

UPM Newsletter

July 2012
Volume 39, Issue 7

United Professors of Marin – AFT Local 1610
P.O. Box 503, Kentfield, CA 94914 -- Phone/FAX (415) 459-1524

PONDERINGS OF THE PRESIDENT

by Laurie Ordin

On the first night of the holiday, Passover, Jews around the world join family and friends for dinner and the youngest child at the table asks the question, “Why is this night different from all other nights?” Somehow, this question keeps popping into my mind as I sit down to write this column. I guess it’s because I think you might be asking yourselves, “Why is this column different from all other columns?...President’s Ponderings columns, that is.

For as long as I can remember, the name on this byline was Ira Lansing, but now it says Laurie Ordin. In case you missed the memo, Ira has stepped down as UPM President, a position he had held for 23 years. And now, I am going to try to fill his shoes, a very big challenge for me, indeed. Many of you know me, but allow me to take this opportunity to introduce myself, for those of you who don’t know me.

I have been working as a member of the mathematics faculty at CoM for about 16 years. Most recently I have been co-chair of the mathematics department. I started at CoM as a part timer, after working for seven

Featured in this Issue

Ponderings of the (new) President
Editor’s Note – UPM Staff Changes
Editorial – Brainpower
Collective Bargaining – Update
Connecting the Dots – Phoenix Rising
For The Good of the Order – Myth, Mirth and Miscellany – a new feature.

years, part time, at Diablo Valley College, Laney College, Chabot College, Embry Riddle Aeronautical University, and UC Berkeley extension. I have a deep appreciation for what it is like to be a part time “Roads Scholar.” I have always admired the way UPM respects and supports its adjunct faculty members.

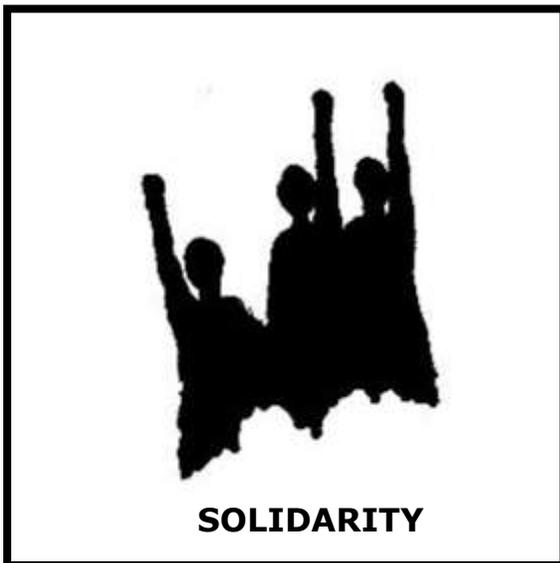
I have been a member of the UPM Executive Council for several years, have been co-chair of UPMPAC, and have been a member of the collective bargaining team. Around the college, I have been on the Technology Committee, the Academic Standards committee, the College Petitions Committee, and have been an advisor to AGS and the, now defunct, Women in Math Club. As such, I have been a help to some and a nuisance to many. Perhaps these last two qualities are the things that motivated people to suggest that I might possibly be able to take Ira’s place. (See Pg.2)

-Ponderings continued-

I feel that I have a very steep learning curve to ascend. I hope you will all take some comfort in the fact that Ira has said he will be there to help me. I know I do! I remember that when I first came to CoM, I was always glad to have Ira heading things up at UPM. I felt that he, and many others in leadership roles, would take care of things for us. In recent years, in spite of their strong leadership, I realized that they can't do it all for us. It takes all of us working together. I am counting now on you to do just that.

I hope to eventually get to know all of you. My door at SC 147 is always open. If you don't know me, stop by and introduce yourself. If you are having problems, be sure to let us know. You can reach me by email at laurie@unitedprofessorsofmarin.org.

As a wise, old sage has said many times, *"Stay in touch, stay informed, and stay involved."*



EDITOR'S NOTE

As you are probably aware, our long time UPM President, Ira Lansing, declined to run for a seat on our UPM Executive Council and thus (according to our by-laws) could no longer serve as our President. Without opposition, our Executive Council has elected Laurie Ordin to fill the slot that Ira has filled with such great distinction for so many years. Congratulations to our new President. Her new "Ponderings" column appears on Page 1 of this Newsletter. Thankfully, Ira is not abandoning us. He will serve as our UPM Grievance Officer in place of John Sutherland who has been chosen as our new co-chief negotiator, along with Paul Christensen, who also declined to run for Executive Council. John is being replaced as Union Newsletter editor by me, Arthur Lutz. Additionally, there are two new members of our Executive Council. Theo Fung (our long time UPM Treasurer) was elected to the EC by our faculty, and Kate Hayne was appointed by the EC to fill the part-time seat vacated when Michele Martinisi was elected as a F/T representative. And there are also some new committee appointments.

If all of this seems confusing, please refer to our Masthead on Page 3 which lists all current UPM Staff and Committee positions.

We've also changed the design of our Union Newsletter and have added some new features which I hope will be of interest. Your input is always welcome. And of course your *Letters to the Editor* on UPM related matters are encouraged.

Please send submissions to:
arthur@unitedprofessorsofmarin.org
Arthur Lutz

EDITORIAL

The human brain is a remarkable organ. It contains over 100 billion neurons. And these neurons interface through a network of 100 trillion (!) synapses. When you consider the number of potential interactions at these synaptic junctions, the number is staggering. It's what can account for the works of Shakespeare or the *Principia* of Isaac Newton, or the symphonies of Gustav Mahler.

By contrast, the Nematode worm contains just 302 neurons, which certainly explains why no worm was able to write the soliloquy from Hamlet.

But it isn't only Sir Isaac or the Bard who were blessed with this superabundance of cortical tissue. All humans have the neural equipment to produce inspired creations. The history of civilization is a testament to human creativity and intellect in every area of endeavor.

So I find it surprising that when it comes to solving the problem of our budgetary shortfall at the College of Marin, all our administrators seem to be able to propose is that we eliminate summer school. Does it take a lot of neural tissue to realize that CoM is a school, and that if we don't offer classes there is no justification for our existence?

Maybe if our Board of Trustees devoted less synaptic activity to LEED certification and the approval of Measure "C" cost over-runs, there would be enough circuitry left over to come up with some creative solutions to our financial woes. We don't expect our trustees to have the genius of a William Shakespeare, but shouldn't they at least show more creativity than a Nematode worm?

UPM STAFF AND COMMITTEES 2012-2013

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Laurie Ordin

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Ira Lansing

TREASURER

Theo Fung

BUDGET MONITOR

Deborah Graham

WORKLOAD COMMITTEE

Carl Cox, Theo Fung

NORTH BAY LABOR COUNCIL

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Patty O'Keefe, Chris Schultz

HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMITTEE

George Adams, Chris Schultz

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Kate Hayne

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Arthur Lutz, Michele Martinisi,
Patty O'Keefe

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Katrina Wagner

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UPM-PAC

Paul da Silva, Arthur Lutz, (Co-Chairs)

WEB MASTER

Mike Ransom

CRA TRUST

Sarah Brewster, Judy Coombes, Ed Essick
(Chair), Ira Lansing, Laurie Ordin

NEWSLETTER EDITOR

Arthur Lutz

UPM EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

Teresa Capaldo

COLLECTIVE BARGAINING UPDATE

Paul Christensen and John Sutherland, UPM Co-Chief Negotiators

On July 2, 2012, the UPM CB Team met with District representatives to discuss reopeners.

Summary of the District's proposal

Wages (Article 3): Status quo.

Fringe Benefits (Article 4): Status quo for full-time members; **health benefits for Temporary Credit and Non-Credit reduced to Member only, no dependents.**

Evaluation (Article 7): The District failed to submit a complete proposal; however, District reps informed us that the district wants Chairs involved in evaluation of part-timers.

Workload (Article 8): Increase in calculation of maximum Counselor's work week from 929.6 to 980 semester hours; **Department Chair involvement in evaluation of part-timers (No additional compensation); no right to an overload; overload assignments to be at discretion of District.**

Summary of UPM proposal

(UPM's proposal is based on membership feedback solicited by the CB Team earlier this year)

Recognition (Article 1): ALL part-time members to be paid on "Academic Salary Schedule," formerly "Credit Salary Schedule," at 100% prorated.

Wages (Article 3): All steps on Academic Salary Schedule to increase by 5% for the 2012-2013 Academic year.

Fringe Benefits (Article 4): Fringe benefits for all qualified Non-Credit unit members paid on the Academic Salary Schedule; District to pick up total CRA Trust contribution; retirement incentive for eligible unit members including 3 years of RETCUM status.

Workload (Article 8): In exchange for increased duties regarding Program Review and Student Learning Outcomes, Department Chair compensation shall be increased from 3 to 6 units.

District Budget Report

On June 27, the District presented a Budget report that spelled doom and gloom for the College of Marin. VP Al Harrison admitted that his estimate of funding from County revenues was "conservative," but if correct, CoM would be in the red over the next three years. **Current District spending for consultants (contract fees) was reported at \$1.7 Million!**

President Coon entertained the notion of canceling summer session **at least** in 2013 to make ends meet.

Marin County Assessor's Report

Contrary to VP Harrison's dismal forecast, a recent article (7/5/12) in the *Marin Independent Journal* reported that county taxes were on the rise: "Marin County's assessed valuation for 2012013 totals a record \$56.34 billion, up from last fiscal year's \$55.88 billion, Assessor Rich Benson announced this week. 'This is the highest assessment role value we've ever had in Marin County,' said Benson, a member of the assessor's office for 27 years who also serves as county clerk and county recorder."

The // article continues: “We hit bottom quite a while ago,’ said Alain Pinel reality agent Wayka Bartolacelli, an upbeat 26-year veteran of the business. ‘Things are looking better. Sales are stronger,’ she said, adding that this spring she had seven offers in two days on a Marinwood fixer-upper. It sold for \$510,000, about \$31,000 more than the asking price.”

Comments

Fiscal VP Harrison’s “conservative” prediction conflicts significantly with the County’s Assessor’s Office regarding county funding.

President Coon’s mentioning the possibility of canceling summer session to stop the fiscal bleeding targets faculty only; that is, we recently cut half of our summer offerings, thereby reducing faculty earnings. No mention of cutting administrative (or other) costs during summer session. (What will they be doing with no instruction taking place?)

UPM has scheduled a second “Reopeners” meeting with the District on July 23.

Should you respond the President’s invitation to submit crisis management advice, please avoid dealing directly with the District on issues/items that are currently the subject of CB negotiations (e.g. wages, benefits and/or working conditions).

UPM Membership Application	
I hereby apply for membership in the United Professors of Marin, AFT Local 1610	
Date: _____	Email: _____
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Address: _____	Department: _____
City: _____	Zip: _____
Home Phone: _____	Campus Ext.: _____
Check the appropriate category:	
<input type="checkbox"/> I am a permanent credit or non-credit employee or leave replacement.	
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<input type="checkbox"/> 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	

CONNECTING THE DOTS

News and Opinion
by Arthur Lutz

PHOENIX RISING?

In most world mythologies, the *phoenix* is a symbol of immortality and continuity. It is said to live a thousand years, after which it builds a nest that spontaneously ignites and from its ashes a new phoenix rises that lives for another millennium, preserving and transmitting the legacy of the past.

For most educators the phoenix is an appropriate symbol because educators perform a similar function – preserving and transmitting the legacy of the past.

Yet there is another kind of phoenix that has been rising recently in academe. It's a bird that many of us in the educational community find less admirable.

The phoenix that I'm referring to is the *University of Phoenix*— a phoenix that is less interested in preserving the great time-honored wisdoms and traditions of the past than in accruing short term profits in the present.

I'm talking about an 'e-college' that has over 300,000 online students around the world, but has a graduation rate of less than 16%, (4% in southern California) and whose students are solicited by recruiters who are paid commissions for each student they enroll. And taught by low-paid adjuncts, 90% of whom will never be granted tenure.

Is this the kind of phoenix that we want to see rising at College of Marin?

The potential for this occurring is not

insignificant. Many colleges around the country are investing heavily in Distance Education and dismissing classroom instructors. Harvard, MIT and UC Berkeley are spending huge sums to develop internet courses, despite the pedagogical shortcomings that online delivery methods present. It's a corporate model of education based on "bottom line" financial considerations rather than on pedagogy, and many colleges are vulnerable to these bottom line concerns.

Just last month, the president of the *University of Virginia* resigned citing "philosophical differences" with the university's governing board who wanted her to run U of V like a Fortune 500 company and re-engineer the school's academic offerings around inexpensive online classes taught by low paid adjunct professors. She refused, and pressure from faculty, students and the community forced the governing board to reverse their actions and rehire her.

But the handwriting may be on the wall and an increase in online classes, like those offered at the University of Phoenix, (with all its pedagogical weakness and adverse consequences for faculty employment), may be what community college instructors will be facing.

It's great to see a beautiful bird like the phoenix rising on our CoM campus. But let's make sure we know *which* phoenix it is that's rising.

“FOR THE GOOD OF THE ORDER”

A SAMPLING OF MYTH, MIRTH AND MISCELLANY FOR THE UNION FAITHFUL

LABOR HISTORY

July – 1935. The National Labor Relations Act or Wagner Act was signed into law giving workers the right to organize and bargain collectively. This legislation was the result of years of labor militancy. It followed closely after “Bloody Thursday” in San Francisco in 1934 when the mayor called out the police to break a strike by longshoremen. Two strikers were shot dead and hundreds were injured. Workers responded with a general strike which prompted arbitration and recognition of many of the Longshoremen’s demands and led to the NLRB. So we might give some credit to Harry Bridges’ Longshore union for the wages and working conditions that we enjoy at CoM.

It’s interesting that at our most recent UPM bargaining session with the District, the District’s Chief negotiator announced that he is working for the same firm that had represented the ship owners when they tried to disenfranchise the ILWU and deport Bridges. Our UPM bargaining team will try to make sure that he is as unsuccessful in taking away faculty rights as his firm was in trying to defeat the Longshoremen.

QUIPS AND QUOTES

After visiting a cemetery to visit the grave of a relative, a young boy asked his father, “Dad, do they ever bury two people in the same grave?” “Why no,” his father replied, “why would you think that?” “Because,” the boy replied, “on one of the tombstones it said, ‘HERE LIES THE ATTORNEY FOR THE SCHOOL DISTRICT AND AN HONEST MAN.’”

* * *

July 14th 2012 was the 100th anniversary of Woody Guthrie’s birth. He wrote thousands of songs, most of them honoring working people, the disadvantaged and the disenfranchised. At one point during the height of the McCarthy era Woody was asked whether he was bothered when people called him a ‘left winger.’ To which he replied, “Left Wing, Chicken Wing, it don’t make no difference to me.”

CAMPUS DOINGS

GOOD NEWS! According to the latest report by Marin County Assessor Rich Benson, Marin County’s assessed valuation for 2012-13 totaled a record \$56.34 billion, up from last year by .82 percent. Since our CoM budget relies largely on Marin property taxes, this means that there should be no need to eliminate summer school, as was suggested by Dr. Coon at his recent budget update. It should also mean that the District’s bargaining demand for a decrease in part-time health coverage is unwarranted.

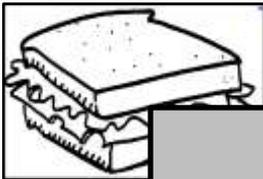
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The news is not as good for San Francisco City College. WASC has placed CCSF on “show cause” status, threatening them with the loss of accreditation and shutdown unless they satisfy deficiencies by October 15th. Yet none of these deficiencies have to do with classroom instruction. In fact, WASC investigators never visited CCSF’s classrooms. So isn’t it shameful that at a time when education is so important for economic mobility, WASC autocrats are willing to close a college that educates 90,000 students? Maybe it’s time for Community Colleges around the state to rebel against Barbara Beno and her band of petty WASC bureaucrats.

On the other hand, wouldn’t there be plenty of money for education if we weren’t spending huge sums on our adventures in Iraq and Afghanistan?

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