

# State of the Union

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## A Letter from your Union President

*BY: Marilyn Martin  
QCC/MCCC Union President*

Here we are again at the end of another semester. For some it is the end of our first year here and for some it is the end of one of many years at QCC. Even though I count myself in the latter group, I am pleased that I still get pleasure, satisfaction and challenge from my work with my students.

This semester there was one particular issue that, although it occurred outside of the classroom, has much significance concerning our relationship with students. The issues concerning the change in the requirement of two signatures for a student to withdraw from a course raised many questions for the faculty and staff and the entire college. The issue has two layers: first, the manner in which the policy was changed and second, the question of whether or not a student should have to get any signature in order to withdraw from a course.

The first concern has been negotiated and is stated in article 4A.01 (page 9) of the MCCC day contract. This article states in part: "The Employer recognizes the importance of the advisory role of unit members in matters of College governance.... A governance structure shall provide for an open forum for discussion and information sharing for the purpose of providing the President of the College with advisory input prior to the promulgation of College policy." While recognizing that our input is only advisory, we still must protect our right to have that input. The withdrawal policy change, after only one discussion at the All College Forum where it received little or no

positive response, was not implemented according to the bylaws of our governance structure.

People tend to groan (or yawn) at the mention of governance here at QCC. We have a long history of ignoring, circumnavigating, and manipulating our governance structure. We did indeed "look" at the structure recently in an attempt to remedy that situation. The proposed changes to the structure and process were minimal as was interest in making those changes. Out of approximately 400 eligible voters, the vote was as follows:

<i>Part time employees</i>	<i>6 yes</i>	<i>1 no</i>
<i>Full time employees</i>	<i>38 yes</i>	<i>4 no</i>
<i>Students</i>	<i>8 yes</i>	<i>1 no</i>

Governance is supposed to be about all members of the community having a voice in shaping our institution. This was hardly a representative vote.

The change in the withdrawal policy was characterized by those who supported it as merely a change in procedure, and as such, did not need to go through the governance process. The Chapter filed a grievance for which the requested remedy was that the policy go through the process since the change was so significant and input so important. Even this was complicated by discord over which committee it should go through and who sits on what committee. Is our structure that vague? As a result of the grievance, the issue has been sent to both the Enrollment and Student Services Committee and the Academic Affairs Committee. Keep in mind that was the goal – to have open discussion about the issue. This is the point of the governance system. In the end, all the discussion is still only advisory, but we must not give up our voice. We have much to say to help the President understand the many issues which impact our classrooms.

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The second layer of this issue, whether or not students should have to get any signatures in order to withdraw, is not my point here. We each have a personal view on the matter, but that is not the issue. Rather, the issue I am addressing here is how we arrive at the decision whether or not to require any signature in the withdrawal process. I believe the policy change was too important to be undertaken with so little discussion.

I would like to see a further review of the governance structure. It is not enough to say that the President, her senior staff, and everyone in the college will make a concerted effort to “use” the system. I believe that in order to make the system “user friendly,” we must strengthen the components of the system, we must enhance our understanding of how the system is supposed to work, and we must ensure that more concerns go through the system, not fewer concerns. Put the structure to work. Use it to discuss, formulate and advise. Perhaps now is the time to consider adding a faculty senate, which would present yet another perspective on issues pertinent to its constituency much as each of the other committees in the structure represents particular concerns and constituencies as parts of the whole.

Those of us who have been here a long time, together with those who bring a fresh perspective, can pool our energy to strengthen the institution, protect our voice, and create a sorely needed effective governance system. If you are interested in exploring the possibility of a faculty senate, please contact me.

Enjoy the lull that summer brings, and I’ll see you in the fall. ❖



**QCC Faculty/Professional Staff Retreat**

**May 15 & 16**

**The Lighthouse Inn, West Dennis, MA**

*Looking forward to seeing many of you there!*

## What’s Wrong with Merit Pay?

*BY Michael Nutter  
Chapter President, NECC  
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At a recent meeting of our chapter membership a resolution was passed asking that the chapter inform the Board of Directors that we oppose the inclusion of merit in our upcoming contract negotiations. This naturally entailed some discussion of the whole idea of merit pay. It led me to ponder the reasons for that opposition.

First, and foremost was the general sense that merit was the sort of approach that led to the inequities which the classification system attempts to address. No one seemed to doubt that we would all be better off if the money devoted to merit were added to our salaries on base. I suppose if there were any confidence that the state would appropriately fund classification in the future, then the merit bonus would be seen as a true bonus. However, both history and current events militate towards inadequate funding, which means that in the zero sum game of our contract the supposed bonus will be subtracted from the rest of our package. Prolonged periods of under funding, like we saw in the previous decade, would make us dependent on the “bonus,” thus turning the ostensible reward into a back-handed coercion.

Second, there is the question of what is truly meant by merit. I’ll confess that it’s been more than a few years since I took organizational behavior, but I think that some of the basic ideas still hold up. Evaluation should normally be based on performance criteria. In other words, on how you actually do on the job. Merit was a subset of non-performance criteria which, although not performance itself, could be reasonably expected to relate to good performance. Examples of such criteria include seniority, related job experience in previous employment, degrees held, licenses and certificates, publications, continuing education, and membership in professional organizations. If most of this looks familiar it’s because merit as defined in the textbooks and in our classrooms is already the basis for much of our classification system.

If management is serious about merit, why don’t they just let us know what additional criteria they want to add to the classification system so we can judge if they are reasonable and what the point

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value will be? If management is serious about merit, why are they dragging their feet on the implementation of points for license and continuing education? If management in institutions of higher education are not using the definition of merit that is taught in our classrooms, have our professors and textbooks all fallen into error, or has management?

Next, and still from the management courses that I took, is the question of what sort of power base management will use in executing its office. As I was taught there were two basic options. The first was reward and coercion. The second was expert and referent power. Referent power is a combination of identification and trust. Expert and referent power are familiar to us as teachers because we see every day that if we can tell a student what is right, and be a role model for the things we teach, then that student will autonomously go into the world and do likewise. Reward and coercion do just the opposite. Reward and coercion promote only public compliance. If you are truly acting because of reward or punishment, then there is no point in acting unseen, since the unobserved will be neither rewarded nor punished. Since reward is always in short supply, the approach will degenerate into increasing coercion, and because of the resulting avoidance behavior, increasing intrusiveness. To walk that path is to let it lead you to its natural destination.

One need only to pick up one's head and look around to see that the increasing intrusiveness and increasing coercion are what characterizes tyranny everywhere we find it. Autonomy, knowledge and trustworthiness, are the very ends of education. Even when politely stated, to run a system whose aims are of one nature, with the tools that lead to its polar opposite, is incongruous and dysfunctional.

Lastly, is the problem that the award of the merit bonus is not grievable. This is largely due to the fact noted above, that there are no real criteria. My own view here is simply that "Those who do evil fear light." The immunity of the decision creates a playground for office politicians. If this reward was intended to promote some behavior, then we would need to know what behavior was being rewarded. As it is, it defies the "performance/reward" relationship. If there are no criteria known in advance, and we have no way to pry out how the award decision was made afterwards, then it cannot make any change in behavior, because there is no way to associate one with the other. All that is left is the capricious,

arbitrary and unreasonable.

The faculty I know of, who got the award, acted all along out of their own professional motivations. To my knowledge, they would have done the same things with or without the waving of the merit carrot. The only way merit can work is to stop you from acting out of your own sense of professionalism and autonomy, and to make you plastic and malleable enough to be easily manipulated. In other words, the purpose of merit is to de-professionalize you. ❖

## Your Dues at Work

*By: Karen M. Cox  
QCC MCCC Treasurer*

Budget problems surround us, but the QCC MCCC unit is fiscally sound and able to meet its obligations and still have a bit for a rainy day. We presently have 130 members, which includes faculty and professional staff here at the college. I will report to you after the Delegate Assembly (Saturday, May 10<sup>th</sup>) should there be any change in the dues for 2003-2004.

I look forward to seeing you at the Annual Luncheon on May 20<sup>th</sup>. We have received confirmations from many of the past retirees, who graciously have thanked the membership for their invitations. We look forward to celebrating with:

**Chuck Barton  
Frank Canosa  
Paul Chamberlain  
Mari Seder**

and honoring them for their many years of excellent service to our students. They will be missed.

If I don't get to see you personally, please have a happy and safe summer. I look forward to seeing you again in the fall. ❖



**Enjoy  
the  
summer!**