

# P-fac NEWS

Serving the Part-time teaching community at Columbia College

October, 2001

## Welcome

Welcome to Columbia and — for those of you who are members — to the Part-Time Faculty Association at Columbia (**P-fac**, IEA/NEA). “IEA” is the Illinois Education Association, the state organization of which we’re an autonomous part, and which in turn is part of the National Education Association (NEA). We are represented within each of these organizations (see below for a report from one of our delegates to the national convention this summer). This is a crucial time for our union. This semester is the last which is covered by the current contract (which was also our first) with Columbia, and we have just begun negotiations with the college for a new one. The formation of our union and its first contract represented great gains for part-time instructors at Columbia (and indeed for part-timers in the Chicago area). Now we must build on these changes and learn from innovations elsewhere (for instance in the contract negotiated by the newly-won union of part-time instructors down the street at Roosevelt University). Their contract may be accessed via their web site: [www.rafo.org](http://www.rafo.org)

For our role to grow in the life of the college - and of course to be justly compensated for our efforts and contributions - will benefit the students we teach and Columbia as an institution. For us as a union to stagnate, will benefit no one. But for us as part-timers to strengthen our role in the college, we must also grow and strengthen as a union. We need a broad base of support for our union, we need dialogue among ourselves, and we need participation in the union. Talk to your departmental representatives. Call the hotline. Think about participating yourself in the life of the union.

## Elections

by Christopher Thale

Election time in the Part-Time Faculty Association at Columbia is rarely a colorful or contentious event. We have yet to see a parade or a sound truck. Though there’s power in a union, we’re still small potatoes, and the factionalism which makes for heated contests (whether of points of view or personalities) has been mercifully absent. But it’s (absolutely) essential to have good people doing the official work of the union, and that’s why elections are important. **P-fac**’s steering committee and department representatives will be elected during October. The steering committee makes the association’s basic decisions; four of its members are being elected. Department representatives are also being elected within each department. They’re supposed to provide an organized voice for part-time faculty interests within each department; and within **P-fac**, they as a group meet in November, discuss issues, set general policy, and choose three more steering committee members. People with ener-

gy and commitment to the college and the cause of part-timers are needed for all these jobs. We’ve got more elections coming up — for delegates to the Illinois Education Association (IEA) as well as to the IEA’s region 58. **P-fac**’s affiliation with the IEA has helped us with negotiating expertise, legal help, and much more; a good chunk of our dues go to finance this help. Good delegates can speak out for part-time college teachers within the IEA, benefiting us directly and many others like us at other colleges. Every paid-up member of **P-fac** is eligible to take part in these elections. All are urged to vote, and we hope many will consider getting more involved — nominating a colleague who would be good at a job; alerting others; or (best of all) doing a stint in some official position. Nominations for the steering committee are due October 17; ballots should be in the **P-fac** mailbox or under the door of the **P-fac** office (6th floor, Congress) by 10 a.m. November 6.

## The National Rep Assembly: A Delegate’s Report

by Mary Lou Wade

It was with great curiosity and a sense of deep responsibility that I headed for Los Angeles for the 80th NEA Representative Assembly (RA) on Sunday, July 1. I had attended the Illinois Education Association, (IEA RA), in April in Rosemont, so, along with Joe Laiacona as the other delegate, we knew some of the other Representatives in the area that encompasses our Columbia College Union. Nothing, though, had prepared me for the thrill of sharing the renowned L.A. Convention Center with 10,000 educators from all over the United States.

Our Illinois hotel was the LAX Hilton, and busses shuttled delegates to the Center, a ride of between 30 to 45 minutes, on a frequent basis. Attendance at the State Caucus, held in our hotel, was mandatory and from Tuesday to Saturday it commenced at 7 A.M. Thankfully, wake up calls were available and coffee and rolls were served, so that all Illinois participants were awake and alert for the important and informative meetings. The daily agenda was examined and voting issues were discussed, all following parliamentary procedure, with sessions beginning and ending promptly. We

were instructed to pick up our credentials, the important badges that we would be wear at all times on the convention floor. Getting a peek at downtown L. A. was exciting and seeing the Convention Center without the delegates was useful. Exhibitors space was vast and merchandise and services represented were varied. That afternoon I attended a meeting of The National Council for Higher Education and learned we accounted for a small percentage of the attendees, mostly K - 12 teachers. (The administrators and custodial help are in a newly defined category called ESP, for education support professionals and that name change occurred at this RA.)

On Monday evening, Illinois delegates, along with friends and family, enjoyed a delicious dinner and great entertainment at the hotel, allowing us to mingle and chat and learn from one another. Tuesday began with the caucus and more information. That afternoon I visited the J. P. Getty Museum, a stunningly dramatic new architectural wonder in the L.A. hills, but our own Art Institute far surpasses its limited collection. Wednesday, the Fourth of July, was the official opening of the RA and the sight of all the delegates assembled, assigned in areas by states, was truly inspiring. Our Illinois seating was in the center, on risers, facing the stage, where two huge television screens captured all the action. Most of us wore the blue denim shirt recommended to identify us and other delegates from other states had different colored t-shirts. President Bob Chase welcomed us and sessions convened all day. Later, our group viewed fireworks from the

second floor of The Warehouse, a restaurant in Marina del Ray. A daily newspaper, RA Today, was distributed to all delegates, updating us on the previous day's decisions and informing us of the upcoming agenda. The issues we voted on were varied, but the most attention-getting were; the partnership of the NEA and the AFT; the decision to establish a task force to further study the NEA resolution amendments on treatment and education of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered individuals; and the forgiving of Minnesota debt, an expense stemming from a 1998 merger of an Association and a Teachers' 92 Federation. Child safety, school testing, budgets, arts programs, guest speakers, individual classroom stories, entertainment, videos, charity, volunteerism, literacy, and insurance; these and many more subjects were covered in by-laws, standing rules, impact statements, amendments, new business, campaigning, and voting.

Our early morning meetings continued and the last night at the Convention Center wasn't over until after midnight. Upon returning to the Hilton on the bus, I learned room service was unavailable, so I went to bed hungry, but certainly not for knowledge. At my first NEA RA, I had learned a great deal about teaching, democracy, and commitment and I was proud to represent Columbia College's part time faculty at such an impressive, worthwhile event. If it is meant to be, I'll proudly wear my Illinois shirt and badge in July of 2002 in Dallas, Texas.

## Hearing on Bill Important for Us

On Thursday October 25, the Illinois House Education Committee will hold a public hearing on HB 1720 at the College of DuPage Campus in Glen Ellyn. As you may know, the present law, as interpreted by Illinois courts, makes it impossible for part-timers at community colleges in the state to organize unions under the protection of Illinois labor law. The present bill, by changing some wording in the labor law, would make this possible. Thus it's a vitally important change for us and part-timers throughout the state, since community colleges employ very large percentages of part-time instructors, and the more of us that are unionized, wherever we teach, the better for each of us, since broad organization will strengthen the position of each individual group.

The public hearing at College of DuPage will be held in Room OCC 128 A and B, and will begin at 1:00pm on October 25. The chairman of the committee is Dan Cronin. If any of you can be there, do it!

## Campus Equity Week

From October 28 through November 3, 2001, there will be a week of coordinated activities on campuses in the United States and Canada. Campus Equity Week – designed to educate campus communities, the public and policy-makers – will focus attention on issues of fairness and quality of education. The message is that teachers' working conditions are students' learning conditions and equal work deserves equal pay. Campus Equity Week will focus on declining labor standards and the increasing use of temporary and part-time labor for all campus work.

In Chicago there will be several events. On Tuesday October 30, from 3-6 pm, there will be a forum on organizing at private universities. There will be speakers from **P-fac** and the Roosevelt Adjunct Faculty Organization (RAFO), representing two successful organizing efforts.

And on Friday, November 2, a conference on the subject of part-time and contingent academic labor will take place from 2-6pm at Harold Washington College, in the 11th floor community room. There will be a breakout session on organizing in private universities, in which **P-fac** will also participate.

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For more information call our hotline: 773-281-0975  
WEBSITE: WWW.PFAC.ORG  
EMAIL: INFO@PFAC.ORG We are always looking for feedback and contributions. Editor: John Stevenson; P-FAC IEA/NEA