up to the PersChoice level of health care coverage for those in PPO plans. Several other provisions were included in the agreement, including additional sick leave. A copy of the exact language can be found [here](#).

## By-Laws Amendment

Some minor amendments are being proposed to the RHCFA by-laws. The most significant provision would be to drop the Finances and Community Relations chair positions on the executive committee in favor of two at-large positions. Other provisions offer some cleanup language and changed timelines to accommodate the switch to the sixteen-week calendar.



## RHCFA Elections

Officer elections are coming up soon. In March, there will be a vote to reaffirm Jennifer Fernandez for a second year as president. In April, elections will be held for secretary, treasurer, and the two at-large executive committee positions (if the by-laws amendment passes).



## Part-Timer Notes

We are still working with the District to change assignment maximums to 67% to reflect the new law passed last year. We will let you know what is going on as soon as information becomes available. On the dues front, CTA is considering dropping dues for instructors making less than \$8,000 per year. For those of you teaching only a little bit each year, this will significantly lower your obligations.



## Grievances



One of the most important activities our Association undertakes is to protect members when their rights under the Collective Bargaining Agreement have been violated. One such action occurred in 2007 when three full-time counselors were denied the proper opportunity to interview for transfer to the Counseling department. All attempts to resolve the situation informally were exhausted. With the help of the Community College Association, we have been engaged in arbitration hearings since the fall of 2008. This could be quite a costly venture, potentially costing our Association tens of thousands of dollars.

## Community College Association News

As you may know, Rio Hondo College faculty are members of the Community College Association. This is the higher education affiliate of the California Teachers Association, a group with over 300,000 members. At the national level, we are associated with the NEA, the largest public employee union which represents over 3 million members.

CCA meetings are held three times a year at various locations in California. Approximately ten faculty members from Rio Hondo attended the Winter Conference held in Costa Mesa. Workshops attended by our representatives included those on SLOs, grievances, legal representation, arbitration, and negotiating in rough economic times.



Attendees at the conference relax after a day of work-

At the meeting we learned that CCA and other organizations are greatly concerned with the influence that the accrediting agency for community colleges, ACCJC, has over issues that should be the subject of bargaining. For example, by requiring elaborate record-keeping and reporting of SLOs, the agency is essentially imposing new working conditions on faculty,

thereby inserting itself as a third party in negotiations. This puts districts and faculty associations in quite difficult situations. CCA and other union groups have been assessing legal and other options to mitigate the problem.

### A Small (or perhaps quite large) Fortune

Without question, community colleges are feeling the pinch of the difficult financial times that are facing the state and the nation. Summer or intersession terms have been cancelled at some schools, salaries and hiring have been frozen, and other belt-tightening has occurred. While all this has been going on, however, the 72 California community college districts as a whole, have been collecting quite a stockpile of money. Collectively, they have close to a billion dollars in their reserves, about twice the level required by law. Rio Hondo is no exception. Over the last five or so years, our reserve has grown from about \$5 million to about \$8 million!

### Vote for Lynette and Mary Ann

Lynette Nyaggah (English) is the vice-president of CCA? Her contacts and influence have been quite beneficial to RHCFA. She is running for a second term, with elections being held at the next CCA meeting, in April. Also, Lynette and Mary Ann Pacheco are running as representatives to the CTA state council. Please vote for them when you get a ballot in the mail.

### Congratulations Colin



Colin Young, from Political Science, graduated from the CCA Building Strong Locals Academy. A member of the third class, Colin joins Gil Puga (Speech) and economics instructor, Mike Javanmard, as Rio Hondo College faculty who have gone through the training. Participants learn how to strengthen their chapters by participating in three weekend-long workshops over the course of a year.