Social Security Reform – We Can Win This One

Gerald Concannon

Over 200 public employees met at Springfield Technical Community College on November 9 to learn how current social security regulations work to the detriment of Massachusetts state workers and to chart a plan to advocate for the repeal of these damaging provisions. The meeting was organized by Carol Malthan, President of the STCC Professional Association, and Carole Dupont, SAC regional coordinator. The meeting featured statements by STCC employees and retirees who had been adversely affected by current rules. Congressman Richard Neal (D-MA) outlined his support for reforms, and promised to “try to steer the Social Security Fairness Act of 2003 to the floor for a vote.”

M SCA representatives attended the meeting and will work closely with other state employee unions in the campaign for more fair regulations. The M SCA has been active in this issue. Professor Len Papillo (MCLA) and Margaret Kane, a member of the MCAfford Teachers’ Association, have been appointed MSHA and Security benefits, and as a result, spousal benefits are benefits for public employees as if they were Social Security Reform – We Can Win This One

“dual entitlement” – the receipt of earned benefits the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP).

The GPO and the WEP are intrinsically unfair. They deny earned benefits to public employees simply because these employees have worked for federal, state, or local governments that do not pay Social Security taxes. These regulations should be repealed and they can be if we support Congressional efforts continued on page 2

If that employee qualifies for Social Security benefits, he/she may discover that he/she is subject to a reduced social security payment. The modified formula applies to you if you reach age 62 after 1985 and first become eligible for a pension based in whole or in part on work where Social Security taxes were not paid. Your Social Security will be reduced beginning with the first month that you get both a Social Security benefit and a pension check. You are not affected as long as you keep working and draw your salary. M any faculty members continue to collect the full Social Security benefit and their salaries. The offset kicks in only upon retirement. The offset works by reducing the 90% factor to 40% for those who reach the age of 62 beginning in 1990. The 90% factor is used in figuring a full entitlement for workers who are not subject to any offset. The WEP does not apply to persons eligible to retire before Jan. 1, 1986, or persons who have more than 30 years of “substantial” earnings under Social Security. T he “substantial earnings” numbers are available at your local Social Security office or on the web at <www.ssa.gov/pubs/10045.html>.

The GPO and the WEP are intrinsically unfair. They deny earned benefits to public employees simply because these employees have worked for federal, state, or local governments that do not pay Social Security taxes. These regulations should be repealed and they can be if we support Congressional efforts continued on page 2

Nominations Open for 2003 NEA Representative Assembly

The 2003 Representative Assembly of the National Education Association will be held July 1 - 6 in New Orleans, Louisiana.

All M SCA members who are in good standing on January 15, 2003, and who pay their dues to the M SCA through the appropriate M SCA Chapter, may seek election as a local association delegate to the NEA Representative Assembly. Stipends may be available to assist with travel expenses.

However, only members who pay their dues to NEA through the appropriate M SCA Chapter may seek election as M SCA local association delegates to the NEA Representative Assembly. Stipends may be available to assist with travel expenses.

Individuals who join NEA through a local association after January 15, 2003, will not be eligible to seek election as a delegate to the 2003 NEA-RA.

The specific number of delegates allocated to the M SCA will be established after January 15, 2003. The specific number of seats will be sent to all candidates and will appear on the ballot. If a run-off election is necessary the election timetable follows:

• N onomination deadline: February 24, 5:00 pm, regardless of postmark or indicated fax time.
• Ballots mailed: week of March 15.
• Ballots return deadline: April 30, 5:00 pm.

Questions should be directed to:

Gerald Concannon, M SCA Secretary
M ass. M aritime A cademy
101 A cademy D rive
Buzzards Bay, M A 02532
(508) 830-5000 ext 2272
(508) 830-5000 FAX
G concannon@M M A.edu

NEA NOMINATION FORM: DEADLINE - FEBRUARY 24, 2003

Ambassador

N omination Form

Name of Candidate (Please Print): __________________________

Institution Affiliation: ______________________________________

I wish to place my name in nomination as a candidate for M SCA delegate to the 2003 NEA Representative Assembly.

Signature ____________________________ Date __________

Please attach a biography statement (not to exceed 50 words)

Send completed form to: Gerald Concannon
M SCA Secretary
M ass. M aritime A cademy
101 A cademy D rive
Buzzards Bay, M A 02532
MSCA Ad Hoc Committee on Librarian Concerns Established

Nancy George

The Ad Hoc Committee on Librarian Concerns met on December 2, 2002, at Framingham State College. Librarians from Bridgewater, Framingham, the Massachusetts College of Art, Salem, Westfield, and Worcester attended the meeting. Nancy G. Gorge, a librarian from Salem, was elected chair and Linda Blowers, also from Salem, was elected secretary.

During the meeting a representative from each institution discussed librarians' work environments at the campuses. She reported that, of the libraries represented:

- No local Program area, even when eligible, giving library directors total authority over librarians.
- No peer evaluation for reappointment — evaluations are conducted by library directors and VP's of Academic Affairs.
- Little direction or focus as exemplified by missing mission statements and poor collection development practices.
- A lack of professional development funding support.
- Problems with severe budget cuts that adversely affect the collections librarians have worked hard at building.
- Rigid leave policies.
- Poor physical environments in which to work.
- Problems of understaffing, exacerbated by difficulties encountered in searches because of low salary offerings.

In addition, some very poor library director/librarian relationships have created appalling work environments. In these libraries, librarians are treated as hourly employees, not MSCA professionals.

The committee adjourned and adjourned, concluding that it is important that librarians become more active, visible, and vocal in the MSCA. In addition, the committee will:

- Examine the current contract for language that is unclear or does not address librarians' needs and submit language changes as a group to the MSA. A Bargaining Committee to eliminate some of the inequality between MSA teaching faculty and librarians.

— Nancy George is the Electronic Resources Librarian at Salem State College.

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for repea. M SCA and N E A support the bills intro-duced in the 107th Congress by Representatives Howard from MA (R-MA) and Howard from MA (D-MA). The House bill (H.R. 2638) would repeal both the GPO and the WEP. Senator Diane Feinstein (D-CA) introduced the same bill in the Senate (S. 1523). These bills have broad bi-partisan support.

The Ad Hoc Committee needs librarian representation. At the Springfield meeting, Congressmen Neal and Berman agreed it was important that librarians become more active, visible, and vocal in the MSCA. In addition, the committee will:

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In addition, some very poor library director/librarian relationships have created appalling work environments. In these libraries, librarians are treated as hourly employees, not MSCA professionals.

The committee adjourned without action. Nothing will happen unless we express our concern. A ct now.

— Gerald Conannon is Professor of Humanities at the Massachusetts College of Art and Director of the M SCA.
"Merit" Pay: Round Two

Guest Editorial
Jean Stonehouse

"Merit" pay comes out of a finite "pool" of money, the size of which is determined by calculations based on the number of M SCA members and the aggregate amount of the payroll — for the state-wide and then campus-by-campus. At 4:30 pm on November 6th, the BHE Human Resources director released the BHE version of the "pool" numbers to MSCA peers. She, C. J. O'Donnell, and other M SCA officials checked the calculations so that we could be certain that every penny due to our members was included in the BHE "pool." I he amount of individual merit bonus payments was de-
cided by campus administrators and included in the December 20 paycheck.

As soon as possible after Bridgewater State College President M olher-Faria had to do, as I did last year, but I think making the information public keeps the members was included in the BHE "pool." I believe the system of merit pay used at the colleges years ago. They feel its right now can attest to the unfairness of the system of merit awards is impossible. In part, this belief was based on unhappy experience. Several senior professors working on our campuses right now can attest to the unfairness of the system of merit pay used at the colleges years ago. They feel its impact on their salaries to this day.

When it became clear that we would not be able to settle the contract without a merit pay provision, we worked to mitigate its impact. We decided that we, ourselves, would not participate in an inherently un-
ver the name of equal pay, we urge you to enjoy both the recognition and the money. You deserve it. If you find yourself among those receiving the smaller bonuses or no bonus at all, please, don't take it to heart. It does not represent the judgment of your M SCA peers. You deserve better, and we know it.

Whether you find yourself on the top or the bot-
tom of the merit list, I hope that you will remember that we are colleagues. We are a team of faculty and librarians who work together for our profession, our college, our students, our disciplines, and the com-

unities of our region. We are connected one-to-
another in an academic community, as well as in our union, and we succeed or fail, in part, to the extent that we support one another.

Jean Stonehouse: President of the Bridgewater Chapter/MSCA and Professor of History at Bridgewater State College.

Merit Bonuses Awarded by Campus:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Campus</th>
<th>Frequency Distribution</th>
<th>Percent Awarded</th>
<th>Average Award</th>
<th>Comments/Reasons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BRIDGEWATER</td>
<td>$1,496.87 – 88</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>$1,201.50</td>
<td>Individual, professional reasons were given for each recipient.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$1,000 – 129</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$0 – 42</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FITCHBURG</td>
<td>$2,500 – 37</td>
<td>64% FTE</td>
<td>$1,575.86</td>
<td>&quot;For meritorious service&quot; was the sole reason given for all recipients.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$1,182.83 – 87</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$0 – 69.77 FTE</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| FRAMINGHAM            | $1,303.20 – 129        | 77%             | $1,303.20     | Three general categories (distinction as a teacher or librarian; accomplish-
ments as an artist or scholar; or contributions to the College's mission and goals) were used; recipients were eligible in more than one category. |
| MASS. COLLEGE OF ART  | $1,244 – 32            | 95% FTE         | $1,073 FT     | A amounts were based on full-time or FTE salary. Recipients earning less than the median salary for their rank received $1,000; those earning more than the median salary for their rank received $2,500. Program C. Coordinators and all librarians received $1,244. Part-time faculty received pro-rated amounts according to the same scenario. In every case, the award was for meritorious service. |
|                       | $1,000 – 30            |                 |               |                           |
|                       | $800 – 12              |                 |               |                           |
|                       | $750 – 2 PT            |                 |               |                           |
|                       | $625 – 1 PT            |                 |               |                           |
|                       | $600 – 1 PT            |                 |               |                           |
|                       | $500 – 15 PT           |                 |               |                           |
|                       | $400 – 2 PT            |                 |               |                           |
|                       | $328.61 – 1 PT         |                 |               |                           |
|                       | $250 – 2 PT            |                 |               |                           |
|                       | $0 – 5 FTE             |                 |               |                           |
| MASS. COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS | $1,406.61 – 12 | 90%             | $1,114.19     | Newly hired members received $0; assistant professors received the top amount; associate professors received the middle amount; and (full) professors received the smallest amount. $203 was not spent. |
|                       | $1,203.34 – 17         |                 |               |                           |
|                       | $1,000 – 44            |                 |               |                           |
|                       | $0 – 8                 |                 |               |                           |
| MASS. MARITIME ACADEMY | $1,780.20 – 20        | 77%             | $1,311        | Three general categories (distinguished service, meritorious service, and commendable service) corresponded to the three $ amounts. |
|                       | $1,186.80 – 12         |                 |               |                           |
|                       | $593.39 – 11           |                 |               |                           |
|                       | $0 – 13                |                 |               |                           |
| SALEM                 | $1,940.54 – 98         | 86%             | $1,164.33     | Three categories (distinction in teaching/librarianship or approved professional activity; distinction in teaching/librarianship, scholarship and departmental service/approved professional activity; and distinction in teaching/librarianship, scholarship, departmental service and college/community contribution/approved professional activity) corresponded to the three $ amounts awarded. |
|                       | $1,200.01 – 96         |                 |               |                           |
|                       | $749.87 – 55           |                 |               |                           |
|                       | $0 – 39                |                 |               |                           |
| WESTFIELD             | $1,250 – 25            | 90%             | $1,122.29     | Recipients showed "meritorious service" ($1,250) or "commendable service" ($1,096.33) in teaching, scholarship, performance, program development or research, or to the College. |
|                       | $1,096.33 – 123        |                 |               |                           |
|                       | $0 – 17                |                 |               |                           |
| WORCESTER             | $1,500 – 68            | 80%             | $1,263.83     | Merit bonus awards were made for meritorious services to the college as members of its faculty in enhancing the college mission through a variety of activities in teaching, scholarship, and other contributions to the students and the community. |
|                       | $1,024 – 68            |                 |               |                           |
|                       | $1,513.20 – 1 PT       |                 |               |                           |
|                       | $0 – 35                |                 |               |                           |

For those interested, the results of merit pay awarded last year were published in the April issue of the M SCA Perspective, which is available through the M SCA Website.
People of the River: Acclimating at Salem State College

J.D. Scrimgeour

A degree from Salem State means something; it often means one has endured. If, in most circles, it means less than a degree from Harvard, it also should mean something more.

But I shouldn't romanticize. The successes are sweet, but the day-to-day realities often overwhelm: the students who drop out, the ones who probably will, all the missed classes. I work with troubled students, and what makes their lives seem even more tragic is that they're smart—smart enough to know they're troubled. You would not believe me if I listed what my students have endured in the last year alone—a mother's botched brain surgery; a death of a sister (a mother of two) and the subsequent alcohol binge of the father; car accidents (several); a sister's overdose; a mother jailed for dealing; bouts of anorexia, depression, drugs. Then there are the "non-traditional" students—adults who have already made it through, divorced children, homeless, madness. Misery upon misery. Unavoidably, their struggles seep into my own life. Sometimes, I wish they didn't. On one semester I got several harassing phone calls from— I found out later—a student's jealous ex-boyfriend. I could never quite get used to the haunting Police song, "Don't Stand So Close to Me" droning through my phone, or when, I refused to pick-up, being recorded on my answering machine at 2:30 at night.

Out my office window, the drab window shades of M e r r y All stare back at me, some off-white, some cream (but curdled). Beyond them, Salem State's own smokestack, which three years ago malfunctioned and spewed ash all over the neighboring neighborhood, rises out of the administration building. And, just past that, the Sullivan Building, more than 100 years old, squatting behind the bricks off the facade. My son, Aidan, and I, six years older, are both playing basketball at the Salem Y; he hardly ever leaves one has endured. If, in most circles, it means less than a degree from Harvard, it also should mean something more.

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