

# The Union Rag

Newsletter of the Northern Essex Community College Professional Association-NECCPA  
distributed four times a year at unexpected intervals



*Greetings Governor Romney! NECCPA and AFSME joint rally  
at Merrimack Valley Economic Summit, late August*

## **The Reliance of Community Colleges on Part-time Faculty.** *Steve Corvi, DCE History*

Community colleges have, in recent years, depended on part-time faculty to teach an ever-larger portion of total courses offered. This may not be a revelation, but it is instructive to periodically "do the numbers" of courses taught by DCE/part-time instructors as a percent of course offerings overall. The following is a snapshot of that ratio for the Fall 2003 semester.

The wages earned by part-time faculty have been held down by administration to bolster profits in the Division of Continuing Education as state funding dwindles. The student population, our consumers, have little knowledge of the economics of DCE, and the degree to which DCE faculty are exploited.

The following numbers are from the current Fall 2003 courses offering at NECC in the Humanities, Social Sciences and Human Services division.

Total courses offered	<b>340</b>	Courses taught by full time faculty	<b>132</b>
		Courses taught by part-time faculty	<b>208</b>

**Percentage of courses taught by Part-time Faculty: 61%\***

This breakdown illustrates the dependency of the community college (i.e. NECC) on part-time faculty to teach the majority of courses offered in the Humanities, Social Sciences and Human Services division. I would venture that this is representative of all the divisions at NECC.

*continued page 4 DCE ratios*

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## **Zero Tolerance**

by Peter Flynn

Neither full time nor DCE faculty, are well oriented as to institutional expectations regarding student discipline.

Two recent widely discussed incidents have may shed light on current protocols for managing student problem behavior.

The first incident involving uninvited touching of a female DCE instructor by a 19 year old male student produced a disagreement between managers and NECCPA officials.

In October, an Algebra instructor was surprised in the hallway by one of her students who pressed and buzzed a battery operated electric shaver into her arm.

While there was no injury or shredding of her garment, she was startled and shaken. She confiscated the device and turned it into a security person. After her class she sought someone in authority to report the incident. Ultimately she was instructed to send an e-mail to an administrator delegated with managing student discipline. Unfortunately, the administrator was at a conference, meaning a five day delay.

Surprisingly, security returned the electric shaver to the student immediately. The student brandished the device in his next class, until that instructor asked him to remove it to his vehicle.

Based on an interview with the student five days later, the student was instructed to return to class and apologize to the instructor. The instructor was not informed of this plan however and was startled to see the student approaching her after class.

The faculty person had expected that the student would be removed

from her class, if not from school, based on her assessment of the offense and her understanding of the schools Code of Conduct.

In regard to this incident it was stated by Dr. Bevilacqua that the instructor was asked several times whether she wished to drop the student from the class, but she declined to make that decision. This intervention was made after the student had been sent back to her class, however.

In the MACER meeting October 16, NECCPA representatives charged that the administration response was lacking in several aspects. A Vice President depicted the incident as a "touching" of the faculty with a non-cutting device. While he acknowledged that the college has a "zero tolerance" policy, he denied that any additional response of administration was necessary. He told us the student's parents had been contacted by security. The student was redirected into an individualized study program to complete the course.

In the November 20<sup>th</sup> MACER meeting an incident was discussed where a computer teacher has been harassed by a student who was unhappy with a grade. The student had taken the instructor last semester and seemed to have developed an obsessive attachment.

The student is a physically intimidating, largish, middleaged man, who refused to leave the computer lab on more than one occasion when the class had ended. He sent e-mails threatening various actions. When immediate supervisors intervened they became targets of threats, phone calls, and e-mails.

Despite the rambling, hostile comments in the e-mails, managers continued to reason with the fellow and set piecemeal limits. He was

removed from outside the instructor's classroom by security. He accommodated with an opportunity to "test out" of the course according to V.P. Ashley.

Three employees now keep their office doors locked, and the instructor locks her classroom door while teaching.

In the larger conversation regarding student discipline Ms. Ashley acknowledged that the semester has had more than its share of student behavior challenges.

She commented that "zero tolerance refers to incidents involving guns and bombs." Student rights need to be considered. Faculty apparently aren't reading the orienting materials suggesting that they need to make affirmative statements warning students their behavior is unacceptable.

The insights I took from the discussion of these incidents in two months' MACER meetings is that the administration would like faculty to make most initial disciplinary decisions, minimizing administrative responsibility in these matters. This represents a somewhat different posture than many of us long time faculty have experienced. Both old and new faculty need to become cognizant of management expectations.

Other questions have been raised around these events.

Is the mutually acknowledged current increase in frequency of student disciplinary incidents related to the closing of the counseling center?

Have students who have demonstrated aggressive or threatening behavior abdicated some rights? Should they be accommodated academically? Is this

*continued page 4*



*Left: The vocal performance talents of the "Irish Tenured" combine in a rendition of "Franny Boy" at Francis J. Leary's **grand retirement extravaganza** last May at Giordinos Function Center, Haverhill.*

*200 friends, family and NECC employees assembled to see Frank off in style after a 65 year career at Northern Essex C.C. Frank's illustrious career spanned two ice ages.*

*Frank is currently organizing an association of NECC retired faculty.*

### **New Member Luncheon**

26 recent hires were invited to a luncheon hosted by NECCPA in the 312-c Faculty Lounge on the third floor of Spurk on Wednesday, October 15 from noon until 2 p.m.

A welcome orientation folder including a contract, orientation threefold, and other stuff was distributed.

Attendees were subjected to a 30 minute Powerpoint presentation intended to help new members grasp the history, organization, goals, personalities, to establish their relationship to the organization.

New members had some good questions about issues like the status of half time members in terms of salaries, promotions, benefits and dues. Old-time NECCPA members remarked that they learned a few things from the presentation.

The menu included green salad, many calzones, and Italian pastries from the finest Lawrence Italian bakeries. Mangia!

We are contemplating another similar affair at the Lawrence campus, as several new hires were unable to attend because of commitments there.

If you are a new hire who did not receive an invitation to this event please accept my apologies, and contact Pam Donahue at [pdonahue@necc.mass.edu](mailto:pdonahue@necc.mass.edu) and we'll try to personally deliver an orientation packet and welcome you aboard.

### **Classification of Half-timers**

About two years ago Paul Bevilacqua announced to various assemblies his intention to hire a group of faculty on an -01 status, half-time basis enabling them to enjoy medical benefits and accumulate time toward retirement at a year for two years worked at half time. At least two of these half-timers had already been hired the previous semester. Most of these individuals seem to have been employed for some years as DCE instructors in key programmatic areas.

Most folks know at least some of these folks and their work, which is of the highest quality.

As always, this hire was portrayed as a benevolent gesture. He did suggest, as I recall, that there would be some payoff for the college in that these employees would provide a hedge against the state withdrawing -01 slots that exist, at least theoretically, on the books, and assigned to NECC.

Only a very few half time faculty exist at other community colleges across the state. One sabbatical option allows faculty to teach half-time, and some full time faculty for reasons like motherhood, negotiate half time workloads. I've heard of no other colleges who hire new faculty half time, though instances may exist.

Early this Fall, some of the half-timers approached me to ask why their pay didn't seem to reflect past employment, careers in teaching, or

credentials.

At our monthly MACER (employee relations) meeting with top managers we inquired about the basis for establishing the salaries and VP Bevilacqua delivered a soliloquy on his feelings about Classification. Asked point blank whether the half timers had been classified, he admitted he hadn't classified these hires. Steve Fabbrucci explained that, in his view, the contract does not use the phrase half-timers and these hires are considered part-timers, thereby not covered by classification terms.

Having dispensed with our obligation to attempt to resolve disputes through casual negotiations, I filed a chapter grievance requesting the group of faculty be classified and compensated retroactively for monies they have not been paid.

The Step One grievance was held October 14. Management presented the same case with the addition of various documents in evidence.

The next step (Step Two) is to file to schedule a mediation. We are collecting data from the affected individuals in order to have a clear presentation regarding existing versus classification pay. There are no precedents where an individual would have their pay cut as a result of this sort of action, a likely fear of some of the involved individuals.



**Joe Leblanc MCCC V.P.**

*"Zero Tolerance" cont from page 2  
accommodation "enabling?"*

I worked many years in psychiatric settings practicing behavior management. In numerous hours of training and practice, the essentials of managing problem behavior included immediacy, clear labeling of the behavior as inappropriate and unacceptable, explanation to the subject about every element of the intervention, and repeated staff training to make sure everyone was "on the same page." Are these elements evident in these interventions?

*DCE Ratio (cont. page 1)*

Remuneration for part-time faculty is by no means proportional with the amount of labor that is provided to NECC. Furthermore, the part-time faculty are not given benefits such as; sick time, retirement options, healthcare etc. These are basic benefits provided to full time groundkeepers and janitorial staff. It would seem that part-time faculty are entitled to such benefits if they are instrumental in the academic growth and development of NECC. Duties and academic accomplishments of part-time faculty are also essential to the academic integrity of the college. These are not rewarded in ANY manner. Most institutions of higher learning provide rewards for academic achievements, (such as academic publications, documentary productions, and research etc...) since they directly benefit the institution employing such faculty. Secondary education in Massachusetts requires coursework in the field of endeavor for teachers. These are called Professional Development points. There are no such provisions at NECC.

The United States Department of Labor would undoubtedly identify this as an exploited labor market.

*\* Note: Joe Rizzo DCE Grievance Coordinator reports national averages for community colleges are also 60/40 part-time versus fulltimers teaching courses, versus 40/60 at 4 yr. schools*



**Joe Rizzo MCCC DCE Grievance Coordinator**

**The Union Rag**

The Union Rag is the latest iteration of the NECCPA periodic newsletter. We intend to get into print twice each semester and distribute the newsletter in Adobe Acrobat reader format to the NECCPA e-mail distribution list, and print a few additional copies for the cyber-challenged. This'll allow for color pictures and stuff.

It represents the opinions and perspectives of the contributors, officers, and rank-and-file of our local NECCPA chapter of the Massachusetts Community College Council. It focuses local or chapter issues.

We invite contributors who express themselves coherently in less than 300 words on issues of interest to chapter members. Of course, authors must identify themselves, eschew profanity, and have less than three grammos and spelling errors per essay.

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**NECCPA Activists- Those unit members listed below currently have some active role in NECCPA initiatives. ( Who's Who in the U?)**

- President, Peter Flynn (Behavioral Sciences)
- MCCC Board of Directors, Gail Stuart (NECC Library)
- Day Grievance, Mike Nutter (respiratory therapy)
- Vice President -Mark Palermo, ESL
- Secretary, William Heineman (History)
- Treasurer, Pam Donahue (Business)
- Professional Staff, Ellen Madigan (Lawrence library)
- At large BOD-Steve Proietti (Math)
- Strategic Action Coordinator- Arthur Barlas- History
- Social emotional leadership, Francis J Leary (ret. Business)
- MCCC Faculty Classification Appeals-Jane Thiefels-ESL
- MCCC DCE Negotiating Team -Divya Taylor - Developmental
- MCCC Vice President -Joe LeBlanc-English
- MCCC DCE Grievance Coordinator- Joe Rizzo, Sociology