

AFA

DIALOGUE

AFA

Spring 2010 • An Open Forum for Faculty at Santa Rosa Junior College • April 27, 2010

THE AFA DIALOGUE HAS BEEN CREATED TO AIR CONCERNS OF ALL FACULTY. THE AFA UPDATE WILL CONTINUE TO BE THE FACTUAL VOICE OF 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. **THE OPINIONS CONTAINED HEREIN ARE SOLELY THOSE OF THE WRITER AND AFA NEITHER CONDONES NOR CONDEMNS THESE OPINIONS.** AFA RESERVES EDITORIAL PREROGATIVES.

THE UNINTENDED TAKE OF THE GIVE AND TAKE

by Dr. J. Davis Mannino, Psychology Instructor

I have a long history in unionism. My masters of social work is in community development. My thesis examined public housing. I served as chief organizer and later as business agent for the SEIU-AFL-CIO. I assisted in the birth and development of Local 535 — a union for social workers in San Francisco. This union thrives to this day. I think I know the topic of unionism well. Having taught at SRJC for 20 years, I also believe I know this grand old college well. I begin by stating *I acknowledge truth in the adjunct plight and I acknowledge truth in the full-time plight.*

Unions, sometimes called labor unions or trade unions, are democratic organizations of workers that strive to achieve economic and political gains for their members. The word “democratic” is often used in the definition because decisions are made by voting blocks of the membership and because membership is typically voluntary, though more and more unions charge a fee to non-members who benefit from union efforts — such is the case here with AFA.

I applaud the efforts of Jack Wegman, Ed Sorensen, and others, as I do the entire AFA governing board. The economic metric discussed by Wegman does not stand-alone, however. It must also include the *psychological* metric, sometimes mistaken for the *political* metric.

While the economic metric tends to be shaped by algorithms, correlations, and inferential statistics (to name some methods), the psychological metric tends to be shaped more by anger, fear, and the “pissed-off” factor. If roles were reversed, how many adjunct would vote the way they

want full-timers to vote? This gives you some insight into the psychological metric.

At the Newman Hall meeting where the tenure-track nursing instructor — fresh out of adjunct ranks — rose to speak, he spoke from the full-time perspective. How could this be? It’s the psychological metric. I paid my dues and I struggled so long to get this benefit package. It is my birthright of being full-time. And so on, you get the point. I believe, to be fair, that this instructor believed AFA has served both full-time and adjunct well and thus let’s not mess with success [my take to paraphrase]. Choose the crayon of your choice to color the psychological metric. Like Crayola, you “got a ton of ‘em to choose from.” Kind of like the “calm confidence of a Christian with four aces” in hand, to quote Mark Twain.

I was an adjunct lecturer at Suffolk County Community College in New York decades ago. Full-timers gave up salary steps, release time, and taught overloads to develop a core full-time faculty. It was all aimed at minimizing a competing union that recruited adjunct. As one full-timer mused: “Now we are all just one miserable family instead of one miserable family and friends.” Is there a message here? I think so. That message is the unintended consequences of give and take. Let’s take another example: the 75-25% rule that mandates that colleges have 75% full-time to 25% adjunct. If this rule is enforced here at SRJC, adjunct positions are lost. In fact in my discipline, adjuncts had only a 50-50 chance of securing a full-time position. In our situation “diversity choices” ruled the day.

And this is good, as institutions tend to “inbred” and, thus, not reflect whom they represent — the student population we teach.

In San Francisco, the union fought for contract language that limited temporary workers to one year or they had to be hired full-time. They could not be hired again for a minimum of six months. Full-time workers were obligated by union language to work overtime, albeit at time and a half. The purpose was not to keep part-timers out, but rather to prevent the union workplace from evolving into one of multiple worker categories and status. Is there a message here? Again, the unintended take of the give and take.

Some might extrapolate from my discussion here thus far that I privately advocate for just a full-timers’ union; let the adjunct start their own union. ***I do not!***

Early in my union years I soon realized that divided does not do well. I was once called into the office of a sympatric administrator who was privy to management’s negotiating strategy. He pulled out a chart of social worker unions in other S.F. Bay Area counties. In counties where competing unions represented different but similar classes or workers, their benefit outcomes were noticeably different — almost always to the downside! He said, point blank, if you want to succeed you’ve got to weed out the competing unions. Even in my youth, I understood this administrator’s motive well. Administrative salaries, like cream rising to the top in milk, rose on the backs of workers’ salaries. This tends to be true in most governmental settings.

The psychological metric has predictive value through the use

(see “Give and Take” on page 2)

READERS WRITE BACK

A response to Jack Wegman's article
"By the Numbers: A Perspective,"
by Lara Branen-Ahumada,
Adjunct AFA Councilor and Negotiator

My overriding sense of Jack Wegman's article is that it may contribute to polarity, suspicions and negative reactions on the part of both adjunct faculty and regular faculty at a time when the rifts that exist need to be healed. People are hungry for facts and for truth. Fact and opinion are so intermixed in this piece that it is difficult to separate one from the other and this seems dangerous to me. Those seeking some clarity on what is really going on in AFA are not going to find it in this article. The main intent of the article was to address a petition that very few faculty members, full-time and part-time alike, were aware existed, so it opened the door to confusion and speculation. I believe the article creates an inaccurate picture of the opinions of the majority of adjunct faculty members. Besides all that, a couple of Wegman's premises strike me as flawed.

With regard to there being adjunct who want to "forbid overload" (the first "proposal" that Wegman analyzes), my perception is that regular faculty have *thought* they heard this — but it isn't what I have heard adjunct faculty councilors saying per se in AFA council meetings or Adjunct Issues Committee meetings (the official sub-committee of AFA, that is — not the PDA session) over the past year, nor what my reading of the petition presented to the council indicates. It is primarily during times of schedule cuts, when adjunct instructors are losing all or part of their assignments, that there are concerns from adjunct faculty. Even then, no one (within my earshot) has been expressing that overload should be disallowed altogether. If overload does not have any impact on adjunct jobs, then it isn't a problem for adjunct, so there is no reason to curb it. The suggestions that overload be limited or to somehow assure that adjunct faculty members receive like loads *before* overloads, especially during budget crises, are inflammatory enough for many regular faculty members without giving the impression that many adjunct instructors want to eliminate overload altogether.

In response to the 50/50 representation idea, Wegman concedes that it might be argued (based on his analysis) that we should add *one* adjunct faculty member to the council. While I *think* I agree with the premise of basing representation on workload, Wegman arrives at his conclusion through a formula that seems completely illogical to me. He is comparing a full-time faculty member teaching 100% to a hypothetical adjunct faculty member teaching 60%. This might be useful if there were an equal number of full-time and part-time faculty members and all of these part-timers were teaching exactly 60%, but doesn't make sense otherwise.

Wegman states that regular faculty members contribute 68% of the AFA revenues and he thinks that his analysis of workload might explain the disparity between the financial contribution of regular faculty and adjunct faculty to AFA. His analysis disregards the fact that AFA dues and fair share service fees (the source of AFA revenues) are based on a percentage of salary and that regular faculty and part-time faculty are *not* paid equally for the portion of their jobs that is identical — i.e., the student contact portion of the job. Although in part the higher contribution of regular faculty may be linked to the performance of more work, we cannot directly correlate representation to the dollar amounts contributed to AFA because of the lack of pay equity. As an aside, as much as we adjunct instructors can appreciate being paid better than most part-timers around the state, I don't think anyone would fault adjunct for wanting to be paid the same as full-time faculty for the part of the job that is identical. Equal pay for equal work is one of AFA's goals. Unless we abandon this principle, support of the "institution" — as Wegman puts it, which suggests SRJC as a whole, but I believe that what he is referring to is AFA — cannot provide a fair basis for representation.

GIVE AND TAKE

(cont. from page 1)

of surveys. What would happen if we herded the entire full-time faculty into Burbank Auditorium and handed them "iClickers?" Then we had them listen intently to both pro and con sides of the constitutional change issue. Then we asked them to "click" and vote. The "No" vote would prevail overwhelmingly — due not to "dark black hearts" ruling the day, but rather to the prevailing winds of uncertainty huddled deeply within the psychological metric.

To address the psychological metric one has to address fears, anger, uncertainty, and preconceived notions of loss between adjunct and full-time! That is why I believe it is too premature for membership — both adjunct and full-time — to vote on the constitutional change issue. It is even too premature for the AFA council to vote on whether to let membership have the right to vote on this paramount issue. There is much too much necessary groundwork that needs to be laid before such votes occur. I recommend that the AFA council defer to a study group — though a timely one.

I think Wegman, Sorensen, and others bring astute thinking to the "economic metric" discussion. I think many others in their civil email discussion have also served us all well. However, the more I read the more uncomfortable I become. I fear the give and take being asked of us all may in fact lead to the give and take outcomes no one had envisioned.

There is an old saying: "When the Gods are angry with you, they grant your wishes!" The unintended consequences of the give and take may be just such a wish we had wished we all had never wished for.

AFA WELCOMES YOUR FEEDBACK!

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