



# Dial ogue



November 24, 2004

• An Open Forum for Faculty at Santa Rosa Junior College •

THE AFA *Dial ogue* HAS BEEN CREATED TO AIR CONCERNS OF ALL FACULTY. THE AFA *Update* WILL CONTINUE TO BE THE FACTUAL VOICE OF THE AFA, WHILE THE AFA *Dial ogue* WILL ENCOURAGE CONVERSATION AND PUBLISH OPINIONS ABOUT WORK PLACE ISSUES AND POLITICAL CONCERNS. WE INVITE ANY FACULTY MEMBER TO SUBMIT LETTERS, ARTICLES, OR OPINION PIECES. AFA RESERVES EDITORIAL PREROGATIVES.

## Another Adjunct Response to Overload Issues

by *Alix Alixopulos, AFA Executive Council Member*

Well, colleagues, thank goodness I am not on Outlook as I am too busy as a part-timer and “freeway flyer” moving from school to school. However, I have received a hint of the reaction from the comments on the AFA Executive Council on which I sit as a part-time representative and, of course, the comments in last week’s *AFA Dialogue* and was curious.

So this weekend I sat down and went through the three e-mails that Michael Ludder sent out on the College distribution list regarding overload. He used the final full-time overload report data for the Fall ‘03, Spring ‘04, the Summer ‘04, and the scheduled overload data for the Fall ‘04. This was public data originally requested by Academic Affairs and compiled by Computing Services for the review of the Board of Trustees. Just three e-mails and it elicited several hundred e-mails and I sat down and read every damn one.

My first impression is the venom from some and the willingness to put words in Michael’s

mouth that he never said, such as “unscrupulous” in regard to those full-timers who had taken overloads. He certainly touched a nerve, evoking a reaction very similar to that of a privileged population that is forced to recognize some realities. He put out some simple public statistics about which most people don’t have his determination and persistence to dig for.

I am particularly heartened by those responses that made the appeal to “community” because that is what colleges once were. In a community you recognize that what is done to any of your colleagues can be done to you in the long term and most likely will be, especially in hard economic times. It is in those times that solidarity should be the issue.

I have been teaching at the community college level for close to thirty years. The first few years I taught as a full-timer in another state and I am very familiar with the perks and privilege of that position. The last 19 years I have taught at SRJC and three, some-

times four, other community college districts as a part-timer. I think that I have a perspective on what is happening in the community colleges better than most.

First, of the four districts that I am familiar with, Santa Rosa has the best conditions for part-timers and an association that largely does care — that is why I put my efforts beyond just teaching classes, here, rather than in the other districts where the cause is too far gone. But I also know that the issues that part-timers care about — equity, pay, health, conditions — are ultimately bargaining chips in negotiations because I’ve seen them lost at other schools. When I first started teaching, a part-timer was rare, used to fill a needed class here and there. Now that has changed and the ratio between part-time and full-time has been reversed. In one district where I teach, there are no full-timers in a number of departments and, of course, the idea of shared governance has become a joke there.

*(continued on reverse)*

## Overload Issues *(continued)*

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In another district, the full-time faculty lost a three-year fight over an issue of shared governance largely because every part-timer knew that they were only a third of a person with a third of a vote in faculty affairs. A loud guffaw was heard in most offices when the full-timers came asking for help on the picket lines. Now you call us colleagues when you are in trouble.

In two community colleges this year, part-time unions became recognized as bargaining units against the combined efforts of the full-time faculty and the administrations to stop them. There are now close to 30,000 part-timers working in the community college system.

For all you respondents who don't think there are dedicated part-timers here who depend on getting classes as their sole source of income, then perhaps you should hear the stories Michael and I do about dedicated part-timers who have been here for years and have either been knocked down to twenty percent or out, and lost their health plan (people with cancer, which now becomes a pre-existing condition in applications for a new plan or position). Or, the part-timers desperately looking for a job at Starbuck's or similar with flexible hours so that they can survive on the one class that they still have and love to teach. Perhaps a freed-up overload here or there might have made a difference and we do know that there are real colleagues here at

SRJC who have done that. We know that there are individuals in their own private hell of a situation who just can't and we understand that. But the squeals that were also there in the hundreds of responses were those of the privileged who feel no responsibility.

For a number of respondents who criticized the freeway flyers who teach many classes at many schools, you should know that is one way to keep your health care and STRS retirement at any kind of level at all. I would trade my 200-mile-a-day gas bill for 60% somewhere. It is just incredible how many freeway flyers I meet on a daily basis at different schools. And you know what? Most whom I have asked also put in office hours even though they don't have to and, in most instances, don't get paid for them. Most of us would not put up with the crap we face on a daily basis if we didn't love this profession and weren't committed to it.

I think that what hurts me the most is the destruction of our profession itself by our own attitudes. Two recent examples that I know of show the vulnerability of part-timers and ultimately how all of our credibility as teachers is affected. A part-timer I know, a tough dedicated teacher, was asked to change a failing grade for the son of a prominent member of the community. She at first refused but, upon the dean's implication that her future hiring might depend on it, she left the space

blank for them to do what they wanted. She might have gained the support of her association on the grade issue but she knew very well that they would not be around to insist on her being rehired. At another school where I teach, all members of one department are part-timers. Two of them have been asked to evaluate a potential hire for equivalency. Every one knows that space has been reserved in the spring schedule for someone to teach three classes, but not assigned to any one currently working. The potential hire is the nephew of the president of the college.

Teaching is about ethics and morals and that is what Michael is about. The issue, which Michael brought up in his e-mails, stirred the pot of discussion on this one issue of overload. There is so much more that needs to be discussed in a civil manner as to the state of our profession. He did us all a favor.

In solidarity, Alix Alixopoulos

HONESTY CAN BE CULTIVATED BY TRANSFORMING YOUR INNER LANGUAGE. FOR EXAMPLE, YOU MIGHT THINK: "I AM NO GOOD" OR "THEY ARE NOT GOOD." IS THIS TRUE? FOR SOME STRANGE REASON, PEOPLE WANT TO WALLOW IN THE IDEA OF BEING EITHER THE BEST OR THE WORST. WHAT IS TRUE IN THIS MOMENT? HOW CLOSE CAN WE GET TO THE REALITY OF OUR EXPERIENCES?

-MARTINE BATCHELOR  
"MEDITATION FOR LIFE"