

30 Years Strong!

UPM

United Professors of Marin

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# Union Press

## Ponderings of the President

by Ira Lansing

In my 30-plus years as a faculty member at the College of Marin I have missed only three of the annual student graduation ceremonies. The first one I missed when I got married, the second when our son graduated from college, and most recently when our daughter graduated from university. I do not present my track record as braggadocio, but rather for the reasons I choose not to attend my own students' commencement exercises. The very name—commencement exercises—is an indication of the gravity, along with the joy, of the event.

For starters, the title “commencement” for the end of what has been for many a long and arduous

period, is a word that in seeming contradiction indicates the *start* of something. As faculty we realize that obtaining a college degree is really the start of something else: work, more education, whatever one chooses; but it does not end with the degree. It seems especially important to remind the graduates that they must not sit back on their laurels, at least not for too long, but must continue to grow in many different ways. The second word, “exercises”, implies some sort of exertion. A slight aside here: the philosopher George Carlin expressed an affection for the game of baseball because it is the only sporting event that begins with the instructions to “Play

Ball!”. Every other game must be work, but baseball is for play. So too, graduation *exercises* are a reminder of the work that has been exerted to achieve the degree, but also serves as an indication that in all likelihood more work will be commencing. This is not necessarily a bad thing, just a reminder.

The commencement exercises I chose to attend this year took place in Yankee Stadium (apparently the traditional location of Washington Square in Greenwich Village was under construction). A highly appropriate location, one combined with decades of tradition, yet a strong ambience of “play”.

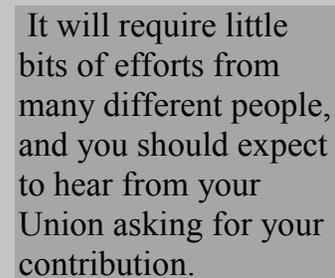
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Many of the speakers recognized the nature of the setting, and mentioned their baseball experiences and team preferences. One speaker, Laurence Tribe, a Harvard Law School professor and the recipient of an honorary doctorate at this ceremony, had these words to say: “Do what you can, while you can.” All these degrees and academic prestige and this is what he has to say? Apparently it was quite significant because it prompted one of the current graduates to throw off his pants (his cap and gown were still on), leap the railing on the first base side and proceed to run the bases in Yankee Stadium. This produced a flood of police, who promptly arrested the young man (out at the plate!). Later on the news the recent graduate explained that he had just spent the last four years learning to think for himself and not to let opportunities pass him by—”do what you can, while you can.” Hence, his attempt at running the bases.

As educators, we know most of these platitudes.

We have heard them and we pass them on to our students. So why a column on what you already know? Most obviously, to serve as a reminder. We are at the *end* of a semester, but also at a *commencement* in our Union relations. We begin the process of contract mediation on June 3. In all likelihood this will not produce results and UPM and the District will proceed into fact-finding, a somewhat lengthy *exercise* that can last weeks. It will require little bits of efforts from many different people, and you should expect to hear from your Union asking for your contribution. A graduation is not an end, but the start of something different. That “something different” is upon us, and if you wish to maintain and enhance the wages, benefits and working conditions you currently enjoy, you had better be willing to *play* for a little bit longer. Do what you can, while you can. Remember that George Carlin’s appreciation of baseball also extends to the object of the game: to go home! We all would like to go home, but that time is

not quite here and we will need a few more innings of participation from everyone. No player is on the field all of the time, no graduate goes from the walk across the stage to receive the diploma and then straight to the job site. We all need a breather at times. Take one, but be prepared to use that degree, to take your turn on the field.



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This mixture of metaphors is starting to overwhelm even my sensibilities, so I leave you with the usual—stay informed, stay involved, stay in touch. To assist in this process, e-mail me at [ira@UnitedProfessorsofMarin.org](mailto:ira@UnitedProfessorsofMarin.org) and I will add you to the list that receives “alert notices” (no spam, promise). Many of you have already done so; once is enough.

[www.unitedprofessorsofmarin.org](http://www.unitedprofessorsofmarin.org)

## Connecting the Dots

News and Opinion  
by Arthur Lutz

### WHERE'S FRAN?

In 1987, Martin Handford published a children's book titled *Where's Waldo?* The book consists of a series of full-page illustrations showing hundreds of people engaged in various activities in diverse settings. Waldo is hidden unobtrusively among these tiny figures and the challenge for the reader is to find him in the myriad of intricate multi-colored details. There are some clues however to help in the search. He dresses in a red and white striped shirt, has a bobble hat, carries a walking stick and wears glasses. Nevertheless, finding Waldo takes time, patience and concentration. The book became an instant best seller with readers of all ages and has since been reissued and revised many times.

I sometimes think we could publish a similar book here at the College of Marin. It would be called, *Where's Fran?*

That's because many of us have noticed that we seldom see President White on campus. Her office is usually dark and most often her reserved parking spaces are unoccupied. She rarely meets face-to-face with campus constituents and quite often misses scheduled meetings. All of which makes us wonder, *Where's Fran?*

"...many of us have noticed that we seldom see President White on campus. Her office is usually dark and most often her reserved parking space is unoccupied."

Say what we might about former president Middleton being indifferent to faculty concerns, at least we would see him strolling about the COM campus. That's hardly been the case with President White.

She's rarely at student or faculty performances. She's been a no-show at most of her own President's

Communication Committee meetings. Those of us who teach on the IVC campus scarcely ever recall seeing her there. And if you ask students, most of them would not be able to identify her.

"With all the serious problems that we have at COM, it is unfortunate that Dr. White chooses to spend so much of her time off-campus."

With all the serious problems that we have at COM, it's unfortunate that Dr. White chooses to spend so much of her time off-campus rather in her office dealing with the nuts and bolts issues of running a college.

We have a campus that is in physical disarray, with neighbors, students and faculty complaining about noise, dirt and lack of parking; there are eleven ongoing cases involving litigation against the District; numerous grievances and arbitrations;

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contract negotiations with UPM at impasse; unions filing Unfair Labor Practice charges; uncertainty about WASC accreditation; a new integrated computer system that is less than functional, and a faculty that is divided on significant academic and professional matters. Given these challenges, we should have a president who is on-site and directly involved in helping resolve these issues on a daily basis. Once-a-week Newsletters and twice-a-year Convocation speeches hardly qualify as adequate on-campus participation.

I know that the job of college president demands community

outreach, but shouldn't dealing with internal problems take precedence over "rubber chicken" banquets and out-of-state travel to accept awards and kudos?

"...given Dr. White's extraordinary compensation and benefit package, shouldn't we expect that she come out of hiding and spend a little more time on campus?"

Earlier this month, State Senator Jack Scott was chosen to be the new Chancellor of the California Community College system. He will oversee 109 community colleges serving over

2.6 million students per year. When Chancellor Scott starts his term in 2009, he will receive an annual salary of \$198,500 plus standard fringe benefits. Starting in 2009 our own President White, who oversees a single District of only 7000 students will receive an annual salary of \$226,000, plus yearly bonuses and life-time medical benefits.

Maybe it's acceptable for Waldo to stay under cover, but given Dr. White's extraordinary compensation and benefit package, shouldn't we expect that she come out of hiding and spend a little more time on campus?

## Bargaining Update: Impasse

UPM Members:

The Public Employment Relations Board (PERB) has approved the Union's request for impasse in Collective Bargaining and has assigned a mediator for the first phase of the process which will begin on June 3, 2008. The mediator will review the current positions of the parties (UPM vs. MCCD) and attempt to move negotiations toward a final settlement. Should he fail to bring the parties to agreement, a likely probability given the District's position on wages & benefits (\$0.00), he may recommend we move on to "fact finding."

For a more detailed description of the current state of negotiations see the UPM web page: [www.unitedprofessorsofmarin.org/](http://www.unitedprofessorsofmarin.org/)

Your Chief Negotiator,  
Paul Christensen

## Cultivating Toxic Sludge

I love gardening. I love working the soil, getting rich dirt under my fingernails, digging my own compost into the planting beds, spreading manure around my veggies, tending tomatoes, carefully watering the basil and imagining what beautiful pesto it will make in another month or so, crushing a sprig of rosemary as I walk by just to have the scent on my fingertips, pruning a bonsai maple....

Gardening is a soulful act. It grounds me and I feel a connection with all things.

In the spring 2008 publication of the College of Marin "Source," CoM President Frances White utilizes the metaphor of gardening to portray new growth at the college. It's not a particularly creative metaphor; in fact, it's trite. But paired with her recent statements in local papers and with her actions (or lack thereof) in regard to some pretty serious allegations at the college, the metaphor

becomes enriched with iron(y).

"Source" begins, "The May flowers blossoming throughout the campus inspire us as we tend to COM's institutional garden." The metaphor continues with phrases such as "nurturing growth for students, faculty and staff," "cultivating improvements," "hard terrain into rich soil," "nurture the fullness of our mission," "yield fresh results," "fruits of our labor," and, if you can take more, "coaxing even more new growth from our garden."

When one looks to our local papers, on the other hand, one sees that President White harbors a different attitude toward many members of her community garden. "The faculty dissenters, she said, 'engage in bullying, unprofessional behavior, personal attacks, racism and sexism'" (*Pacific Sun*, Feb 08). And in a March *Pacific Sun*, President White is quoted as saying of outspoken faculty, "They're doing everything they can to kill the institution. It's a special-interest group that is doing everything

to work against students and full accreditation." Now there's someone with a green thumb for you.

When one looks to our local papers, on the other hand, one sees that President White harbors a different attitude toward many members of her community garden.

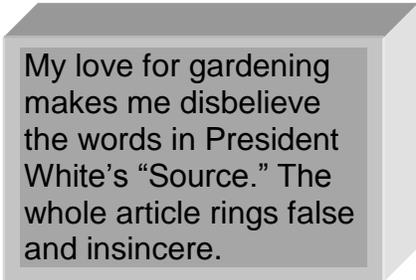
More egregious, this spring President White has let two highly respected senior faculty members be slandered by a few special interest students. At issue was Paul Christensen's quoting an IJ interview in which President White used the term "browning" in reference to a growing ESL population. Our President could have put an end to the issue at once by acknowledging that it was she who had used the term in the first place and thereby saved unnecessary anguish for her faculty members. But she didn't; she let two wonderful, dedicated and hard working people be the target of hateful attacks.

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And as of today, months after the allegation of racism, she still has not spoken up on the matter to set the record straight. One might also ask what happened to the student who sponsored the charge of racism. Why is it that after President White was identified as the source of the offending term that he has now let the matter drop? Why is it that he is not demanding the same punishment for President White that he demanded for Christensen? Why is it that the President and the student have not come out together and

apologized for allowing long standing faculty members to be maligned?

Is this any way to tend a garden? To nourish and ensure a hearty harvest?



My love for gardening makes me disbelieve the words in President White's "Source." The whole article rings false and insincere.

In my gut, I usually trust people who garden. I guess it's because it's so basic and earthy and genuine. You cultivate

the earth, plant seeds, care for them, make sure they have nourishment, and then you nurture the plants so that they give you a return on all the work you put into them.

My love for gardening makes me disbelieve the words in President White's "Source." The whole article rings false and insincere.

After all, who can trust the gardener who willingly and consciously spreads toxic sludge on her crops?

John Sutherland

## PAC Notes

**We've come to the end of another fiscal year, and all PAC funds have been utilized. If you are intending to apply for funds for conference leave after July 1st, keeping in mind a few things will expedite processing your request:**

- Fill out and date the appropriate conference leave request form.
- Estimate conference, travel and accommodation funds
- Attach conference information
- Complete the CEU Waiver
- Identify substitutes, if appropriate
- Submit all materials to HR in a timely manner

**Your PAC reps will notify you once your application has been processed.**

## UPM Website

**District Lawyer Paid \$ 400,000.00 to negotiate?  
Fran White has her contract ... where is ours?**

**UPM Requests PERB to Declare Impasse!**

**On your way to Paris and want to check the Contract regarding leave?  
Being harassed and need to check your rights?  
Nervous about your up-coming evaluation and want to review procedure?**

Find all the answers to your Contractual questions at:

**[www.unitedprofessorsofmarin.org](http://www.unitedprofessorsofmarin.org)**

## UPM Committees and Staff

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<b>CCC REPRESENTATIVE</b> Bonnie Borenstein		

**United Professors of Marin  
UPM-PAC Payroll Deduction Form**

The UPM-PAC (Political Action Committee) provides financial support to candidates and measures that support or benefit education in Marin County and the College of Marin in particular. If you would like to support the UPM-PAC with a monthly contribution, small or large, please fill out the form below and send it to the Payroll Office.

To: Payroll, College of Marin  
Date: \_\_\_\_\_

I hereby authorize the Marin Community College to deduct from my earnings the sum of \_\_\_\_\_ beginning in the month of \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ (year), and each month thereafter, and to remit this sum to the United Professors of Marin PAC #990958 until I revoke this authorization in writing.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Print Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_

Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

SSN: \_\_\_\_\_

**UPM Membership Application**

I hereby apply for membership in the United Professors of Marin, AFT Local 1610

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Campus Ext.: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

SS# \_\_\_\_\_

Department: \_\_\_\_\_

**Check the appropriate category:**

\_\_\_\_ I am a permanent credit or non-credit employee or leave replacement.

\_\_\_\_ I am a temporary non-credit employee on the quarter system.

\_\_\_\_ I am a temporary credit or non-credit employee on the semester system.

Return to UPM Kentfield campus mailbox or UPM Office, Science Center 136