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Carl Friedlander
California Federation of Teachers

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Presentation by Carl Friedlander, President, Los Angeles College Faculty Guild, AFT 1521, & Community College Council, CFT/AFT Carl’s email is cfriedlander@AFT1521.org

I would like to focus on three issues that have emerged at bargaining tables in the California community colleges:

1. faculty proposals to have all faculty, full-time and part-time, placed on a single salary schedule
2. pressure to bargain agreements that pre-fund retiree health benefit costs in districts where district-paid retiree coverage is provided
3. escalating demands from the regional accrediting agency to incorporate language on Student Learning Outcomes (SLO’s) into negotiated faculty evaluation procedures

Movement toward a single salary schedule

All full-time faculty in California community colleges are tenured or tenure track. All contingent faculty are part-time (60% or less).

Historically, full-time faculty are paid from a schedule set up as a matrix where the columns are based on education and the rows are based on teaching experience. In contrast, part-time faculty have traditionally been paid an “hourly rate” (where the hours are classroom hours) from a separate schedule consisting of a single column, where educational background does not affect salary.

As the campaign for salary parity for part-timers has gained steam over the last decade, local bargaining tables have gotten part-timers moved onto full-time salary schedules in a small but growing number of districts. The goal is to pay part-timers pro rata pay based on the proportion of a fulltime load that their assignment represents. This raises a number of issues:

- Full-timers are expected to provide service to the institution not directly connected to their instructional assignments. How should this be factored into the calculation of fair pro rata rates for part-timers?
- What should be the basis for determining salary step advances for part-timers?
- In the eyes of some groups of part-time faculty – librarians, counselors, classroom instructors in “high load” vocational disciplines – the movement toward pro rata and away from “hourly rate” is perceived as disadvantaging them (or violating the principle of “equal pay for equal work”). How do you minimize conflict during the transition to a single schedule?
Pre-funding retiree health care

With the implementation of GASB 43 and 45, public employers who provide retiree health coverage are feeling more pressured to pre-fund this benefit. Management demands for negotiated agreements to pre-fund – or unilateral actions by management to move dollars off the bargaining table and put them in trusts and restricted accounts for the purpose of pre-funding – can become flashpoints in labor-management relations.

In the LACCD, where we have a very rich retiree health insurance program, our faculty union led the way in building support of the other district unions for a permanent pre-funding plan that it worked out with management. In this way, we were able to preserve the promise of district-paid retiree health insurance for future generations of LACCD employees and avoid the kind of two-tiered systems of retiree coverage that have become common in California community colleges.

SLO’s and evaluation

The ACCJC’s new standards make clear that accreditors expect student learning outcomes (SLO’s) to play a role in faculty evaluations:

“Faculty and others directly responsible for student progress toward achieving stated student learning outcomes have, as a component of their evaluation, effectiveness in producing those learning outcomes.”

Standard III. A. 1. c.

Understandably, faculty members have been concerned about the potential misuse of SLO assessment in relation to individual faculty evaluations. Clearly, it would be unfair to hold individual instructors accountable for aspects of student learning that range well beyond their control—things like varying levels of student preparation, motivation, work load, family situation and other factors that impact an individual’s ability or willingness to learn. It would also be impractical—if not impossible—to assess the learning of every student in every section on a regular basis.

There is also a strong feeling among many faculty union leaders that the escalating demands of accreditors that SLO’s be addressed within faculty evaluation are an inappropriate intrusion into collective bargaining. Some have even called for the filing of lawsuits against the accrediting agencies.

We are struggling with this at bargaining table in California. Your input and suggestions are welcome.