



# The Union Rag

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## NECC Retirees Association

Frank Leary is forming an association for retired NECC staff that will be affiliated with the Retired State, County and Municipal Employees Association of Massachusetts. With the governor threatening to "overhaul" the state retirement system, and consciousness of the inequities of Social Securities WEP/GAO rising, organizing retirees to advocate is forward-thinking.

Those interested, and within ten years of retirement might think of contacting Frank at 978-774-7108.

*Left, Professor Leary and g-kids Gracie Mae, 4 months, and Jaccob, 4 years.*

## MACER

by Peter Flynn

MACER is an often emotional forum where administrators and NECCPA representatives exchange rumors and gossip, launch trial balloons, and hammer out agreements on matters that tend to fall through contractual cracks.

MACER is a contractually driven, monthly meeting of NECCPA representatives and the president, and some of the vice-presidents, to discuss "matters that are of mutual concern to the employee and the employer." The acronym MACER stands for Management Committee on Employee Relations. Article XXII, on page 61 of the agreement that expired June 2003 describes the terms and conditions of MACER.

An important, if misunderstood, function of NECCPA chapter officials is to communicate interests and issues of the membership to the

administration informally before they crystallize into grievances requiring time and money to resolve.

One way to keep communication open is to have regular meetings where issues are presented and dissected. Despite the emotion that sometimes accompanies information that may be unexpected and dissonant with the respective teams view of the way things should be, MACER provides an exchange that helps to shape practice and policy, though largely behind-the-scenes.

While the contract specifies three representatives from each team, the practice locally is to bring whoever can speak to agenda items. The core NECCPA team includes Bill Heineman, Gail Stuart and Peter Flynn, but Mike Nutter and Joe LeBlanc also have been attending regularly. Other NECCPA elected officials rotate through with an eye to training opportunity.

It has been the practice for NECCPA to send an agenda to the President's secretary, Cindy Hideriotis, in the days before the meeting. Typical issues are disputes with immediate supervisors regarding practices or demands that seem extracontractual, security, implementation of new practices, like the student evaluations, or the academic calendar. If you have an issue that seems appropriate for MACER discussion, please contact a NECCPA official in person or via e-mail, and we'll "run it up the flagpole" at MACER next month.

MACER has "no teeth" in the sense that it lacks contractual or legal bite; however the impact of new information, moral suasion, and clearly presented argument can affect adjustments in perception, and then practice.

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## The Reformatory for Everyone

contributed by Mike Nutter

*"The man who does not find his subsistence must be made to desire to procure it for himself by work; he is offered it by supervision and discipline; in a sense he is forced to acquire it; he is then tempted by the bait of gain; corrected in his morals, accustomed to work, his anxiety aroused by the little money he has kept for his release, he has learned a trade..." (Vilan, 1773).*

*from Michel Foucault's  
Discipline and Punishment*

I'm having trouble trying to decide if Foucault is really a genius, or if he just looks that way to me because he shares all my prejudices. The quote above strikes me as if it could serve as a de facto mission statement for Northern Essex. The problem being that this was not the description of a school, but the description of an 18<sup>th</sup> century prison. In the time of the industrial revolution, society was abandoning punishments aimed at the body, the burn you at the stake or draw and quarter you sort of thing, and aiming at the mind and soul of the delinquent. The aim was to turn the villain into a laborer. I think it was in the same spirit as Abraham Lincoln's comment on army discipline when he said that it seems like the waste of a good soldier to have to shoot him yourself.

The method was to set a daily schedule so full of work and hygiene that all other activity was excluded. Close supervision and punishments for any deviation from that approved script, even small ones, would quash any impulse but the one to work. Since the value of the ordinary man was his labor, the punishment did not aim at the crime, but at the character of the criminal. The idea that you



*NECCPA Leadership Summer Retreat August 2001. Flynn's deck, Newburyport, 7:30 p.m. L-R Front : James Bradley, Gail Stuart, Frank Leary, Priscilla Bellairs, himself, Eleanor Hope McCarthy. Rear: Walter Drescher, Joe Rizzo, Mary's fiancée Rick, Mary Wilson, Arthur Barlas, Mike Nutter, Peter McCarthy (Fully half of these folks are now retired)*

wanted an autonomous individual was not on the table. It was his autonomy that put him where he was.

It seems that at some later stage society discovered the equivalent of original sin. If the problem was character not deeds, then why not educate in a way that preempts the problem. If the premise is that one starts out guilty then the right to discipline is there before you actually do anything. It gets right back to the "society verses nature" arguments of that day and age. It would obviously be unfair of me to pretend that the pendulum didn't occasionally swing the other way. I think the vast majority of faculty and staff see our mission in a much broader way, and want to develop a great deal more in our students than just their capacity to labor.

This in fact brings us to the heart of the matter. Any of us who lifts our head to look around seems to notice two things. First is that we are experiencing an increasing array of increasingly serious student discipline problems. Secondly, we ourselves are

increasingly experiencing the treatment described in the quote from Foucault. Increasing productivity (narrowly defined), increasing busy work, bureaucratic paperwork, and increasingly intense, and intrusive supervision. These things are not unique to Northern Essex. We can talk to colleagues anywhere in the system and hear pretty much the same thing.

Once again it is unfair to tar everyone with the same brush, but in a system that aims at enforced uniformity as the purpose of our employment and the creation of docile workers as it's goal, then to think that we should remove difficult students from our classroom is to miss the point entirely. They are to share our fate and we theirs. Don't try to escape. Since the William Weld years began we have worked in a system that sees us as delinquents! We are not its wardens. We are not the guards. We are its inmates, and any claim to the authority to direct or shape it, is just rebelliousness against those who see themselves as our moral superiors.

## UPPC – What’s That?

by Linda Desjardins\*

In this world of acronyms R us, it has become nearly impossible to keep up with all the letters and what they represent, even for groups whose acronyms we see frequently. Now we have the “UPPC,” letters you may have seen but are unsure what they mean. It’s the Unit Personnel Practices

Committee, and we are charged with evaluating unit members’ files to determine if they should be granted tenure. This is not an arbitrary procedure: we have specific contract guidelines to follow.

First, the eligibility has to be determined. The candidate must have six years as a unit member, at least three of which have been in that unit member’s current job function. Easy enough. Except that each of us has a file in Human Resources that reminds us that Big Brother is truly watching us: some files exceed six inches in depth! Every scrap of paper we’ve ever submitted, whether it’s a W-2 form or a request for excused absence or an expense report or request to attend a conference...it’s all there. Our job application, letter of hire, subsequent letters of hire, calculation of sick days available...it’s all



*Henry Madigan- Pratt, son of Lawrence campus librarian and MCCC Board member, Ellen.*

there. And the UPPC committee has to sift through all that to determine whether the member is eligible.

The next criterion that must be ascertained concerns evaluations: the member must have received other than “unsatisfactory” on the most recent summary evaluation. There is a separate folder for evaluations. Our work is very limited here as we only read the last evaluation. If our unit member still meets requirements, we move on to the next step

The third step is our recommendation and we have two choices: recommendation for tenure or a one year terminal appointment. All four of us must sign off in unanimity. We’ve not had a dispute to date as the guidelines are very straightforward.

But we’re not through yet.

Now we prepare a memo, addressed to the unit member’s dean, listing the aforementioned criteria with check-off boxes indicating “yes” or “no” for each requirement. A copy of this memo also goes to Stephen Fabbrucci in Human Resources, to, of course, be added to the file. The dean then passes along his or her recommendation to Paul Bevilacqua for final determination.

This year we have fifteen eligible unit members. This means your UPPC committee has been busily investigating each member’s personnel file to assure they meet the contract’s standards for being granted tenure. It feels good to say yes and to have the proper reasons why.

*\*Linda Desjardins is UPPC Chairperson this year.*



**BOD** *Contributed by Gail Stuart*

I have been asked to write a few words about my role as your representative on the MCCC Board of Directors where I am currently serving my second one-year term. The official powers and duties of the board of directors are spelled out in the "MCCC Policy Manual." In short, they include "all management responsibilities not otherwise delegated to constitutional officers." In practice, this means keeping informed on the issues confronting our union, and deliberating and voting upon various policies and procedures and on certain matters having to do with personnel and finances.

One of the major duties of a director is to act as a link between the chapters and the central organization. When our chapter wants to make its opinion known to the board, we will sometimes pass a motion at a chapter meeting asking the chapter president to draft a letter to the board. It is then my responsibility to ask the MCCC President to put the issue on the agenda for the next Board meeting. Conversely, it is also my responsibility to keep the members at our chapter informed of what the Board is doing.

Usually I accomplish this by forwarding the minutes of each month's board meeting to the membership, and by reporting news from the board at our local chapter meetings whenever there is space on the agenda. It is essential to keep these channels of communication open, because members need to know what the board is doing, and even more importantly, the board needs to have a sense of what the rank and file members need and want from their union.

The Board holds a daylong meeting each month at the MCCC central office in Worcester. Typically, we begin with reports from each of the elected officers of the MCCC Board. We also hear reports from the Strategic Action Coordinator (our own Joe LeBlanc), the Communications Coordinator, two consultants from the Massachusetts Teacher's Association, and two members of the MTA Board of Directors.

After hearing the formal reports, we generally move on to new business, which can include approving or denying recommendations from the various standing committees on personnel, finance, by-laws, etc. There may be Gail



*Gail Stuart, Haverhill Librarian,  
NECCPA Director to MCCC BOD*

discussion of various issues at the campuses such as computer use policies, or security cameras on campus. The directors may compare notes on the practices and policies at their various campuses. I take notes on any news or discussion that I think will be of particular interest here at Northern Essex in preparation for reporting back to our members.

Like all boards of directors, the MCCC board has fiduciary responsibility for the financial affairs of the union. This means ensuring that we have enough resources to cover our expenses and that any expenditures are affordable, responsible, and worthwhile. This is something that the MCCC Board takes very seriously. The delegate assembly approves a budget each spring at the annual meeting, covering most major expenses, but there are occasions when the board is asked to authorize smaller outlays, often on the recommendation of the Finance Committee. We have considered whether to authorize funds for such items as benefits for our central office employees, greeting cards for state legislators, and donations to other unions during work actions. Even the smallest expenditure is not approved without careful consideration, and sometimes heated debate.

If you have any questions about the MCCC Board of Directors, please do not hesitate to stop at the Bentley Library reference desk or contact me at extension 3421.

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**Very Important If You Are Participating In The Program To Enter Grades Through The Web.** *by Russ Gouveia*

Identity theft is a serious and growing problem. It starts by getting your Social Security Number. The system to enter grades over the web starts with you entering your Social Security Number in an unsecured web site. Do not be fooled because you start by clicking a link that says you are going to a secure location; You are not. By entering your Social Security Number this way, it can easily be stolen. You absolutely should not do this.

There is no good technical reason the system is set up this way. Do not accept any reason why this system is okay even on a temporary basis. Please simply refuse to enter your Social Security Number until the site is secure or they set up an alternative way of entering the system.

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*As follow-up: The IT department sent a memo that for the training and Grade entry, they will be assigning numbers so the SSN will not be used. It is still an issue in that the SSN is used for faculty and student identification and it should not be. The student's SSN is printed on all material including our class lists. Think how many are put in open mailboxes or are found in the trash. The root cause of the problem is misuse of the SSN and we should push to have everyone assigned an alternate ID # and never use the SSN. Again it is not a difficult technical problem (I have many students who could fix this easily). There are other serious security problems with the way they are doing this but the SSN was the worst case and I felt Teachers needed to be notified immediately.*