



# On Campus

THE NATIONAL PUBLICATION OF AFT HIGHER EDUCATION FACULTY AND PROFESSIONAL STAFF

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# Healthcare reform: A moral and economic imperative

RANDI WEINGARTEN, AFT President

IF THE AMERICAN SYSTEM for ensuring access to healthcare were a patient, it would be very sick indeed. Forty-seven million people are without coverage, and many millions more have inadequate coverage. Costs are spiraling out of control. Increasingly, even those who have health insurance find themselves paying more for less coverage and fearing that things will get far worse.

Addressing America's healthcare crisis is a moral imperative. It is simply unconscionable that, in a country that considers itself to be civilized, so many among us are deprived of a basic human necessity.

It is also an economic imperative. The cost of healthcare now causes a bankruptcy in America every 30 seconds. Businesses that offer healthcare often find themselves at a competitive disadvantage. And healthcare entitlement costs are eating up such a large share of government spending that they put a stranglehold on other, equally worthy, investments.

But there is reason to believe a breakthrough is possible. Most people agree things have gotten so bad that we have no choice but to drastically revamp our healthcare system. President Obama and key congressional leaders have made healthcare reform a top priority. And groups that sparred during the last major effort to change our healthcare system have found common ground on some important issues, including the belief that doing nothing is not an option.

The AFT is working with the AFL-CIO to do all we can to avoid the mistakes of the past and, this time, actually achieve secure, high-quality healthcare for all. Working with progressive organizations, other allies and, crucially, employers, the AFL-CIO is developing support for

comprehensive healthcare reform that addresses access, costs, financing, delivery and quality.

President Obama convened a healthcare summit in March that brought together many of the constituencies needed to make healthcare reform a reality. HPAE president Ann Twomey, who is an AFT vice president, represented the AFT at the summit. The president made clear that healthcare reform is among his most urgent priorities.

The White House summit participants wrestled with—and found some common ground on—many of the toughest issues in healthcare reform. Not surprisingly, there also was disagreement on the details. No one would pretend that reforming our healthcare system will be easy.

Twomey had an opportunity to speak with President Obama about the need for safe staffing standards and the inclusion of healthcare workers in the process of defining healthcare reform. She outlined a number of considerations that should be part of any healthcare reform proposal:

- **A public plan option.** This would allow people to purchase health insurance from a public provider in direct competition with private health insurance. It especially would help those who don't have employer-provided health insurance or are ineligible for programs such as Medicare and Medicaid.
- **Retain employer-provided insurance and favorable tax treatment for these plans.** Our

unions negotiated these plans, often in lieu of salary increases. These plans cover more than 160 million Americans and are the bedrock of our healthcare system.

- **Accountability.** Hospitals must follow responsible business and safety practices. They should be held accountable for the public funds they receive. And they must provide services needed by communities, not just services they deem profitable.

- **Quality.** Preventable medical errors result in an estimated \$37 billion annually in unnecessary costs. The key to reducing such errors is safe staffing levels. One study shows that nurses intercept 86 percent of medical errors. Other studies have established that when nurse staffing goes down, patient deaths go up. Nurse-to-patient staffing requirements must be part of healthcare reform.

President Obama and Democratic congressional leaders want to have a healthcare reform plan in place by Labor Day. Despite the hopeful signs that a transformation of America's healthcare system is within reach, many powerful forces remain aligned against the reforms we seek. Moving forward, activism from union members like you, especially healthcare professionals with firsthand knowledge of the scope and seriousness of these issues, will be critical. Rest assured that the AFT will continue to push for true reform, and that your support will be essential to secure victory.

Unions are developing support for comprehensive healthcare reform that addresses access, costs, financing, delivery and quality.



A Union of Professionals

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# Rebuilding the economy

The stimulus and recovery agenda expands to include healthcare reform



FIRST, THE GOOD NEWS: Thanks to the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, a total of \$4.3 billion in federal stimulus funds has been injected to date into higher education to help alleviate the effects of the current recession. That's based on 26 states reporting.

In addition, healthcare reform is moving to the front burner and is being seen as critical to the strength of the economy.

Now, the bad news: We're still in the midst of the worst recession since the Great Depression. While jobs and programs have been saved in every state, and some disasters averted, other higher education sacrifices loom large in

Healthcare professionals from Connecticut met with their congressman, Rep. Chris Murphy (D-Conn.).

MICHAEL CAMPBELL



## PRINCIPLES FOR HEALTHCARE REFORM

A KEY PART OF GETTING THE ECONOMY MOVING FORWARD is healthcare reform. Our healthcare system costs too much, covers too little and gives access to too few. The Obama administration has made clear that reforming healthcare is essential to getting the economy back on its feet.

The campaign for healthcare reform began in earnest this summer, when hundreds of AFT members attending the joint AFT Public Employee/AFT Healthcare professional issues conference spent a day visiting elected officials on Capitol Hill.

The AFT strongly supports a healthcare reform plan guaranteeing high-quality and affordable healthcare for all Americans. Effective reform will:

**Establish a robust public plan** that will make healthcare accessible and affordable to every person, family and business—while ensuring that individuals have the choice of selecting a public plan or keeping their private plans.

**Ensure that employer-provided healthcare benefits are not taxed.** Workers, and their unions, weigh the cost of healthcare benefits when negotiating for wages and benefits—frequently forgoing pay increases in exchange for maintaining affordable healthcare coverage. An additional tax will unfairly penalize workers who have employer-provided coverage. Workers will see this tax as a threat to their employer-provided benefits—and they will be right.

**Require standards for appropriate hospital staffing levels** that will improve patient safety, reduce medical errors and prevent healthcare workers from leaving the profession.

**Recognize that tackling healthcare reform**, including reducing the cost, is key to building our economic strength. Family budgets, American businesses, and federal and state governments are being squeezed by the current healthcare system. Reform can enhance choice and competition in healthcare, while also creating jobs, spurring innovation and investing in our country.

To contact your members of Congress and tell them you support these four principles for healthcare reform, go to [www.aft.org/fight4america](http://www.aft.org/fight4america).

states like Illinois, New Jersey, Oregon and Pennsylvania.

States face budget gaps through 2010-11 that could run as high as \$370 billion, says AFT state budget analyst Ed Muir. "There's no way to spin or finesse your way out of a problem of this magnitude. That's why we're seeing New York, Wisconsin and other states take the hard but necessary steps of securing public service funding through income tax increases and corporate tax reform."

States like California and Washington can't face that solution. To help close a current \$24.3 billion gap, California Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger has proposed eliminating the state's need-based student-aid program, Cal Grants; cutting state support for California State University and the University of California by about 20 percent in the 2009-10 budget year; and reducing funds for the state's community colleges by more than \$900 million over the next 13 months.

"If the Legislature enacts the governor's current budget proposals," says California Federation of Teachers president Marty Hittelman, "our students and the society we live in are not likely to recover for decades."

Proportionally, Washington state's shortfall is of a magnitude similar to California's, says AFT Washington president Sandra Schroeder, who is an AFT vice president. The governor is spending the entire \$819 million from the state stabilization fund in 2009-10, with nothing left for the following year. Of that total, \$100 million goes to higher education, which isn't enough to avoid a 10.6 percent cut in state support to public higher ed. (Without stabilization funds, it would have been a 17 percent cut.)

The situation turned ugly on June 11, when the Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges declared a financial emergency that lets college presidents expedite the termination of full-time, tenure-track and tenured faculty in the two-year colleges only.

"The financial emergency declaration is an unnecessary blunt object that will give college presidents an easy way to resolve their bad management decisions on the backs of faculty and will impact the students' success in achieving their degrees," says Schroeder.

## Help is at hand for debt-burdened students

New student loan changes take effect July 1, providing massive relief to borrowers

THE COLLEGE COST Reduction and Access Act (CCRAA), which became law in 2007, represents the single largest increase in college aid since the GI Bill. Lawmakers held firm on reducing subsidies to private lenders and using the savings to fund reductions in loan costs and increases in grants. Most of the benefits kick in July 1. Here's an overview of the new benefits:

**Income-Based Repayment** As part of the CCRAA, monthly student loan payments will be capped at 15 percent of the borrower's (or borrower and borrower's spouse's combined) discretionary income beginning July 1, 2009. Discretionary income is defined as any in-

come over 150 percent of the poverty line. Those already making loan payments can choose to stay on their current income-based repayment plan or opt into the income-based repayment enacted by CCRAA. For individuals in this program, the federal government will forgive student loan debt after 25 years. To view a video and get more information on this option, go to [ibrinfo.org](http://ibrinfo.org).

**Interest Rate Reduction** As part of CCRAA, Congress also has mandated a reduction on the interest rate of undergraduate students' subsidized Stafford loans made after July 1, 2009. Rates will decrease from 6 percent to 5.6 percent. This is the second of four annual cuts to this interest rate. The interest rate on subsidized Stafford loans will continue to decrease to 3.4 percent in 2011. Interest rates on unsubsidized Stafford loans will remain at 6.8 percent.

**Pell Grants** Due to funding provided by both the College Cost Reduction and Access Act and the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, the maximum Pell Grant scholarship for the 2009-10 school year will be \$5,350—more than \$600 above last year's award. At this level, the Pell Grant will be able

to cover a year of tuition at most public universities and community colleges.

**Loan Forgiveness** The CCRAA allows those who have student loans through the federal Direct Loan (DL) program and who are employed in public service careers to qualify for loan forgiveness after making 120 monthly payments on their loans.

Only payments made on or after Oct. 1, 2007, count toward the 120 payments. For those not pursuing a public service career, the federal government will forgive student loans debt after 25 years.

**TEACH Grants** These provide upfront tuition assistance to qualified undergraduate students who commit to teaching in public schools in high-poverty communities and high-need subject areas. Undergraduate recipients may receive \$4,000 a year, with a maximum of \$16,000 over four years. (Graduate recipients may receive a maximum of \$8,000 over two years.)



More information can be found on the Web site of the U.S. House Education and Labor Committee at [edlabor.house.gov/blog/2009/05/managing-your-student-loans-up.shtml](http://edlabor.house.gov/blog/2009/05/managing-your-student-loans-up.shtml). Another excellent source is the Project on Student Debt, [projectonstudentdebt.org/about.vp.html](http://projectonstudentdebt.org/about.vp.html).



## Standing up to outside pressure

New coalition defends professional integrity, public interest

THE AFT JOINED 18 other organizations on May 20 in launching Professionals for the Public Interest (PftPI), a coalition of unions and professional associations aiming to shield the integrity of their work against outside pressures.

The new group, whose members represent professionals in science, engineering, health, the arts and human services, has been two years in the making. It takes its cue from President Obama's March 9 memo on scientific integrity, broadening the scope to include professional integrity across many fields.

PftPI defines professional integrity as encompassing professional standards, knowledge and the common good. Workers' integrity is compromised, the organizations say, when external policymakers ignore the workers' professional judgment and implement a decision that compromises public welfare.

For example, intellectual freedom suffered, jobs were lost and careers damaged in the battle over the USA Patriot Act, a federal law enacted after Sept. 11, 2001, that curbed Americans' access to information in the nation's libraries and spurred U.S. Attorney General John Ashcroft to attack "hyeterical librarians."

This breach of professional integrity was a loss to science, history and literature, said Mary Ghikas, a representative of the American Library Association. "That is a loss that we share," she added, "and we share it forever."

"The simple fact is that the people who do the work care more than anybody else, know more than anybody else, and can do more than anybody else about improving public services," said AFT president Randi Weingarten. She helped present the new coalition at a news conference at the National Press Club

in Washington, D.C. "When professionals are left out of policymaking," she added, "what we get is top-down, ivory-tower policies that don't work. Worse, what we get is a stifling of the thought process and the freedom to speak."

The coalition is being spearheaded by the AFL-CIO's Department for Professional Employees. In addition to the AFT, charter members include the American Association for the Advancement of Science, American Chemical Society, American Library Association, American Public Health Association and National Association for the Education of Young Children.

As its first project, PftPI is kicking off an "Integrity at Work" contest, which seeks compelling stories and ideas about defending your professional integrity on behalf of the public good. The deadline is July 31, and finalists will be chosen by Labor Day on Sept. 7.



For details on the "Integrity at Work" contest, go to [www.pftpi.org](http://www.pftpi.org).



SECIUK/DEMIREL

## Putting community colleges at the heart of economic renewal

Brookings report calls for federal transformation

COMMUNITY COLLEGES REPRESENT an affordable, accessible route to good jobs or more education, but they are plagued by low completion rates. As the economic downturn is increasing demands on community colleges, the Brookings Institution is calling on the federal government to seize the opportunity to move in a different policy direction: Invest more but also demand more from two-year colleges, thereby achieving greater innovation and student success.

The Brookings proposal comes as part of its “Blueprint for American Prosperity” initiative. This is a multiyear initiative to promote an economic agenda for the nation that builds on the assets and centrality of the United States’ metropolitan areas.

The initiative is rooted in the economic reality that metropolitan areas account for 74 percent of the nation’s college graduates,

contain 77 percent of all well-paying “knowledge” jobs, and generate 76 percent of the nation’s gross domestic product.

In May, Brookings released a policy brief focusing on the educational assets of metropolitan areas, called “Transforming America’s Community Colleges: A Federal Policy Proposal to Expand Opportunity and Promote Economic Prosperity.” The brief develops four major recommendations for the federal government:

Double its current level of support in order to account for more than 10 percent of community colleges’ budgets, ultimately awarding three-quarters of these funds based on colleges’ performance in meeting key goals around student credit, credential and degree completion.

Establish national postsecondary goals and create a performance measurement system to support the effective use of federal resources.

Stimulate instructional innovations and practices to increase community college quality, by devoting half of the administration’s proposed \$2.5 billion state-federal partnership fund to improve and evaluate sub-baccalaureate education.

Support the improvement of student data systems necessary to measure and track college student outcomes, guide funding, improve accountability and promote continuous improvement in educational quality.

The report notes that community colleges have admirably responded to the needs of a varying population over the years. They have served multiple missions, including (but not limited to) retraining older workers, awarding associate degrees and preparing students for transfer to four-year colleges. Now, Brookings urges, colleges need to establish a broader set of goals, with incentives and resources provided for achieving them.

Doubling the federal investment in community colleges would increase support from \$2 billion to \$4 billion a year. This is still a modest investment, Brookings notes, compared with the \$60 billion the United States spends annually on K-12 education and the \$20 billion it spends on public four-year colleges and universities.

## The war on labor heats up

Study shows employers’ anti-union behavior is intensifying

FOR THOSE WHO QUESTION the need for the Employee Free Choice Act, a new study by Cornell University professor Kate Bronfenbrenner provides a sobering argument. Her research shows that not only do employers engage in punitive campaigns of intimidation, but their tactics are getting worse.

Bronfenbrenner is director of labor education research at Cornell’s School of Industrial and Labor Relations. In *No Holds Barred: The Intensification of Employer Opposition to Organizing*, she provides a comprehensive, independent analysis of employer behavior in union representation elections supervised by the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) between 1999 and 2003.

Employers are more than twice as likely to use 10 or more tactics—including threats of and actual firings—in their campaigns to thwart workers’ organizing efforts. According to Bronfenbrenner, in NLRB election campaigns, it is standard practice for workers to be subjected by corporations to threats, interrogation, harassment, surveillance and retaliation for union activity. For example:

- 63 percent interrogate workers in one-on-one meetings with their supervi-

sors about support for the union;

- 54 percent threaten workers in such meetings;
- 57 percent threaten to close the work site;
- 47 percent threaten to cut wages and benefits; and
- 34 percent fire workers.

Even when workers succeed in forming a union, 52 percent are still without a contract a year after they win the election, and 37 percent remain without a contract two years after the election.

Private sector campaigns differ markedly from public sector ones, where 37 percent of workers belong to unions. Survey data from the public sector describe an atmosphere in which workers may organize relatively free from the kind of coercion, intimidation and retaliation that so taints the election process in the private sector. Most of the states in the public sector sample have laws allowing workers to choose a union through the majority sign-up process.

Says Bronfenbrenner, the failure of the current system to defend workers’ rights in a timely manner multiplies the obstacles workers face when seeking union representation.



*No Holds Barred*, published by the American Rights at Work Education Fund and the Economic Policy Institute, can be found at [www.epi.org](http://www.epi.org).



Download the brief at [www.brookings.edu/projects/blueprint/publications.aspx](http://www.brookings.edu/projects/blueprint/publications.aspx).

## Are we overproducing Ph.D.s?



**YES**

**The cruel reality is the jobs aren't there**

BY JASON LETO



**NO**

**It's the current employment model that is unacceptable**

BY RICH POTTER

THE TENURE-TRACK JOBS Ph.D. students seek are rapidly disappearing.

Why? American college and university enrollment has increased faster than budgets, with universities increasingly relying on cheap contingent labor to meet their staffing needs. Work done by tenured and tenure-track faculty in the past is performed today by graduate and adjunct workers. This has turned the labor market upside down: Doctoral students are in greater demand than those who hold a Ph.D.

For doctoral students, the reality is especially cruel, as the work they do is the very same work that allows universities to eliminate the jobs they seek. Author Marc Bousquet notes that as the labor market in higher education changes, the nature of the few remaining tenure and tenure-track jobs also has changed, with tenured faculty becoming increasingly "epiphenomenal." These tenured faculty provide public relations value, and supervise the day-to-day activities of the contingent workers who carry out the bulk of the teaching and research necessary for the institution to function.

The disappearance of tenure-track jobs harms not only those pursuing or recently awarded Ph.D.s, but also undergraduate students and the public that higher education serves. Putting into the classroom those training to be experts, rather than the experts themselves, denies students the best quality education. By expanding an exploited and underpaid contingent labor pool, colleges and universities are abusing their own communities. What's more, this labor situation uses up and burns out scores of the smartest and most educated people in the country.

Universities could begin to remedy the problem by recommitting themselves to transparency when they hire new graduate workers, informing them of past outcomes for those pursuing the Ph.D. And political leaders should muster the courage to speak out against the increasingly desperate state of higher education.

Finally, faculty, adjuncts and graduate assistants must recognize themselves as workers and demand fair treatment. By joining and organizing unions, many of us have begun the process of working together to fix this situation.

*Jason Leto is a doctoral candidate in American religious history at Florida State University, and the outgoing organizing chair for the FSU chapter of United Faculty of Florida/Graduate Assistants United/AFT/NEA.*

TO ASK IF WE ARE OVERPRODUCING PH.D.S is to ask if there is too much supply relative to demand. This makes demand the constant and supply the variable to be controlled. But how should demand be measured?

If we understand demand as determined by the number of available tenure-track professorships, then we surely are overproducing Ph.D.s. A more accurate measure of the current demand for instructors of higher education, however, must include not only tenure-track positions but also positions for adjuncts, visiting professors and graduate employees. We then must ask if satisfying total demand with the current mix of employment models is acceptable. This is tantamount to asking if the current structure of higher education is acceptable, which is a question that deserves sustained debate. Within the

current context, however, two issues are of immediate concern.

First, is the adjunct model of employment societally beneficial? We must answer no; the adjunct model offers an unacceptable quality of life for laborers and diminishes the quality of higher education. Although flawed, we must choose the tenure model over the adjunct model. Second, would an increase in the number of students within the higher education system be societally beneficial? Here we must answer yes; inasmuch as we believe that creating knowledge is beneficial, we should seek to increase access to higher education. Any person who wishes to participate in higher

education should have that opportunity.

Of course, if we increase the total number of students, we will need even more instructors than we currently have. And if we are committed to expanding the use of the tenure model at the expense of the adjunct model, then those extra instructors must be tenure-track professors. In the end, the answer to the question of whether we are overproducing Ph.D.s is: "No. We are overproducing adjuncts and underproducing students relative to society's demand for high-quality knowledge." Addressing this imbalance requires channeling more resources to our higher education system.

*Rich Potter, a filmmaker and Ph.D. candidate at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign's Institute of Communications Research, is a member of the Graduate Employees Organization/AFT.*



GUY SCHUM

## Kean University faculty fight drastic reorganization plan

THE FACULTY UNION at Kean University, along with state and national labor leaders, is pushing for a forensic audit of the New Jersey university's finances before Kean's board of trustees approves a rash reorganization proposal that would jeopardize the quality of the school's academic programs.

Kean University president Dawood Farahi's reorganization proposal would cut classes and programs, substitute academic department chairs with highly paid management, and eliminate the Department of Social Work (stranding its 333 student majors), among other changes. The proposal, described by administrators as the first step in "privatizing" the public university, is the president's response to budget cuts and a \$7 million shortfall in the university's \$150 million budget.

A trustee vote on the plan, set for mid-

May, was put on hold after the Kean Federation of Teachers held a news conference and faculty rally on May 4. AFT president Randi Weingarten spoke at the rally, calling the reorganization a "tragedy."

"Your brothers and sisters in New Jersey and the 1.4 million members of your national union are with you, and will stay with you, as you fight to restore financial and educational sanity here at Kean," Weingarten said.

"The budget shortfall can be stemmed in other, more practical, ways, including tapping reserve funds and trimming the ever-growing, bloated administration, without threatening the jobs of our untenured faculty or massive tuition and fee hikes," said James Castiglione, president of the Kean Federation of Teachers.

Under Farahi's leadership, the union says, the debt has grown 650 percent in the last six



JERRY MCCREA ©2009 THE STAR-LEDGER

years, from \$46 million to over \$350 million. During this time, tuition and fees for students have skyrocketed 57 percent, and the administration has grown by 31 percent. The only decrease has been in the numbers of full-time faculty.

Randi Weingarten spoke at a Kean rally, where faculty and students protested a university reorganization.

## Local forgoes raises; college agrees to no layoffs

MILWAUKEE AREA TECHNICAL COLLEGE faculty and staff nabbed increased support for the work of technical colleges—and basked in the limelight—when they decided to forgo raises for the 2009-10 academic year. The members of AFT Local 212 and a sister AFSCME local were called heroes in the local press. The Legislature responded with a 1

percent increase to the state technical college system—the only state agency that wasn't cut in Wisconsin's wracked

economy. The U.S. secretary of education then chose to visit the college and make an important policy announcement there.

Local 212 concluded it needed to act because Wisconsin, like much of the upper Midwest, has been so deeply affected by the recession, says Michael Rosen, Local 212 president.

"With all the hurt around us, as professional educators, we wanted to make sure this college wasn't going to stop providing services to the very people we serve."

The threat of budget cuts, layoffs and class cancellations was very real. When the administration asked the union, which represents both full-time and part-time educators, to consider a wage freeze, "it was not a hard sell" for members to take action, says Rosen, but it did require negotiating with management to look for ways everyone could do their part to close a \$19 million gap in the budget.

The administration froze administrative salaries, cut advertising, stopped hiring for positions that didn't involve student contact and made myriad other trims. Satisfied, the union voted to do its part on May 26. It agreed to forgo

this year's 3.5 percent raise; the college agreed to no layoffs for two years.

"I won't suggest this is a model everyone should follow," says Rosen. "Under our circumstances—with 12 percent unemployment, falling property values and declining revenues at the college, and with our success at the bargaining table—it played out to our benefit."

Within days, the Legislature's joint finance committee passed a budget with the first increase for technical colleges since 2000-01. On June 4, U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan chose the campus of MATC to announce a new \$7 million grant program for community colleges that prepare displaced workers for new careers. Rosen thanked the secretary for the administration's support for higher education, but noted that Pell Grant increases don't help community college students as much as direct aid to the institutions might, since most public two-year college tuition is already less than the minimum grant.

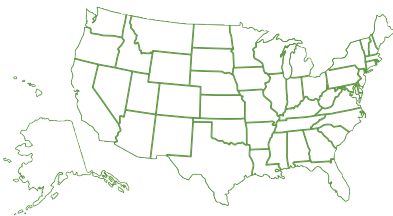
After the announcement, Duncan met with Rosen. He said he was well aware of what the union did and that it was hard. "I want you to know how much it was appreciated," he told Rosen. "I said, 'It was a lot of work, but it wasn't hard in the sense that we know it's the right thing to do,'" says Rosen.

U.S. Education Secretary Arne Duncan greets Local 212 president Michael Rosen at MATC on June 4.



MARK HOFFMAN/MILWAUKEE JOURNAL SENTINEL





MICHAEL CAMPBELL

Marietta English, recently elected president of AFT-Maryland, addresses a rally in support of "fair share."

**MD** The recent legislative session in Maryland produced a heartening development for graduate employees and contingent faculty at the University of Maryland.

Deep inside the "Joint Chairmen's Report on the State Operating Budget and the State Capital Budget and Related Recommendations" is language charging the University of Maryland system with forming a working group that includes various stakeholders to study and report on "the status of graduate assistants and adjunct faculty in Maryland's state public higher education institutions." The group is to report back to the Legislature no later than Nov. 1, 2009.

"Examining the growth and use of contingent faculty and graduate employees in Maryland is long overdue," says Lorretta Johnson, AFT executive vice president and former president of AFT-Maryland, under whose leadership this process was started.

Public employee unions in Maryland also scored a big victory when the state Legislature passed a "fair share" bill. The bill allows unions to negotiate fair share provisions, which would let them require everyone in a bargaining unit, including nonmembers, to pay fees to cover the cost of union representation. Almost 1,000 union members gathered in Annapolis in late March for a rally in support of fair share.

**NJ** The New Jersey Public Employees Occupational Safety and Health office has found that Rutgers University seriously violated the state's Occupational Safety and Health Act. PEOSH required the university to ensure that Rutgers has trained all employees in the use of fire extinguishers and that the university's emergency action plan meets the requirements of state law. The investigation was triggered by a complaint filed by the Union of Rutgers Administrators last November (see Jan./Feb. 2009 *AFT On Campus*, feature). The URA, an affiliate of the AFT, is urging the university to publish flip-chart emergency protocols and beef up its pandemic response planning.

In another part of the state, two unions bargaining their first contract with Sussex County Community College are at impasse and preparing to meet with a mediator. A unit of 27 professional staff and another unit of 37 support staff began contract talks in December of 2007 and have since weathered a decertification attempt. Two other unions representing full-time faculty and part-time/adjunct faculty also are beginning their contract negotiations this summer. All four units make up the American Federated Teachers Union and are affiliated with the AFT.

**NY** The United University Professions/AFT/NEA is questioning the layoff of 111 employees at the State University of New York at New Paltz. The college announced in May that it plans to phase out a nursing program that offers bachelor's and master's degrees after current students graduate in three years. It also is killing graduate education programs in chemistry, math, earth science, Spanish and French. The college says it is facing a \$4 million deficit in next year's operating budget. The union's analysis puts the shortfall at closer to \$2 million.

**PA** Teachers at Wakisha Charter School in Philadelphia have voted overwhelmingly to affiliate with the Alliance of Charter School Employees (ACSE), an affiliate of AFT Pennsylvania.

More than 60 percent of teachers voted in February in support of the union. Wakisha, a middle school with an Afrocentric curriculum, has 26 faculty members and serves 370 students. "Teachers have come together to say we want a voice to



LISA HOLUIS/AFTU

New Jersey unions gathered at Sussex on April 29 to tell management to get serious about bargaining.

make Wakisha a better school for our students," says Antoinette Griffin, an eighth-grade math teacher who has taught at the school for three years. "We want to reduce teacher turnover, strengthen teachers' skills and get the resources that we need to offer an academically rich program to our students. With a union, we have the backing to work on these improvements." ACSE was created by AFT Pennsylvania to support charter teachers who want a professional voice at their schools.

In an effort to demonstrate their commitment to Wakisha, the teachers reached out to a number of community leaders for support in the union effort. Several of them sent letters to the board asking that they respect the right of teachers to organize without interference.

"For charter schools to achieve their founding mission of innovation, these schools need to recognize teachers as full partners," says AFT Pennsylvania president Ted Kirsch, who is also an AFT vice president.

**WI** As *AFT On Campus* went to press, University of Wisconsin faculty and academic staff were a hair's breadth from getting the right to decide on the question of collective bargaining representation. Some faculty and staff in the state have been working for this for more than 30 years. A provision in the governor's budget would expand this right to more than 17,000 UW employees. Another last minute addition to the budget bill folds 2,500 research assistants at the university into the University of Wisconsin Teaching Assistants' Association/AFT. The bill awaits legislative vote and then goes to the governor for his signature.

# THE

What happens when higher education disinvests in academic staff?

# Shifting Workforce

**AN AFT ANALYSIS** of the most recent 10 years of national academic staffing data reveals a troubling trend in higher education that shows no sign of abating: Institutions are disinvesting in their full-time tenured and tenure-track workforce. Instead, they are increasing their reliance on contingent faculty and instructors, such as part-time faculty, full-time nontenure-track faculty and graduate employees.

And while academic staff struggle to make do with less, institutions are expanding the size of their noninstructional workforce. In fact, the number of noninstructional professionals—those working in academic support, student services and institutional operations—grew by 50 percent between 1997 and 2007, the years the AFT studied. They were supervised by another growing cohort in higher ed—administrators, whose numbers increased by 41 percent.

In contrast, instructional staff—including full- and part-time/adjunct faculty and

graduate employees—grew by 32 percent in that time period. The number of students enrolled increased by 3 million.

These are the major findings of “American Academic: The State of the Higher Education Workforce,” which the AFT released in April. It is the first in a regular series of reports the AFT will release on academic staffing in colleges and universities. Previous studies have demonstrated the problems created when colleges hire contingent faculty and instructors without fair wages, job security and professional support. This one documents that, rather than working to reverse these trends and investing in a more secure higher education teaching workforce, institutions are expanding their reliance on contingents.

Faculty are feeling the pain. Fewer tenured and tenure-track faculty on campus “creates a horrible work environment,” says Carolyn Kube, United University Professions’ part-time concerns committee representative at the State University of New York Stony Brook Health Sciences Center.

“The impact on our campus is the feeling of a two-tiered system—the haves and the have-nots. This creates an environment of exploitation of nontenured faculty to teach overcrowded classes and take on extra courseloads to secure their jobs. In the end, it affects the quality of education at the given campus.”

Kube was one of many who posted comments on the AFT’s Web site in response to a question about the impact of academic staffing patterns.

Marilyn Besich, a Montana State University-Great Falls business professor, lists a few of the effects she has seen on full-time tenure-track faculty: “increasing workload, more advising and more teaching/helping of students whose adjunct instructors are unavailable; more committee assignments and fewer faculty to assign the committee work to; and grade inflation that comes from adjuncts being afraid to offend students.”

“This is a critical moment for our country, when we should focus on investing, not disinvesting, in our public higher education institutions,” says AFT president Randi Weingarten. “Both President Obama and the

English instructor Nancy McMahon, right, confers with colleague Karen Redfield at Madison Area Technical College.



PAUL T. MCMAHON



“The impact on our campus is the feeling of a two-tiered system—the **haves** and the **have-nots**.”

—CAROLYN KUBE, State University of New York

Congress have recognized that higher education is essential to our country's economic recovery, and a fully supported higher education workforce is critical to strengthening our institutions.”

Among the report's other key findings:

From 1997 to 2007, the proportion of full-time tenured and tenure-track faculty declined from one-third of the instructional staff to slightly more than one-quarter.

The increased reliance on contingent faculty and instructors was found in all sectors of higher education, with the most dramatic increase at community colleges.

“Thousands of students are taught by part-time faculty at Madison Area Technical College,” writes Nancy McMahon, a part-time English instructor and member of the MATC Part-Time Teachers' Union. “For decades, college growth has been addressed by hiring increased numbers of part-time faculty, most of whom must have one or more



other jobs in order to survive and have little time for college committee work or institutional involvement. Most cannot even attend departmental meetings due to scheduling difficulties and time constraints.

“There is a need for more full-time positions, and many part-time faculty want to teach at MATC full time. However, MATC has come to depend on the low labor cost of part-time teachers to subsidize the rest of the institution, balance the budget, etc. Part-time faculty are the cash cow of the system.”

One of the primary ways AFT affiliates are addressing the academic staffing crisis is by participating in the AFT's Faculty and College Excellence campaign. FACE aims to achieve pay and professional equity for contingent faculty, and to ensure more full-time tenure-track faculty jobs through legislative action, collective bargaining and public education.

—BARBARA MCKENNA

## ALARM RAISED ON ACADEMIC STAFFING PRACTICES

THE MODERN LANGUAGE ASSOCIATION is part of the chorus highlighting travesties in higher education hiring practices. It is calling upon its membership to tackle head-on imbalances in academic staffing patterns. The imbalances, it says, have been created since the 1970s, as institutions have rationed tenure-track lines and opted to make nontenure-track appointments.

In a letter to English and foreign language department chairs, officers of the MLA call upon the academic leaders to respond to “the biggest challenge facing our membership and our profession, the current composition of the academic workforce.”

The request follows the release last year of a workforce report called *Education in the Balance*, which documents that tenured or tenure-track faculty staffed only 30.8 percent of all course sections in English. “Although first- and second-year students tend to do best when they can have personal contacts with professors who know them as individuals, they have little chance of getting this support when most or all of their instructors are overworked, underpaid and underappreciated,” writes MLA president Catherine Porter in the summer 2009 *MLA Newsletter*.

In the letter to department chairs, the MLA urges them to take steps at the institutional and national disciplinary levels to shine a light on the problem. It advises chairs to discuss the report with faculty members and administrators on campus, follow best practices for pay and policy outlined in the MLA's Academic Workforce Advocacy Kit, and call attention to institutional disparities. The letter also recommends that faculty serving on external review committees raise the issue of ratios of full-time to part-time instructors.

Most heartening to faculty unions, the MLA endorses the AFT's Faculty and College Excellence campaign (FACE), and urges members to talk to legislators and the public about academic staffing issues.

Find MLA materials on staffing at [www.mla.org/advocacy\\_kit](http://www.mla.org/advocacy_kit).

## What is the impact of having fewer tenured and tenure-track faculty on your campus?

“It affects the amount of ownership that we take as faculty on campus. There are many committees and ways to serve and improve our campus services to students, but not many full-time faculty to serve and lead in these capacities. It is in these committees where camaraderie, friendship and partnerships are formed that build our campus communities.”

SHARON HENDRICKS

Los Angeles Community College District

“I am the only tenured instructor in my program. I am the only one who deals with curricular problems or scheduling because the others are intimidated and don't wish to deal with the chair. I hesitate to ask for help from those who make half my salary and in some cases are teaching at other institutions as well as mine.”

MARY ELLEN MCGOEY

Northeastern Illinois University

“I guess this means more freeway flying and therefore more of the type of education that one might receive on a freeway, if classes were held there.”

STEVE SCHLICHTENMYER

Palomar College, California

“Now that I am full-time (finally!), I have a hard time telling students to go into college teaching, since 70 percent of them will end up teaching part-time and being contingent laborers used when administrators need them. They'll be paid the minimum, receive no medical benefits (most of the time) and no retirement, etc. For the amount of education one needs to teach college, it is just not cost effective to become a college instructor.”

CATHERINE PAVLISH

Oregon Coast Community College

“Having a precarious position fosters non-solidarity, as people without tenure resent those who have tenure and who do not seem to care about the ill-treated members of their departments.”

JUDITH WISHNIA

State University of New York, Stony Brook

## Unions form at two private colleges

In New York, contingent faculty find their voices and let them soar

IN BACK-TO-BACK ELECTIONS this spring, part-time/adjunct faculty teaching at two private colleges, the Manhattan School of Music and Cooper Union, have voted to unionize. The new unions are affiliated with the New York State United Teachers/AFT/NEA.

While salaries are always a worry to people who make their living in the arts, as most of MSM and CU teachers do, of greater concern is having job security and some say in how the work is determined. At both colleges, the faculty say administrators haven't played fair with them.

### Manhattan School of Music

At Manhattan School of Music, the new union comprises more than 150 faculty who teach in the MSM Precollege Division, which is an undergraduate and graduate degree-granting music school.

While the work of the precollege teachers is similar to that of the college teachers, after a probationary period the college faculty may receive three-year contracts, while the precollege faculty only get one-year contracts. The precollege faculty make, on average, half the hourly wage of the college faculty. And in 2002, a policy change cut off the precollege facul-

ty's access to health insurance that had been available to all MSM teachers who taught at least 10 hours.

"The precollege division has been treated as the low man on the totem pole," says Adam Kent, a pianist and precollege faculty member.

Another point of contention is how students are assigned, says Susan Deaver, a precollege flute teacher who also directs two precollege ensembles. Teachers are expected to recruit and retain students, and, in the past, they taught the students they recruited. Since 2002, however, the administration has assigned incoming students and kept secret how the students happened to come in. Because teachers who don't have students, don't have work, the issue of how student assignments are made can be very sensitive. "We have seen what appears to be a lot of faculty squeezed out," she says.

"We don't have anything in writing that says they can't assign students at their discretion," says Kent, speaking of the administration. "We want more transparency in the way work is distributed."

Last year, when the college suddenly required precollege faculty to fill out job applications, that was the last straw. The form included a fine-print clause allowing the school to release the faculty at any time. Many refused

to complete it, and organizing was the next step. The precollege faculty voted 72-58 for a union in a mail ballot election sponsored by the National Labor Relations Board.

With a union, says Deaver, "we'll have job security, transparency, a fair grievance procedure, binding arbitration. We'll still be working with administration, but on a level playing field."

### Cooper Union

Adjuncts at Cooper Union are seeking job security, help with health insurance and a voice that carries more weight at the private college. They have had two good models to follow as they considered the benefits of organizing: The Cooper Union Federation of Teachers is the 34-year-old union that represents 60 full-time faculty. And three years ago, 170 educational support staff, known as the Union @ Cooper Union, voted for representation.

On May 26, in an NLRB mail ballot election, the unit of 210 Cooper Union adjuncts voted 112-23 for union representation. All three unions are affiliated with NYSUT.

Cooper Union—its full name is Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art—is an unusual private institution, offering degrees in art, architecture and engineering. Its students all attend on full scholarship, making it one of the most selective institutions in the country. As with Manhattan School of Music, the Cooper Union faculty are all accomplished artists and working professionals who perform outside the college as well as teach.

While salaries are higher than the adjunct average, many faculty have not had a raise in 10 to 15 years, say organizers. What's more, in some cases, the college does not provide firm assurance that adjuncts will be teaching until just a few weeks before the semester begins.

"Because the lion's share of teaching falls on adjuncts, we should have a collective voice and speak together when we approach the administration," says Betsy Alwin, who is a sculptor, an adjunct, a technical assistant to the sculpture department and, coincidentally, the newly elected president of the Union @ Cooper Union.

Achieving a level playing field with full-time colleagues and the administration is a primary goal of precollege faculty at the Manhattan School of Music.



BRUCE GILBERT

# Tackling the staffing crisis

## AFT higher education council rolls out new tools

THE UNITED STATES may be in the worst recession since the Great Depression, but things would be much worse if progressive minds weren't applying themselves to crafting a new order, said AFT president Randi Weingarten when she addressed AFT policy leaders this spring.

Weingarten exhorted the unionists to shelve the defensive mode we've assumed for the past eight years and launch new ideas. "We need to engage," said Weingarten. "We need to ensure we are viewed as equal partners" with an administration that is moving rapidly on several reform fronts—healthcare, education and energy.

The message jibed with the focus of the AFT Higher Education program and policy council (PPC), which met May 28-29 to deal with those priorities and more. They looked at the division's No. 1 priority—addressing

the academic staffing crisis—and rolled out new tools to address it. These include the release of "American Academic: The State of the Higher Education Workforce, 1997-2007" in May (see page 8), which garnered national media attention; ongoing state efforts to hold information hearings on, and pass, Faculty and College Excellence (FACE) legislation; the introduction of new education campaigns to let the public know about the overuse of contingent faculty; and the publication of a new tool, a FACE collective bargaining toolkit.

The other weighty concern for the group was progress in the Fight for America's Future—the national union's campaign to ensure that state budget cuts are carried out to do the least damage to the people our members serve. Thus far, says AFT director of legislation Tor Cowan, the American Recovery

and Reinvestment Act "has broken new ground in terms of getting higher ed some relief." And, he added, the administration's commitment shows "its recognition of education's importance in turning the economy around."

The administration has repeatedly stressed that both access to higher education and stronger support for workforce and skills training in two-year colleges are part of its economic agenda. The PPC heard that the AFT has met with top deputies in the U.S. Department of Education and in Congress to talk about these matters and share the AFT's priority of addressing academic staffing issues.

The council also discussed professional staff, a national survey of part-time faculty, campus security and nontenure-track faculty organizing.

# Grad employees say 'Yes!'

## New unions form in Michigan and Florida

TWO NEW GRADUATE employee unions voted in May for collective bargaining and to be affiliated with the AFT. One is based at Central Michigan University and the other at Florida State University.

The vote at Central Michigan was 152-21 for representation by the Graduate Student Union (GSU). The unit of 450 teaching and administrative assistants is affiliated with AFT Michigan, the AFT and the AFL-CIO. These graduate assistants teach, grade, tutor and perform administrative duties on the university's Mount Pleasant campus.

By the time they cast their ballots on May 4 and 5 in an election supervised by the Michigan Employment Relations Commission, the GAs had received messages of support from many across the campus and the state, including legislators and the governor. In the end, the strength of the vote was a repudiation of the strong-arm tactics of the administration, which raised the heat in the final days of the organizing drive by sending a letter to the GAs telling them that a union would be "contrary to the best interests of our students" and the university.

"That message, coming from a taxpayer-

subsidized university that gets the rest of its money from tuition paid by working-class families, is abhorrent," says AFT Michigan president David Hecker, who is an AFT vice president.

Florida State graduate employees voted 448-140 to affiliate with the United Faculty of Florida/AFT/NEA. The union, FSU Graduate Assistants United, will represent 2,800 graduate employees.

Key issues during the campaign were concerns about increasing workloads; substandard, inadequate pay; expensive health insurance that employees had to purchase; and a lack of input on any of those working conditions.

"We teach a majority of the classes at FSU," says Danielle Holbrook, FSU-GAU copresident. "Without our labor, the university could not function, but we've had no legal voice in how we are treated, so we organized

a union and are ready to negotiate."

The graduate employees in the FSU-GAU will be joining graduate employees represented by the United Faculty of Florida at the University of Florida, University of South Florida, and Florida A&M.

Overall, the AFT has 19 graduate employee affiliates.



UFF/FEA UNITED PHOTO

Left to right: Danielle Holbrook, Matt Gauding, Katie Hladky, Kevin Carr and Candi Churchill helped get the vote out at Florida State.

### KINDLE LIGHTENS TEXTBOOK LOAD

Kindle, the magazine-slim electronic device that wirelessly downloads books to the screen, is going to college. A new version, Kindle DX, though nearly three inches larger than the original, is still smaller than a sheet of notebook paper and less than a half-inch thick—but it accommodates textbook downloads, and could make a huge difference in the college textbook market.

Losing the weight of inches-thick tomes and escaping their exorbitantly high price tags will be a welcome alternative for many students. Others are more skeptical, saying that flipping through “pages” on a Kindle is cumbersome, and the black and white screen, even with gradations of gray, is a poor substitute for color illustrations. But technology experts are buzzing about whether the new device, owned by online giant Amazon, will change the face of the textbook industry.



DAN SHERBO

**BLACKBOARD ACQUIRES ANGEL** In a move bemoaned in a burst of blogging and twittering among faculty, Blackboard has purchased Angel, a system many had adopted to avoid the course-management giant. Blackboard executives are busy trying to assure their clients that Angel, popular for outstanding customer service, will lend that element to Blackboard, which has been roundly criticized for its poor performance in that regard.

Some remain skeptical, and point to past acquisitions that did not improve Blackboard's approach. Others are concerned about monopoly; Blackboard has acquired a number of other course-management companies, and remains the most popular service of its kind among American universities today.

The purchase has sparked new interest in open-source alternatives such as Moodle and Sakai. Those alternatives could mean significant savings for colleges and universities.

## Tsunami of demand hits online courses

### How will community colleges provide technical support?



BY VIRGINIA MYERS KELLY

IT'S NO SURPRISE that, as the economy continues to tumble, enrollment at community colleges has soared. But the corresponding surge in online class enrollment at those same institutions is a bit more complicated.

A recent survey from Kenneth C. Green, director of the Campus Computing Project in Encino, Calif., tells the story. Community college enrollment has increased in 92 percent of the 120 institutions surveyed; in 71 percent of those surveyed, it has increased by more than 5 percent; and in 28 percent, by more than 10 percent. New college students and some formerly enrolled in four-year institutions are attracted by lower tuition at the smaller schools. Joining them on campus: the newly unemployed, returning to school.

Online education has kept pace with the increase in community college enrollment—and surpassed it. In the winter semester of 2009, 93 percent of those participating in the survey reported that enrollment in online courses has risen since winter 2008. And 71 percent said enrollment had grown by 5 percent or more.

Interestingly, enrollment in online certificate and degree programs—as opposed to classes—is slightly behind, with half the colleges reporting increases in certificate enrollment and 55 percent reporting increases in degree programs.

Green says part of the discrepancy can be attributed to setup: “It’s easier to put out a course than it is to do an entire program online.” But even establishing infrastructure for

individual courses can be challenging, given the current “tsunami” of demand. Green suggests that challenge has created a gap between demand and delivery.

Scrambling to respond to the increasing number of students eager for online ed, he says, most institutions have turned to part-time faculty. But some have neglected the corresponding demand for IT help lines, counseling and the like. “Who’s going to answer the phone at 10 in the evening for online students?” asks Green. “What is the institution doing ... to really provide a full level of support?”

Green notes that faculty who are new to online teaching need technical support just as students do. Plus, faculty in bricks-and-mortar classrooms still use online supplements—they too require tech support.

So, how to meet the need? It would be nice if state budgets would kick in more generously, but the economy hasn’t helped in that regard. “You could have gypsies doing IT support,” Green concedes, but issues of fairness and job security would only be duplicated from the sisterhood of traveling professors that already exists.

“It’s going to be tough for the next year or two, certainly,” Green concludes. “When the online conversation began 15 years ago, the sense on a lot of campuses ... was that we have syllabi, we have servers, this is going to be easy, inexpensive and highly profitable. It turned out to be none of those things.”

*Virginia Myers Kelly is an education writer based in Washington, D.C.*

# Tenure is a vested right, court rules

## Metropolitan State case helps set precedent, say experts

IN THE CULMINATION of a six-year legal battle, a Denver District Court judge has ruled that a college violated faculty rights when it rewrote a faculty handbook to eliminate tenure retroactively. The judge found that tenure is a “vested” right, and therefore is protected under the Colorado constitution.

Six years ago, trustees at Metropolitan State College of Denver rewrote the faculty handbook to allow the president, in the event of layoffs, to determine who would be fired without regard to tenure or seniority. This revision changed tenure provisions that had been contained in the college’s 1994 handbook, and had a chilling effect on academic freedom in the classroom, says Ellen Slatkin, president of the Metropolitan State Faculty Federation.

The MSFF tried unsuccessfully to negotiate with the trustees. In 2004, the MSFF and the Colorado Federation of Teachers sued the board to recover the tenure rights, and the case made its way through the state’s District Court and Court of Appeals.

In his decision on June 1, Denver District

Judge Norman D. Haglund ruled specifically on the question of whether the 1994 tenure rights were vested—that is, whether they were of such a substantive nature that faculty would have reasonably depended on the continuation of those rights.

The judge ruled that the tenure rights were vested, and he relied heavily in his decision on arguments from the American Association of University Professors and testimony from noted tenure and academic freedom expert Matthew W. Finkin, a law professor at the University of Illinois. Finkin provided persuasive evidence that tenure is an “industry standard”—a point the judge repeatedly referenced in his decision.

“This decision has great national importance,” says Slatkin. “Had the trustees’ actions been allowed to stand, it could have set a precedent for stripping away tenure rights retroactively.”

“It was a significant accomplishment to convince the court that a handbook is binding and can confer vested tenure rights,” says AFT counsel David Strom. “Most employers

believe that handbooks are policy statements, subject to change, that do not create permanent rights.

“What gives this decision greater importance is that Finkin’s testimony on the ‘industry standard’ of tenure carried the day.”

Next up for the union, says Slatkin, is getting new handbook language that protects faculty hired after 2003. And ultimately, she adds, in a state that lacks a bargaining law, “we have to have collective bargaining so this can’t happen again.”

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### WORLDVIEW

## Tackling AIDS in southern Africa

### Prevention and treatment is focus of AFT's partnership

*The AFT serves as a technical adviser to the U.S. government HIV and AIDS prevention and treatment project for South African teachers, which is a part of the AFT Educational Foundation. While in Africa this spring to consult with human rights organizations in Zimbabwe about post-conflict stabilization, AFT secretary-treasurer Antonia Cortese and AFT Healthcare director Mary MacDonald also traveled to Durban, South Africa, to meet the union's project partners at the Southern African AIDS Conference. Following is a report on the AFT's Africa HIV/AIDS project by Smydge Perry, the South Africa project director.*

THE AFT BEGAN developing HIV and AIDS workplace programs with teachers unions in sub-Saharan Africa in 2000. Startup money from the national AFT-Africa AIDS Campaign launched HIV prevention initiatives with teachers unions in Kenya, South Africa, Swaziland and Zimbabwe. The South Africa project was based on a 2005 report by South Africa's Human Science Research Council, "The Health of Our Educators," which found that approximately 50 percent of all teacher attrition in South Africa was linked to AIDS, which resulted in the death of 4,000 teachers in 2004.

These statistics were startling to the South African teachers unions, which recognized that the HIV/AIDS epidemic was severely affecting educators in both primary and secondary schools. Without treatment, infected

AFT secretary-treasurer Antonia Cortese, right, and AFT staffer Smydge Perry, middle, talk with a teacher in South Africa.

teachers eventually become chronically ill with increased absenteeism, and lower morale and productivity.

Consequently, the U.S.



Centers for Disease Control and Prevention provided a grant to the AFT Educational Fund, South African unions and other non-government partners to mitigate the effects of HIV and AIDS on South Africa's education sector. The project provides voluntary counseling and testing, peer education on prevention, condom access and treatment services exclusively for teachers.

South African teachers unions, which have a proven track record in implementing HIV and AIDS programs, execute the project under the leadership of the country's Education Labor Relations Council, of which they are all members.

During their visit, Cortese and MacDonald joined union leaders at the Southern African AIDS Conference in Durban. While it is too early to declare victory, there are some encouraging signs that the AIDS epidemic may have peaked. According to a 2007 study by the South African Department of Health, HIV prevalence among young women (ages 15-24) showed a significant decline, although there were no notable declines for older women (ages 25-49). Given that a majority of the teacher population falls into the latter category, the activities of the teachers unions are strategically positioned to have an impact on this target population.

### HELP PUT AN END TO CHILD LABOR

CHILD LABOR DEPRIVES children around the world of the opportunity for an education. In Uzbekistan, the government even uses the education system to institute forced child labor in the cotton harvesting industry. This government coercion affects approximately 2 million children across the country and forces teachers to accompany their students both to supervise field work and to pick cotton themselves.

Join the AFT in its campaign to end child labor in Uzbekistan's cotton industry by writing your senators to request that they support Iowa Sen. Tom Harkin's resolution calling on Uzbekistan to end child labor, and by writing a letter to the U.S. companies that import cotton from places like Uzbekistan.

For more information, visit [www.aft.org/stopchildlabor](http://www.aft.org/stopchildlabor).



## When the sky is falling, put a roof over your head

BY DON KUEHN

WHEN THE SMELL OF FEAR is in the air, bad news can be good. For “contrarian” investors and homebuyers, this is a great opportunity.

In almost all areas of the country, housing prices are very, very depressed. Nationally, prices fell 6.3 percent in January. Armed with a traditional 20 percent down payment, buyers today are able to extract big discounts from desperate sellers.

Let's say that a year ago you were looking at houses priced around \$245,000. Today, you can probably get the same house for about \$200,000. With a 20 percent down payment, you would be financing \$160,000. According to the mortgage calculator at MSN Money, a 30-year, traditional fixed-rate loan at 4.5 percent carries a monthly payment of just \$810; at 5 percent, it's \$859. That may well be cheaper than the monthly rent you're paying now.

Add to depressed prices and cheap loans the potential of a federal tax credit of up to \$8,000, and you could be looking at the best

time in a very long time to buy a home.

This tax credit thing is pretty tricky. You may be eligible for a credit of as much as \$8,000 if you are a first-time homebuyer or haven't owned a home in the past three years, and if your adjusted gross income is less than \$75,000 (\$150,000, if you're married). And, even buyers who owe no taxes could get a refund of up to the maximum allowed.

There are many factors to consider before you decide to dive into the housing market. In any discussion of real estate, you know the standard advice: location, location, location. Some cities, some neighborhoods, some school districts will see housing prices settle down before others will. So, be careful where you look.

For a kind of weathervane on house prices, keep an eye on the cost of renting in your area. Rents point which way housing prices are likely to go, according to Danilo Pelletiere, research director of the National Low Income Housing Coalition. Stable or rising rental costs are a good sign for potential buyers.

Investing in anything is risky right now, and real estate is no exception. Housing



DAN SHERBO

prices could continue to fall in your area even after you have moved into your new home, but experts say that shouldn't be a problem if you plan to stay put for at least five years.

Maybe the greater risk is being left behind when this great economic engine begins to roar again. It's *your money*, and you want it to work for you—not the other way around. This economy, bad as it is, offers you the chance of a lifetime to make sure your money does just that.

*Don Kuehn is a retired AFT senior national representative. For specific advice relative to your personal situation, consult competent legal, tax or financial counsel. Comments and questions can be sent to [dkuehn60@yahoo.com](mailto:dkuehn60@yahoo.com).*

For an expanded version of this article, go to: [www.aft.org/publications/your\\_money](http://www.aft.org/publications/your_money).

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## Weingarten calls for end to exploitation of contingents

ADDRESSING A GROUP of national higher education administrators, union leaders, lawyers, faculty and staff this spring, AFT president Randi Weingarten issued an urgent call for labor and management to reverse the decades-long overreliance on and exploitation of contingent faculty members.

"In terms of the investment in higher education, there is a real dilemma in our higher ed schools when almost three-quarters of the instructional staff is made up of contingent faculty and more than half our classes are taught by contingent instructors," Weingarten said. "This is the time, despite the financial situation, to think about how we start to do things differently."

Weingarten spoke at the National Center for the Study of Collective Bargaining in Higher Education and the Professions conference.

The expansion and mistreatment of contingent faculty—graduate employees, part-time/adjunct faculty and full-time temporary instructors—has been an issue of growing contention at colleges and universities around the country, particularly at public

colleges, Weingarten noted. In an era of budget cuts, part-time instructors are seen as an inexpensive way to increase course offerings.

"The budget battle is a problem common to labor and management," she said. "We have to walk in each other's shoes. Getting along, trusting one another, will lead us to engage in dialogue and find solutions."

Sandra Schroeder, AFT Washington president and an AFT vice president who co-chairs AFT Higher Education's program and policy council, echoed Weingarten's call. She cited the AFT's Faculty and College Excellence campaign as one such solution. A top AFT priority, it tackles both the compensation issue for contingent faculty and the need to boost full-time, tenure-track lines.

### NONTENURE-TRACK FACULTY ON A ROLL IN MICHIGAN

AFT MICHIGAN HAS ADDED another notch to its belt, as nontenure-track faculty at Michigan State University voted by a two-to-one margin for representation. The new union, the Union of Nontenure-Track Faculty (UNTF), will represent 650 part-time and full-time nontenure-track faculty on MSU's East Lansing campus. The mail-in ballot election was overseen by the Michigan Employment Relations Commission, and the votes were counted May 29. The final tally was 240-113.

Job security, health insurance and wages are the top concerns of the UNTF members, who work on year-to-year contracts. "Although I have been treated well in my department," says sociologist Ralph Pyle, who has been teaching at MSU for 12 years, "I feel that I would have more peace of mind if I knew my job was secure."

"What matters to me most is having a voice," says Naoko Wake, a visiting assistant professor in MSU's Lyman Briggs College. "Now we will be real citizens of the university community."

The victory is part of a national trend of nontenure-track organizing. In Michigan, faculty have been on a roll, with unions recently organized at the University of Michigan, Wayne State University and Henry Ford Community College. This summer, part-time faculty at Western Michigan University also will vote on union representation.

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