Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Here we are at the midpoint of the Spring semester, and as of yet, we have not even begun the journey toward a new contract with administration. I have no doubt that this leaves many, if not all, of you unsettled. While there is certainly no cause for celebration, it is important to note that all is not “gloom and doom.”

To begin, it is important that we remember that because we are a New York State public sector union, we have certain protections under the Triborough Amendment to the Taylor law. Since 1982, because of that amendment, that an old contract stays in effect until a new one is negotiated. The quid pro quo is that we may not strike. The reason for both these measures is to ensure that both sides negotiate in good faith. So while it is true that our contract has been expired since August 31, 2018, we are still under the protection of the terms of that contract today and will remain so until our new contract goes into effect.

Secondly, President Baston has called for a Labor Relations Council meeting to take place on March 25, which I will attend. I remain hopeful that after that meeting we will be able to engage in some meaningful dialogue with the administration’s negotiating team. Regardless of the outcome of the upcoming meeting, I will keep you apprised of our contract negotiation status.
Meanwhile, please allow me to remind you of two things, the first of which is the issue of substitute teaching. As I have informed you in the past, it is the position of the administration that adjuncts are to be paid at their normal hourly rate, but only for 50 minutes of the hour when substituting for another instructor. For example, let’s say you are a new adjunct and are receiving the entry rate of $62.92/hr. If you were teaching your own three credit course once a week, you would be paid $188.76 (or 3X $62.92) for that class, which would run for 150 minutes (or 3 fifty minute hours). If, however, you were to substitute for another instructor for the same length of time, you would receive only $157.30. This is the result of a bizarre interpretation of the term “pro-rata basis” in our collective bargaining agreement (Article IV, Section 3, paragraph c) on the part of RCC CFO Joseph Marra.

I have been unsuccessful, to date, at convincing either him or President Baston of the error of their ways. I have, however, been assured by our president that he sees merit to my “equal pay” argument on an ethical basis. I made the point to him that two instructors who are equally credentialed who cover the same material in the same class should receive equal pay. He has agreed to address this issue contractually going forward.

With all the last minute course additions and drops that take place within the last couple of weeks before school starts, schedules can sometimes be severely disrupted, and to say it is an inconvenience is a gross understatement. Of course we will always do our best to make sure that all adjunct faculty members are treated with the respect and dignity they deserve, but the bottom line is, no adjunct, regardless of seniority, is guaranteed more than two courses per semester.

Finally, I urge you all once again to become active in your union to whatever extent is reasonable for you. An e-mail or a phone call from any of you is never viewed as a disruption or an intrusion, but rather as an opportunity to engage with a colleague about shared concerns in a shared workplace.

In solidarity,

Bill Hohlfeld, President
RCC Adjunct Faculty Association
Current & Recent Happenings

General Membership Meeting
On March 12th & 13th the RCC AFA held the Fall General Membership. Key topics on the agenda included: the status of contract negotiations, the development of the Adjunct Academy for RCC staff pursuing internal advancements such as full-time employment status, and the completion of enrollment forms required for union membership as well as the importance of recruiting of new members. By vote of the Executive Board, attendance at union meetings is to be restricted to union members. Guests from Mercy College Joe Cassoni and Mila Rostain for SEIU were introduced and were welcomed unanimously by special vote to attend the General Membership Meeting.

United We Stand in Support of Mercy College Adjuncts
The RCC AFA has joined faculty at Fordham University, Assemblyman Thomas J. Abinatti, along with other higher education unions and politiciains in New York signing a letter support for the organization of Mercy College Adjunct Faculty. For more information, read the following article published January, 31st 2019.


DUE Meeting of Union Presidents
On November 29, 2018 RCC AFA President Bill Hohlfeld attended an event hosted by Dutchess United Educators as an opportunity to network with community college union presidents from Dutchess, Orange, Sullivan, Ulster and Westchester. The meeting provided an discussion of unions structures, contract negotiation successes and issues, and the value of regional organization.

Passing of Professor Pisani
We are saddened to report the passing of a recent addition to the RCC Adjunct Faculty Association Board as Member-at-Large Joseph Pisani, Adjunct in the Business Department.

As per RCC Human Resources, a memorial gathering was held Tuesday, March 19, 2019 at Dorsey Carlone Funeral Home, 1100 Cortlandt Street, Peekskill, NY 10566.

We wish strength and peace for Joe's family at this time.

Peter Marino, Vice President
RCC Adjunct Faculty Association
Schedule Expectations and the Future of Enrollment

Adjunct Faculty at RCC and elsewhere devote a tremendous amount of time and effort to create outstanding academic experiences for their students. While some adjuncts may teach one course per semester, some adjuncts teach 2 or more classes each semester at 1 or more colleges and universities, and depend upon these classes for a significant amount of their income. While some adjuncts drive hundreds of miles throughout the week to different locations, some teach hybrid or on-line sections.

No matter what situation you’re in, one thing adjuncts have in common is the expectation that we will be offered a similar class schedule each semester because we rely on the income, the schedule and the commitment. While we all understand that enrollment trends have a direct effect on all full-time and adjunct faculty schedules, many adjuncts’ schedules (and expectations) may be negatively affected.

The enrollment landscape is changing not only for RCC, but for many SUNY campuses. As the article noted below states, “Community Colleges - which account for 30 of SUNY’s 64 campuses across the state - have been the driving force behind the falling enrollment numbers.” President Baston is focused on introducing programs such as Guided Pathways, Middle Skills Academy and certificate programs to attract not only high school graduates, but adult learners, corporate employees, and other potential populations to boost enrollment. The future is positive but, of course, uncertain.

For a perspective on what is happening across the state, please read this article published February 14, 2019 by Chad Arnold in the Democrat and Chronicle democratandchronicle.com (a USA Today publication) and headlined in the Rockland Journal News: IS NEW YORK’S POPULATION DECLINE IMPACTING COLLEGE ENROLLMENT? SUNY SAYS YES...

Nancy Rosen, Secretary
RCC Adjunct Faculty Association