

HCAFA News

Harper College Adjunct Faculty Association



**Contact: Mark Michaels
(847) 359-0300**

COMMENTS OF ARLENE BUBLICK TO THE HARPER COLLEGE BOARD November 30, 2004

Good evening, Board Members.

My name is Arlene Bublick. I represent the newly formed Harper College Adjunct Faculty Association. I am currently acting as Chair of the Association's Negotiating Committee.

The HCAFA is the newest and also the largest labor organization on Campus. The size of our combined bargaining units is 300 members, half again as many as that of the full-time faculty union. At your board meeting last month a report was given stating that Harper is now recognized for excellence in education. Because we share your goal of quality education, our members are a large part of the reason that Harper received such recognition.

I am here this evening to request your help moving negotiations along more expeditiously and economically.

As we hope you know, College administrators led by Larry Bielawa, have been meeting with us since June 29th to attempt to negotiate the first contract covering 6-hour adjunct faculty members. We have now met nineteen times for a total of more than 51 hours. Since there are usually at least four College negotiators at each negotiation, the College has spent more than 204 hours at the table so far, plus probably another couple of

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hundred hours preparing for, caucusing, and reporting on negotiations. That's probably well in excess of \$15,000 spent on negotiations so far. Yet we have reached tentative agreements on only five minor sections and one article of the contract. If this rate continues, the College can expect to spend well over \$100,000 in administrator time to negotiate this first contract.

What is holding up negotiations? We believe that a major problem is with the approach being taken by the Administration. When we started, we presented a complete proposal, covering all possible contract issues. The first response by the College was to reject all the language—even boiler plate language like the Introduction—non-binding simple language describing that the contract was a contract between you and the Association—nothing more and nothing less! And they continue to fight over language that is common to their contracts with other Harper units and for other community colleges and school districts across the state.

The administrators may attempt to claim that we have taken the same approach. However, we can demonstrate through our notes that we have bent over backwards to stay out of such conflicts, sometimes even by incorporating large chunks of administrator-proposed language into our proposals. Such information is available for all to read on our web site—www.harperadjuncts.org, where we are sharing with all the contents of proposals from both sides.

It is our feeling that this problem became even more critical last month. On Oct 28th, our Association was certified to become the representative organization for two additional groups of adjunct faculty, all 3-hour adjuncts, and part-time librarians and counselors. On November 4th, we presented the College with our demand to bargain on behalf of

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these groups, and requested that we consolidate negotiations for all three groups. We believe that all Harper Adjuncts should be treated equally. The administration flatly refused to discuss consolidation at that time and have refused twice more since that first request.

We made that request for a number of reasons—and it seems to us that most of them benefit not only us but the College as well. The first and foremost reason has to do with the cost of the negotiating process. Remember what I said before, that at the current pace, the one set of negotiations that we are working on now for the 6-hour adjuncts could cost the College upwards of \$100,000. Does the Board think that it is a prudent use of taxpayers' money to repeat this cost 2 more times—including one time where there are only twelve members in the bargaining unit?

Another very important reason to consolidate the three groups comes from Harper's administrators. They expressed their concern that, with the addition of the two new bargaining units, they will have to contend with three additional units. Yet during negotiations, they expressed a strong desire to see uniformity between our contracts and those of other campus unions. By consolidating negotiations, they can assure that there will be such uniformity between at least three of the bargaining units—covering the largest number of employees.

Even more importantly, when this divisive approach has been used at other community colleges, the resulting administrative process became a nightmare. This will be particularly true for the 3 and 6-hour adjuncts. We have already seen that members of one unit became members of a different unit with a change of semesters. At a College where outdated management systems can't even produce an accounting of the cost of

adjunct salaries, such movement between the units is impossible to manage.

We believe that all of this confusion will be for naught at the termination of the first contract. The 6-hour and 3-hour units are separate only because of a short term technical issue that developed due to the timing of the first elections. In these cases, our sister associations in IEA have always worked to consolidate the bargaining units at the first chance possible. This will happen at Harper in the Fall of 2005. If allowed to continue, the Administration's current divisive and costly strategy will have served only as an irritant and a waste of time.

In summary, we are asking that you intercede in your role as the governance Board of this College. Advise the administrators to consolidate the negotiations with the 6-hour and 3-hour adjuncts and the twelve part-time librarians and counselors immediately. And direct them to work quickly and constructively towards an agreement that meets the values expressed in the core value statement of Harper College: by working towards an "environment where relationships and practices are based on **trust**" between the Association and the Administration through "interactions which add dignity to ourselves, our relationships with others and our organization."

Thank you.

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