Local 1600 Wins Strike Against the City Colleges of Chicago

After three weeks on strike, over 600 City Colleges of Chicago faculty, professionals, training specialists and security crammed into the Holiday Inn Mart Plaza on Sunday, November 7, to ratify a new contract by an overwhelming 95 — 5% vote. That contract was a stunning victory for members who staffed the lines and kept virtually 95% of all college credit classes closed. “Make no mistake about it,” said President Perry Buckley, “what won this strike was the resolve and solidarity of the members who walked the lines and kept the colleges closed.”

Just five months earlier the City Colleges’ “hired-gun” lawyers at Franczek & Sullivan had thrown down the gauntlet of a contract that would have gutted over 40 years of gains by our union, Local 1600. Their original proposal included: insurance premiums based on a percentage of unspecified costs; dramatically increased deductibles and co-pays; a freeze on salaries for four years; placing librarians on a 12-month schedule; increasing professional and training specialists work load to 40 hours; increased workloads for senior faculty; elimination of accumulated sick pay and early retirement enhancement, and new demands of course work and a form of “publish or perish” in a totally revamped post-tenure evaluation. In the end, the City Colleges did not win a single one of those give-backs.

In fact, the union won astonishing gains for its members. Professionals won an annual 4% “up-front” wage increase. Faculty and training specialists won a compounded raise of almost 17% over the four years. Professionals also won a guaranteed comp-time provision which automatically turns time into pay, if time is not granted within 90 days. The new part-time professional chapter gained significant wages and benefits. All raises included back-pay to the expiration date of the contracts. The part-time professionals will receive one-and-a-half years’ back pay. Professionals also won “parity” in release time with faculty. Part-time professionals

and security guards gained new benefits including an hourly increase, free tuition and days off.

The nursing faculty, who had sought a one-to-one clinical to credit hour ratio for the past 25 years, finally won that right. Beginning in the fall for every hour worked in the hospital they will receive one contact hour credit. For most nursing faculty, this change will mean a day less working clinicals in the hospitals they serve.

The victory did not come without a fight. The City Colleges played hardball right from the beginning. They cancelled health care insurance, arrested students who supported the strikers, moved in tactical police to deny

From left: CCC Board Member Rev. Albert Tyson, Local 1600 CCC Vice President Sonia Powell, Rev. James Meeks (state senator, 15th, Independent) and Local 1600 President Perry Buckley announce the ratification of the new City Colleges contracts on November 7.

(Continued on Page 11)
Before, during, and after the three week strike against the City Colleges of Chicago this truth manifested itself time and time again. After a 701 — 23 strike authorization vote, the CCC Board chose to ignore the people behind that vote. On the first day of the strike, when only five of 755 members crossed the picket line, the Board again ignored the people who marched the lines. After three weeks and only two additional members had crossed, then and only then, the Board faced the reality that they had underestimated the “people” who make up Local 1600 in the City Colleges. In the end, in a nine hour session, the CCC Board gave up every concession they had held fast to for over six months.

Strikes are won on picket line, and that is where this strike was won. However, the people behind the scenes who kept the lines strong, who served selflessly, played the major roll in the victory. From the negotiation team, to the Solidarity Committee, to the chapter chairs and strike captains, to Dennis Gannon at the CFL, to the staffers from the IFT, to the rank and file who volunteered at the Union office, this was a total team effort.

As with any victory there are scores of underlying and core reasons for that success. Having Norm Swenson as chief negotiator was obviously critical. Once again, as he has done so many times before, he “picked the Board’s pockets.” The support of other CCC Unions (Local 1708, AFSCME, and SEIU) helped keep our spirits high. The scores of adjuncts who honored our lines helped keep the classes closed. Fewer than 10% of any of the college credit classes ever met. In every critical area it was people who won the strike.

Now that the strike is ended and we have returned to our students, the battle has entered a sad, but undeniable, stage: reprisals. Clearly angry with their loss, and embarrassed by their misreading of the strength of the Union and the resolve of its members, the City Colleges have waged a campaign of retaliation. Simply, the CCC administration has once again proved they are big on being petty.

At the press conference announcing the settlement, Reverend James Meeks called on the chancellor, board chairman, and me to make the rounds to every college to “begin the healing.” I have not yet received a call to do so. If asked, sadly, I must reply with a line I saw on a student picket sign at Truman College: “Before the healing, stop the bleeding.” This Union cannot and will not share a stage with an administration that continues to battle after the conflict is over. “It’s about people.” They still do not get it.
Employees of the Campus and Public Safety Staff of Prairie State College voted to join forces with Local 1600. This chapter — responsible for campus security and safety of faculty, staff, and students — won voluntary recognition from their board with 91% of their members signed on. Their recognition was certified on October 8th by the Illinois Educational Labor Relations Board.

When asked who was responsible for the virtually unanimous victory, organizer Julius Neveles stated, “Inconsistent and unfair practices by department supervisors. Their double standards and favoritism were unacceptable.” Like many predecessors in the labor movement before him, Neveles took a big risk but stood up for what was right. His union brothers and sisters should be proud of his tenacity and leadership. Neveles has been on staff for nine years following a 32-year career in the U.S. Army in which he reached the rank of lieutenant colonel in the U.S. Army Reserves.

Certified as the Prairie State College Police Officers Association, 23 officers now have the protection that they deserve as American workers. The negotiating team is currently negotiating the first contract. Local 1600 Assistant to the President Janie Morrison stated, “The Prairie State Police Officers needed a union to represent them to improve their working conditions and to obtain parity pay for part-timers. We plan to address these and other issues in their first contract.”

Julius and his associates would like to thank Chapter Chair Susan Braasch of the Prairie State Support Staff who was “a great help” as well as Janie Morrison, Local 1600 V.P. for Classified Gail Wiot and IFT staffer Jennifer Marsh for their guidance and leadership. Support Staff Chapter Chair Susan Braasch added, “I’m happy that the campus safety officers are finally going forward in negotiating their contract and are a part of Local 1600.”

Adjunct faculty at South Suburban College made their voice heard by voting to unionize under the Cook County College Teachers Union, Local 1600, and the IFT on Nov. 17. Ninety-four percent of the eligible voters chose “union” by a vote of 59-4. Those adjunct faculty teaching at least three credit hours for two consecutive semesters were eligible to vote according to the Illinois Educational Labor Relations Board.

South Suburban faculty members under Chapter Chair Karen Simac and Local 1600 Legislative Chair Bill Naegele spearheaded the initiative back in June. They were assisted by IFT staffers Lorenzo McDonald and Jennifer Marsh. In Naegele’s words, “Jennifer, Lorenzo and I worked well together. It was a joint effort between Local 1600 and the IFT.”

Simac added, “It was my hope, and the hope of my faculty association colleagues, that the adjunct faculty at South Suburban College would join Local 1600.” After the vote tally, Marsh stated, “The IFT and Local 1600 can be unbeatable when we work together effectively in organizing new groups into the union.”

Julius and his associates would like to thank Chapter Chair Susan Braasch of the Prairie State Support Staff who was “a great help” as well as Janie Morrison, Local 1600 V.P. for Classified Gail Wiot and IFT staffer Jennifer Marsh for their guidance and leadership. Support Staff Chapter Chair Susan Braasch added, “I’m happy that the campus safety officers are finally going forward in negotiating their contract and are a part of Local 1600.”

Adjunct faculty at South Suburban College made their voice heard by voting to unionize under the Cook County College Teachers Union, Local 1600, and the IFT on Nov. 17. Ninety-four percent of the eligible voters chose “union” by a vote of 59-4. Those adjunct faculty teaching at least three credit hours for two consecutive semesters were eligible to vote according to the Illinois Educational Labor Relations Board.

South Suburban faculty members under Chapter Chair Karen Simac and Local 1600 Legislative Chair Bill Naegele spearheaded the initiative back in June. They were assisted by IFT staffers Lorenzo McDonald and Jennifer Marsh. In Naegele’s words, “Jennifer, Lorenzo and I worked well together. It was a joint effort between Local 1600 and the IFT.”

Simac added, “It was my hope, and the hope of my faculty association colleagues, that the adjunct faculty at South Suburban College would join Local 1600.” After the vote tally, Marsh stated, “The IFT and Local 1600 can be unbeatable when we work together effectively in organizing new groups into the union.”
Washington Strike Captain Art DiVito and Mark Henschel lead the marchers at Harold Washington on day one of the strike.

Olive-Harvey Strike Captain Gide Colinet passes out the “Daily Picket Line” newsletter on day two of the strike.

Kennedy-King Chapter Chair Jeannette Williams (right) assembles some picketers on day one of the strike. KK had a difficult task closing a campus with 28 entrances.

President Perry Buckley gives an update on the picket line at Wright College.

Chapter Chair Rausan Tamir leads the training specialists at the “Little Giant” Dawson Tech on day two. The group was small in numbers, but they more than made up for it with noise and tenacity. They kept the school closed, and the lines strong.
Wright College Strike Captain Chuck Mustari gives the members on Montrose Avenue the afternoon update.

Malcolm X on day one of the strike. First year chapter leaders Alta Williams and William Stewart Jr., worked tirelessly to keep the strike lines strong.

Chapter Chair Tony Johnston leads the Truman Chapter on Wilson Street.

The union team heads to a Sunday, Oct. 24, mediation session with bags packed but “no where to go” with the CCC Board’s lawyers.

Washington Chapter Chair Mike Ruggeri urges on marchers at the Oct. 28 Student March on City Hall.
Regardless of the cold winds, the Daley strikers pass out the news on day two.

WR English and Speech Dept. members compose a letter to the Chicago Sun-Times editor at the picket line.

Negotiations team members Clyde Walker, Verna Anderson and Joe Figueroa along with KK Chair Jeanette Williams gather with over 300 union members at the “Halloween Rally” at the Holiday Inn Mart Plaza.

After the CCC Board walked out on WR Prof. Ginia Jahrke’s address at the Nov. 4 board meeting, Jahrke continued while WR President Chuck Guengerich (left of Jahrke) kept his back to her. Jahrke received an ovation from the union members.

President Perry Buckley, surrounded by Local 1600 Negotiation Team members announces the tentative agreement to (L) Chairman James Tyree and (R) Rev. James Meeks (state senator, 15, I).
Over 600 members gather to ratify the tentative contract at the Holiday Inn Mart Plaza on Nov. 7.

Chapter Chairs John Harris (OH), Mike Ruggeri (HW) and Alta Williams (MX) prepare to monitor the ratification voting.

Chapter Chairs Mel Anderson (DA) and Tony Johnston (TR) distribute ratification ballots to their members.

Malcolm X strike leaders relax after the ratification vote.

On Monday, Nov. 8 at 7:30 a.m., the Daley Chapter gathered. "We walked out together, so we walked in together," said Negotiation Team Member and Strike Captain Wendall Wilson. This act of solidarity — faculty, professionals, and training specialists together — helped to continue the camaraderie of the strike.
Local 1600 Legislative Chair Bill Naegele, the “unofficial” spokesman for the Union during the strike, was interviewed by Channel 5 News on Oct. 24. Naegele worked at the union office daily and volunteered on the weekends too. He drove President Buckley to the picket lines while Buckley stayed on his cell phone taking care of problems.
Students rally with candlelight vigil at Millennium Park on Wednesday night.

November 4

Board attempts to deny faculty, staff, retiree and student speakers from sitting in the CCC Boardroom for over an hour. One student is arrested for attempting entrance.

November 5

Sidebar negotiations with Tyree, Watson, Buckley, Local 1600 V.P. CCC Sonia Powell and Chief Negotiator Norm Swenson continues through the day. They reach a tentative contract.

November 6

Union and Board hold joint press conference. Union calls for ratification vote on the new contract on Nov. 7 at Holiday Inn Mart Plaza.

November 7

Over 600 strikers attend meeting and vote 94.8% to 5.2% to accept new contract.

At the press conference, Buckley singles out Rev. James Meeks and Norm Swenson for praise.

From left: Norm Swenson, Perry Buckley and Sonia Powell listen to Secretary-Treasurer Tim Leahy of the Chicago Federation of Labor (CFL) at the “Halloween Rally” in the Holiday Inn Mart Plaza. The CFL, representing 500,000 union members, was a crucial source of support in the CCC strike. CFL President Dennis Gannon and Leahy worked behind the scenes politically. They came to the Local 1600 office early on a Sunday before mediation to lend support. In addition, Leahy also addressed the CCC Board the day before the strike ended and pointed out the board’s complete failure in negotiations.
In the November House Meeting, the members passed the following motions:

➤ To create a committee to explore options and issues that arose during the strike for professionals. The first three committee members are Anthony Johnston (TR), Rausan Tamir (DW) and Mel Anderson (DA).

➤ To thank those members of the retirees’ chapter who turned out in large numbers to picket with their active sisters and brothers as well as active members from suburban chapters who picketed with members of the City Colleges of Chicago chapters.

➤ To establish a Militancy Committee to deal with strikebreakers and other issues arising from our recent job action at the City Colleges of Chicago with Wendall Wilson of Daley College as the chair of the Militancy Committee.

➤ To support arbitration for the Malcolm X professor’s case awaiting Step II responses.

Bob Blackwood introduced Todd Lakin (DA) as the new CCC Voice correspondent.

LAKIN NEW CITY COLLEGES’ VOICE CORRESPONDENT

Assistant Professor Todd Lakin of Daley College, Spanish instructor and chairman of the Foreign Languages Department, is the new correspondent covering the City Colleges of Chicago for the College Union Voice. Lakin, who has been in the City Colleges of Chicago for seven years, holds an A.A. from Elgin Community College, a B.A. in Spanish from Drake University and an M.A. in Latin American Studies from the University of Kansas.

Last summer, the National Endowment for the Humanities gave Lakin a grant to attend the NEH Summer Institute: “Mesoamerica and the Southwest: A New History for an Ancient Land.”

Lakin was the only professor to break into print with a letter to the editor of the Chicago Sun-Times on the bloated bureaucracy of the City Colleges of Chicago during the three-week CCC strike. Lakin is married to Twania Brewster, the director of public relations for the United Way of Metropolitan Chicago. His hobbies are travel to Europe and South America and photography.
picketers the legal right to cross streets, and made no move on any of the issues. It was a textbook case of “bargaining in bad faith.”

The November 4 CCC Board meeting, in many ways, was the turning point in the strike. The City Colleges tried to limit both speakers and audience members by changing the rules as to who could enter the public meeting. A near-riot ensued. Over 50 union members stood their ground and refused to permit anyone to enter the boardroom before them. To the chants of “shame” and “we will not move,” the Board finally gave in. Senator James Meeks, who had attended the meeting, was amazed when he heard Chairman James Tyree deny Buckley’s request that he and Chancellor Wayne Watson attend the mediation session scheduled for the following day. Meeks interceded and the following day Buckley, Chief Negotiator Norm Swenson and Local 1600 CCC Vice President Sonia Powell sat face to face with Tyree and Watson. Nine and a half hours later, there was a tentative contract.

A key element throughout the negotiations, as well as that last day, was the rest of the Union team. Professional members Hermine Krysa, Mel Anderson and Rausan Tamir, along with faculty members Wendall Wilson, Verna Anderson, Clyde Walker, Joe Figueroa, waited at the Hinsdale office of the Federal Mediation Service. Swenson, Buckley and Powell knew that if the talks with Tyree and Watson broke down, they could resume with the mediator. Several times when talks seemed to be breaking down, just the mention of “going to Hinsdale where our team is waiting” kept the talks on track.

The three weeks of classes will be made up in January. The second semester will end on May 28, two-and-a-half weeks later than planned. Then all is back to normal … at least for four years.
At the Harper Pro-Tech Chapter luncheon on Sept. 23, Local 1600 Suburban Vice President James O’Malley makes a point about what goes around in contract negotiations will come around to us all.

Oakton Classified members Beth Wrobel and Asst. Chapter Chair Marilyn Davis won staff excellence awards in October for their dedicated work at Oakton College.

Have you moved? Please send us your new address:

NAME: ___________________________________________ HOME PHONE: _______________________

ADDRESS: ____________________________________________________________

CITY/STATE/ZIP: ____________________________ COLLEGE (OR FORMER COLLEGE): _____________

MAIL TO: COLLEGE UNION VOICE • COOK COUNTY COLLEGE TEACHERS UNION, 208 W. KINZIE ST., CHICAGO, IL 60610

WWW.CCCTU.COM