Local 1600 goes to Federal Mediation on CCC Contract

Noting the “absolute lack of good faith bargaining” with the attorneys who are negotiating for the Board of the City Colleges of Chicago, Local 1600 Chief Negotiator Norman Swenson and Asst. Chief Negotiator Perry Buckley consulted with the union negotiating team. On September 1, the union team filed for federal mediation to resolve the impasse.

Federal mediation, which is not mandatory arbitration, is a necessary step under the Illinois Educational Labor Relations Act before any job action can be taken by the union’s CCC membership of 1,338 teachers, training specialists, professionals, part-time professionals, and police officers. The union already has the part-time professionals’ contract in federal mediation, and, after 14 months of bargaining, the board’s lawyers have only placed on the table a $0.25 per hour increase for the past year and a $0.30 increase for this year. The board offered the CCC Police Officers Chapter only a 1% increase, although they are $4.00 an hour below other security officers in Cook County. Commenting on the board’s negotiating stance at the September 9 CCC Board Meeting, Local 1600 President Perry Buckley commented: “We are on a runaway train toward a strike.”

The CCC Board has proposed a four-year freeze in salary for faculty, professionals and training specialists and has proposed an incredible increase of 25% of the annual premium cost for an individual in a PPO and an increase of 50% for family coverage. HMO coverage for an individual would be 20% of the cost of insurance for an individual and 40% of the cost for family coverage.

The CCC Board also increased the annual PPO deductible to $2,000 for an individual, $6,000 for family coverage, plus a $5,000 deductible per family member for any out-of-network physician. Copays were increased in all areas including office visits, hospital services, emergency room and prescription drugs. Dental and vision plans have

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As I write this in the waning days of September, the City Colleges of Chicago are preparing for its first strike in 27 years. And if the world is not watching, at least every one of our 23 bargaining units should be. If we permit the City Colleges’ hired-gun lawyers to decimate our contracts here, every board in Cook County will take heed and try the same. In 2005 Morton Faculty and Classified, Triton Faculty and Midmanagement, and South Suburban Faculty all have contracts expiring. Seven contracts expire in 2006, and another two in 2007. The line starts here.

There is an old adage: “Whenever a board hires an outside law firm to do its negotiating, the board is looking for trouble.” And trouble is what we have. We currently are at three CCC negotiations tables (all in mediation): the new part-time professionals unit; police officers (security); and the faculty, professional, and training specialists. How bad is it?

• The faculty and professionals would see their insurance premiums rise by thousands of dollars with lowered benefits; the board is denying part-time professionals and security to even purchase coverage at full cost unless the Union agrees to exclude vast numbers of our members.
• Faculty and professionals are being offered no increase in salary; part-time professionals, who make as little as $7.00 an hour, are being offered a 25 cent an hour raise; and security are being offered pennies even though they are now woefully underpaid.
• The board is also demanding that every faculty, even 35 year veterans with doctorates, be required to take graduate courses every four years. They also are calling for mandatory publications or conference presentations … making the City Colleges the first “publish or perish” community college in the country.
• Faculty would teach more hours with larger class sizes, and English composition teachers would teach 15 hours per semester.

All this is even more contemptible when one considers that CCC pays more than $20 million in administrative salaries; provides lifetime health benefits for top administrators and their families; has a chancellor who makes $216,000 a year; and has a fund balance of $320 million (up 17% from 2002) and an unrestricted fund balance of $96 million.

Clearly these are “reasons for strong actions,” and strong actions are what they will get. By the time you read this we may have already taken our strike vote authorizing the negotiation team to set a strike date. We already are working with other Unions, community leaders, student organizations, and our friends in elected office to rally support. We have a press and public relations team in full force. The strike pickets and buttons have been ordered. Off-site headquarters have been rented. If we are denied respect by this board, we will walk out into the street to demand it. And we will not go back in until we get it.

There have been 20 strikes in the 40 year history of CCCTU. We have never lost one. I assure you we are not going to start losing now. We will be asking all Local 1600 members to join us on our picket lines and support us in a fight that may soon come to your college. These are the times when the might of a county-wide Union local comes into play. Together we are a force that cannot lose.

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reduced the annual benefits and hiked the cost of the coverage.

CCC retirees would be required to pay 100% of all insurance for themselves and their family, including those who retired with a promise of 10 years of subsidized health insurance. Retirees would be totally denied dental or vision coverage.

President Buckley noted, “All of these proposals together would raise the average cost to members by thousands of dollars per year.”

The union responded by requesting the same benefits for active employees and retirees that was granted by the CCC Board to top administrators on May 6, 1999. Top administrators receive 100% board-paid single or family insurance coverage for life in a PPO or HMO plan plus 100% board-paid single or family dental and vision coverage.

The CCC team also launched attacks on the post-tenure review process (requiring “publish or perish” plus additional courses taken regardless of the degree held), plans to destroy departments and hire from the central office, proposed large increases in class size and a 15-hour contract load for all faculty.

Local 1600 President Buckley said, “We do not want to strike. And we will only do so if this board forces us to do so. But what they have on the table is far, far more than ‘posturing.’ They are earnest in their attack on faculty, professionals, police officers … even our retirees. We are in the battle of our lives and our careers.”
Solidarity Committee makes recommendations to CCC Members of Local 1600

President Perry Buckley and Chief Negotiator Norman Swenson have been meeting since August 27 with the Solidarity Committee, containing representatives from each chapter in the CCC. Upon the authorization of a job action by the membership, the Solidarity Committee would assist picketing at each campus of the CCC and related activities.

At the September 9 meeting, the Solidarity Committee made suggestions for consideration by the membership in the City Colleges of Chicago:

• Be sure to vote “yes” on the authorization to give the Local 1600 CCC negotiating team the authority to set a strike date.
• If you are not currently a member of the College and University Credit Union, be sure to apply as soon as possible by filling out a form from your chapter chair. AFT interest-free loans will be distributed through the CUCU in the event of a job action.
• In the event of a job action, be sure to take any union materials out of your college office or work station, as you will not be returning to the building until the job action is over.
• Should the CCC Board announce that it is canceling all health insurance in the event of a job action, be aware that this cannot be done for 30 days. After that date, your ability to pay for your insurance is guaranteed through COBRA legislation.

Impact Bargaining Saves Jobs at Triton Midmanagement

The Triton College Board of Trustees continued their attempts to divide and conquer when they RIF’ed seven members of the Midmanagement Chapter at its May Board Meeting. Through impact bargaining, the chapter executive committee, in concert with Local 1600, saved six of seven employees while the other employee took early retirement. A common administrative ploy has been to reorganize positions and to allow RIF’ed employees to reapply. Besides the employee forced into early retirement, another employee applied for and was granted a classified position. Three more were interviewed and hired for reorganized positions. The other two positions are grant funded. The negotiators included Mary Jeans, Kathi Deresinski, Kevin Miller, Peggy Hosty, Local 1600 Suburban Vice President Jim O’Malley and IFT staffer Jennifer Marsh. “This experience was successful but not satisfying” stated Triton Midmanagement Chapter Chair Mary Jeans. “O’Malley and Marsh’s roles at the table were vital.” Deresinski added, “It was positive working with the other Triton chapters of Local 1600.” Local 1600 President Perry Buckley stated, “What is happening at Triton with RIF’s and threats of privatizing is a nightmare. Mary Jeans, Jennifer Marsh, Kathi Deresinski and Jim O’Malley have done a great job at saving jobs. Sadly, however, the fight doesn’t end. One battle is replaced by another and another and another.”
At Malcolm X College on August 16, Local 1600 President Perry Buckley joins with Chapter Chair Alta Williams and Asst. Chapter Chair William Stewart, Jr., in briefing the membership on negotiations with the CCC Board.

At Wright College on August 18, President Perry Buckley (center) addressed the chapter on the CCC Board’s sky-high health care increases and later met with chapter officers. From left: Reggie Bishop, Paul Janus, Hermine Krysa, Linda Rivera, Chapter Chair Clyde Walker, Asst. Chapter Chair Henry Herzog and Chuck Mustari.

At Daley College on August 17, Local 1600 Legislative Chair Bill Naegele, Chapter Chair Mel Anderson, Local 1600 President Perry Buckley and Past Chapter Chair Wendall Wilson enjoy a good lunch before Buckley discusses the CCC negotiations.

At Kennedy-King on August 20, Local 1600 President Perry Buckley (far right) spoke to the membership on the CCC Board’s proposals on post-tenure evaluations, and then posed with (from left): Local 1600 Legislative Chair Bill Naegele, Verna Anderson, Daaiyah Ziyad, Asst. Chapter Chair Larry Ross, Chapter Chair Jeannette Williams, Bill Settles, and Local 1600 CCC V.P. Sonia Powell.

At Truman on August 26, Local 1600 V.P. CCC Sonia Powell addresses the chapter on the CCC contract negotiations.

On Sept. 14, Chapter Chair John Harris at Olive-Harvey opened a crowded meeting for the members to hear President Perry Buckley on the Board’s hostile attitude.
PHOTO ALBUM: Visiting the Suburban Chapters

At the Prairie State Support Chapter on August 9 are: (front row): Chapter Chair Susan Braasch and Susan Sanchez. (back row): Mary Hampton, Local 1600 Legislative Chair Bill Naegele, Kathleen Hazlett, Local 1600 President Perry Buckley, Shirley Parham, Lisa Wilkins-Hill, and Pamela Ethridge.

At the Harper College Faculty Chapter on August 17 are: (front row): Chapter Chair Michael Harkins, Janet Friend-Westney, Susan Overland, and Dan Loprieno. (back row): Local 1600 Suburban Vice-President Jim O’Malley, Local 1600 President Perry Buckley, and Paul Guymon.

At Moraine Valley on August 19, Local 1600 President Perry Buckley (far right) addressed the membership on the threats to Illinois community college contracts. From left: Local 1600 Suburban V. P. Jim O’Malley, Chapter Chair Randy Southard, and Local 1600 Grievance Chair Tom Kodogeorgiou.

At Morton College on August 20, are (back row): Local 1600 President Perry Buckley, Morton Faculty Chapter Chair Dante Orfei, Asst. Chapter Chair Jerry Neadly, Local 1600 Suburban Vice President Jim O’Malley, Cathryn Stukel, and Janet Crockett. (front row): Jesse Garcia and Local 1600 Legislative Chair Bill Naegele.

President Perry Buckley and Legislative Chair Bill Naegele met with Julius Neveles at Prairie State on August 9 to discuss the formation of the new Prairie State Police Chapter.

At Oakton on September 17, former Chapter Chair of Oakton Classified Alice Barnhart, President Perry Buckley and new Chapter Chair Jillian Verstrate share thoughts before the Union House meeting.

PHOTO ALBUM: The Speaker’s Fundraiser

President Perry Buckley has a word with Speaker of the House Michael Madigan at the Speaker’s Sept. 14 fundraiser at the Hotel Sheraton.

Three southsiders — from left: Local 1600 Classified V.P. Gail Wiot, President Perry Buckley and (far right) Moraine Valley Support Chapter Chair Rose Sakanis — have a word with State Representative Kevin McCarthy (D, 37th).

Illinois Attorney General Lisa Madigan makes a point with an old friend from Wright College, President Perry Buckley.
EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING

At the August Executive Board Meeting, the members passed the following motions:

➤ To pledge support in solidarity with the CCC faculty, professionals, training specialists, part-time specialists and security officers in negotiations for fair contracts and to encourage the suburban chapters to participate in any job actions.
➤ To appoint Sharonda Benson of KK as chair of the Executive Board’s Women’s Rights Committee and William Stewart of MX as chair.
➤ To authorize reimbursement for President Buckley, V.P. Classified Gail Wiot, chapter chairs and two representatives from each classified or support chapter to the PSRP Convention in Springfield on Oct. 8 and 9.
➤ To hire Gayle Gregg as a full-time employee.

CCC Board proposes to end Retirees’ Health Insurance

The lawyers who are representing the Board of the City Colleges of Chicago have proposed dumping the 10-year period following retirement of partially subsidizing health insurance for retirees and their families. Retirees and their family members would have to pay 100% of their costs. “It’s an insult to our retirees,” said Local 1600 Chief Negotiator and Retirees’ Chapter Chair Norman Swenson. “Many retired early based on the CCC Board’s promise to provide 10 years of board-paid insurance at a rate only slightly more than the active faculty.”

Responding to the CCC Board’s proposal, Local 1600 President Perry Buckley said, “The board’s representatives have reached a new low in proposing to destroy the health insurance structure for those of our members who need it the most. Our retirees have given their entire careers in service to the City Colleges of Chicago.”

Swenson said the CCC Board’s lack of good faith bargaining would be discussed at the Wednesday, November 3, luncheon at Drury Lane Theater in Oak Brook Terrace. The retiree chapter plans to follow the luncheon with the musical “Of Thee I Sing,” one of the first American musicals to feature a Presidential political campaign. The fee is $20 for members and $30 for guests (maximum of three). All reservations are due by October 27; there are only 60 luncheon/theater reservations available.

Officers sing praise of AFT Delevan Conference

On August 1-5, Local 1600 Vice Presidents CCC Sonia Powell and Suburban Jim O’Malley plus Oakton Classified Chapter Chair Jillian Verstrate attended the AFT sponsored Union Leadership Conference at Delevan, Wisconsin, near Lake Geneva. All of the officers praised the five days of training they received.

“Activities started at 8 a.m. and ended at 5 p.m.,” Powell commented. “Jillian and I attended the sessions on grievances and arbitration. At the conclusion, we participated in a mock arbitration.” Powell made it clear that with a little extra training, she would be comfortable in the future to save Local 1600 a few dollars in legal fees by arguing grievance cases before an arbitrator.

Verstrate echoed Powell’s comments. “This training was of great value. Anyone would benefit from this intense experience.”

Jim O’Malley, who has a very good record for winning grievances, decided to branch off into the leadership skills program and learn how to teach “approaching a grievance session” and “how to be most effective in one.” O’Malley said, “I feel with the training I received at Delevan I will be able to effectively teach our Local 1600 members how to win grievances in the Spring.”

Local 1600 President Perry Buckley said: “In the near future, our members will have leadership training from both the IFT and the AFT.”
The Oakton Classified Chapter has been involved in impact bargaining since June over the Reduction-in-Force notice issued to the manager of the Early Childhood Demonstration Center. This case was the maiden voyage for new Classified Chapter Chair Jillian Verstrate: “All open positions at the college were frozen pending the outcome of the bargaining, which put some pressure on the administration to resolve the issue to our satisfaction.”

The employee reviewed all vacant positions, but none of them seemed to be a good fit. After a seven-week negotiation, an excellent severance package was agreed upon despite the absence of severance language in the chapter’s contract. Verstrate added, “While our preference would have been to save the position, we did our best to please the union member. She was very pleased with the outcome.”

The Oakton Classified team included Verstrate, Assistant Chapter Chair Marilyn Davis, and Grievance Chair Patti Lucas. The team appreciated the support and assistance of IFT staffer Jennifer Marsh, now-retired IFT Staffer Bob Breving and Local 1600 President Perry Buckley.

Buckley said, “Local 1600 can be very proud of what Jillian Verstrate and Marilyn Davis did in this case. They went to heroic efforts to win a wonderful severance package for the RIF’ed union member. What they secured was in excess of what any contract provides. This was union work at its best.”

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**LOCAL 1600 ENDORSES CANDIDATES**

The Legislative Committee followed the lead of the AFT and endorsed John Kerry for President and Barack Obama for U.S. Senator from Illinois. At the September 17 House Meeting, Local 1600 President Perry Buckley and Local 1600 Legislative Chair Bill Naegle presented COPE checks to six state representatives and one candidate and two state senators endorsed by Local 1600’s Legislative Committee. Each representative will receive $5,000; each state senator will receive $10,000. COPE funds are not raised through union dues but rather through the political contributions of the members to the COPE fund. The endorsements were given based on the candidates’ views and votes on labor issues and on the candidates’ need for funding.

**CANDIDATES RUNNING FOR STATE REPRESENTATIVE:**
- Michelle Bromberg (D)......Skokie
- Jim Brosnan (D) ............Evergreen Park
- Ken Dunkin (D) .............S. Loop to 63rd & Cottage Grove
- John Fritchey (D) ...........Lincoln Park to Lakeview
- Kevin Joyce (D).............Morgan Park, Mount Greenwood
- Robin Kelly (D)..............Matteson
- Elaine Nekritz (D)..........Northbrook

**CANDIDATES RUNNING FOR STATE SENATE:**
- Susan Garrett (D)...........Des Plaines
- Louis Viverito (D)..........Burbank

Legislative Chair Naegle stated, “I hope that every campus will be involved in Labor Walks and work on Election Day. Coordinators will be contacting chapter chairs to help gather volunteers.”

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**Oakton Classified reaches impact bargaining agreement**

On August 26 at the Oakton Classified Chapter are Marilyn Davis, Chapter Chair Jillian Verstrate and Patty Lucas.
PERSONAL GLIMPSES

✦ South Suburban mathematics Professor Beth Beno was elected president of the Illinois Mathematics Association of Community Colleges in the fall 2004 semester.

✦ Dr. Bob Blackwood of the Retiree Chapter makes a brief appearance in Casey Moore's documentary film entitled: “Finding the Future: A Science Fiction Conversation.” The feature-length film has been screened at the New York Film and Video Festival and the 2004 World Science Fiction Convention.

✦ Harper faculty English Department member Xilao Li organized a group of students through the Harper International Studies Department and took them on a trip to China this summer.

✦ The Working Women's History Project congratulated one of their founding members and current treasurer, Professor Jacqueline Kirley, who just retired from Harold Washington College.

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