



AWARD-WINNING!

# The SCFA Sentinel

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. . . by, for, and about the united faculty of Sierra College

Volume 5, Issue 3

## From the Editor's Desk...

It seems impossible that once again the end of another semester is upon us...but the calendar on my wall and the increasingly glazed expressions on the faces of my students tell me that this is, in fact, the case.

It's been a busy month since the last issue of *The Sentinel*: we've seen an election where the pitiful 39 percent of our voting-age population who bothered to vote have turned the nation in a different and—in my opinion, disturbing—direction...we've watched the United Nations take its firmest stand ever on weapons inspections in Iraq, the result of which will certainly impact the entire world (whether for good or ill remains to be seen)...we've listened to grim forecasts for our state's future economy, while waiting to see if and when the local ax will fall...and through it all, we've somehow managed to get on with our individual lives. The tenacity and resiliency of the human spirit continues to amaze me.

This month, beginning on Page 6, we're bringing you an exclusive commentary on retiree health insurance issues by SCFA Treasurer Debra Sutphen. In fact, we feel the subject is so important that President Don Cospér has abbreviated his regular column so that we can run Deb's article in its entirety.

This issue of *The Sentinel* also contains a real melting-pot of other stories and information—so give yourself plenty of time to browse through it all!

On a more personal note...as we move into and through these final weeks of 2002, I'd like to extend to all of you my warmest wishes for a wonderful Holiday Season and an abundant New Year.

May the weeks and months ahead be ones of true peace and understanding within our homes, our communities, and our anguished world.

Joan Merriam  
Editor



## President's Report

by SCFA President Don Cospér

As Joan mentioned in her Editor's column, I plan on keeping these comments fairly brief this month in deference to the importance of Deb Sutphen's article on retirement medical benefits.

So, without further ado, here's a thumbnail sketch of what has been going on with SCFA in the past month.

- **AT THE BARGAINING TABLE**  
For the next 2-3 meetings, the ongoing discussions will continue around the issue of STRS creditable earnings toward retirement
- **BEFORE THE STRATEGIC PLANNING COUNCIL**  
Front and center is the proposed Management Reorganization Package...we believe that any increase in either costs or staff must be balanced by a corresponding increase in faculty
- **RETIREE ISSUES**
  - We have met with the retirees on the Hartford Plan, which has earned positive feedback thus far and given us hope that this plan will be successful...after a one-year trial period, it should also generate some overall savings in total health costs
  - The District and SCFA have agreed to a four-hour-per-week Classified position to coordinate retiree affairs; the duties will include tracking the Hartford Plan, developing a retiree newsletter, and coordinating retiree meetings (Anyone interested in this position, please contact Don Cospér.)
- **ARBITRATION**  
We will be going to advisory arbitration in order to work out the actual meaning of the phrase "full medical benefit" for current fully retired employees as expressed in the Contract
- **PART-TIME ISSUES**
  - Negotiations will resume in 2-3 weeks over the issue of part-time equity (including seniority)...a plan for establishing parity must be on the Chancellor's desk the first week of February
  - Any part-timer having issues over payment of office hours should contact a member of the Executive Board *immediately*

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## 2 President's Report

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- **COORDINATOR POSITIONS**

We will be addressing the need to integrate any new coordinator positions into the contract

- **CONTRACT REWORKING**

Ron Martinez and I are engaged an ongoing effort to reorganize and reword the existing contract into a format that is more readable and easily-understandable

- **POST-RETIREMENT MEDICAL FUND**

The Joint Labor Management Council has commissioned an actuarial study on the PRMF which will help us

make a decision as to when we can reasonably expect to begin spending from the Fund for the purposes for which it was intended

- **IN THE WORKS**

- ...December survey to SCFA members only on future directions for the Association

- ...spring semester survey to all faculty and Department Chairs, and meetings with Department Chairs, to assess Department Chair agreement and whether or not it should be continued

- ...workload discussions at the bargaining table

this spring, especially the .7 loading factor


- ...SCFA membership package for new employees, to be available for the spring semester

- ...survey to all aged 55+ full-time faculty on whether they would consider retirement if incentives were offered

Have a great semester break, and we'll see you all in a few weeks!

## New SCFA Web Site is Born!

Yes, Virginia, the rumors are true: the all-new, reorganized, redesigned SCFA website is finally up and running!

After more hours, sweat, and tears—not to mention an unprintable word or two—than she cares to even think about, Website Administrator Joan Merriam is hopeful that the new site will work flawlessly for all of its visitors...although she sheepishly admits that the first iteration crashed her brother's Macintosh no less than five times before he finally gave up. (Hey what do you expect from someone who's never created a website before?!) 

The site is still in its semi-formative stages with some unfinished pages and "missing links" of which we're totally aware, but it's becoming more complete every day...and we're hopeful that even in its current state, you'll find it to be a fun and helpful place to browse!

Pay special attention to the "Suggestion Box" page, where you can offer your comments, criticisms, suggestions, and ideas. It's also a handy place to jot down a Letter to the Editor of *The Sentinel* if you don't want to take the time for either snail-mail or e-mail.

The website address is easy to remember:

 [www.scfa.net](http://www.scfa.net)

Stop on by and say hi!

## "Sentinel" Receives Prestigious Award

The publishers of *The SCFA Sentinel* have just learned that the newsletter is being honored with the 2001-2002 Communication Award from the California Teacher's Association.

The Communication Awards, which are given in five separate categories, are voted upon by the statewide officers of the CTA. This year, there were over fifty entries in the program, making this award "an achievement of very high distinction," in the words of the congratulatory letter.

*SCFA Sentinel* Editor Joan Merriam will accept the award at an upcoming meeting of the local CTA Service Council.

# Transitions

We were saddened to learn of the passing in early November of one of Sierra's pioneers, Paul Chesney. Sierra's Athletic Director from 1967-1975, Paul began teaching at Sierra in 1950, even before the current campus was built. His teaching career centered around coaching, which he did for a wide variety of sports: football, basketball, baseball, golf, track, and skiing. Memorial contributions may be made to Sutter Auburn Faith Hospice.

November also brought faculty member and Faculty Senate Secretary Sandra Anderson a grueling and painful time: she was involved in a serious automobile accident on a Thursday that left her with a number of injuries, including a major concussion...then, that following weekend, her mother passed away in Lincoln after a long illness. Our sympathies are extended to Sandra, along wishes for a swift recovery.

*If you have news of celebrations, sorrows, or other important life transitions within our Sierra College family of faculty and staff, please send a note or e-mail with the pertinent details to Sentinel Editor Joan Merriam.*



## Companion Campus Connections

### NEVADA COUNTY CAMPUS

Despite the dogged efforts of our maintenance crews, NCC's roads and sidewalks remain littered with masses of summer-sunburned leaves and pine needles...a sure sign that winter is only a chill wind away!

The Nevada County Chapter of the college Foundation has changed its name to the Nevada County Campus Coordinating Council. The new Council will, however, remain part of the Foundation's Board of Directors.

The newest face at NCC is that of John Whitman, who's taken on the position of Tutor Center Coordinator. John comes to us from the eastern seaboard, all the way from Connecticut. Welcome to our version of the Wild West, John!

### TRUCKEE CENTER

As we mentioned last month, the Truckee Center is gearing up to begin the Spring

semester in its new digs in the Pioneer Park Business Center...and it's doing so under the auspices of a new Dean, Frank McCourten.

We'd intended to bring you a full-length interview with Frank in this month's issue—but partly because of the extended piece on health insurance issues, and partly because we thought it would be more fitting to have the interview in the first issue of the new semester (when classes have actually begun meeting in Frank's latest domain), we opted to move the interview to the February issue of *The Sentinel*. Watch for it!

### ROSEVILLE GATEWAY

Remember the dust-up some months ago about the suddenly-restricted parking at Gateway? Well, for those inquiring minds out there who were wondering what happened, the issue has been resolved: faculty, staff and students can now park wher-

ever they wish in the lots, without regard to their "status."

Yet every silver lining has a cloud...in this case, the cloud is that for some unknown reason, the Nursing Department offices have been relocated to the basement.

The *basement*?  
What's *that* all about?

Do you work at Gateway, Twelve Bridges, or Truckee? *The Sentinel* is looking for "campus correspondents" who can keep us informed about what's happening on these campuses.

Just send an email with your news to Sentinel Editor Joan Merriam at [jcm@foothill.net](mailto:jcm@foothill.net)

# PART-TIMERS

## International Week of Action Declared

Montreal, Canada, was the setting for the recent conference sponsored by the Coalition of Contingent Labor, or COCAL.

There, faculty activists from the U.S., Canada, and Mexico voted to sponsor an "International Week of Action" to highlight the inadequate pay and working conditions endured by part-time (also known as contingent) college and university faculty.

The Week of Action will be held during the Spring of 2003, although specific dates have yet to be set.

As with the similar Campus Equity Week held in 2001, this coming year's event is designed to focus the national and international spotlight on issues of fairness, equality, and the true costs

of the over-use of poorly-paid contingent instructors within higher education.

Raising awareness among both the public and lawmakers is the main goal behind the International Week of Action.

**"Teachers' working conditions are students' learning conditions" has become the rallying cry for part-time faculty advocates**

"What people need to understand," explains Margaret Quan, one of California's most vocal part-time faculty advocates and a founding member of the California Part-time Faculty Association, "is that teachers' working conditions are students' learning conditions."

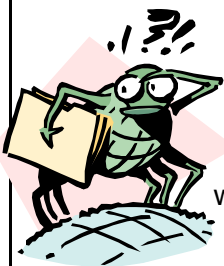
What is it, add many contingent faculty members, about the notion of *equal pay for equal work* that's so hard to understand?

That's one of the major ques-

tions that leaders of the International Week of Action want people to begin thinking about—especially the ones who are getting ready to send their kids off to college, where statistics show that more than 60% of all faculty are part-time.

Anyone interested in getting in on the ground floor of the planning efforts on a national level can subscribe to an open discussion e-mail list. To join, send a message to [cewAction-subscribe@topica.com](mailto:cewAction-subscribe@topica.com)

Sierra College has already begun to form a group to head up planning for local activities. Once we get the word on the dates for the Week of Action, we'll start the wheels rolling in earnest. If you're interested in getting involved, call or send an e-mail to Joan Merriam at 530-478-9883 or [jcm@foothill.net](mailto:jcm@foothill.net).



## Wanna Know What's Up?

Are you feeling a little detached from your part-time colleagues at Sierra? Looking for a way to stay informed about the latest goings-on in the world of part-time faculty issues?

Then join the Sierra College Part-time E-mail Forum!

The Forum is a free, completely *private* e-mail list where you can communicate openly and honestly with fellow Sierra part-timers about issues and events that concern you as a part-time faculty member. All you need is a personal computer and an e-mail account.

It's easy to join...and now that the SCFA website is online, there are even more ways to do it!

- ⇒ Send an e-mail asking to join the Forum to Joan Merriam at [jcm@foothill.net](mailto:jcm@foothill.net)—be sure to include your name, e-mail address, and teaching department
- ⇒ Add your name to one of the sign-up sheets posted in your mailroom
- ⇒ Log onto the SCFA website at [www.scfa.net](http://www.scfa.net) and click on the "Join Part-time E-mail List" icon

Just remember: you need a *private* email account to join the Forum...that is, you can't use your Sierra College e-mail address.

# PAGES

Featuring News of Special Interest  
to Sierra's Part-time Faculty

## Study Shows Upsurge in Part-time Faculty Numbers

Part-time faculty at Sierra are in good—and abundant—company, according to a recent study by the American Council on Education.

The study was based on data from the U.S. Department of Education Center for Education Statistics, and covered the period of 1981 through 1999.

### PERCENTAGE OF PART-TIMERS

The most startling fact to come out of the study is that the number of part-time faculty grew by *nearly 80 percent* between 1981 and 1999.

The most significant increase came in the six years from 1987 to 1993, when nationwide, 41 out of every 50 new faculty hired were part-time. Compare that to the previous six-year period, where fewer than 15 out of every 50 new faculty hires were for part-time positions.

The largest numbers of part-time faculty—64 percent—were at public two-year colleges, according to the study. By 1998, fully 80 percent of the faculty hired to teach at these two-year institutions within the preceding five years were part-timers.

### DIVERSITY

In terms of diversity, the report found that the racial/ethnic composition of part-time faculty was on a parallel with that of the full-time faculty: 85 percent of full-timers and 88 percent of part-timers were white.

While the use of part-timers can offer colleges the opportu-

nity to increase the ethnic diversity of their faculty, the ACE study shows that this is not the case. Even as the US population becomes more disparate in its ethnic makeup, colleges are failing miserably in terms of any tangible commitment to mirroring that diversity in their hiring practices.

### SALARY DIFFERENTIAL

It comes as no surprise that the study showed a major divergence between the salaries of part-time versus full-time faculty. On average, part-timers earned \$2,200 per semester course, while full-timers netted \$7,800 per course.

This fact alone flies in the face of the ever-popular notion that the major reason colleges use part-time faculty is for "flexibility." To quote the authors of the report, "financial concerns were one of the main reasons that institutions hire [part-time] faculty."

What these concerns fail to take into account, the study asserts, are the hidden costs of relying on such huge numbers of part-timers. Fewer full-time faculty means fewer faculty available to participate in non-teaching work such as governance, curriculum development, and program coordination. According to the study, a college would need ten part-timers to cover the administrative committee responsibilities of six full-timers.

## An Interesting Suggestion

*One of our part-time colleagues from the southern part of the state made this provocative suggestion in an e-mail to the California Part-time Faculty Association listserv:*

If the institution plans to treat their students inequitably, then the students should get fair disclosure.

Insist that an asterisk be placed in the class schedule on each course section assigned to a part-time faculty member, and at the bottom of each page, a disclaimer stating:

**"The faculty member teaching this section is not paid for nor can be expected to provide office hours, advising, or any other assistance outside of class. Nor does the college pay the faculty member to be aware of information about the course curriculum and its articulation with other programs in the college or in transfer institutions. This is not a full-service section."**

Regular publication of this disclosure statement should be guaranteed in the contract to protect the part-time faculty member from their students' unfair expectations and from potential lawsuits, and to protect the student from developing unreasonable expectations which will not be fulfilled by the college.

*A little food for thought....*

# Medical Insurance for Retired Faculty: 6

## The Options Narrow

By Debra Sutphen, SCFA Treasurer

It has been nearly two years since I became part of SCFA's Executive Board. I joined to bring to SCFA a voice representing recently hired full-time faculty, to help SCFA work toward more amicable relations with the District, and to secure for those full-time faculty hired after July 1, 1994 retirement medical benefits equitable to those enjoyed by full-time faculty hired before that time.

My efforts to better represent the more recently hired faculty have been most noticeably born out through the much changed look of the full-time SCFA Executive Board.

Two years ago, I was the lone non-tenured member of the Board and the only member to have been hired at Sierra after 1994—that notorious benchmark that unfortunately divides all faculty. Now, three of the four full-time Executive Board members are post-1994 hires. Today, Sierra's full-time faculty is comprised of a majority of people hired after 1994, and SCFA's leadership reflects that evolution.

I am also gratified by the considerable progress made by SCFA's Executive Board in forging a more productive rapport with district management, a rapport which has generated solid benefits for Sierra College faculty.

Unfortunately, on the issue of equity for post-1994 FT hires with regard to retirement medical benefits, I am increasingly concerned—as I know my post-1994 constituents are—by the slow progress that we and the

District have made toward solving this thorny issue, and by the progressively more difficult hurdles that we are sure to confront as we seek acceptable solutions.

For those of you who are relatively new to Sierra College and unfamiliar with the issues regarding full-time retirement medical benefits and post or pre-1994 hires, allow me to offer a brief explanation.

In 1984, SCFA and the District reached agreement through collective bargaining that provided lifetime medical insurance benefits to all Sierra College full-time faculty hired before July 1, 1994. These benefits extend to spouses and dependent children.

Subsequent contract language limited full-time faculty to various restrictions regarding these retirement medical benefits. (For example, full-time faculty hired after November 27, 1984, must complete five years of paid service to be eligible for the lifetime medical benefits. For faculty hired full-time after July 1, 1988, this stipulation was increased to twelve years of paid service; also, the benefit for dependents terminated three months after the retired faculty employee's death.)

If you know anything at all about the rising costs of health care in this nation, you know that this was a terrific benefit for Sierra College full-time faculty employees in 1984—one that has evolved in 2002 to an extraordinary benefit.

The unfortunate piece of this otherwise rosy picture is the part

regarding Sierra College's *future* full-time hires.

Section 11.9.4 of the SCFA/District contract reads in part: "The District's obligation to pay the cost of medical insurance for [retired] faculty employees hired after July 1, 1994 is discontinued."

There is an additional piece to the SCFA/District agreement regarding full-time faculty retirement benefits. Beginning July 1, 1991, the District began, with full-time faculty agreement, to match a 1% deduction from each employee's salary; these dollars were placed in a restricted fund for, according to the contract language, "medical benefits for retirees."

The contract language confirms that "the purpose of the fund is to guarantee fully paid life-time medical benefits for District faculty employees." (SCFA Agreement, Sect. 11.16.2) This aptly named "Post-Retirement Medical Fund" (PRMF) now exceeds \$5 million dollars and continues to grow.

For pre-1994 Sierra College full-time faculty, this "unfunded liability" plan has worked well. Unfortunately, it has left post-1994 hires completely out in the cold.

In short, if you are a full-time faculty employee hired by Sierra College before July 1, 1994, you have a secure medical future ahead of you after retirement.

If, on the other hand, you are one of those hired **since** July 1, 1994, you constitute the

*(Continued on page 7)*

# Medical Insurance

(Continued from page 6)

growing group of what the more forbearing among us might term "the unlucky"...and what the less polite might characterize in contemporary vernacular as "the screwed."

In short, we post-1994 hires will, if nothing changes in our favor, retire someday to see our savings quickly devoured by rapidly increasing medical costs.

The rising cost of health care in the United States is an issue that should cause us all tremendous concern. Last year alone (as those of you now over cap with Blue Shield understand most pointedly), health insurance costs have risen between 25 – 35%.

There is no real relief in site, particularly now with a strongly conservative, pro-Big Business administration comfortably ensconced in Washington.

Facing this immense health care crisis looming before all Americans, what have we done here at Sierra to address the post-1994 retirement medical insurance equity issue?

## **We have done plenty.**

Last year through SCFA insistence, the Board of Trustees agreed to reverse its original position in which it effectively barred its representative from bargaining on this issue.

Since then, the Joint Labor Management Council (JLMC)—comprised of representatives from FUSE (the Classified Staff Union), management, the District, and SCFA—has met several times to seek a fiscally feasible path toward post-94 equity with pre-1994 faculty.

Last August I joined the JLMC when Rex Chappell retired, and participated in a full SCCP with representatives from

all concerned groups to devise plans to address post-1994 medical benefit equity.

As President Don Cospers reported in the September, 2002 *SCFA Sentinel*, for the first time in Sierra College history those groups reached consensus on two potential solutions and presented those to the Board.

The Board subsequently directed its representative to return to the JLMC and keep working. Since then, the JLMC has met twice to explore and consider possible options.

Additionally, I personally asked all Board of Trustees candidates interviewed by the SCFA Executive Board during the recent election campaigns whether or not they could commit to faculty equity regarding the post-'94 retirement benefits issue. All four candidates that we endorsed responded affirmatively.

So where are we at now on this issue as we approach the winter break? Despite a group of Sierra College faculty, staff, managers, and Board members who all earnestly desire a solution to this issue, the options appear to be narrowing.

The \$5 million sitting in the PRMF looks less impressive every day as actuarial projections regarding the cost of the SCFA/District retirement health care benefit agreements for pre-1994 faculty balloon in tandem with projected health insurance costs.

The Salary and Benefits formula, in effect contractually for more than a year, has brought Sierra's faculty control over distribution of COLA and apportionment of a proportionate share of new or increased unrestricted and ongoing revenue monies.

This important ability to de-

termine apportionment of our "bucket" of revenues (toward salary increases, hiring priorities, etc.) is threatened by the continuing inequities between pre- and post-1994 full-time faculty.

ALL faculty—including the post-1994 full-time and all part-time faculty, **none of whom themselves receive retirement medical benefits**—must, according to the current Salary and Benefits formula, pay for the increased cost of retiree benefits.

To state this more plainly, the vast majority of faculty at Sierra College help fund a benefit for a fortunate few that they themselves are denied.

Eventually, I suspect that if left unresolved the majority of Sierra College faculty subjected to this egregious inequity will take drastic measures to change it—and most likely in the process will significantly damage the collegial relations between all Sierra employees that now characterize our work environment.

In sum, the time to solve this dangerous impasse regarding the post-1994 issue is NOW. As time passes, the factors complicating this very difficult issue simply grow more intimidating and threatening.

I strongly encourage all Sierra College faculty, staff, managers, and District representatives to put your good minds to work on this and offer your help to the JLMC to solve this issue with dispatch.

Please contact Don Cospers, Winsome Jackson, Dave Kenyon, or me with suggestions. Let's open up our options on this and move forward toward an equitable future for all Sierra College employees.

# Election Kudos

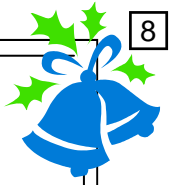
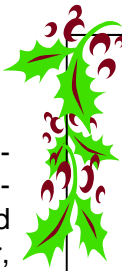
**CONGRATULATIONS!** to our recently-elected members of the college's Board of Trustees: David Creek, Dave Ferrari, Nancy Palmer, and Jerry Simmons. We also commend each of these individuals for the professionalism with which they carried out their campaigns...our state and national candidates could learn a thing or two from their examples!

We look forward to establishing positive working relationships with these and all the Board members as we work together for the future of Sierra College.

# Flex Week Reminders

Mark your calendars now for the following Flex Week meetings and activities:

- **PART-TIME FACULTY CAUCUS**  
Friday, January 10  
6 to 9PM  
W-110 (Rocklin)
- **NCC FACULTY CAUCUS**  
Tuesday, January 14  
6 to 9PM  
L-106 (NCC)
- **NCC PLANNING MEETING**  
Wednesday, January 15  
3 to 5PM  
L-101 (NCC)
- **CONVOCATION**  
Thursday, January 16  
8:30 AM to 12 noon  
Dietrich Theatre (Rocklin)
- **SCFA ALL-FACULTY BREAKFAST**  
Friday, January 17  
8:30 AM to 12 noon  
Sunset Whitney Country Club, Rocklin (*breakfast is free of charge!*)



*The members of the Sierra College  
Faculty Association Executive Board,  
its support staff,  
and the staff of The SCFA Sentinel  
would like to take this opportunity  
to express our appreciation  
to all of Sierra's faculty  
for your support and confidence  
during the past year.  
We wish each of you  
the happiest and most joyful  
Holiday Season  
and  
New Year.*



## ◆ SIERRA COLLEGE FACULTY ASSOCIATION ◆

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Richard Alman - Wayne Barbee - Deb Sutphen - Don Cosper

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