

P-fac NEWS

Serving the Part-time teaching community at Columbia College

February, 2002

No Contract Negotiations Continuing

As of January 31, the contract between P-fac and Columbia, covering the great majority of part-time faculty in the college, expired. On February 6, **P-fac** and the college signed the following agreement:

“At this time, given that a new contract was not in place by January 31, 2001, both parties agree to continue bargaining in good faith. The current contract will continue to govern the relationship between Columbia College Chicago and **P-fac** until a new agreement or impasse is reached.”

This has been a difficult set of negotiations, and it is still on-going. In this issue we have tried to outline the major issues and sticking points. Talk to your fellow instructors and to the **P-fac** representatives in your department about these issues. If you have particular feelings, concerns, or opinions, now is the time to make them known.

A New Contract

What have we been aiming for in a new contract? What are the points at issue?

First on everyone's mind, naturally, is salary. According to the college, as of the end of our first contract, in fall 2001, part-timers' average pay per 3-credit course is \$2400. The negotiating team, of course, is working to bring that average up substantially. When we were organizing for a union, we noted that the first two students in a class, through their tuition for that class, paid the part-timer's entire salary for teaching the course. Our first contract gave us a substantial raise although still not near parity. (See “The Traffic in Teachers,” this issue.) In the four years since we gained a union the college has raised its tuition by 10% each year except for this year, when it was 7%. Tuition revenues have risen from \$65 to \$100 million. The cost to a student of a 3-credit course now stands at \$1250. The first two students who walk in the

door of the classroom still pay the part-timer's entire salary for teaching that course. Columbia still devotes less than 10% of its budget to part-time faculty, who teach over 70% of the courses.

This has been a difficult negotiating process, particularly (of course) around the question of pay, and it isn't over yet. The numbers are closer than they were a month ago, and it begins to look as if we may be able to agree on a beginning rate of pay for a three-credit course in the mid-2000s range. But there are key issues still unresolved, which interrelate with the issue of salary. There is the number of pay “steps” and the criteria (number of credit hours) defining each step. And there is the length of the contract (the administration wants a four-year contract; we do not). Finally, the administration, as a means of saving money, wants to shrink the size of the

bargaining unit, which is the group covered by the union contract; we do not think this is a good idea.

There are also other outstanding questions still to be decided. One of our concerns has been to increase our security at Columbia. We have already reached preliminary agreements on some points which bear on this. Remediation is something taken from last year's union contract at Roosevelt: the idea is that before a department can let someone go because of perceived deficiencies in the classroom, the instructor must be told what's wrong and given a semester to make it right. There is the beginning introduction of seniority rights to courses (“bumping”). We have discussed creating an “adjunct” status, an idea we took from what was won a few years ago by part-timers at the School of the Art Institute: adjuncts would have contracts for more than

Representatives Meet

By Pete Insley

Due to the fact that we would begin the new semester without a new contract, on January 27 a meeting of **P-fac** Departmental Representatives was held. The purpose was to inform representatives of the state of the negotiations, and to get feedback and advice on ways to proceed.

There was a good turnout from representatives, who realized how important the meeting was. Others called in sick or were out of town. Members of the Steering Committee were also there. After the main sticking points in negotiations were outlined, we broke up into small groups to discuss the issues and come to some conclusions, then reconvened and shared the small-group conclusions.

Although there were differences, some clear results emerged from this process. The negotiating team was advised to go back to negotiations on salary and find a suitable compromise that did not leave anyone out and that spread new money equally to newer and older members. If a large compromise is necessary then insist on a short contract and renegotiate in one or two years.

It was also agreed that members of the union should be kept more informed of what is going on in negotiations.

Several representatives stepped forward, as well, to help with union jobs such as publicity and maintenance of the database. All in all it was an excellent meeting and reminded members of the Steering Committee and the negotiating team, who sometimes feel isolated, of the reservoir of energy and knowledge the union has in our representatives and members. □

just one semester as well as other enhancements. And we may discuss other possible measures to increase security.

Also in the accomplishments column: we will in all probability be able to reach agreement on the elimination of the much-hated two-course limit.

During the fall semester we agreed to observe a certain confidentiality in the negotiations: what was going on in the process would not be shared outside the union's steering committee. When it became clear that we were about to reach the end of the then-current contract without agreement on a new one, however, and in view of the difficulties experienced in negotiations, we informed the administration that we were going to begin consulting and informing our members. The first step was to meet with the departmental representatives (see "Representatives Meet"). Now we are bringing out the issues involved, the preliminary accomplishments and remaining problems, to the membership and to part-timers generally. If you have thoughts on these questions and their relative importance, talk to your departmental representatives. If you would like to become more active in the union at this point, contact Pete Insley, Membership Chair (773/283-0528), or John Stevenson, Publicity Chair (773/743-3728). □

ARBITRARY TREATMENT CONTINUES

By Herb Kraus

As reported in our last issue, Judy Lomperis, a part time instructor with an outstanding record in the Department of Art and Design for the past eight years, has been arbitrarily dismissed by the new chair of that department.

Judy is the Secretary of **P-fac**, a founding member of the union and one of the Department of Art and Design **P-fac** representatives. No criticism was made of her professional teaching record and no evidence of complaints by students or other faculty of her classroom proficiency was offered. Instead the new chair told her he was not obligated to give her a reason for not rehiring her but that her attitude did not contribute to a spirit of collegiality in the department.

Judy has been a tireless advocate for a greater voice for part-timers in her department. The dismissal, in late November, came a couple of weeks after Judy and other **P-fac** representatives in the department met with the chair to discuss greater access by part-time faculty to departmental resources.

Judy has been pursuing the grievance process as provided for in our first contract, but the reaction of administrators has tended to be dismissive. She is currently awaiting a response from Bert Gall, Executive Vice-President and the last person to whom an appeal can be made in the grievance process.

Judy's case graphically illustrates the way in which we are all, no matter how long we may have taught at Columbia, completely subject to the whims of our supervisors from semester to semester. Driving home the same lesson is the experience of Jack Behrend, the former president of **P-fac** and current treasurer, who was not assigned classes this fall, or again for the current spring semester in the Film Department, where he has taught for the past 30 years.

An injury to any one of us is an injury to all members of the union and a portent of what might happen to any of us. This must not happen!

It is one of our aims as a union to minimize the job insecurity to which we are all subject and which Judy's case so vividly illuminates. A goal of the current negotiations for a new contract is gain a greater measure of security in our work as instructors at this institution. □

THE TRAFFIC IN TEACHERS: Social justice, unionism, and the market

By Christopher Thale

We're hearing arguments that part-time faculty pay ought to be based on what our counterparts at "comparable institutions" are receiving. Put less politely, our pay should be set according to norms set by institutions which exploit part-time faculty who have no organized voice and no protections

This idea is an argument about what the traffic will bear — the traffic in teachers, that is

What people can command in the market often has little to do with how much they know, what they do, or how hard they work. Business cycles, unemployment and interest rates, demographics, monopoly, oligopoly, government regulation and licensing systems, and other institutions organize power and privilege and structure income distribution. Owners, managers, and non-profit administrators typically have more bargaining power than do ordinary employees. The whole idea of a union is to overcome some of these bargaining deficits — to organize economic clout so that ordinary workers have a share.

Markets can do a tolerable job of pricing the proverbial widget, but their historic failure is in pricing (or even employing) the labor of human beings. Scholars, artists and other creative people have always fared badly when the "free" market sliced up the pie. Our creative and scholarly work is poorly measured by bottom lines. Because we're dedicated to our disciplines, we're ripe for

exploitation — even by institutions, such as colleges, supposed to be committed to higher goals than the market. (It's always so interesting to see "non-profits" claiming the rationale of the market.) Unfortunately, treating human beings as market items has consequences profoundly at odds with a pedagogical mission which requires stability in the faculty, high morale, and mutual commitment to the goals of the college. It's equally at odds with the social goals which have been a hallmark of Columbia.

If comparisons are in order, we should be compared with our full-time colleagues, not with part-time teachers somewhere else. Good teachers who teach part-time ought to be paid at the same basic rates as good teachers who teach full-time. (Non-teaching duties, of course, would call for separate treatment.) Why shouldn't it be equal pay for equal work?

The current discriminatory system is an institutionalized insult to the dancers, writers, producers, and others who (as part-time faculty) teach the vast majority of Columbia's classes. This two-tier system somehow seems to disappear when the administration advertises its faculty as a selling point with prospective students or urges donors to give to a school whose faculty are engaged in the arts and communications. Truth in Advertising may require informing prospective donors and students that the administration actually thinks so poorly of its part-time faculty that it resists compensating them comparably to full-timers. Wouldn't it be better for the college to take the part-timers seriously, and compensate accordingly? □

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