

State of the Union

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It's been a busy time for the union

BY: Marilyn Martin
QCC/MCCC Union President

As you know it has been a busy few weeks. On Tuesday, February 14 (Valentine's Day!) the Legislature passed a supplemental budget that included our points and their retroactive funding. The Governor has ten days to veto that budget. If he does veto our points, the MCCC leadership is confident that the Legislature will override the veto and we will get our points. While we are waiting to know what the Governor will do, QCC hosted the Board of Higher Education meeting on Thursday, February 17. I was proud to be a part of the strong statement made by many of our members. On day 962 without a raise, we were asking the Board, which is our employer and the group with whom we negotiate our contracts, to advocate for us with the Governor to fund our points. Everyone "appears" to agree that the points should be funded, but where is our money? President Kurtinitis agrees that "three years is too long to go without a raise." Peter Tsaffaras, from the BHE, also believes that we should get our points although he was willing to haggle with the Executive Committee over words. We don't want sympathy; we want our points.

We are also in negotiations for a new contract. We would like a fair contract, on time. I am trying not to let my pessimism take-over, but if we look at the very small pay increase negotiated in FY 03, and that in all likelihood FY 04 will be a zero percent year since Massachusetts has a policy of not bargaining for previous fiscal years, the situation is bleak indeed. Add

to that if a successor agreement is not reached by this June, we will be taking another zero percent year for FY 05. Unbelievably, the Presidents' negotiating team canceled the last scheduled meeting because they were unprepared to present their counter-proposal. We have been working under the old contract for three years, and yet they were not ready with their proposal.

We must continue to be united and to keep our focus clear: we want a fair contract and we do not want anymore zero years.

Massachusetts is the home of the oldest and some of the best-known private higher education institutions in the country, yet in the most recent *Chronicle of Higher Education*, we are ranked 50th in the country in support of public higher ed. It is time that Massachusetts stops allowing Mitt Romney to dismantle our public higher education system on his way to his own aspirations. Every indication is that community colleges are making a huge contribution to our state, but if the neglect and abuse continue, we will crumble as well. Work to Rule is our most effective tool for making our voices heard. We must continue to be united and to keep our focus clear: we want a fair contract and we do not want anymore zero years. ❖



Channel 3 interviews Marilyn Martin at the BHE picket on Thursday, February 17 in the library. The T&G covered the story as well. More photos on pages 3 and 4.

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Mass state employees not covered by social security

*BY: Jim Rice
QCC Faculty*

GPO/WEP

Massachusetts is one of fifteen states in which public employees are not covered by social security. The Government Pension Offset (**GPO**) affects people who work as federal, state, or local government employees, including educators, if the job is not covered by Social Security. The Windfall Program (**WEP**) affects people who worked in jobs not covered by Social Security and in jobs in which they earned Social Security benefits, such as educators who did not earn Social Security in the public schools, but who work part-time or during the summer in jobs covered by Social Security. The WEP also affects people who move from a job in which they earn Social Security to a job, such as teaching, in which they do not earn Social Security benefits.

This is a national problem. There are affected people in all states precluded from receiving Social Security.

Members of the GPO/WEP NEA cadre reported on the Association efforts to rectify the GPO and WEP existing legislation. The cadre, in existence for the past four years, has the current strategy: reintroduce bills in the 109th congress, encourage co-sponsors, and continue grassroots efforts. The **GPO** reduces by as much as two-thirds the spousal benefits for public sector retirees in the fifteen affected states. The **WEP** takes away social security benefits from public employees who have also worked in the private sector in these states.

Offsets Need to be Repealed

The offset penalizes people who have chosen public service by taking away benefits they have EARNED. Nine out of ten public employees affected by GPO lose their entire spousal benefit, even though their spouse paid Social Security taxes for many years. The WEP causes the worker to lose a portion of the benefits they earned themselves.

This is a national problem. There are affected people in all states precluded from receiving Social Security. Because people move from state to state,

affected individuals are everywhere. Plus the number of retirees eligible to retire increases every year.

The GPO and WEP can discourage people from entering/staying in the profession. Individuals who worked in other professions will not want to become educators if doing so will mean a loss of earned Social Security benefits.

New Employee Advisory

The NEA has long argued the need for a notice to advise employees in jobs not covered by social security. The Social Security Administration has produced "Form SSA-1945, Statement Concerning Your Employment in a Job Not Covered by Social Security" for new employees to sign. This form, along with instructions for its use, can be found at www.socialsecurity.gov/form. Although this form is progress, it does not address the substantive issues of GPO/WEP. ❖

Grievance?

**Contact either Maura Stickles at 4533
or Adrienne Smith at 4478**

Union Meeting Dates

All meetings will be held in Room 107A at 2:00pm on the following dates:

- **March 10**
- **April 14**

Since we have pressing business this academic year turnout is very important. Please make an effort to attend.

Your dues at work

*BY: Karen Cox
QCC/MCCC Treasurer*

Contracts, budgets and money dominate many conversations. There is discussion of an increase in the MCCC dues. Rising expenses and a deficit have raised this issue again. Please anticipate this will be on the agenda for the Delegate Assembly in May. You might think about attending if you feel strongly about this and/or other issues. I will report to you after the Delegate Assembly should there be any change in the dues for 2006.

I can report that the QCC/ MCCC unit is fiscally sound. At present we have a total of \$3,700.00 and anticipate expenses of \$ 2,700.00 for officer's salaries, refreshments and office expenses. Additional income for 2005 is pending and would be approximately an additional \$1,500.00 and will carry us through the summer.

The annual luncheon will be held on May 12th in the TLC at 12 noon. Hopefully, we will be able to partially subsidize the annual luncheon. I don't anticipate that it will be a problem to charge all who attend a part of the cost. Please mark your calendar for this special date. I am not aware of any new retirees to be honored at this luncheon. If you are planning to do so, please contact me soon. ❖



Union votes on further WTR action

The Work to Rule Committee recommended to the membership at the February meeting that we affirm last semester's vote to continue to **not** accept extra work for extra money. The membership voted and the vote passed with a majority.

Join your fellow unit members on the WTR committee

Work-to-Rule Committee - participate in the discussion, education, and evolution of the work-to-rule campaign on this campus. We are looking for participation from diverse work areas.

WTR committee meets every 2nd Tuesday and 4th Monday of the month at 2:15 p.m., with one exception noted below.

ALL meetings in Monks Room

Feb. 28 (Monday) - 2:15 p.m.

Mar 8 (Tuesday) - 2:15 p.m.

Mar 28 (Monday) - 2:15 p.m.

Apr 12 (Tuesday) - 3:00 p.m.

Apr 25 (Monday) - 2:15 p.m.

Agenda items can be sent to
Jean jnicholas@qcc.mass.edu
or Ken kenw@qcc.mass.edu



In all over 50 faculty, unit professionals, and students picketed the Board of Higher Education's meeting in our Learning Center.

QCC Chapter of the MCCC Work-to-Rule Activities Fall 2004/Spring 2005

*BY: Betsy Zuegg
QCC/MCCC Secretary*

To the members:

The following list reflects the activities that some of our members have taken to support the Work to Rule initiative on campus.

1. Professional staff resigned from Student Advocacy Initiative
2. Faculty/Prof staff resigned as advisors to student clubs and activities
3. Faculty interviewed for article in student newspaper (article on WTR)
4. President of Unit met with Student Senate
5. President and VP of Unit attended QCC Board of Trustees meeting
6. Faculty member resigned from Library Collections Committee
7. Faculty member resigned from Teaching Learning Roundtable
8. Article in Open Door about the Theater Club's support of faculty in WTR
9. Alumni Assoc. boycott of Holiday Craft Fair
10. Sept., Oct., Nov., Jan., Feb. Division meetings were adjourned
11. Sept., Oct., Nov., Jan., Feb. work Area meetings were adjourned
12. Article published in the Telegram and Gazette
13. Coordinators did not participate in the College Open House
14. Faculty and professional staff distributed informational handouts to guests at the Open House
15. Board of Trustees sent letter to Governor Romney and legislators in support of faculty
16. Some members agreed not to accept money to grade Developmental English final writing exams
17. Psychology Club has been inactive since September
18. Psi Beta Club (Natl Honor Society for Psych) has been inactive since September
19. Member withdrew from the Vice President Search Committee
20. Member withdrew from the Enrollment and Student Services Committee, resulting in no representation from faculty on this committee

**969 Days
Without a Raise
and counting**

21. Members resigned from the Developmental Advising Task Force
22. The BOSS Club has ceased activities since the start of the fall 2004 semester
23. Member resigned from the Campus Committee
24. Member declined offer of Vice President to be a presenter at the College Board Conference
25. Professional staff member resigned from the Developmental Advising Task Force
26. Professional staff member did not participate in the spring semester Information tables
27. Professional staff members wear the "Tell Mitt" button in high visibility areas of the college.
28. Academic Affairs Committee meeting was successfully adjourned by faculty and professional staff members
29. Professional staff person did not accept any work after hours for compensatory time
30. Professional staff person did not participate in the banked time program
31. Member withdrew from the Teaching and Learning Roundtable and two of its subcommittees. Vice President was notified in writing of this resignation.
32. Member stopped offering, through staff development, workshops on Inspiration.



Faculty and professional staff picketed at the front entrance to the college during the first week of school, protesting the fact that our points have not been funded, we have no contract, and have not received a raise in over 960 days. A picture of the picket was featured in the following day's edition of the Worcester Telegram and Gazette.