CICC

Balla-Hawkins Tapped as CCCI Legislative Advocate

CCCI is pleased to announce that the organization has engaged David Balla-Hawkins to advocate on behalf of community college faculty in Sacramento and to assist CCCI members in local organizing and electoral activities. Hawkins is no stranger to community college faculty issues, having served eight years as the legislative advocate for the Faculty Association of California Community Colleges (FACC) from 1993 to 2001. He also advocated for California State University faculty from 2001 to 2011 and is well known for his work in grassroots organizing. He got his start as a student at Butte Community College, where he was involved in political activities addressing peace and social-justice issues and opposing campus budget cuts, student-fee increases, and faculty lay-offs.

Hawkins is glad to return to working with community college faculty because of the work we do: Faculty are educators, mentors, counselors, and friends to their students — students who reflect the cultural, economic and ethnic diversity of our state.

Community college faculty play a key role in securing our future economic and social health. CCCI considers itself lucky to find an advocate so familiar with the unique (some would say peculiar) aspects of the California Community Colleges and looks forward to the benefits of Hawkins’s expertise. He also offers a wealth of experience with and enthusiasm for campus organizing. This is an area of advocacy that few faculty unions have explored. CCCI members are especially eager to gain this new resource.

In the coming year, Hawkins will help expand the role CCCI plays at both the state and local district levels. He agrees with CCCI that the strength of the Independents comes from their ability to work with our natural allies among other faculty groups and student organizations as well as with administrative groups when our interests coincide. On the other hand, from our local bargaining, we are well aware of the importance of flexing our muscles, at times, to achieve our goals. Hawkins is looking toward a long-term goal of gaining a stronger influence with legislators and district boards and building an infrastructure whereby legislators and their staff actively seek our advice and input on policy and budget matters — with candidates seeking CCCI support recognizing that our active engagement in local and state elections is pivotal to their success.

He points out that due to term limits, local public engagement has grown in its influence and has become a necessity. Paying due respect to how faculty feel that they have enough to do attending to their teaching, professional, and family responsibilities, Hawkins sees his role to be a provider of “simple tools and thoughtful counsel that will empower individuals without overwhelming them, tools that can be used effectively to help CCCI make things better for their students and their colleagues.”

This is why CCCI chose Hawkins as its advocate and advocacy trainer. He promises a unique combination of state-level influence and local empowerment. At one point in the deliberations, a CCCI representative explained that the organization should not seek to supplant any of the community college voices that are already heard in Sacramento; instead, we want to add another voice, to have an additional representative who, in a legislative hearing, will stand up for community college faculty. David Hawkins is sure to add a very impressive voice.

Student Success . . .

For assessing student success; address statutory and regulatory barriers to student success and completion; identify best practices, especially with regard to basic skills; consider alternative funding options for providing student services; consider alternative funding models in other states; and review the effective use of technology to promote student success and completion. While it was certainly a prime interest of the author of SB 1143, it is important to note that the Task Force did not recommend an “alternative” outcomes-based funding model.

It is doubtful, of course, that the recommendation, whatever its final form, will make a great impact on student success at a time when the colleges are reeling from the effects of this long-term economic downturn. The current political climate where public pensions are under attack, is crucial that we edge someone knowledgeable and strong.

CCCI has endorsed Sharon Hendricks, a retirement issues activist from Los Angeles City College with a solid track record advocating for both full-time and part-time community college faculty. Hendricks has served on the Faculty Association of California Community Colleges (FACC) Board and FACC Retirement Committee; she is the Retirement Liaison for the LA College Faculty Guild; and perhaps most importantly, she has been mentored and endorsed by the outgoing community college representative on the CalSTRS Board, Carolyn Widener. Hendricks “understands the challenges we face in pursuing our retirement security and is committed to task force recommendations do little to point toward what might be accomplished once the state emerges from its doldrums; instead, it is primarily a plan of re-formulation in an ongoing environment of scarcity. The recommendations are mired in a psychology of facing a bitter “new reality” in which we must replace an open access model with a new reality in which we must replace an open access model with a new . . .”

Economics of Scarcity Becoming “Business as Usual”

by Richard Hansen, CCCI President

California’s economic stagnation persists, and as a result, the community colleges face ever-more challenging budget cuts. But the problem now runs deeper because as the recession continues, the cuts not only get worse, they begin to look like “business as usual.” As we continue to suffer under the doldrums of a stagnant economy, many of us also begin to look around for someone or something to blame, a scapegoat. Here in California, we have our own unique manifestations of the effects of this long-term economic downturn, and our own particular results with respect to the state’s community colleges.

As the stagnation continues, the community college open-access model is under attack. In a time of scarcity, the argument has grown louder that the state cannot afford the “luxury” of open access. There is a growing obsession with student readiness, outcomes, and completion rates. Education is becoming less about intellectual exploration and more about specific preparation designed to fit students into a well-defined niche in the grand socio-economic scheme of things.

This is evident in the motivations behind SB 1143, a bill that ultimately sought to punish the community colleges by instituting an outcomes-based funding model as a means to force them to become more efficient producers of student outcomes. The plan was to cut student services; programs to save the state money and then cut them again to create a fund of “prize money” that would be doled out to districts that found a way to improve student success in an era of less state support for students.

An alternative to this system of punishment was found in the Student Success Task Force (see related article), mandated to consider outcomes-based funding but also granted the opportunity to formulate a grand plan for improving community college student completion. A colleague recently pointed out that, unfortunately, the
Economies of Scarcity . . .

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close to institutions wherein students are free to explore with a more controlled process by which students enter a community college, achieve specified completion goals, and exit. Sadly, they will find a marketplace that was quick to demand that the colleges impart certain skills but offers little guarantee that these skills will translate into either a long-term or a meaningful career. As public employees, we suffer from this same marketplace in which the prolonged stagnation has led to a growing criticism of our pensions. It is more pervasive in other parts of the country, but here in California we are one of those states in which anyone with $200 can file a proposition, and several have been filed in recent months aimed at undermining public employee pensions. So far, these efforts have not found the financial backing to pay for signature gathering and will, most likely, never get off the ground.

Even an organization like the California Foundation for Fiscal Responsibility (CFFR) hasn’t been able to supply the leadership to put a serious ballot campaign together, but they make a lot of noise by publishing articles and research reports critical of public pensions.

Hendricks Endorsed for CalSTRS Board . . .

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working effectively with all our members to address the relationships with faculty throughout the state to represent us on the CalSTRS board, and that’s why Sharon Hendricks should be elected to the “Task Force on Student Success.”

The Task Force of 20 members, representing a wide variety of system and community interests and backed up by Chancellor’s Office staff, has been meeting monthly since January 2011. Four faculty were selected to serve on the Task Force, including former Academic Senate President Jane Patton and CCCI President Rich Hansen, plus one faculty who serves as a member of the Board of Governors. All of the Task Force meetings have been open to the public but without opportunities for public comment. The group will meet again in November and December to consider the input collected from the presentations statewide and craft a final recommendation. This is scheduled to go to the Community College Board of Governance for its report to the legislature resulting from passage of SB 1143, which became law on September 28, 2011. The Task Force report was written by Carol Liu (D-Pasadena), containing intent language “to enact legislation to establish a framework for allocating state funds to community colleges in a manner that [promotes] the committee’s recommendations.”

The recommendations have far reaching implications for how the community colleges operate, and some touch on areas of collective bargaining. The list of Task Force presentations is expected to be made available on the Chancellor’s Office web site, www.cccco.edu — use the link to “the “Task Force on Student Success.”

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When this Envelope Arrives, Open It to Vote for Sharon Hendricks!

Neither the STRS System nor the Board endorses a particular candidate or position.

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