

Governor Romney's "Reforms" and GIC's Changes Spell Bad News for State Employees

Patricia V. Markunas, MSCA President

On January 28, 2004, Governor Mitt Romney released House One, the administration's proposed budget for Fiscal Year 2005. Several issues have dominated the reaction by MSCA members to his proposals: the state of funding for public higher education, "reform" of the state pension system, and proposals concerning state employee premiums for group health insurance coverage.

Additionally, the Group Insurance Commission (GIC) has more recently announced substantial changes in the health insurance plans available for state employees. As the open enrollment period looms, those state college faculty and librarians who are losing their current health plan need comprehensive information in order to choose another plan for themselves and their families.

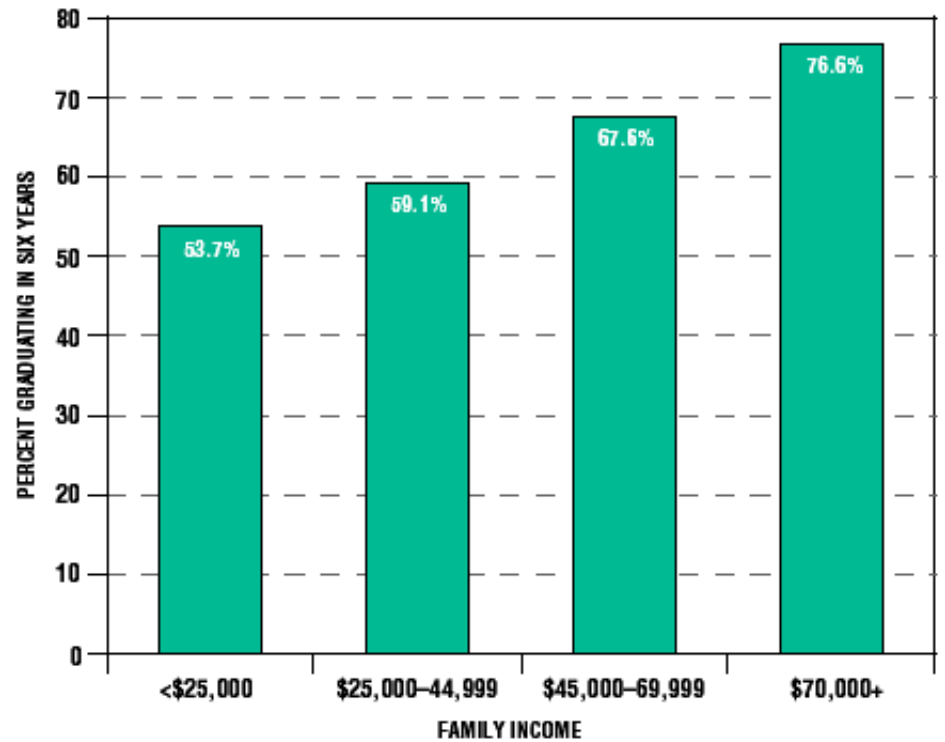
This article provides a brief overview of these issues. More detailed information has been distributed on the campuses and posted on the MSCA website <www.mscaunion.org>. MSCA members are invited to participate in the annual State College Day at the State House, scheduled for Wednesday, April 28th. State College Day, sponsored by the state college presidents, is devoted to lobbying efforts on behalf of the state college system. If you are interested in supporting this effort, please contact my office <Pmarkunas@aol.com> for further information.

State College Funding

At first glance, it appears that the Governor has proposed an increase in the campus funding line items for FY 2005. However, the Massachusetts Budget and Policy Center <www.massbudget.org> noted in its budget analysis that, even with the modest 3.8% increase that is proposed, higher education remains cut by 12.9% from just two years ago. A national comparison of funding for higher education among the 50 states over the past decade indicates that Massachusetts is the only state in the nation whose current funding for higher education is less than it was 10 years ago.

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Six-year graduation rates by family income for BA-seeking students starting at a four-year institution



SOURCE: *Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Study, 1996-2001 Data Analysis System (BPS: 96/01)*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2002.

This chart illustrates the high correlation between socio-economic factors and graduation rates. Such social conditions are ignored in the current BHE process to evaluate state colleges. Story on Page Two.

MSCA Votes: Results of the MSCA Officers Election and DGCE Contract Ratification

On April 7th, the following results were tabulated in the 2004 MSCA Officers Election. Those presumed elected are indicated with an (*). These results are tentative, pending official tabulations by the American Arbitration Association and final certification at the 2004 MSCA Delegate Assembly.

	Markunas* President	Minasian* Vice President	Anderson Secretary	George* Secretary	Price* Treasurer
Votes Received	555	535	220	373	543
Write-In Votes	6	14	0	0	5
Blank/Void Ballots	51	63		19	64
Total Ballots Cast:	612				
Total Ballots Mailed:	2,077				

Thank you for your participation in the election.
Sandra Faiman-Silva, Chair
MSCA Nominations and Elections Committee
Supervisor, MSCA Election
sfaiman@aol.com

On April 2nd, the following results were tabulated in the ratification vote for the 2003-2006 DGCE/MSCA collective bargaining agreement.

Yes	114
No	4
Challenged Ballots	10
Blank Ballots	0
Total Ballots Cast	128

Once again, congratulations to the DGCE Bargaining Committee and MTA Consultant Robert Whalen, and thanks to everyone who participated in the ratification.

BHE Releases Flawed Accountability Report to Press

MSCA Board Expresses Lack of Confidence in Chancellor

As was reported in the *Boston Globe*, the *Boston Herald*, other newspapers around the state, and on radio and television, at the February meeting of the Board of Higher Education, Chancellor **Judith Gill** provided a report that purported to show Massachusetts State Colleges fell behind their "peers" in graduation rates. This inaccurate report was released to the media before it was sent to the state colleges presidents and even the BHE's own members. Moreover, it misstated our "peers" because about half of them in the comparison were doctoral granting research institutions. If the correct measures had been used, the study would have demonstrated increasing graduation rates that exceeded the rate at many institutions previously defined as peers by the BHE.

The Executive Officer of the Massachusetts State College Council of Presidents, **Frederick Clark**, immediately wrote to the Chair of the BHE, **Stephen Tocco**, to protest the methodology of the report. At its meeting of March 5, 2004, the MSCA Board of Directors voted to convey to Chancellor Gill its lack of confidence in her ability to oversee the statutory responsibilities concerning performance measures and accountability for the state colleges. (This letter has been posted on the MSCA website: <www.mscaunion.org>.)

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MSCA Perspective

A publication of the Massachusetts State College Association, the faculty and librarian union for the nine state colleges in Massachusetts. Write to us at: MSCAPerspective@salemstate.edu

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Massachusetts Community College Council:
www.mccc-union.org

GRADUATION RATES: Talking Points

When you talk to friends, relatives, state legislators, and the media, keep these points in mind:

The trend towards greater accountability in higher education generally has two goals: to make colleges more efficient, and to improve students' educational experiences. While these may be reasonable goals, graduation rates are not a valid way to measure progress.

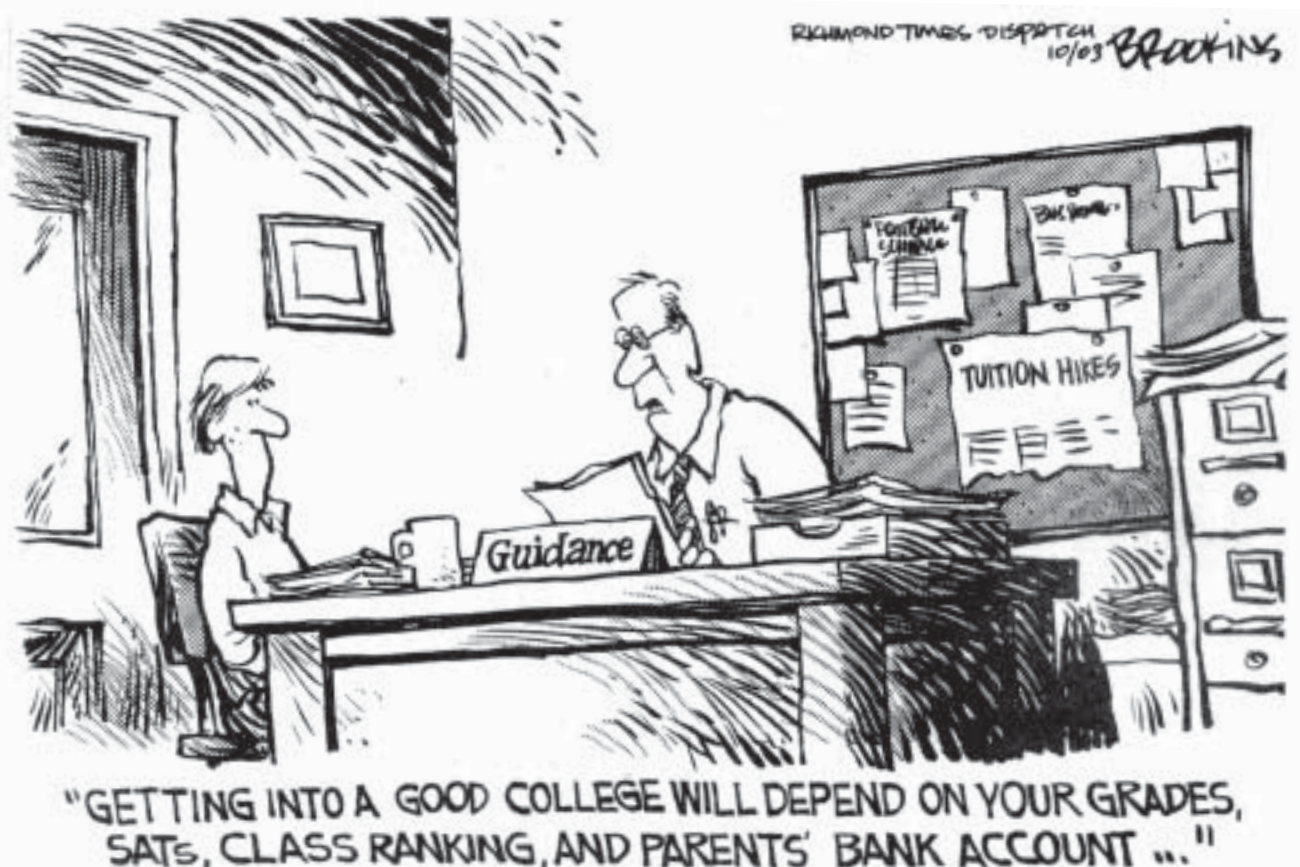
The graduation rate model assumes that every student begins college with a clear degree goal. But students enter with a variety of goals and from a variety of backgrounds. Students who enter seeking short-term certificates and complete this path are counted as dropouts.

Student characteristics are far more important predictors of college graduation than institutional characteristics:

- **Traditional college students (full time students who enroll immediately after high school) are more likely to graduate than non-traditional ones.** Non-traditional students include adults over 21, parents, full-time workers, part-time students, etc. Colleges with more traditional students will have higher graduation rates. Therefore, colleges with a mission to provide broader access to the community will be penalized.
- **Family income is a strong predictor of college completion.** Colleges that enroll large numbers of low-income students typically exhibit lower graduation rates. Therefore, admissions may become tilted toward more affluent students.
- **Hispanic and Black students are less likely to graduate than Asian and White students.** However, because race and ethnicity are highly correlated with family income, it is difficult to determine the independent effects of these variables on completion. In addition, race and ethnicity are not correlated with individual performance. In any case, emphasis on graduation rates may lead to less diverse campuses.
- **Institutional graduation rates underestimate the true rate of degree attainment.** Using a system graduation rate is more accurate. This combines those who graduate from their first school with those who graduate from any subsequent college or university. The system rate recognizes movement between programs and geographical locations.
- **Graduation rates miss key questions about the quality of education,** such as the academic gains students make as a result of their college experience. These outcomes are conceptually difficult to define, and so are usually not measured or are included only as minimum standards. The basic skills tests for teacher candidates provide one such example.

Stressing institutional graduation rates has the potential to reduce the willingness of colleges to enroll non-traditional, high-risk students, including those with below-standard academic preparation, lower family incomes, parents without college experience, and those living in communities with limited public resources. To build a better society, we must address the needs of these students. Imposing simple graduation rates as the sole standard of institutional accountability will not achieve that goal. In fact, it runs the risk of forcing colleges to limit enrollment of the most vulnerable students who want to give college a try. Even worse, the proposed use of incentive funding based on improving graduation rates may act to undermine educational quality as colleges and universities dilute course or grading requirements in a bid to help marginal students graduate. In the long run, politically defined outcomes run the risk of simplifying and distorting the educational process.

These "Talking Points" were adapted from an article by John Lee of JBL Associates, published in Update (January 2004), a publication of the NEA Higher Education Research Center. —ed.



IN THE ASSOCIATION

MSCA Board Names Rep. Kujawski 2004 MSCA “Friend of Education”

At the March meeting of the MSCA Board of Directors, the board unanimously voted to present its 2004 “Friend of Education” award to **Representative Paul Kujawski**, who represents Worcester’s Eighth District. Representative Kujawski has served in the state legislature since 1994, and is presently chair of the Steering, Policy and Scheduling Committee. Before running for the House, he was active in his town, serving on the Webster School Committee for 12 years and coaching a number of town sports.

Representative Kujawski is a graduate of North Adams State College and has been a tireless supporter of public higher education in the state legislature. Last month he filed legislation to require the Board of Higher Education to advocate for the state colleges (see box, this page). His letter to Chancellor **Judith Gill**, urging her to take on a more supportive role on behalf of the state colleges, is reprinted below.

Representative Kujawski will accept the award at the annual MSCA Delegate Assembly at Salem State College on May 1.

March 1, 2004

Judith Gill, Chancellor
Board of Higher Education
14th Floor, Room 1401
One Ashburton Place
Boston MA 02108-1696



Dear Chancellor Gill:

I am gravely disappointed by the recent attack by the Board of Higher Education (BHE) upon the State Colleges of Massachusetts.

I understand that the Board released an “Accountability Report” first to the *Globe* and only later to your own Board members and the Presidents of the State and Community Colleges. Having campuses read about an “Accountability Report” for their higher education segment in the *Boston Globe* before ever having had an opportunity to review and comment

upon the report is no way to run the BHE. How can your own members cast informed votes, if they are receiving materials at the same time they are expected to vote on an issue? Poorly prepared Board members, rushed reports, and a lack of meaningful input from the colleges regarding the final work product will always lead to a bad result.

As you know and we have now discovered, the Board of Higher Education apparently used the wrong national standard for six-year graduation rates for the State Colleges in the report. Instead of the actual good news story being presented that the college segment exceeds the national average, the BHE used an inappropriate number and now the damage has been done.

It is time for the BHE to promote and advocate for our fine public colleges. If you do not—who will? The BHE had a great opportunity to put a positive spotlight on public higher education through the recent accountability report which was filled with good news: Fall to fall retention rates, audited financial statements, deferred maintenance, SAT scores, etc. The Board failed miserably in articulating anything positive about these institutions through the release of the Report. What a shame.

I am a graduate of North Adams State College, my son Timothy is a recent graduate of the University of Massachusetts, and my youngest son Jonathan is a freshman at Westfield State College. Our colleges are the gateway through which tens of thousands of Massachusetts’ citizens pursue dreams for a better life. These students are generally working class folks who struggle to balance work, family and expenses as they pursue a higher education. Six-year graduation rates speak to the pressures that are on our constituents as they work toward a degree. Our citizens are able to graduate and earn degrees but they often have to take time out to raise families or work. These same students often transfer among and between institutions to reach their goals. An attack upon our State Col-

leges is an attack upon these citizens and ignores the many factors that influence paths toward graduation: commuter, part-time student, SAT scores, etc. I am very proud of these citizens and of our public colleges. It is high time for you to understand the students in our colleges and to provide a desperately needed voice of advocacy on their behalf.

Sincerely yours,
Paul Kujawski
State Representative

Cc: Members of the Massachusetts General Court

An Act to Increase Public Support for the Public Institutions of Higher Education

(Sponsored by Rep. Paul Kujawski)

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:

SECTION 1. Section 5 of Chapter 15A of the General Laws, as appearing in the 2002 Official Edition, is hereby amended by striking out the second paragraph and by inserting in place thereof the following paragraph:

The board shall coordinate activities among the public institutions of higher education and shall engage in advocacy on their behalf, which advocacy shall include a sustained program to inform the public of the needs, the importance and the accomplishments of the public institutions of higher education in the Commonwealth.

BHE Releases Flawed Report *continued from page 2*

The Honorable **Paul Kujawski** (D-Worcester) sent a letter to the Chancellor, asserting the need for the BHE to advocate for public higher education, and filed legislation to require this responsibility (see story above).

Is it any surprise that children of affluent families have higher college graduation rates than poorer families? As the chart on Page One, prepared by the U.S. Department of Education, shows, there is an undeniable, high correlation between graduation rates and family income. While this is not news to state college faculty, apparently the BHE has decided to eliminate such significant socio-economic factors in their “report cards” for state colleges. In the current graduation rate controversy, we have this year’s higher education version of last year’s MCAS controversy, in which public school districts were penalized for trying to serve the students who needed them most: poor and underprivileged children who had not learned conventional academic success at home. In the case of the state colleges, many students are first generation college attendees. They come from a great variety of economic backgrounds, demonstrate diverse learning styles, and have varying levels of preparedness.

This is the joy and the challenge of the state college system. Yet the BHE would have us “graded” on our effectiveness as colleges as though all students and learning styles are the same throughout the private and public colleges, from community colleges to selective research universities.

Consider the pressure this places on admissions officers to find traditional middle-class students and to avoid taking risks on students with learning disabilities or students from less well equipped high schools. The BHE’s abstract “graduation rate” does not consider the backgrounds and needs of the individual student. It does not consider that students may transfer within the system to an institution that better serves their interests, nor does it count incoming transfer students even though (or maybe because!) they are highly likely to complete a degree.

As faculty, we must continue to advocate for quality

education, adequate administrative support, and student access to the state colleges. —ed.

“Reforms” *continued from page 2*

Closer inspection reveals that the increase for the state colleges will merely cover the cost of the long overdue pay raises for APA and AFSCME employees, implemented at long last in January.

Pension “Reform”

The current state retirement pension system provides for a defined benefit plan that is fixed and guaranteed, based on an employee’s number of years of state service, his/her chronological age and on the average of his/her highest salary over three consecutive years.

The governor’s proposal for pension “reform” would provide the lesser of two options for one’s pension upon retirement: either the current defined benefit plan as described above, or a theoretical calculation of what a lifetime annuity would yield annually, assuming that 15% of the employee’s annual salary were invested at a certain rate of return. The latter plan would make planning for one’s retirement nearly impossible, as it replaces the current defined benefit plan for a defined contribution plan that is subject to uncertainty, unpredictability and political whim. The latter plan would also be a nightmare to administer, as it requires the theoretical annual “annuity” calculation to be done for every year of state service — a task deemed impossible by those who manage the state payroll system.

Other proposals include significant increases in the cost of buying back any creditable service, a repeal of the involuntary job loss retirement benefit, and significant increases in the costs of making any benefit improvements, such as increase COLAs.

As MSCA President, I will send a letter on behalf of the membership to all 200 legislators, opposing these changes. As MSCA members, each and every one of you should do likewise. If you are unsure of your state legislators’ names, you can find them through the MTA website <www.massteacher.org> or call the State House at 617-722-2000.

Group Health Insurance Benefits

The governor’s proposals concerning group health insurance benefits maintains the current split between the employee’s premium and the state’s contribution (80%/20% for employees hired prior to June 30, 2003 and 75%/25% for those hired after that date). However, the proposed budget in House One would have the state pay a total of 75% of the cost of all state employee plans together — not 75% of the individual plans chosen by each state employee. This proposal, if enacted, would substantially increase the cost of indemnity plans and other plans that cost more because they offer more benefits. Again, contact your local legislators to oppose these proposals and to maintain current benefits and premiums.

The Group Insurance Commission recently announced that it is dropping three popular health plans (Harvard Pilgrim HMO, Tufts HMO and the Commonwealth PPO) from the choices offered to state employees. MSCA members enrolled in these plans must choose another plan during the open enrollment period (April 12th to May 14th); otherwise, a health plan will be chosen for them.

The Benefit Decision Guide is currently available on-line at <<http://www.state.ma.us/gic/bdg.htm>> and will be mailed to all state employees in April. We have two strong recommendations to make about this year’s open enrollment period: review the Benefit Decision Guide thoroughly, and wait until the last possible time to change health plans if you need to or wish to. Health Fairs have been scheduled throughout the state and on the local campuses; check with your local campus Human Resources Office to obtain a schedule.

The status of the group employee health insurance plans is rather fluid at present; we will do our best to keep you informed as we are informed about this situation. The June *MSCA Perspective* will publish an article about the GIC — who are they, what are their powers, and what can be done about changing a state bureaucracy that is not elected by individuals whose lives are so profoundly affected by its decisions.

Fiscal 2005 Budget Proposal to the MSCA Delegate Assembly: Recommendation of the Board of Directors

	2003-2004 Budget Proposal	2004-2005 Budget Proposal
9010 Office Maintenance		
Telephone	8,000	8,000
Supplies	10,000	10,000
Postage	10,000	10,000
Equipment	10,000	5,000
Insurance	4,000	4,000
Archives	500	500
Printing	5,000	5,000
	<u>47,500</u>	<u>42,500</u>
9020 Administrative Salaries/Payroll Taxes		
President	15,576	15,576
Vice President	7,142	7,142
Secretary	7,142	7,142
Treasurer	11,650	11,650
Grievance Chair	9,529	9,529
Negotiations Chair	6,252	6,252
Negotiations Chair DGCE	2,472	2,472
Editor	6,664	6,664
MSCA Webmaster	1,500	1,500
Taxes	20,000	20,000
Secretarial Services	96,985	133,971
Negotiations Scribes	4,362	4,362
	<u>189,274</u>	<u>226,260</u>
9023 Professional Services	<u>1,000</u>	<u>1,000</u>
Archives	<u>1,000</u>	<u>1,000</u>
9030 Board of Directors/Delegate Assembly Meetings	<u>15,000</u>	<u>15,000</u>
	<u>15,000</u>	<u>15,000</u>
9040 Negotiations/Labor Management		
Sessions	40,000	15,000
Employee Relations Committee	2,500	2,500
Printing Contracts	10,000	5,000
	<u>52,500</u>	<u>22,500</u>
9044 Data Base		
Data Base Chair	4,000	4,000
Data Base Supplies/Meetings	2,300	2,300
	<u>6,300</u>	<u>6,300</u>
9046 Ad Hoc Committee/Librarians Concerns	<u>1,000</u>	<u>1,000</u>
	<u>1,000</u>	<u>1,000</u>
9050 Contract Administration/Grievance		
Committee Expenses	9,000	11,760
Arbitrators' Fees	50,000	27,740
Stenographers' Fees	6,000	6,000
	<u>65,000</u>	<u>45,500</u>
9060 Legislative	<u>1,000</u>	<u>1,000</u>
Committee Expenses	<u>1,000</u>	<u>1,000</u>
9065 Affirmative Action Committee		
Meetings	1,000	1,000
Study	0	0
	<u>1,000</u>	<u>1,000</u>
9070 Communications		
Publication & Mailings 7 Issues	15,750	15,750
Related Expenses	1,250	1,650
	<u>17,000</u>	<u>17,400</u>
9080 Conventions/Workshops		
MTA Annual Meeting	10,000	10,000
NEA-RA	3,600	9,000
NCHE/Membership	3,600	3,600
Williamstown	1,500	1,500
	<u>18,700</u>	<u>24,100</u>
9085 Elections	<u>12,000</u>	<u>1,000</u>
9090 Auditor's Fee	<u>4,500</u>	<u>4,500</u>
9100 Discretionary Fund	<u>10,807</u>	<u>1,000</u>
9110 Local Support	<u>10,000</u>	<u>15,000</u>
9600 E-mail	<u>1,000</u>	<u>1,000</u>
TOTAL	<u>\$453,580</u>	<u>\$426,060</u>

Anticipated Income Worksheet

Current Dues Structure

Local Dues	Members	Dues	Total
Full Time	1,400	\$230.00	\$322,000.00
Part Time			
9-11 Credits	79	\$115.00	\$9,085.00
3-8 Credits	729	\$70.00	\$51,030.00
1-2 Credits	47	\$45.00	\$2,115.00
Total Dues Income			<u>\$384,230.00</u>
Total Projected Members	2355		

2004/2005 Projected Income

	Current Dues Structure
Dues Income	\$384,230.00
Local Support Reimbursement	\$35,000.00
Data Base Reimbursement from MTA	\$6,300.00
Reimbursement from local chapters for web sites	\$530.00
Total Projected Income	<u>\$426,060.00</u>

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