MACER May 21, 2026 Meeting Notes

Management Association Committee for Employee Relations

Representing Management: Joanne Landers, Mike McCarthy

Representing NECCPA: Sara Codair, Jenny Fielding, Linda Giampa, Laura Mondt, Steve Russell

Meeting held in President's Conference Room, Haverhill Campus

NECCPA President Linda Giampa began the meeting at about 3:00 PM. She reminded the group that this was Steve's last meeting as secretary, as he is retiring from NECC.

1. **Lawrence Office Moves** – Linda asked what information was used in making decisions to move PACE, SOAR and Academic Coaching into one space in the Dimitry Building. Mike replied that it is important for students not to see closed doors, to have people visible who can help. Linda reminded the group of the "front door" concept that the Jones Report presentations discussed, but this does not really seem to be adhered to. She made the point that as is often the case, people who work directly with the students are not consulted when changes are made to office spaces which the students access. Linda added that while it is important for services to appear seamless, such as Tutoring and Academic Coaching, she said that the open space concept, so favored by architects and consultants do not provide for the privacy that is often necessary when staff are talking with students.

   Joanne said that private offices are available in all the areas for people to use when needed. Linda asked how that works when someone is already using the office. Mike said most of the time there is room, since many of the offices are not occupied all of the time.

   Mike said that much of the discussion about office space is not made public while it is still under discussion because staff assume decisions are firm when they are still under discussion and this creates anxiety and rumors.

   Discussion ensued about whether students not part of a program like PACE or SOAR would be served by staff from those programs when they come into a common office space. Mike said the funding source should not matter, but that would need to be looked into.

   Linda summarized the discussion by saying that these moves are made for no apparent reason and without consultation with staff involved with students who will be using the spaces. It shows a lack of respect for staff and contributes to low morale.

Mike said he would pass that observation along , but he believed that there is no intent to ignore staff input. The Jones Report will give logical explanations. He added that the final report should be available soon.

2. **Haverhill Office Moves** – Linda said that as in Lawernce, people subject to possible moves are not informed about the move until it's time to pack. In discussions about moving student services from the second floor to the first floor in the Spurk Building, consideration has not been given to classroom accessibility that is currently available to those rooms on the first floor. This is especially important given the unreliability of the elevator in the Spurk Building. Mike asked if the student services presently on the second floor do not also need to be accessible. Linda replied that they do and if necessary, in the event that the elevator is out of service, a coach or tutor needs to meet with a single student, they can always arrange an individual meeting somewhere on the first floor. It is not possible to relocate an entire class to the first floor. Linda summarized by saying if things are working well now, there is no point to change office locations.

3. **B&E Building Tech Tower** – Linda observed that people only learned of this from an *Observer* article. Mike reiterated that usage of B and E Buildings was also being considered in the Jones Report.

4. **420 Common Street** – Linda asked what was going to be done about the ongoing mold problem at this building. Mike replied that the building has been closed as of Tuesday May 19. Presumably classes scheduled and office space will be relocated to another facility in Lawrence. Beyond that, Mike had no further information about what would happen with that facility.

5. **Noise Issues** – Steve pointed out that an article in the recent edition of the Observer highlighted the noise from leaf blowers. So much effort is given to getting students to talk in class, he said, and many of them are not used to doing this. It does not help when a student starts talking and a leaf blower or other machinery comes by the window, or when the HVAC unit in the classroom starts up. This drowns out students who are reluctant to speak up anyway. The article referred to recent landscape activity in preparation for graduation, but the noise can really increase in the fall when leaves are being cleaned. Steve asked if maybe this could be done at times when fewer classes are scheduled, perhaps on Friday or even better, on Saturday. Mike said he would try to make that happen. Steve added that perhaps when the HVAC is redone in B and E Buildings, quieter systems can be implemented. Mike said that this was happening. Rooms would have individual "mini-split" types of units that were quiet and individually controlled.

6. **Floor Waxing** – Linda asked if areas could be notified in advance when floor waxing was going to occur, especially in the Spurk Building. The smell, she said, can be unbearable and it would be better if staff could work remotely on those days. Mike agreed to notify offices of the cleaning schedule.

Meeting ended at about 4:00. Next MACER meeting is Thursday June 18, 3:00 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Stephen Russell, Ph.D.
NECCPA Secretary.

Postscript: As mentioned above, I am retiring from NECC after having taught here since 1999 (since 2003 as a full-timer). I have been on the NECCPA Executive Board and a participant in MACER since 2005, first as secretary, then as president, then again as secretary, and at times, strategic action coordinator. It has been a tremendous honor and privilege to serve in those capacities, and I am grateful for the support the membership has given me over the years.

One of our colleagues who retired around 2008, who is also a good friend of mine, Priscilla Bellairs, Professor of English wrote a pamphlet when, titled *Survival Memo*, and distributed it to her colleagues. In Section 6 titled "Express gratitude toward your professional union by being a cheerful giver of dues and service," she said,

> Unions can be as annoying, confrontational, insensitive, incompetent, even proportionately expensive as . . . well, management. But unions are OUR side. For me, the most dispiriting part of serving on a state-wide contract negotiating committee was the realization of how very little the management teaching knew about education at all, about the community colleges they technically governed in particular, and how very little they cared to know. For the last thirty years [add eighteen more], every salary increase, every benefit we retained, every working condition that has improved is directly attributable to long hard efforts by union officers and members. Are you making their jobs harder by being in contact with your union only to register complaints, grievances, and disagreements? Volunteer your time to make changes—or shut up and pay your dues gratefully.*

Some of this is harsh, but it's applicable today, maybe even more than when Priscilla wrote it. On-line education, remote work and COVID changed how we teach and interact with students and especially how we interact with each other. Despite salary increases negotiated by the union over the years, they have not been enough, and members' personal financial pressures have forced many to work extra. All of these make it harder to build the personal relationships and solidarity so essential to the strong union that we need more than ever. We cannot wait for others, be it management, the legislature and certainly not the federal government to make our professional lives and the college better. Ultimately, it is up to us!

Though I am retired, I will occasionally teach "DCE," and will always continue to support the union. I hope you will, too.

Steve

*Priscilla B. Bellairs, "Survival Memo," Haverhill, MA, NECC Teaching and Learning Center, 2008.