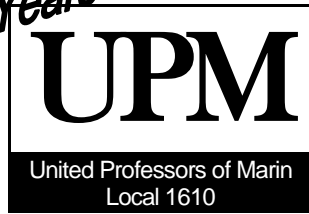


37 Years Strong!



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Union Press

PONDERINGS OF THE PRESIDENT by Ira Lansing

When there is comparative labor calm in the District, when we are not involved in negotiations on a new contract, and when the administration is not actively targeting you, there is not much to write about. Maybe that's not quite true—the not much to write about part, not the targeting—but this is my penultimate column as UPM President for this esteemed publication, so I will be slightly more reflective than usual.

Perhaps at this time a most pressing concern to me is where are the successors? Not just mine, but for any Union position. Sure, you are out there, you have to be if you are a faculty member, but what are you doing to gain the experience and exposure that are necessary to maintain the accomplishments of this organization? Interest and enthusiasm are a good start, but eventually ability must kick in. So for this column it might be appropriate to share with you some of the abilities, as I see them, that this job requires. It is left to you to modify and transfer the requirements to other UPM positions.

After more than two decades in the role of UPM president—yes, I was doing this when some of you were still in high school—I have seen that

the qualifications for UPM president are the same as those for a good auto mechanic.

Think about how you interact with your mechanic. It probably falls into one or both categories of preventative or crisis interactions. You contact your mechanic when you need regular services to keep things running smoothly. So too is the UPM president in touch with members when they want to make sure things will run smoothly. What type of absence does this fall under, can I request this type of assignment, can I be scheduled this way, are all questions that I hear regularly and they are not much different than what is this noise coming from the back, or how come I feel the steering wheel shake. Like the mechanic, with experience most issues can be diagnosed easily and dealt with fairly simply. Sometimes the solutions are simple if you know where to look (the noise was a can of tomato sauce that was rolling around in your trunk that fell out of a grocery bag) or standard (you just need an alignment to eliminate the shaking). But if you never saw anyone pull a can of tomato sauce out of the trunk, your inclination might have been to pull apart the entire rear end of the vehicle, and that's where experience comes in.

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Another qualification a UPM officer should have is the ability to separate the personal from the professional. Always present the organizational opinion or perspective, not your own personal viewpoint. If you ask your mechanic which car is most reliable, you do not want to hear her say she buys whatever looks good because she can work on it herself. And if that statement were made to the press (yes, the media contact UPM for opinions on educational and CoM related issues) you know it would get printed as “UPM Mechanic Says All Cars Are Reliable”. This separation is possibly the hardest since we all wear many hats in this institution. But when you see your mechanic in the movie theater, do you say “Oh, there’s Mark” or do you say “Oh, there is my mechanic”? As UPM president you are first and foremost (and forever?) seen as UPM president, even if you say otherwise. Maybe some of you reading this will think that is a personality trait and that you can wear many hats without confusion. Good, give it a try and see what works for you. But you have to become involved first.


A final attribute that UPM officers must maintain is always remember that without authority, you can do nothing. How would you feel if you brought your car in for an oil change and were later told that the timing belt and water pump were replaced (at much greater expense)? Maybe they needed to be replaced, but shouldn’t you be consulted first? Maybe there were other options. It is much easier to proceed than to correct retroactively. Sure, sometimes you don’t mind hearing you needed a new hose, so it was replaced at the same time as the oil change, but knowing when to replace a hose is also based on experience.

Master mechanics all started out as apprentices, and you don’t apprentice alone.

Stay in touch, stay informed and stay involved, with an emphasis on the latter, unless you don’t mind replacing your entire vehicle every time it has is a problem.

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2011-2012

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Grievance Report: Student Complaints Continued

As I reported in last month's newsletter, several UPM members have recently been confronted by student "complaints" regarding their teaching practices. I routinely attend meetings with these faculty members and their Deans, representing our colleagues in order to ensure their contractual rights.

You'll recall that a student complaint is defined as a "specific allegation by a student that a faculty member has violated State law, Federal law or a policy of procedure of the Marin Community College District (MCCD) regarding issues of grading or assignments."

Since last month's report, another supposed complaint has come up, this one again having to do with Assignments. I say "supposed" complaint because this one, like others, was not a valid complaint as per District Procedure. The student claimed that the instructor was not teaching to the Course Outline of Record (COR), and the Dean involved immediately took the student's side. Of course, any critical reader will quickly see that varying from the COR, **IF** indeed this is what the instructor did, is a not ground for formal complaint under "Assignments," as defined in District Procedure:

Assignments: A student may file a grievance if he or she believes a faculty member has given the student an assignment that is unreasonable or unsafe, i.e., an assignment that subjects the student to unreasonable demands or requirements, or to unsafe conditions.

In the above case, however, the area Dean would have allowed the "complaint" to proceed had it not been discovered that the student had missed his/her deadline for filing (A student is required to submit a complaint within a specified time, and this student should have filed a spring 2011 complaint by the end of last September). Other instances testify that this Dean has allowed "complaints" to move forward by broadly interpreting that "unsafe assignments," as he put it, "could easily include a wide range of complaints based on student perceptions."

Equally disturbing is the Dean's email statement that "we are all here first and foremost to serve our students." In itself, this statement appears innocuous, but when we regard it in light of a student complaint, we see a bias. One might think that the District's obligation is to stand behind its faculty as well as its students. But being predisposed "first and foremost" to serve students suggests that this Dean's priorities are not "first and foremost" with his faculty.

Broad District interpretations of the CBA have in the past been extremely harmful to all of us—CoM students, Marin taxpayers and UPM members. Many taxpayer dollars and many hours of valuable time have been spent enforcing (District) and defending against (UPM) these broad and biased interpretations. One wonders if we'd be on WASC's blacklist today if the District under Fran White had put the same money and time into establishing our Accreditation as it did trying to destroy UPM.

Bottom Line: Know your Contract and your rights.

John Sutherland
UPM Grievance Officer

CONNECTING THE DOTS

News and Opinion
by Arthur Lutz

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Since the time of Socrates, philosophers, educators and scientists have been pondering the conditions that contribute to student learning. Numerous proposals, some based on experimental studies and some on theoretical models, have been advanced. One agency that is currently participating in this learning debate is WASC, the *Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges*, which accredits our school. Their mission is to insure that the conditions for positive student learning at College of Marin are in place and are robust.

To this end, WASC has developed a set of standards and assessments that they believe are significant for successful student learning.

But some educators have questioned the soundness of WASC's standards, and there are some researchers who have proposed an alternate method to insure student learning, which could, if implemented, make WASC obsolete.

This alternate learning method is based on laboratory studies that were conducted some years ago at the *University of Michigan* by biologist

James McConnell, on organisms called *PLANARIA*.

Planarians are soft-bodied invertebrate flatworms that inhabit fresh water streams. They are about ¼ inch long and have a diffuse nervous system. And if these animals are cut into small pieces, each piece will regenerate into a new complete worm. And if Planarians are taught a task, like swimming a water maze to reach a food reward and then are cut into pieces, each of the cut pieces, after regenerating, will exhibit the same ability to swim the maze as the parent animal.

In 1965, McConnell *et al*, extended their research and taught a group of Planarians to swim a maze, and then after they had learned the route they were ground up in a blender and fed to a control group of Planarians that had never been taught to swim the maze. What the researchers found was that after ingesting the macerated bodies of the maze-trained worms, the control group, (that had never learned the maze), was immediately able to swim the maze successfully.

So what does this study tell us, if anything, about the learning process, and especially about learning in humans beings?

What it seems to suggest is that learning can take place through the

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alimentary tract as well as by repetition. And it also suggests that if one were to eat some of the tissue of a person who had learned a task or acquired a skill, an untrained person could acquire that same skill – without training or study or practice – a possible alternative to the requisites that WASC believes are important for successful student learning.

So I was listening to a recording of Glenn Gould playing Bach's *Goldberg Variations* the other night, and I thought how wonderful it would be if I could play like that. But I have no talent for the piano. So maybe, I mused, if after Gould had died, (and while his brain was still warm and the 'music center' of his brain was still functioning), if I could have dipped a spoon into his cortex and eaten a little, perhaps I would be able to play

the *Goldberg* just like Glenn – without the need for musical talent – or training – or spending long hours practicing.

It gives new meaning to the phrase "*brain food.*"

Of course there might be a down side. Glenn Gould was a quirky person who reportedly suffered from OCD. So if it happened that my spoon missed his music center and I supped on the wrong part of his brain, rather than turning out to be a great pianist, I could turn out to be a compulsive hand-washer.

I guess what all of the above shows is that some of us at CoM would rather go to any extreme, even cannibalism, than be subjected to the pedagogical nonsense that WASC is trying to impose on us.

PAC Funds

Professional Affairs Committee (PAC) representatives Patty O'Keefe and Chris Schultz have announced that conference leave funds have been expended for the year. You may/must still apply for conference leave through the PAC; however, if your conference is before July, 1, 2012, you will have to find another source of funding. New funds will be available as of July 1.

Keep in Touch with Your Union News

Visit the UPM website for the most recent newsletters, union announcements and more.

Looking for a side-by-side comparison of the new and old contracts?

ww.unitedprofessorsofmarin.org



August 13-17, 2012 at UCLA

The CFT Union Summer School equips local leaders with the powerful skills to organize successful campaigns, expand union membership, involve members in union activities, increase the union's political power, and establish excellent representation and collective bargaining programs.

The program is geared for emerging and veteran leaders who want to take their skills to the next level. The week will be filled with rigorous workshops, motivated and skilled trainers, and applied learning. There will be ample opportunity to share best practices with local leaders from across the state and to find inspiration in one another's work.

Registration deadline is June 4, 2012. Join us for this exciting, week-long, union leadership program!

2012 Course List

1. **Winning the Best Contract:** *Collective Bargaining & Contract Campaigns*
2. **A Voice at the Worksite:** *Effective Problem-Solving & Grievance Handling*
3. **A Strong Local Union:** *Building Power Through Organizing*
4. **Power of the People:** *Political Action in 2012*
5. **Treasurer's Training:** *Financial Stewardship & Leadership for a Strong Local Union*

Scholarships Are Available

Scholarships are available for the CFT Union Summer School. Call 714-754-6638 or email [Eva Kappen](mailto:Eva.Kappen@cft.org) at ekappen@cft.org to request a Union Summer School Scholarship Application. Scholarship applications are due on May 29.

For More Information About The CFT Training Department

The CFT Training Department is also available to assess your local union's training needs and work with your local leadership to create a training and leadership development plan. For more information, contact CFT Training Director [Laura Kurre](mailto:Laura.Kurre@cft.org) at lkurre@cft.org 510-523-5238.



Letters to the Editor

The following letter is an open address to all UPM members from Dr. Paul da Silva
Feel free to voice your comments and/or opinions concerning any Union related article or issue. Please direct your letters to john.sutherland@marin.edu

More Than Bread and Butter?

Some of you may have seen me standing next to a table labeled "United Professors of Marin" on the Kentfield campus just after Spring Break. Many of you stopped by and chatted. *What* was I doing? I was collecting signatures for two ballot propositions that would help direct funds to education in California. Both had been endorsed by the Executive Council of our local.

It was at the very end of the petition drive season, and it was a very busy time on campus, and the efforts may have relatively little chance for success. Therefore, some may wonder *why* I did it. I think it is important to explain.

It is no secret that education in California is not in good shape. Many of us remember much better days in higher education, when tuition was low or nonexistent, and systems and programs were growing, not shrinking. Now for many years, state support has been falling while needs have been increasing. We have a crisis on our hands. Concerted political action is urgently needed to reverse current trends.

Many people look to labor unions to provide the leadership necessary to start this action. However, organized labor is now less able to respond to this need than before.

It is also no secret that after reaching high levels in the 1950's and 1960's, union membership experienced a sharp decline. Some labor historians attribute this to the U.S. labor movement's emphasis on "bread and butter" issues, which are the wages and benefits covered in collective bargaining agreements. In contrast, unions in many other countries have taken broader views, mobilizing to support a wide range of political actions and movements.

Although focusing their attention more narrowly may have allowed U.S. unions to achieve significant gains in their contracts, it also permitted other forces to

limit the activities of the entire labor movement until it no longer had room to maneuver in even its traditional role of getting good contracts. The clearest recent example of this comes from Wisconsin, where the governor has attempted to eliminate public employee unions' bargaining power altogether. Here in California, we have seen attempts to weaken the labor relations board. Here in our District, we have seen what a Board of Trustees determined not to respect our contract can do.

Fortunately, we have examples of recent changes that should give us hope. People in Wisconsin quickly mobilized, especially many union members. Up and down the Pacific Coast, the ILWU, the nurses' unions and the teachers' unions joined the Occupy protests. Here in our district, involvement in the last Board of Trustees election led to significant changes on our campus.

Where do we go from here? I do not suggest that we abandon the all-important work of contract negotiations. We need to continue that and support the bargaining committee whose hard work has won us so many excellent provisions in our contracts over the years. What we need to do is make their job easier. How do we do that?

I suggest that all members of our union ask ourselves what community activities we could get involved in during the coming year. These could be political, but they could also be charitable or social. As soon as any possibilities emerge, we should discuss them with our colleagues. Even if the idea comes from just one or two people, we can present them to the Executive Council for endorsement and then begin to do something. Not only will it feel good, but any organizing that tends to broaden our view of what our local can be and/or heighten our visibility in the community will tend to strengthen us as a group. Maybe we will start a new trend! At least that's what I was hoping to do.....

Paul da Silva

UPM Membership Application

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

Date: _____ Email: _____

Name _____ SS #: _____

Address: _____ Department: _____

City: _____ Zip: _____

Home Phone: _____ Campus Ext.: _____

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

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: _____