

# State of the Union

Volume 1, Issue 2

March 2003



## MARCH MADNESS

### Prepare for action!

*BY: Marilyn Martin*  
*QCC MCCC Union President*

The fiscal crisis occurring in Massachusetts is of grave concern to everyone. Many of us have been through this experience before. We have watched QCC's surface get tattered and torn as hard decisions were made to determine priorities. Unfortunately, the difficult truth is that cuts are made; priorities shift; life goes on. Eventually, times get better, but everyone's best efforts still cannot undo the harm done during the hard times.

Some of us remember the infamous "zero years." That's right; MCCC members endured more than four years with no raises. Individual salaries do not recover from even one year without a raise to keep up with inflation. As a result, major efforts such as classification are necessary in order to bring salaries back to at least the market rate. In addition, more subtle injuries to our earnings also occur. For example, last year, although the legislature refused to increase our health care contribution, our co-payments and deductibles were increased. That part of our contribution will never be returned to its original level even if our overall contribution were increased. The economy will improve, but the impact on state employees has always been severe and long lasting. Yes, these are drastic times, but the

*continued on page 2*

#### INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 1 An Article from Your Union President
- 2 Annual Union Luncheon
- 3 What is Macer?
- 4 DCE Grievance
- 4 What is the role of the MCCC Board of Directors?

### Critical strategic action needed

*BY: Flo Lucci*  
*Strategic Action Coordinator*

If there were ever a time for all of us to band together, it would be now. The next month or so will be critical in terms of making our voices heard to the legislative body. On May 5, 2003 the House of Representatives will debate Governor Romney's proposal to reorganize the Massachusetts public higher education system. Some view his proposal similar to other states that have turned their public higher education system into nothing but workforce training sites. Although we would never argue that workforce development is an integral part of what we do, we must never allow dissemination to the point

---

*If there were ever a time for all of us to band together, it would be now.*

---

that access to traditional academic higher education for low and middle income residents is compromised. Although I find my workload extremely demanding as usual, I felt that it was important to stop and see how I can help in our efforts until our state's economic condition improves. I hope that we can all work together to resist Governor Romney's efforts and advocate for the ability to continue to do the good work that we do.

On Wednesday, March 5, 2003 I attended a statewide meeting for the MCCC Strategic Action Committee. We have all heard about the Romney proposal, but let me share with you some new points I learned during that meeting:

*continued on page 3*

long-term impact is not to be minimized.

We must each be thoroughly informed about the Governor’s proposal; we must be prepared to act. We may be called upon to go to the State House, call legislators, work an informational picket, or explain our issues to others. Every public higher education employee has an obligatory role to protect public higher education and the people employed in the system.

**LEGISLATIVE BREAKFAST REPORT**

It was interesting to be a part of an initial effort to confront the Governor’s attack on the Higher Education system. On Friday, 2/28, several members of the QCC/MCCC executive committee and myself attended the Annual Legislative Breakfast very ably hosted by President Kurtinitis. Several legislators were in attendance. President Kurtinitis did an excellent job outlining her thoughts on Governor Romney’s Higher Education Reorganization plan. She discussed her concerns regarding centralization, increased layers of governance, loss of local control, etc. She also suggested several alternatives for legislators to ponder. Those in attendance appeared to listen thoughtfully, but of course they made no promises.

**DAY AND DCE SENIORITY LISTS CONCERNS**

Both the day and the DCE seniority lists at QCC have multiple problems and both are currently being examined with an eye to making them reflect the reality of our institution and accomplish what seniority lists are supposed to do. The MCCC and QCC Human Resources are currently addressing both seniority list concerns.

Two articles in the day contract concerning the seniority list:

- Article 19.05.A: “Seniority shall mean a unit member’s length of continuous full-time unit service...”
- Article 19.05.C: “By October 15 of each year, the President of the College... shall forward to the President of the Association... seniority lists, which shall indicate a unit member’s college-wide seniority in the professional staff work unit and the faculty work unit and the unit member’s seniority in that unit member’s department(s)/program area(s)/ work area(s) whichever is appropriate.”

It is the second section where things get complex. Since the major purpose of the day seniority list is

**The QCC MCCC Annual Luncheon**

will be held on **Tuesday, May 20, 2003** at Club Maxine’s –Maxwell Silverman’s Toolhouse at **12 noon.**

Please join us to honor our retirees (**53** at last count) and our members (**130**) at this special event.

The cost of the dinner is \$10.00 to our members.

Once again the members graciously invited their retirees to be their guests.

Please join us for a good time at Club Maxine’s on May 20<sup>th</sup>.

for retrenchment purposes, it is important that each unit member has both his/her college-wide and work area seniority properly documented. If you have taught at least eight courses in an area (as part of your DAY responsibilities), you are probably eligible for seniority in that area. That may become significant if the dreaded retrenchment looms.

So, when the list is distributed, check your status carefully. It could be very important. It is certainly something better pursued while things are calm.

**CHAPTER GRIEVANCE**

The Chapter filed a grievance concerning the recent change in the withdrawal process for students. The grievance does not address the substance of the policy change. Rather it requests that such a significant change in policy should go through the Governance System. In that way, the College community could have discussion regarding the need for the change. The issue was not taken to any Governance committees. In the meetings where it was discussed, it was not positively received. Even if it were to go through our Governance process, the result could be the same, but the concept of shared governance means that all constituents have collaborative participation. It is the Chapter’s concern that significant policies are not necessarily arrived at through collaboration. ❖

***Please consider becoming a Delegate to the MCCC 2003 Delegate Assembly on Saturday, May 10 at the Ramada Inn in Auburn. Contact Sarah Hovsepian at X4315 if interested.***

- The most important thing is that the way that reorganization bills are put forth in the legislature only allows for a vote for or against the entire proposal. I am sure that you will agree that this is frightening.
- His efforts towards privatizing the Mass School of Art, Mass Maritime, and UMASS Medical Center appear to disseminate collective bargaining only and don't seem to accomplish any other goals.
- Tuition retention would be evaluated by a 2/3 enrollment assessment and 1/3 performance assessment but there are no details given as to how the performance would be measured.
- Restructuring to a one line item budget under the Board of Higher Education only creates further layers of bureaucracy not less.
- Make no mistake, Governor Romney is attempting to completely remove Chapter 150E which protects the following areas for unit members:
  - Workload, Evaluations and Assignments
  - Professional Development
  - Longevity Pay
  - Sick Leave Buy-Backs
  - Salary Step Increases
  - Retirement Incentive Plans and Seniority
  - Retrenchment Language
  - Just Cause for Performance-Based Terminations
  - Job Descriptions
  - Length of the Work Day/Work Year
  - Subcontract of our Work
- In addition, his proposal for the 75/25 health insurance structures needs further clarification. What the proposal states is that the state would pay 75% of the lowest HMO premium. Fallon has the lowest rates statewide so each employee is only going to be allowed 75% of the single premium through Fallon, which is \$162.47 this year. Likewise, 75% of the Fallon family premium for this year is \$413.77 so that is the most that they will contribute on any family plan regardless of the different premiums from the various plans.

In the next few weeks, we will be getting various communications from our statewide union leaders. The time for us to voice our concerns is now - not when it may be too late. Please try to make your concerns known to your legislators. They are willing to fight this plan, but need to hear from us. <http://www.state.ma.us/legis/memmenu.htm> ❖

## So what is MACER?

*BY: John Solaperto  
Professional Staff*

MACER, the Management Association Committee on Employee Relations, (article XXII in our contract), is a committee established at the College level with the purpose of discussing "...matters of mutual concern to the employee and the employer."

The committee is comprised of six members, 3 representing the local College administration and 3 representing the local Association. Representatives are appointed by the President of the College and the Local Chapter President. Additionally each President designates a chairperson from their respective appointees.

It is contractually mandated that the committee meet at least once per month during the academic year, unless there is a mutual agreement that there is no need to meet during a month. The chairpersonship of the committee alternates between the Association and the College. Both parties may submit items for the agenda to the chairperson; however, it is understood that the MACER committee has no power to "...negotiate, alter, or amend..." the terms of our contract.

Now that's the official explanation, paraphrased from our current contract. A more practical explanation of the MACER committee is that it is a forum for direct communications between labor and management. It is a place where questions can be addressed directly to both parties to obtain an answer that is not filtered through some drawn out bureaucratic process. MACER items are typically issues/concerns that affect the working

*continued on page 4*

## Union Meeting Times

*BY: Betsy Zuegg  
QCC MCCC Secretary*

I would like to remind our membership that open MCCC meetings are held on the second Thursday of the month (excluding months when classes are not in session) at 2pm in Room 107A. Prior to each monthly meeting, an email reminder is sent with an attached copy of the minutes of the previous month's meeting. We invite and encourage all of our members, both part and full time, to join us at these meetings!

conditions of the unit at large. Issues for proposal as MACER agenda items can be brought to any member of the committee.

This is my first year of service to the union as a member of MACER, and I was somewhat surprised to be asked to act as chairperson, (I'm still learning). I encourage you to speak to me in regard to any issue(s) you feel may be appropriate as agenda items. I would also urge you to voice concerns directly to administrators. There should be an attempt to resolve issues with supervisors, dept. heads, instructional deans, etc. before any issue is brought to the MACER committee. Sheila Sykes, our VP for Administrative Affairs at QCC, for instance, has indicated that she is approachable in this regard. Taking this sort of action first can often resolve issues, (or begin to have them addressed), before we bring them to MACER. This approach can also put the committee in a better position if the issue does have to come to MACER. ❖

## What is the role of the MCCC Board of Directors?

*BY: Sarah Hovsepian  
MCCC Board of Directors*

The MCCC Board of Directors meets monthly- usually the third Friday of each month, with usual exceptions in July and December. This meeting is the opportunity for all fifteen Community College Directors to meet, bring Chapter concerns to the Board, make decisions on budget and policies, and personally carry information back to their campuses.

Each meeting of the Board has reports from all the officers, reports from our Strategic Action and Day Bargaining Teams, and from our MTA Representatives and Consultants. Our Communications Coordinator presents the coming edition of "MCCC News," which is now being mailed to every member's home. Twice a year there are reports from both the Day and DCE Statewide Grievance Coordinators, and their annual reports are sent to the campuses where they are placed in members' mailboxes.

In addition to the monthly meetings, Directors are expected to be involved in other MCCC activities. In my case, I am on the Personnel Committee and the By-Laws Committee. In the past I have been on the MCCC Executive Committee, as well as chairing the committee that located our new

## DCE Grievance

*BY: Maura Tighe Stickles  
DCE Grievance Coordinator*

We continue to work with QCC Personnel Office on the DCE Seniority List. When we began to examine the Seniority List last fall it became apparent that there were errors in years of seniority noted for many of our DCE members. As a result a lengthy and time consuming process began which has included back tracking and double checking seniority for the past 5 years.

We expect to have this process wrapped up within the next two weeks at which time a DCE Seniority List will be distributed to all members. It will be important for each of us to triple check for accuracy. If questions and/or concerns arise, please let me know as soon as possible. ❖

## Your dues at work

*BY: Karen M. Cox  
QCC MCCC Treasurer*

Our budget maintains its balance and we are in good condition to meet the demands of these changing times. Please remember if you have any questions about your annual dues, you can contact me at 508-854-4479 or visit me in B58A.

You can also contact the MCCC statewide office at: 27 Mechanic St., Suite 104 Worcester, Ma. 01608. Or call: 508-890-6688 and ask for Phil Kennedy. All of your questions are important, so please feel free to ask them. ❖

Central Offices. I have also been actively involved with the Statewide Professional Staff Committee.

Each Community College has its own unique personality and individual needs. The Board of Directors is an exciting, dynamic group of professionals working to improve our working conditions and the quality services we provide for our students.

To take a look at the year's work, please consider becoming a delegate to the MCCC 2003 Delegate Assembly on Saturday, May 10<sup>th</sup> at the Ramada Inn in Auburn. Please let me know if you are interested (X4315). ❖