

AFA

DIALOGUE

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THE AFA DIALOGUE 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 DIALOGUE WILL ENCOURAGE CONVERSATION AND PUBLISH PERSONAL OPINIONS ABOUT WORK PLACE ISSUES AND POLITICAL CONCERNS. WE INVITE ANY FACULTY MEMBER TO SUBMIT LETTERS, ARTICLES, OR OPINION PIECES. AFA RESERVES EDITORIAL PREROGATIVES.

REPRESENTATION OVER A GAP

by Ted Crowell, Adjunct Faculty in the Philosophy Department

Let's start with a fundamental: the purpose of a recognized labor union is to represent the members' interests in working conditions, salaries, and benefits as governed by a contract. In the best of all possible worlds these interests reside in a more or less homogenous membership. In this ideal world, there is less political maneuvering within the membership, less internecine wars and more of a common front in efforts to gain better working conditions and salaries.

Unfortunately, the ideal world, by its very definition, is not the real world. Within a bargaining unit, there are often wide divergences in the nature and interests of the membership. It is this issue and its related problems that I would like to discuss, and to which I offer some possible solutions.

In the two-year California college system, differences are created, in part, by the legal force of the Education Code. In addition, the District recognizes certain employee categories (lecture hourly, lab hourly, noncredit hourly, allied, contract, adjunct, etc.) – all within the rubric

“faculty.” These we can think of as institutional/legal differences. Then there are non-clearly defined differences such as newly hired faculty, senior faculty, faculty

FACULTY JOB RESPONSIBILITIES

Regular faculty members working a 100% load are paid for a 40-hour workweek. Pay for 35 of those hours (87.5%) is for student contact, and pay for 5 of those hours (12.5%) is for college service and professional service & development (CS&PS&D). Adjunct faculty members are not required or paid to perform CS&PS&D and, thus, their workload is 87.5% of a regular faculty member's workload. The student contact responsibilities for the two groups are the same.

nearing retirement, faculty with dependents, faculty with second employments, and so forth.

The issue that is currently center stage is the distinction between regular contract faculty and hourly part-time faculty. Different expressions emphasize the nature of this particular gap: regular/adjunct; full-time/part-time; contract/contingent.

Here is the problem. There are two separately defined faculties,

regular and hourly. Even though there are recent changes in faculty workload, and reductions in the hourly salary schedules, the job responsibilities for the two faculties are still nearly the same (see inset). So we have a bargaining unit advocating for a common interest in working conditions when there is an institutional gap between the salaries, benefits, and legal status of each. Map onto this the non-legal differences and we have a nearly intolerable situation facing the bargaining unit, especially under the current conditions of severe state budget reductions. The paradox is further sharpened by the fact that SRJC has made

strides in bridging the gap between the two faculties by offering compensation to adjunct faculty for college service (AFDAF), linking the hourly salary schedules to the contract schedule, and paying full-time overload assignments off the hourly schedules. At the same time, the Ed Code defines and distinguishes between two different categories of faculty.

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OVER A GAP *(cont. from page 1)*

What follows are some suggestions to ease the pain and keep the gap from becoming a schism. Creating a separate unit for each of the faculty groups is not one of my suggestions. Our single bargaining unit has achieved improved working conditions for all represented faculty groups. A separate unit for part-time faculty is not likely to achieve a better parity figure than is now in place.

1. Ensure that all faculties (part-time, allied, lecture, non-credit) are legally guaranteed representation in all union entities. AFA has worked to achieve this over the years, but a continued review should be conducted to ensure this principle is being met. There may be current situations that are out of sync with this principle.
2. Formulate ground rules for representatives that caution against demonizing the other faculties. There will be instances where the expression of interests of one group is seen by another as damaging to the interests of the other (e.g. the recent referendum on adjunct

medical benefits). However, the expression of that interest may be a genuine expression of legitimate concerns from members of that group, not intended to harm the other. There are often long-term interests that may reside with the regular faculty that appear to be in conflict with the short-term interests of the part-time faculty. This is a manifestation of the paradox between the two groups.

3. Take steps to eliminate dual advocacy roles when a single person occupies several positions. Apart from confusion over which hat is being worn by that person; this can have the practical benefit of broadening participation in the governance of the organization. See the further implication of #3 in #'s 4 and 5 below.
4. Provide and define the forums for unfettered advocacy on behalf of all groups. Also define the forums wherein the advocacy needs to be redefined. See #3 above. Council meetings (both open and closed) and General

Meetings are, I think, examples of the first. I would also include college committees on which AFA members serve. Negotiation sessions are examples of the second. The needs for confidentiality in the case of each of these groups needs to be clearly defined to avoid potential problems.

5. Limit representation on the Negotiation Team to non-Council members with only the AFA President appointed to the Negotiation Team (as stipulated in the AFA Bylaws). A Council member has a duty to represent a particular point of view based on a constituency. A negotiator has a responsibility to represent the entire organization's position. By serving in a dual role, there is the potential of a conflict.

There are suggestions in addition to or different from the above, and I welcome their addition. Some of the above may be enforceable; others are cultural recommendations that rely on the good intentions of the members. I hope in these difficult times our history of unity will endure.



AFA WELCOMES YOUR FEEDBACK!

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