

## **AFA Report to Board of Trustees, 9/8/20, Sean Martin, AFA President**

President Burns, Trustees, President Chong, Colleagues and other members of the community,

I'll start on a positive note in reporting the AFA Executive Council's recent endorsements of propositions 15 and 16. Both propositions received overwhelming support among AFA councilors, as we expect the passage of the first to address a longstanding inequity in the tax code and provide for much needed resources for the college, and we expect passage of the latter to provide additional options in our efforts to meet the demands for a more diverse and representative faculty.

On a related note, AFA is pleased to report steady progress, in collaboration with our district partners, to negotiate and implement tangible provisions to support equity, diversity and inclusion at SRJC. These provisions include the development of numerous special assignments designed to provide critical support for students and faculty working to address the equity needs for diverse populations in our community. We fully expect these provisions and related positions to contribute to the mission and values of the college.

AFA is also working with our colleagues in the Academic Senate ahead of efforts to align our committee structures, including those in shared governance, with legal requirements under Education Code and labor law. In these discussions, we have identified specific ways to improve our committee structures while reducing the number of committees, minimizing redundancy, and better integrating input from all constituent groups engaged in the process, including in the development of policy. We look forward to working with our district colleagues, along with other constituent groups, implementing reforms that will better serve the mission and values of the college.

Regarding the effort to attract and retain a more diverse and representative faculty, it is clear that we have a long way to go. It is evident in the data presented at this afternoon's listening session that we are making greater progress in the area of full-time faculty than Adjunct faculty. We are convinced that this is no mere correlation, but reflects structural conditions at SRJC and in our community more broadly.

As pointed out by several speakers in today's listening session, candidates considering an Adjunct position at SRJC are faced with numerous obstacles. Some of those obstacles are, no doubt, related to our recruitment and retention practices at SRJC. But others are related directly to material conditions. To wit, the salary and benefits Adjuncts earn at SRJC are insufficient to meet the high cost of living in Sonoma County. To make matters worse, there are few options for Adjunct employment in Sonoma County. Most Adjunct instructors are burdened with heavy student loans and other liabilities associated with earning the qualifications needed to serve as a member of the faculty. Unlike Adjunct faculty in more densely populated areas who can piece together part-time work among multiple institutions of higher learning, SRJC faculty must either have alternative means of income, housing, or healthcare, or resign themselves to travel long distances to piece together work at institutions throughout the greater Bay area. In short, it makes little sense for a qualified candidate to relocate to our region without some material incentives to do so. Candidates for full-time faculty positions face similar material obstacles, though to a lesser degree. Data from this morning's report offered by our

Human Resources office indicates we are better able to recruit diverse faculty for full-time faculty positions. Thus, AFA urges Trustees to consider actions that would increase the number of full-time faculty positions while also providing more secure benefits for Adjunct instructors.

I'll close my report with some thoughts regarding Incidents of discrimination, harassment and other misconduct on district email and at other district venues in recent weeks.

AFA agrees absolutely that harassment and discrimination are unacceptable, wherever they happen. The contract between AFA and the District, along with state and federal law and the District's policies, all prohibit such discrimination or harassment. These laws and provisions entitle all faculty and other District employees to a workplace free of unlawful harassment. Further, we believe adherence to these values and legal obligations is entirely consistent with support for faculty rights to free expression and the exchange of ideas under the standards of academic freedom and the first amendment.

To this end, we fully expect our district leaders to address each instance of unlawful discrimination and harassment in a swift and effective manner consistent with contract, policy and law. We know our colleagues in Human Resources and elsewhere face enormous challenges and believe they are taking this duty seriously. Such action is crucial to build confidence in these systems so people can engage in their professional responsibilities without fear of being targeted by acts of unlawful hostility.

We also urge the district, as well as our faculty colleagues, to foster respect for the critical use of evidence in our policy discussions. Too often, vague and unsubstantiated data, produced by unsound methodologies, stand in place of genuine evidence. In numerous recent instances, innuendo, hearsay, guilt by association, defamatory personal attacks and numerous other irrelevant appeals have contributed to an uncivil climate unbecoming of an institution of higher learning.

We can do better. AFA is committed to working with our district colleagues to this end.