



The SCFA Sentinel

published by the Sierra College Faculty Association

FEBRUARY, 2000

... by, for, and about the united faculty of Sierra

Volume 1, Issue 1

Welcome to a new semester...a new and united Sierra College Faculty Association...and a new all-faculty newsletter! What you're reading is one result of months of long and arduous discussions between the part- and full-time leadership over the subject of unifying the two faculty groups under a common banner, to serve their common interests.

Last December, members of SCFA voted overwhelmingly to adopt a new constitution that accomplished this purpose. Subsequently, the leaders of our newly-united faculty association asked if I would develop and edit a newsletter for all of Sierra's 800-plus faculty, merging the exclusively part-time "Freeway Flyer" and the "SCFA News" into the single inclusive publication you now hold in your hands.

And so, we find ourselves embarking on a new journey, through somewhat uncharted territory. As your editor, I hope and intend to be open and responsive to the needs and desires of all of Sierra's diverse faculty through the pages of this newsletter...yet to do that effectively, I need your input. That includes criticism and suggestions for improvement as well as kudos and ideas. You'll find my phone and e-mail address on the last page, as well as those of the entire SCFA Executive Board. I encourage you to call or write any of us, anytime.

Now the real work begins: the work



President's Report

by SCFA President Ralph Eavenson

It's been a very eventful couple of months since the final issue of *SCFA NEWS*...and one of those events is the merger of *The Freeway Flyer* and the *SCFA NEWS* into this comprehensive newsletter for all Sierra faculty. We've also established Editor Joan Merriam as Communications Coordinator and Bob Keller as Website Administrator, to help SCFA get its message out.

Since last semester, a number of other events have also occurred.

THE GRAND JURY REPORT

The most immediate news is that the Placer County Grand Jury has issued their report on claims of a cover-up in settlement of the Debra Furtado case. Twenty other issues are still under investigation.

THE NO CONFIDENCE VOTE

Last fall, the membership voted to conduct a staff satisfaction survey. As a result of the grand jury findings of management mistakes—and the college's response attack on the jury—the new SCFA Executive Board voted to take the drastic step of conducting an immediate poll of the faculty to determine their confidence in the college president, Kevin Ramirez.

The Faculty Senate took custody of the ballots as they were tallied, after which the Senate's President sent the verified count to the Board of Trustees Chair.

As I reported to the Trustees

at their Feb. 8 meeting, those ballots revealed that Sierra College faculty overwhelmingly voted "No Confidence."

Out of Sierra's 173 full-time and at least 671 part-time faculty, of those voting only 94 responded with a vote of Confidence.

WHAT LED TO THE VOTE?

Leading the list is the embarrassing attempt by management to "spin" the Grand Jury report through a college-wide e-mail criticizing both the jury and their report. Many of those accusations involved the charge that the report was only preliminary, that it was biased, and that it contained unfounded accusations.

Yet in fact, the report was not "preliminary"—it was the grand jury's *final* report on the college's handling of the Furtado lawsuit and the subsequent settlement. The only accusations contained in their findings were those quoted from the lawsuit.

Yet management continued their attack on the jury, which unfortunately only served to further convince the public that something is rotten at Sierra.

Of course, faculty had already voiced some major concerns about how the college is managed. You can read some of those concerns for yourself—plus the text of the Grand Jury report—on our SCFA website, www.scfa.net.

Some have asked why there was no list of issues on the ballot. When SCFA polled the member-

(Continued on page 2)



Yes, winter has indeed arrived at Sierra's little home on the hill: our resident wild turkey (Grace, by name) has left for wherever turkeys go to get out of the rain, and there have already been several days when snow made the multitude of steps on the campus more than a little treacherous to negotiate. (Wasn't someone saying something about a *drought* about a month ago??)

Enrollment at NCC continues to build: last spring, we had over 3,000 students, and estimates are there'll be even more this semester by the time the final tally is in.

And speaking of "more"...NCC now has 54 *more* computers than before. The new ones are in the computer labs, while the old units have been moved to new workstations in the LRC and to an area in the Administration Building where students can use them to access the PASS system.

Construction on the new Fire Station Training Center, just below the south parking lot, is almost complete. Funded and operated by the City of Grass Valley, the building will include two 40-person classrooms which Sierra will be able to utilize when they're not being used by the City.

And just after the Training Center opens its doors, we'll be celebrating the ground-breaking for NCC's new Child Development Center. It's expected the Center will be completed and open by the spring semester of 2001.

Last semester's issue of the *Freeway Flyer* mentioned that NCC would be adding a new Disabled Student Services counselor this semester. Well, they have...and he's Milton Lucius, who'll be on campus two days a week to assist our disabled student population.

Welcome, Milton!

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

We will go to our classrooms and offices to do the work we've always done with and for students.

We will go to the Board of Trustees meetings to hear the Board discuss what they can do to solve the problems the grand jury has pointed out. We will also go to whatever meetings the Board holds to discuss our No Confidence vote.

We will go to the negotiations table with the District.

We will go to the Wednesday informational picketing to protest Sierra's low percentage of full-time faculty hires and the corresponding shabby treatment of part-time faculty.

And we will wait and see what else the Placer County Grand Jury reveals about how management has been spending the public's money in the operation of our college.

In the meantime, remember that the Board of Trustees does not answer to the faculty, so our vote of No Confidence has no binding effect on them. Yet in any university in the country—and probably any other community college in the state—such a vote would likely result in the trustees firing the president.

As Dr. Ramirez has an unusually close relationship with most members of our board, and—as the grand jury noted—they depend upon him rather heavily, the result probably depends more on what is revealed in the rest of the Grand Jury report and on public reaction.

Ultimately, the Trustees—just as we faculty—must answer to the people and the voters of the district.



(Continued from page 1)

ship last fall, several people objected to our questions, claiming they were slanted in such a way as to influence the results without giving two sides to each argument. While it would be easy to dismiss criticism as coming only from those who disagree with the results, SCFA officers tried instead to respond to their concerns.

As a result, we created the Confidence/No Confidence question to be as unbiased as possible: it contained no argument at all, required only a yes or no answer, and included an explanation of what each response actually meant.

WHAT HAVE WE GAINED?

In money or progress toward a contract, we expected nothing and gained nothing.

Meanwhile, the actions of President Ramirez and/or those he controls are threatening the well-being of our college...and keep in mind that faculty and support staff whose actions or incompetence threaten the welfare of the college are usually fired.

While there may be little to gain by bringing in a new president, it could be less disruptive for the college than an election defeat of incumbent trustees—and far less disruptive than a recall of the entire Board if the grand jury reveals more problems with how public money is spent and public business is conducted at Sierra College.

The cover-up of the lawsuit settlement—which resulted in the grand jury's negative findings—has done irreparable harm to the college's image. It has effectively killed any chance of a bond measure passage for new facilities.

Our vote of No Confidence did not *cause* this harm—our vote was a *response* to the harm done to our college.

So, what have faculty gained? Our self respect. We also stand to gain the respect of the Board of Trustees and the community.

Notes From the Negotiating Table

by Luis Sanchez, SCFA Chief Negotiator



Until recently, negotiations had been stalemated in the face of the administration's pleas of poverty, even while they enjoyed the fruits of their own recent substantial pay raise and continued their empire-building campaign—as evidenced by their recently-announced plans to expand

Roseville-Gateway.

But thanks to the dogged efforts of our CTA negotiating representative, Alan Frey, talks finally resumed on February 24. At the same time, the other faculty Negotiating Team members—Lin Fraser, Wayne Barbee, Margaret Williams, and I—are working to develop the kind of strong negotiations strategy that will move this intransigent administration off its seat.

During the last few months, the administration adopted a public relations campaign that blamed Sierra's fiscal woes on a lack of state funding. While no one can deny the need for better state financing of community colleges, the truth is that Sierra College *has* seen an increase in growth dollars over the past few years—funds which were intended by the state to benefit full and part-time employees who face higher prices for goods and services as they work to support themselves and their families.

Yet the administration chose to ignore the faculty's needs when it came to allocating those state growth dollars.

The result? An alienated and undervalued staff who not only feel the sting of this breach of trust, but also see their students paying an equally high price for the administration's wayward course.

You might have also noticed the new public relations tool distributed by the administration in the form of a glossy magazine called *Sierra College News and Events*. During a time in which we are told that there is no money for even a paltry cost-of-living adjustment, we can't help but notice that there never seems to be a shortage of funds for new PR campaigns, consulting fees, lease expansions, and so forth.

In fact, pages 12 and 13 of the slick sales pitch are devoted to touting the profitability of the Roseville-Gateway outpost. What the fluff piece does NOT mention is that the so-called "profits" Roseville-Gateway generates fail to include the amortized cost of our capital investment. Moreover, a careful examination of page 13's Cost Analysis shows that the Administrative Overhead doesn't appear to include the salaries paid to the three administrators maintaining permanent offices there. Once those salaries are added in, Roseville-Gateway's "profit" promptly turns into a substantial *loss*. (This isn't surprising, given the incomprehensibly high lease rate Sierra pays, compared to similar building space in the area.)

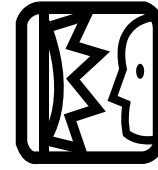
Yet even more disturbing than this article is the one just preceding it that proclaims the virtues of Sierra College's shared governance system. What that piece fails to mention is that all of our shared governance committee decisions can be overridden by the unilateral will of the college's President.

This is hardly "shared" governance.

The Negotiating Team welcomes your ideas and suggestions—here's how to reach us:

Luis Sanchez, Chair	Ext. 2707	(Luispsanchez@aol.com)
Wayne Barbee	Ext. 3513	(waydor@pacbell.net)
Lin Fraser	916-568-3100, ext. 1664	(lfraser@jps.net)
Margaret Williams	Ext. 2919	

Staying Informed ³



by Bob Keller,
Website Administrator

Finding it tough to stay on top of the latest goings-on at Sierra?

Well, all you have to do is point your favorite Web browser to

www.scfa.net

for a faculty's-eye view of everything and anything related to the college! You can get current news, read copies of articles and editorials from local and regional newspapers, thumb through a calendar of upcoming meetings and events, and get perspectives from the leadership of SCFA. Our web site is available to anyone, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week—all you need is an Internet connection and a web browser.

Be sure to check in often, because the site is updated almost daily!

And if you're a part-time faculty member, we operate a private and confidential e-mail list exclusively for part-timers. This list-serv is designed to keep part-timers informed, and to provide a place for discussing problems and concerns that are specific to part-time faculty. We frequently report news items on the list also.

Another plus is that all of our part-time SCFA Board members are on the list, so if you have an SCFA-related question, you'll get an answer fast.

To join, just send an e-mail to Bob Keller at:

oitsubob@ix.netcom.com

and ask to be added to the listserv. Be sure to include your name, department, and the classes you teach.

"Status quo" ...

Latin for

"The mess we're in."

— Jeve

So, Why Should I Join the Union?

An Answer from Two Perspectives

by Fara Eskandari and Jim Weir

A FULL-TIMER'S POINT OF VIEW

At our Sunset Whitney breakfast meeting, I announced that I am now on SCFA's Membership Committee. Part of that job is recruitment...but don't worry: I *won't* be stationed near the cafeteria check-out line and harass you to become a member!

While I will respect your decision about joining the union, let me tell you why I think becoming a member of SCFA is important.

In our world there is and will always be competition for scarce resources. Here at Sierra, we compete for wages, salaries and benefits with all the subgroups of the larger group. Invariably, the stronger and more powerful wins over the weaker, creating an unhealthy imbalance.

I believe our administration has historically been that stronger group. This imbalance could have been *much* worse if we hadn't had a faculty association to fight on our behalf.

Take my own case, for instance: *even as a union official*, for five months all I got was the runaround from the administration when I tried to point out errors in computing my earned units as well as interpreting my contract. Thanks to SCFA, I was able to bring and win a grievance against the district for these errors. More recently, it took only the *threat* of a grievance to resolve the issue of my reclassification.

Membership in SCFA/CCA/NEA also gives you the protection of \$1 million in professional liability insurance—no small matter in today's litigious society.

But our bargaining power and position is only as strong as our membership numbers, a fact the district knows all too well. Joining SCFA is the best way to protect your interests, and let your voice be heard.

THE PART-TIME PERSPECTIVE

There are a number of excellent reasons why full-timers should join SCFA. While many of these reasons apply equally to part-timers, SCFA is doing some things *specifically* for part-time faculty.

First, SCFA has lower dues—just \$15 a pay period—for part-timers, with *no* reduction in membership benefits. You still get insurance. The right to vote for your leadership. Discounts. Membership in our state and national organizations. Representation at the bargaining table. Grievance assistance.

Second, recognizing that the fractured schedules of part-timers often “disconnect” us from our colleagues and campuses, SCFA now supports our part-time e-mail listserv. It also underwrites this newsletter and a faculty web page, so both part- and full-timers can stay informed about events of the day and hour. (A good example: when the grand jury story broke, not even the *college* had a copy of the jury's report...but SCFA had it posted on our website!)

The last reason part-timers should join SCFA comes down to equity. We have four SCFA faculty hunched over the bargaining table, intent on gaining their colleagues a decent salary, medical benefits, job security, and everything else that makes for a professional position.

Every part-timer benefits from those efforts, because SCFA bargains for *all* of Sierra's faculty. Yet just 120 part-timers are carrying the financial load for the 750 others that aren't members.

That's simply not equitable. If you want a fair share of the pie, you should be willing to buy your fair share of the ingredients.

Isn't your future worth \$15 a month?

I Wonder Why...⁴



...some of Sierra's top brass were apparently less than enthusiastic at the news that the full-time and part-time faculty had reached an agreement on unification, especially when the college had been so battered by the pernicious climate of mutual mistrust that had existed between the two faculty groups for the past couple of years?

Could it be that the ongoing intra-faculty warfare had become a perfect foil against which the District could play out the old game of “Divide and Conquer,” pitting each faculty group against the other in order to divert attention away from the *real* adversary?

One can only guess.....

Informational Picketing Continues



Both part- and full-time faculty—plus more than a few students—have been engaging in informational picketing in front of the Rocklin campus cafeteria every Wednesday for the past month, and organizers say the action will continue until substantial gains are made in equity for part-timers at Sierra.

The action is the brainchild of part-time instructor Jerry Fishman, who galvanized his colleagues into taking more direct action on the equity issue after the administration broke off negotiations with the faculty union late last semester.

Statewide, part-time faculty earn about 37¢ for every dollar a full-timer earns.

Anyone wanting to join the picketing is encouraged to simply stop the table by any Wednesday from 10:30 AM until 1 PM—there are plenty of protest signs to go around!

Letters to the Editor

This letter was written to Negotiations Chair Luis Sanchez by a member of the full-time faculty, in response to an email on the Sierra College email system. Luis' response follows.

I just read Bill Hotchkiss' commentary on the "No Confidence" vote. The point I want to question is his statement that our 1% unfunded liability dollars were put into the General Fund. Has this indeed happened? If so, what as faculty do we need to do to rectify the situation? _____

Good question. According to section 11.15 of our last contract, this 1% fund was supposed to be overseen and administered by a committee of three faculty and two management rep-

resentatives. The fund was also to be maintained in a *restricted* account.

Last December, I notified John Delury that the faculty wished to call a meeting of the committee to evaluate the status and viability of the fund.

He indicated that management representatives would not attend such a meeting.

I then asked him for the fund's most recent bank statement, financial statement, and actuarial report. He couldn't provide a separate bank statement, but did give me some financial statements showing the balances for "all fiduciary funds" as well as two excerpted pages from an actuarial report apparently done in July of 1999.

When I asked John for the rest of the report, he said he wasn't at liberty to share it with me—though he would

soon be meeting with the actuary to obtain further information.

In mid-February, I left a voicemail message asking John to meet with the faculty committee representatives so we could discuss the actuarial report. A few days later I received a reply that he would *not* meet with us, but would provide us with a copy of the report shortly. (I saved the message to ensure that I did not simply misunderstand it). You now know about as much as I do.

While John's March 15 resignation from the college may result in further delays, I intend to ask that the fund be placed in a segregated account overseen by the Presidents of SCFA and the Faculty Senate until we can examine an actuarial report assuring us that the 1% fund is necessary and viable.

Letters to The Sentinel should be sent to Editor Joan Merriam through campus mail to NCC...or via e-mail to jcm@pacbell.net...or by snail-mail to Sierra College Nevada Co. Campus, 250 Sierra College Dr., Grass Valley 95945. Unsigned material will not be published, although names can be withheld upon request. Letters may be edited for length and content.

Web Sites

YOUR FULL-SERVICE CYBERSOURCE FOR THE BEST WORLD WIDE WEB INFORMATION ON HIGHER EDUCATION AND RELATED

◆ HISTORY AND POLITICS OUT LOUD

www.hpol.org

This site features a great collection of audio materials capturing significant political and historical events and personalities of the twentieth century.

◆ LIVES, THE BIOGRAPHY RESOURCE

<http://members.home.net/klanxner/lives/>

Reputed to be the largest guide to biographical sites on the Web, this site contains links to thousands of biographies, autobiographies, memoirs, diaries, letters, oral histories, etc. of the famous, infamous, and not-so-famous alike.

◆ PLAGIARISM.ORG

<http://plagiarism.org>

No one likes to "count" on students cheating, but plagiarism is a fact of life we need to be alert to. This site provides instructors with an easy way of spotting and deterring plagiarism, by use of an advanced matching algorithm that compares student papers with the site's huge database of digital materials—including those from online paper mills. The resulting Originality Report, which analyzes the paper's structure and content, is then sent to the

FACCC Leadership Lobby Day



Want to learn how to lobby effectively for change?

How to talk to your legislators and your local governmental representatives about the issues that concern you as a community college instructor?

Then sign up to attend the Faculty Association of California Community College (FACCC) Leadership Lobby Day in Sacramento on March 20. The day will include training sessions, updates on community college issues, and legislative guest speakers.

Call FACC at 916-447-8555, or check out their website at **www.faccc.org** for more information.

*watch for more webs
next month.....* ✨

What's New for Sierra Part-timers

by Jim Weir, SCFA Vice-President



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If you'd told me two years ago that I would have seniority privileges, that I could accumulate sick leave, or that Sierra would be rectifying past errors on my retirement benefits, I'd have asked what you were smoking.

But it's true. Here's a rundown:

SENIORITY Starting this Spring, all departments *should* be honoring the seniority agreement reached last year with the college. Under this agreement, your department must offer you at least as many units as you "normally" teach, depending upon your seniority rank. After everyone has been assigned this "normal" load, any unassigned classes are offered first to the most senior part-timer, then to the next most senior, and so on. Ideally, within a few years the most senior teachers will be at or near the maximum load allowed by law.

As we get closer to signing a new contract, this provision will have to be put into language that is unambiguous and enforceable. (You'll find the agreement on the SCFA Web page at www.scfa.net.)

Some of our full-time colleagues have valid concerns with the present agreement, since if for some reason one of their classes gets dropped, they're only allowed to bump the *least* senior part-timer. Under that scenario, it's possible that a full-timer could end up teaching from 8AM to 10PM. This issue will be handled on a case-by-case basis for now, and later addressed within the contract. We are, after all, a *united* faculty, and have every intention of protecting the rights of *all* of our colleagues.

SICK LEAVE ACCUMULATION Last December, our SCFA attorney served the college with a letter demanding that Sierra abide by the state law requiring cumulative sick leave for part-time faculty.

What this means is that all your unused sick leave, beginning on the day you started teaching, will be

retroactively calculated and placed in a leave "bank account" on which you can draw any time.

In the semester it's earned, sick leave can usually be used only for illness. But once the semester ends and *unused* sick leave is "banked," you can use it for any contractually-allowed leave such as bereavement, personal necessity, jury duty, etc.

We're still wrestling with the issue of reimbursement for any sick days that your pay was docked in the past: our interpretation of the law is that banked leave can be applied to salary deductions made for too many sick days during the past three years. We'll update you on this as negotiations continue.

RETIREMENT In the same letter, our attorney demanded that Sierra abide by the State Teachers Retirement System (STRS) guidelines for calculating part-time faculty retirement credits. The college agrees they've been figuring these credits incorrectly, and have directed the Busi-

ness Office to untangle the mess and adjust everyone's account. But if you have an *immediate* need for your benefits to be recalculated, and the Business Office seems to be dragging its feet, contact me or any member of the Board.

QUO VADIS? Money, plain and simple. We are one of the **ONLY** colleges in the state to pay new Master's degree part-timers at the same rate as Ph.D.s who've been with the college for years. Our goal is to institute an actual salary *schedule* for part-time faculty, so education and longevity will count for something other than a pat on the back.

Both full-timers and the administration agree that part-time salary equity is the most important issue of the moment. I hope we'll have some good news to report on that front later this year.

◆ SIERRA COLLEGE FACULTY ASSOCIATION ◆



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