WE Asked You... and YOU Told Us!
The Survey Results Are in...

SEE INSIDE!

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Visit the CCCTU website: www.cctu.org College Union Voice
“A pessimist sees the difficulty in every opportunity; an optimist sees the opportunity in every difficulty.” —Winston Churchill

There are basically two streams of thought in this edition of the *Voice*. The first deals with the very serious challenges and threats we are facing as trade unionists and educators. The other deals with how our Union is working to prepare both in the present and future to meet these challenges.

There is not one of us who does not know that our very careers are under attack. Teachers and public employees on all levels are being told we are the reason for America’s decline and failure. We are told that we are overpaid and under-worked. Teachers in K – 12 are told they are the reason students are unprepared for college work; college teachers are told they are the reason remedial students fail and do not graduate. They do this while all the time ignoring the growing poverty, unemployment, and disappearing middle class in America today.

Charter schools and for-profit colleges (which promise much but deliver little) are seen as the panacea while being handed over vast amounts of money that should be going to public education. Over 85% of revenues for these for-profit colleges come from federal taxpayer dollars. The CEO’s of places such as Phoenix University, Westwood College, and ITT Tech are paid millions. The average completion rate at these schools is 1.2%.

Rarely discussed is America’s inconsistent and woe ful funding of public education. In our 14 community colleges in Cook County, the State of Illinois has permitted their funding to drastically plummet from 33% to as low as 7% in some schools. Even these funds arrive months late to our colleges.

And as we have been warning all our members, our promised pensions are under serious threat in spite of being constitutionally guaranteed. As I write this, there is a bill in the Illinois House which would diminish our pensions and require all active members to kick in an additional 5 – 10% of their base pay. This is not just a pension question; it is a significant pay cut question as well.

Also, and sadly, there have been recent disclosures of Union leaders who have used the system to obtain for themselves pensions and benefits far in excess of what they have obtained for their members. Some of these provisions are “legal”, some are not. There can be no excuse, no justification, and no explanation for these abuses. These union leaders who have lost their way hurt not just their members, but the entire Union movement.

Quite simply, it is our job as Union leaders to make the lives of our members better. We are supposed to look out for them, not ourselves.

Sadly, some of these abuses have occurred at the Illinois Federation of Teachers. Bill Naegle and Tom Dowd are Vice Presidents of the IFT; Tom is on the Executive Committee. They will be voices for change and revision to policies that provide officers and staff benefits and salaries far beyond what our members enjoy.

So, after all that, what’s the good news?

As you will read in this issue of the *Voice*, the CCC-TU is being proactive in making us a better service-orientated Union. We are getting our members politically active. We are very close to launching our new website which will be able to inform every one of our 5,000 members in seconds when we need them to contact their legislators. At Morton College in early November, over 100 members gathered for negotiation and grievance training. We are working harder than ever in working with our friends in Springfield to thwart the attacks on our pensions and our profession.

At our monthly House and Executive Board meetings, we are informing our chapter chairs and delegates of what work needs to be done. Communication is key.

Finally, there is a report in this issue which discusses the results of our Union-wide survey. We are happy with the results which showed that our members, on the whole, are happy with our work. However, the surveys also showed where we need to improve. And we will. Communication is the one common theme that came up on survey after survey. We must and we will do a better job of reaching out to our members.

Remember there is room for everyone in this Union, your Union. It can start with a conversation with your chapter chair or a phone call to me at the office 312-755-9400. There are always more jobs to do than hands to do them. There is room for everyone.
And the Survey Says...

The Cook County College Teachers Union mailed out almost 5000 surveys to all our members to find out just what’s on your mind. We wanted to find out how you rated our service to you. We wanted to find out if you thought what we were doing was beneficial to the membership. We wanted to know if you have some suggestions on how we might do what we do better, or if we should consider additional services.

It was the first time the CCCTU has ever attempted to ask all of its membership to respond to such an inquiry, and from the response, not the last time we will elicit your thoughts. In order for us to better serve you, we need to know what is on your mind and what you think is important.

Of those who filled out the survey, 74% were active faculty or retired faculty; 26% were classified, professional or security. The survey respondents found that a majority viewed themselves as “active members” and most (66%) expressed an interest in increasing their involvement by attending workshops/training sessions. Active membership were defined as participating in some, but not all union meetings, social affairs or being on committees.

The attack on the State University Retirement System (SURS) pension in Springfield generated almost unanimous support from respondents to want more information about retirement funding and planning for retirement. Many members stated the need to be well informed of their contract pension policies. Several thought they should have additional information on the pros and cons of retirement at their college. They wanted to know practical aspects of retirement planning, how much to set aside during their employment, what the future costs of health care are predicted to be, and how much they should have in alternative financial savings.

Training opportunities for members appeared high on the list of things the Union should provide to the rank and file membership. Fifty-two percent of those responding wanted to have more training on negotiating. A majority of members saw this as one of the most important services the union provides for its membership. Job protection and legal representation also appeared high on the list. Many expressed a desire for pre-contract workshops and being more involved in the process. Of almost equal interest was getting more involved in political advocacy, and supporting elected official who understand and support our issues before the Illinois General Assembly and the United States Congress.

Communication ranked as a high priority. Informing the membership on important issues that could affect their profession was an important priority for many. On the topic of communication with the membership, over 85% of those responding to the survey cited their reading of the Union newsletter, the Voice, on a regular basis. On the other hand very few looked at the website or the Union Facebook page. Most expressed that they were not aware that they existed. Almost universally membership believed that future communication should emphasize utilizing more electronic communication. Although most enjoyed the Voice, they wanted to see more practical articles and less social. One member voiced, “The articles need to hit home!” Readers also wanted updates about local and national politics.

Note: The data regarding training corresponded with what union members thought was the most important function of the union, which is represented in the bar graph below.

Workshop and training interest

- Members who reported they would attend workshops or training sessions (66%)
- Members who reported they would not attend workshops or training sessions (25%)
- Members who did not respond (9%)

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IFT PSRP/Public Employees Conference in Springfield
Both Timely and Useful

On a brisk Friday afternoon, V. P. Classified Rose Sakanis and Legal Counsel Brenda Pryor led a contingent of active classified and support members down to Springfield for the 2011 IFT PSRP/Public Employees Conference at the Crowne Plaza Hotel. Attending from MV were Mike Dengler, Carol Antosz, Chapter Chair Helen Agresti, and Sharon Pawlak. Prairie State was represented by Chair Sue Braasch, Carissa Davis and Mary Hampton. Attending from Morton were Chapter Chair Tim Visk, Ruben Ruiz, Diana Rodriguez, and Monica Flores. South Suburban was represented by Erica Humphrey, Triton by Linda Nordstrom and Oakton by Heather Jakob-Short.

At the IFT PSRP Constituency Council Meeting on early Friday night, PSRP Chair Karen Kendall guided an open and frank discussion about attacks on classified chapters throughout Illinois in K-12 schools as well as in community colleges in salaries, health care benefits, working conditions and threats of Reductions in Force (RIFS).

At the “Don’t Let Facebook Get You Fired” Workshop which followed the council meeting, Ruiz raised a question about negative criticism of college personnel or college practices by students or by an employee on his or her Facebook page. As Pryor writes in her column in this Voice, employees can and have been disciplined for such criticism. Students, however, usually are not.

Saturday morning opened with breakfast sessions with various public employee pension experts. At the SURS session, SURS’ Larry Curtis noted the threat posed by Senate Bill 512 to active and retired community college and university members in the Veto Session. IFT Secretary Marcia Campbell commented on SB 512, “You should start now to write to your state representatives and state senators; don’t wait for us to ask you to write, call or email—because we may very well be doing so at the last minute. Please, get in touch with your political representatives in Springfield now! Don’t wait!”

Saturday morning offered more workshops in a number of areas. One of the most interesting was the OSHA Update for IFT Public Employees which was chaired by Sakanis. Sakanis praised the efforts of U. of Illinois’ Dr. Joe Zanoni, chair of the Environmental & Occupational Health Sciences, and the U. of Illinois’ Marsha Love. In addition, AFT Health and Safety Director Darryl Alexander, who was the presenter at the workshop, announced the AFT had partnered with UIC to do programs on occupational work problems with Zanoni and Love; Alexander is making monthly visits to Illinois.

Sakanis expressed a desire to have Zanoni visit one of our CCCTU training sessions in the coming year.

Sakanis summed up the conference by praising Campbell for finding good speakers, a number of good presenters for the workshop discussions, and for keeping the focus on updating our members with methods of improving both our occupations and our political well-being.
Fall Training Conference Draws Huge and Enthusiastic Crowd of Members

The CCCTU Fall Training Conference at Morton College, Cicero, IL, on Saturday, Nov. 5, drew over 100 members to an intense 8:30 a.m.-4:00 p.m. educational experience. The key issues were financing your union chapter, how to deal effectively with grievances, and extensive data on how to negotiate a new contract.

At the beginning plenary session, Asst. to the President Randy Barnette praised Jennifer Visk, Joe Mustari and Gayle Gregg for their assistance in putting the nuts and bolts of the conference proper together. He also noted that most of the planning had been by the new officers of the union. Barnette later received praise for his work as well.

President Perry Buckley thanked everyone for the good turnout and reminded them of the seriousness of the negotiations they would be facing in the real world. Legislative Chair Bill Naegle was intense in his message about the anti-public-employee pension bill, Senate Bill 512 or some variation of it. (Editor’s note: It may come to a vote in the Illinois General Assembly after Thanksgiving. Please visit www.ccctu.org for regular updates.)

The members then broke into three groups. A dozen or so members attended a chapter treasurers’ workshop, directed by Treasurer Don Radtke on how to effectively use the chapter’s money. Radtke stated the CCCTU provides scholarship funds, recruitment funds, and chapter rebates. He also noted: “In Local 1600, there is no financial difference between the cost of being a ‘Fair Share’ member or being a member of Local 1600. The costs are the same. We are the only local in the IFT which spends no dues money, but only voluntary COPE funds, for political activity.”

A second group of a dozen attended the Grievance Chair Workshop, hosted by Legal Counsel Brenda Pryor and Grievance Chair Chuck Mustari. The session focused on real problems. The first real problem every grievance chair faces is the member who is offended by a directive that she or he feels is a subject for a grievance. As Mustari noted, “When someone comes to you asking for a grievance on a directive, first distinguish between a personal gripe versus a grievable issue. If there is no provision in the contract or past practice prohibiting it, you have a personal gripe. We can’t grieve an issue where there is no just cause. The would-be grievant has to find a way to deal with the directive outside of the grievance procedure.”

Most of the members spent about two hours in the auditorium-like classroom learning about negotiations with 30-minute presentations by Harper Assistant Chapter Chair Sean Noonan on why we bargain collectively, Secretary Debra Baker on roles of negotiation team members, V.P. Dave Richmond on ground rules, table discipline, and mechanics of negotiation, and Harper Chapter Chair Tom Dow on how to use the ICCB website to research for negotiations.

By noon, the members were in the cafeteria but now sharing the table with the members of their mock negotiating teams, rather than their friends from their home chapters.

It came as a surprise to some, perhaps, that the CCCTU officers would all play administrative negotiators in the mock negotiations around the cafeteria tables which went from 12:45-3:00 p.m. Of course, in many cases, only the CCCTU officers and some of the current chapter chairs had extensive histories of being on the inside of contract negotiations. Richmond, who was supervising the entire event, was free from taking sides. On the other hand, Buckley and Radtke were the hard-nosed “administration team” facing the College A union negotiators.

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Legislative Chair Bill Naegle exhorts the audience to tell their legislators, “Keep your hands off my pension!”

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“We are the only local in the IFT which spends no dues money, but only voluntary COPE funds, for political activity.”

—CCCTU Treasurer Don Radtke

Marilyn Davis, William Stewart, Debra Baker, Michelle Sutko and Chuck Mustari reach an agreement for College E.
Buckley a Big Hit on Lt. Gov. Simon’s Education Panel
By Rachelle Robinson-Dukes, VP CCC

“[This will take 6 or 7 years to take effect. By then we will see students enter college better prepared for college English and math],” stated Chico. In addition, community colleges and high schools must work together to facilitate college readiness. This can be done in several steps: by doing testing to juniors and seniors to determine college readiness, offering dual credit and dual enrollment, and by creating a college bridge program.

Chico suggested that public community colleges should model the for-profit institutions’ marketing and aggressive recruiting. Buckley strongly objected, though, to the for-profits. “Overall I am not a fan of the for-profits. They do a great job at marketing. They promise high but deliver low. Some take advantage of low-income families. They often eat up the students’ financial aid and don’t do what they are supposed to do. It is unfortunate that they get so much of the state budget.” Giannoulias echoed this sentiment, which was received with cheers from the audience.

The discussion closed with a call for more funding for education. Currently the state is underfunding community colleges and has been doing so for years. “It is offensive and unacceptable,” stated Giannoulias.

All of these factors – core curriculum standards, dual credit and dual enrollment, early testing, partnering between high schools and colleges, and increasing grant monies for future college students – are necessary to ensure better quality education for American students.
V. P. Sakanis and Retirees Question BGA Study on CAN-TV

On Sept. 21, three members of the CCCTU — V. P. Classified Rose Sakanis, former V. P. Classified Gail Wiot (a retiree) and Web Manager Bob Blackwood (a retiree) — did a CAN-TV show questioning a Channel Two report by Jay Levine with data from the BGA’s Executive Director Andy Shaw. The show was cablecast in early October.

On CBS-2’s website, Pension Consultant Bill Zettler noted: “The average 66-year-old private sector retiree collects $28,000 a year in Social Security. A 66-year-old community college retiree collects $128,000 a year, plus the cost of living increases.”

Sakanis read the piece from the Channel Two website word-per-word.

If you hear that cold, it sounds like the “average community college retiree is collecting $128,000 a year.” That is because it is a false comparison or false contrast. The study pairs up the presumably true average of $28,000 a year for a private sector Social Security recipient vs. a single community college retiree who may be collecting $128,000 a year.

Blackwood noted on the CAN-TV show: “If you averaged the top five recipients of a SERS pension you would probably get $128,000 a year—but I suspect they are all former college presidents or university presidents or top administrators.”

Then, the TV show cut to two screens comparing the real average SERS payments which are either $31,308 according to a University of Illinois study presented to the U. of IL Board on July 20-21, 2011 or, the larger number of $33,960, which was provided by SERS on its website. You will note neither of these averages comes close to $128,000.

<table>
<thead>
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<th>SERS/ AVERAGE PENSION</th>
<th>(prepared by officials from the University of Illinois July 20-21, 2011 Board Meeting)</th>
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<tr>
<td>NOTE: Most employees covered by state of Illinois pension systems are NOT eligible for Social Security.</td>
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<td>SERS: (e.g. Sec. of State’s Offices)</td>
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<td>TRS: (K-12 grade-high schools)</td>
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<td>GARS: (state reps., state senators)</td>
<td>$47,052</td>
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<tr>
<td>JRS: (circuit court &amp; other judges)</td>
<td>$104,208</td>
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SERS FACTS:
Illinois Community College Pensions
- 45% of members are professors and teachers
- 55% are staff employees such as building service workers, groundskeepers, clerical, and administrative staff
- 65% of members earn $50,000 or less
- 64% of benefit recipients receive $2,600 or less per month = $31,200 yearly
- 78% of retirees reside in Illinois
- The average monthly retirement benefit of a SERS annuitant is $2,830 = $33,960 yearly

After getting the data up both in black and white and via commentary, the three CCCTU members gave the following information about their own pensions:
- After around 28 years in service Wiot grossed slightly over $34,000 a year, just a touch higher than the SERS estimate of the average retiree pension.
- Rose Sakanis estimated via the SERS website that if she retired next year on her anniversary date, she would gross about $1700 a month. If she waited until 2016, she would have around $2500 a month.
- Bob Blackwood gave a take-home figure, after taxes and Blue Cross Blue Shield, of $58,000 yearly—explaining that he had retired on one of the top levels for faculty over 10 years ago, though he was still quite far from the $128,000 a year which was the figure the BGA study cited.

For the latest update on the attacks on YOUR pension, go to www.ccctu.org.
As has become an annual fall tradition, President Perry Buckley, his staff and elected officers visit as many city and suburban chapters as possible during the start of the fall semester. This fall every campus and chapter was visited. Stories can be found at www.ccctu.org. Every photo taken at each event is available through the same website; follow the links to SmugMug.

- $589 Total amount contributed by new COPE members (per pay period)
- $428 Total amount from increased contributions of current COPE members
- $1017 TOTAL INCREASE IN COPE FUNDS AS OF 10/14/11

Oakton Classified: First Teleconferenced CCCTU Chapter Meeting

Oakton Classified’s Chapter Chair Kathleen DeCourcy supervised a chapter meeting at Oakton’s Des Plaines’ campus without being there. She created the first teleconferenced CCCTU chapter meeting by remaining at the Skokie campus but wielding the metaphorical gavel at Des Plaines via a Tandberg 880 system.

In the front row Alex Delonis, Loretta Lavere and Kathy Kuhlman watch the TV screen with Joe Mustari, Rose Sakanis and Randy Barnette.

Legislative Chair Bill Naegele just “sold” a hot pink CCCTU fleece hooded jacket to KKC’s Bonnie Harrison during the COPE “fire sale.”

President Perry Buckley addresses members at Wright College’s Humboldt Park Vocational Center on October 18. It was the first visit for the officers of the CCCTU at that facility. Chapter Chair Linda Murphy said, “This meeting was a long time in coming and I’m glad that we did it. We’ll definitely be here at least once per year.”

Triton’s newest Mid-Manager (formerly Classified) Larry Bodzewski registers as a COPE contributor thanks to CCCTU Intern Paul Inclan and Social Media Staffer Jennifer Visk.

At Morton Faculty on Aug. 18 Sec. Deb Baker holds up the newest CCCTU travel coffee mug which can be had for a $1 increase.

Visit the CCCTU website: www.ccctu.org
COPE “ROAD SHOW” NETS OVER $1,000 INCREASE IN CONTRIBUTIONS

Asst. to the President Randy Barnette presents COPE Honor Roll member James Gray with a "100% gold-painted" CCC-TU lapel pin. Gray recently received tenure at Triton College.

MVC Asst. Chapter Chair Hope Essien gets a round of applause for his appearance in Starz’ new Chicago-based show, “Boss.” During the “We Are One” rally in early April the film crew from the show was impressed with Essien’s passion during the march and has included him in the opening credits. Bravo!

Daley’s Jennifer Jakob and Helena Craules wait for newly elected Chapter Chair Todd Lakin’s first meeting to begin on Aug. 24.

Suburban VP David Richmond demonstrates some of the premiums available to COPE contributors at Moraine Valley.

President Perry Buckley brings the Morton Classified Chapter up-to-speed with what is happening in Springfield.

Sec. Deb Baker listens to President Perry Buckley update the Triton Classified Association on Oct. 27.

At OHC, members enjoy their lunch as they wait for the COPE presentation.

South Suburban Support Staff’s Irene Ramirez draws a raffle ticket on Oct. 6th.

Visit the CCCTU website: www.ccctu.org

College Union Voice
Rally for Retirement Security Draws a U. S. Senator, Four Congressmen and a CCCTU Contingent

On Monday, November 7, the CCCTU joined the Illinois Alliance for Retired Americans (IARA), Jane Adams Senior Caucus, SEIU Healthcare, Access Living and community organizations for a major rally at the Federal Plaza in Chicago to demand that Congress protect retirement security for all generations.

President Perry Buckley led a CCCTU contingent to the rally where the speakers included U. S. Senator Dick Durbin (D, Ill.), and Congressmen Bobby Rush (D, 1), Mike Quigley (D, 5), Danny Davis (D, 7), and Janice Schakowsky (D, 9).

Buckley gathered the members at the headquarters—Bob Blackwood, Myra Cox, John Mintier, Don Radtke, Mike Ruggeri and John Wenger—and marched to the Federal Plaza at Dearborn & Adams Streets.


Senator Durbin pledged support for Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid. He was followed by Congressman Davis who stated: “A people united will never be defeated.”

Congressman Quigley criticized our priority system in spending federal money: “We spend more money on just researching new weapons systems in the USA than China spends on their entire military.” Congressman Schakowsky demanded simple justice for older Americans. Congressman Rush echoed the crowd’s need to continue to receive their Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid and other retirement benefits without suffering reductions.

All of the people there from the CCCTU will remember the pledges given by their political representatives; all of them will write or call their political representatives in Washington during the days and months to come.

CCCTU Meets with Legislators at LEAD Dinner

At the annual Chicago Teachers Union Legislators Educators Appreciation Dinner on Friday, October 28 at Plumbers Hall, Legislative Chair Bill Naegele made the rounds, meeting with legislators, aldermen and other key political players.

Visit the CCCTU website: www.ccctu.org
The new union website—www.ccctu.org—will be launched on January 1, 2012. It will also be available through the old address, www.ccctu.com, but it features a new look.

• Beneath the CCC TU logos, there is a navigation bar on which you will find a list of categories, containing some things you may need—e.g. forms.

• To the right of the navigation bar is the tiny blue link to our CCC TU Facebook page, supervised by Social Media Staffer Jennifer Visk.

• Beneath the navigation bar, you will see a large horizontal photo which has three horizontal slideshow photos beneath it, labeled “FEATURED STORIES.” If you click on any photo, a “featured story” will come up.

• The "Search" feature will enable you to search for older stories in the archives.

• Beneath the “Search” feature is the “Upcoming Calendar Events” window—reminding people of a House meeting, an Executive Board meeting, the Union Banquet, etc.

• Beneath the “Upcoming Calendar Events” window is the “Join the Membership Email List Here” window. We are asking all our members to register their “home” or “private” email addresses there in order to receive “blast” emails advising members how and when to contact their legislators on issues that will have an impact on our pensions, our salaries, our working conditions, our contract negotiations, etc. If needed, the membership list can accept email accounts from a wide variety of popular email services, such as: Gmail, Yahoo, Hotmail, AOL, or the email account made available to you through your Internet Service Provider. We have been advised, this is the best way to avoid our blast emails from being labeled “SPAM.”

• Note: Your “community college” email addresses may not be registered here in this window. It is neither appropriate nor legal to use your college email address for political purposes. You could be disciplined for doing so.

• The next window beneath the “Join the Membership Email List Here” is the “Colleges We Serve” window. This window gives contact information for the college. It also gives the union chapter chair, assistant chair, and grievance chair contact information.

The call for a new website came from the new officers elected by the CCC TU—Rochelle Robinson-Dukes, Dave Richmond, Rose Sakanis, Debra Baker, and Chuck Mustari—as well as the new chapter chairs. At training sessions, they saw the need to attract a younger audience with a more visually exciting website plus hard facts and union journalism.

Grievance Chair Chuck Mustari saw the need to scan past arbitration decisions. Secretary Debra Baker saw the advantage of creating a listing of contracts from our many chapters which also could be scanned. Scanning will be added to the website when time and financing permits. Assistant to the President Randy Barnette oversaw the development of the website.
How to Build Better Relationships within Your Chapter

By Robin Meade, Chapter Chair, Moraine Valley Adjunct Faculty Organization

Often noticed in this day and age are the numerous and pervasive methods of communication, yet frequently people perceive themselves out of touch with what is happening around them. Texting, blogging, email and social networking carve out huge sections of individual time but provide only a surface-level communication. Time constraints and technology limitations cut out the decoding of the intended message even further. No wonder the big trend in organizations is building more efficient processes through building relationships with and between employees.

From a chapter perspective, ideally there should be opportunity to meet with as many members as possible to speak with them personally. This just isn’t practical for one person to accomplish. Instead a multilayered approach to communication needs to be adopted. In Marketing, this is called Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC).

IMC involves a consistent message or theme being sent out with various forms of communication. For any person who is busy, adjuncts in particular, where there is perhaps a 10 to 15 second window of undivided attention, any message coming from the same source should be framed the same way. The receiver then begins to accept the information at a higher level than “junk” information. The current MVAFO theme is “Make a Difference * Be the Difference.”

But who cares about a 10 to 15 second message? How can anything of value be communicated effectively in so short a time? True and it can’t. This is where the layering comes into play. One brightly colored memo on the union bulletin board plus an email plus a posting on a website plus a few lines in a newsletter, all framed consistently, referring to each other and timed correctly absolutely can effectively communicate anything.

Timing is everything. Providing these layers all at once is useless.Spacing them no more than a week apart is most effective but always communicating on the same day of the week should be avoided. Why? The audience will then become acclimated to ignoring the message on that day of the week. IMC is about utilizing a consistent package for communication, not about always doing the exact same communication. Plus, not everyone teaches the same days so if communication comes out on the same day all the time, there will be some members who perceive those who teach on that day are more important. This is a particular issue for the MVAFO in delivery. At your chapter there may be a different one.

Also, adjuncts require more lead time for events. This is a particular issue when communicating with the other areas on campus which have regular office hours. Typically at MVCC emails are sent out to communicate with anyone about everything. Adjuncts are on the go, often teaching at two colleges on the same day, so emailing is okay as a channel of communication, as long as a quick response isn’t expected.

Lastly, effective communication is a team effort. A network needs to be set up with the Executive Committee and other seasoned volunteers to post messages, update the website and meet with members. This not only facilitates communication but future leadership development. The newest communication initiative for the MVAFO has been holding a coffee hour once per week.
Don’t Let Facebook Get You Fired!

By Brenda D. Pryor, Esq.

Dear Union Brothers & Sisters,

I am writing to you today to discuss a rapidly growing issue of concern – proper conduct for employees online. This article might be more aptly titled: “don’t let social media get you sacked,” because I want people to be knowledgeable about all online conduct, not just Facebook!

Your first thought might be: “Hey! What I do online, from the privacy of my own home shouldn’t impact my employment.” But you would, unfortunately, be wrong. The courts have ruled that as a public employee (which community college employees are) you have a right to limited free speech. This means that the college can limit your free speech rights, online and anywhere else, by virtue of you being their employee. While they cannot limit when you speak as a citizen on a matter of public concern, they can limit (read: discipline) you in other forums. This is why you can participate in a union rally for collective bargaining rights without reprisal, but you can get written up for posting how stupid a certain VP is on your blog!

Local 1600 Grievance Chair Chuck Mustari states it plainly, “Just ask yourself this: if what you put online on Facebook, Twitter or other social media sites were displayed or read out loud at the college’s Board of Trustees meeting, would you be ashamed? If so, then JUST DON’T DO IT!”

Members should also be aware that there are reports that employers are actively monitoring social media sites for employees’ commentary. People have been reprimanded or terminated for complaining about their clientele, posing online holding alcoholic beverages, attempting to “friend” attractive students at their college, joking that they were addicted to drugs, and disclosing confidential information “anonymously.”

Some additional do’s and don’ts are:

• DO check your privacy settings frequently & leave them set to the most restricted access settings;
• DO make sure your profile picture is acceptably neutral because that picture is searchable (so that photo of you passed out drunk on your 40th birthday, while amusing, is not appropriate);
• DO be cautious about who you “friend” (no supervisors or students on your personal page). Mustar even recommends having 2 Facebook pages – one for personal use & one for professional use;
• DON’T gripe about your employer and/or co-workers by name;
• DON’T post anything sexually explicit, racially offensive, anti-Semitic, or that references your use of alcohol or drugs;
• DON’T forget that the Internet isn’t nearly as anonymous as people like to think.

Remember, what is uploaded online in a millisecond will last for a lifetime!

Visit us on Facebook!
facebook.com/CookCountyCollegeTeachersUnion

Oakton Pizza Party...A Slice!

At its annual Pizza Party the Oakton Classified Staff led by Kathleen DeCoursey enjoyed pizza, beer and, most importantly, good camaraderie. In this photo are (from top left) Toni Mannama, Evelyn Burgess, Kristin Wirth and Dorothy Olson.
A Day in the Life of a Support Member:
Prairie State’s Carissa Davis

The phone rings or a subdued knock on the door sounds, and a voice says, “I know you must be trying to get lunch, but I just need some help for a minute with….,” Carissa Davis, the coordinator of veterans affairs at Prairie State College’s Financial Aid Office, is busy from the early summer mornings when she walks into her office at 7:30 throughout the day until she leaves, often not until 6:30 p.m. or later. “If my students have to work late at their jobs,” Davis says, “I stay until they can see me.”

When asked if she only deals with veterans, Davis says, “It is a little bit of everything, and every day is different.” She says about 70% of the students she sees are veterans, but some of her 150-175 veterans are different from others.

“Those under the Post-9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2008 must have me OK their courses every semester. Also,
• I okay their schedules,
• fill them in on what will and won’t work for them,
• and review their past performances to determine what they can handle.

Sometimes, it is better to have them take fewer classes and succeed, than to take more classes and fail.” Of the 6,000 students at Prairie State College in Chicago Heights, an estimated 5-7% of them are veterans.

“Those under the older version of the GI Bill have fewer requirements and, correspondingly, receive less money. And, of course, some veterans just don’t want to bother with the paperwork, so they just pay out-of-pocket,” Davis says “Frankly, it is my job to help the veterans and other students maximize the benefits that they are legally entitled to receive; I like doing that.”

When asked why she takes pleasure in helping people out, as opposed to those individuals and institutions who take their money and shuffle them out the door, she talks about her mother. Assistant Pastor Shirley Davis served the people of Trinity Resurrection United Church in a small community specifically identified as “South Chicago.”

“We had the smallest church in the community, but—when it came to helping out people, particularly kids, and doing other charitable acts—we had the best reputation,” Davis says. “She tried to give our people a chance at personal success. After a while, you stop thinking of helping people not as something your mother does, but as something you love doing yourself.”

Carissa Davis honors her cousin, Sgt. Simone Robinson, who died in Iraq, with a poster in her office.

Davis says simply, “I like what I do. I like the people I serve. I get families that come in here to talk about college.”

When time permits, she may even mention her cousin—Sergeant Simone Robinson from the Illinois National Guard—who died in Iraq on March 1, 2009. Davis has a poster of her in her office. “Simone was a student here at Prairie State,” Davis says. Davis takes her job seriously, but she wears her education lightly. With two degrees from Prairie State College, an undergraduate degree from Governor’s State University and a Master’s Degree in Communications & Training from GSU, she is now thinking of pursuing a doctorate in a related discipline. She willingly displays an amazingly clear, yet detailed, form that she created to help her veterans see what they needed to do to obtain their maximum benefits. “If they fill this out ahead of time and talk to me for even 20 minutes, I can really help them. Otherwise, it may take me much longer to have someone prepared to succeed in college,” she noted.

One thing Carissa Davis knows is that, if you are willing to put in your time and effort, you can achieve your goals. And she finds the ways to motivate people to make a success of their lives, a lot like her mother did.

For the latest update on the attacks on YOUR pension, go to www.cctu.org.
Survey Says... (continued from p. 3)

When the surveyed members were asked their thoughts on how to attract new employees to get more involved in union activities, many excellent suggestions were made. Some members thought a new-member orientation and welcome reception should be held at each campus to welcome new members. Others suggested a mentoring program at each chapter, to pair the new members with some of the veterans. Some thought that finding things that interested certain members might help attract newer members. Professional growth training sessions on how to do better at their job were also a consideration for many.

The Cook County College Teachers Union is committed to reaching out and finding ways to better serve its membership. Surveys, like this one, are just some of the ways to get feedback from the dues paying employees of the union. We hope to develop a dialogue over the course of time that, hopefully, will reflect the needs and will of our membership. We thank you for taking the time and effort to help us do our job better. We look forward to serving you and your interests.

Fall Training Conference (continued from p. 5)

Ground rules and intent to bargain were presented by the union; the board members offered their proposals. The union team created counterproposals with justification, language changes, etc. Then, the real “fun” began. During one of the short breaks, one experienced negotiator said, “I was a little surprised at how spirited some of our CCCTU officers are as board negotiators.” Suddenly, the “mock” negotiations smelled and looked like the real thing. The camera captured the tension on many of the negotiators’ faces. When it was all over, it was a series of split decisions: some settled, some required more negotiations, some were ready to strike. The “mock” negotiations reflected the reality of life in 2011.

Dave Richmond struck the right note at the end of the conference. “Conferences like this one are usually held only by statewide federations. It is Perry Buckley who wants us to be totally prepared for what’s coming in the future. We owe him our thanks for today.” Richmond and Buckley both received a large hand from the hard-working audience.
MVFA Prof. Donates Penned Novel, to Do Book Signing

Mark Derdzinski, assistant professor of English at Moraine Valley Community College, has fulfilled one of his dreams by writing and publishing *Nemo: Into the Abyss and Back*, a modern day version of Jules Verne’s 20,000 Leagues Under the Sea that was written for the Millennial Generation (18- to 30-year-olds).

Now, he wants to raise money for the college’s Faculty Association Scholarship Fund by selling copies of the book in the college’s bookstore for $10 each. He has donated 10 copies to the bookstore, which has resulted in a 100 percent profit to be donated, and will donate all proceeds from additional sales of the book. He hopes that community members will purchase the book to increase the donations to the scholarship fund.

“Many students are struggling,” said Derdzinski. “So many of them just can’t afford to buy books, and this is my way to help some of those students be able to get their books.”

*Nemo: Into the Abyss and Back* follows Nemo, an American defense contractor who holds the U.S. government responsible for the murder of his family, and Alicia Petit-Smith, a journalist searching for the person responsible for a series of mysteriously sunken ships. In keeping with Verne’s masterpiece, readers of this book will experience the thrill of diving for wrecks and encountering giant squid while travelling in the submarine Nautilus.