Governor Patrick: We’re Ready!

By C.J. O’Donnell, MSCA president

On June 2nd Governor Deval Patrick held a town hall meeting of the Readiness Project at Framingham State College. MSCA was there to greet him.

Joined by members from three other MTA-affiliated higher education unions — MSP-Amherst, APA and MCCC as well as MTA staff — our message was simple: “Governor Patrick: We’re Ready!” Nearly 300 leaflets were handed out.

The leaflet noted that 85% of Massachusetts high school graduates who attend college in the state attend one of the 29 institutions of public higher education. It explained that the state colleges are having difficulties hiring new faculty, particularly in STEM or high-demand fields key to the state’s economy, as a result of low salary offers in a high cost-of-living market.

It noted that the colleges are having trouble retaining faculty for the same reason. The front of the leaflet concluded with the message:

“Governor Patrick: We’re Waiting! …for you to authorize our employers to offer fair and equitable salary increases to reverse these devastating effects.”

The back of the flyer contained the governor’s contact information and a request that the public contact the governor with this message:

“Governor Patrick: To maintain and improve the quality of education at the State Colleges and Universities, the salaries of faculty and librarians need to be competitive with those at their national peer institutions. Please authorize a fair and equitable salary proposal at the bargaining tables.”

As a result of our presence, Patrick Education Advisor Dana Mohler-Faria asked MSP-Amherst President Max Page and me to meet with the governor before the town hall meeting. We were joined by MTA Director of Higher Education Arthur Pippo.

In the ten minute meeting I spoke about the difficulties recruiting and retaining faculty and librarians at the state colleges because of salary inversion and compression. I noted that we needed a fair and equitable salary offer to address these problems and that the offer needed to be made soon. Max spoke about similar problems on the Amherst campus and Arthur spoke on behalf of the MTA-affiliated unions who were not present.

The governor asked to greet nearly 30 demonstrators holding signs and banners and wearing MSCA and UMass Unions United stickers. After speaking with us, he invited the entire group to meet with him after the town hall meeting.

In the private meeting that followed Governor Patrick was joined by President Mohler-Faria and Education Secretary-designate Paul Reville. Those in attendance appreciated the opportunity to speak with the governor, but everyone who spoke was on message.

At this point the Governor’s office has not authorized a salary increase for any statewide union currently in negotiations. MSCA will be at the bargaining table throughout the summer. In conjunction with other MTA-affiliated unions, we will be asking members to send communications to the governor and to appear at demonstrations, as the opportunities arise.
Final President's Report: Delegate Assembly

April 26, 2008, Salem State College

Patricia V. Markunas

As my presidency draws to a close, I have thought a great deal about the accomplishments of our union over the past eight years. During the campaigns of 2000, I spoke personally to hundreds of MSCA members, who were loud and clear about what they wanted from their union. They wanted the contracts settled as soon as possible. They wanted improved communications within the union and with the media. They wanted a presence on Beacon Hill so that elected officials would understand our work and give attention to our legislative priorities. And they wanted the union’s leadership to work together to accomplish these goals.

These challenges were daunting enough, but there were others as well. During the bargaining crisis of those years, the union’s infrastructure had been under-standably neglected. Our reserves were nearly depleted. A backlog of arbitrations reached into three figures with no end in sight. The MSCA records, transferred among four different MSCA presidents between 1988 and 1992, were in disarray and important materials were missing. The Employee Relations Committee, our contracting mechanism for negotiating with state college management to prevent and resolve problems, had not met regularly and minutes had not been prepared for years.

All of these challenges have been met and the union is far stronger and positioned well for future growth. Only by the union’s elected and appointed leadership working together and with the strong support of the rank and file membership were we able to accomplish all that the membership expected eight years ago.

Our record on contract negotiations, still the greatest challenge, is one of which we can be proud. We were only higher education bargaining units who have our contract funded during the Swift administration, and we provided leadership and cooperation to insure the funding of other higher education contracts. We achieved a contract settlement in 1990 with the first involvement of two state college presidents at the bargaining table, a relationship that proved crucial when the Romney administration reneged on its settlement and the contract funding appeared in jeopardy.

Under the Patrick administration, we have pursued different strategies with the Board of Higher Education and the Council of Presidents to get to settle-ments. We finally have an advocate in public higher education, Fred Clark, as chairman of the Board of Higher Education. One challenge remains unchanged since 2000; however, State college faculty salaries remain lower than those at peer institutions, and the progress towards equitable salaries gained in the previ-ous contract has been erased. This goal must be accomplished!

As the important priority of contract enforcement, the memorandum of agreement that established a mediation process for the parties to resolve griev-ances prior to arbitration has proven successful beyond anyone’s expectation. The arbitration backlog has been cleared and the settlements achieved through mediation have provided a greater degree of satisfaction to both parties than the “win-lose” nature of arbitration.

The cost savings has been phenomenal as well. My executive assistant, Christine Melin, has created a com-puterized, searchable set of abstracts for every legal opinion and arbitration decision that we have received over the past 30 years.

This resource, as well as the ongoing project to professionally archive the MSCA historical docu-ments with a web-based inventory system, moves the MSCA’s records into the 21st century and provides searchable access and several modes of retrieval to those MSCA officials who require records, no matter at what campus they reside.

The financial recovery of the MSCA has been phenomenal as well. Through rigorous scrutiny of all expenditures and the members’ support of a significant dues increases, our reserves are near the half million dollar mark and we should be able to enact a dues decrease for perhaps the first time in our history. Improvements in communications and creation of a presence on Beacon Hill took much work and com-

Patricia V. Markunas
Post-Tenure Review Ratings Improve

As the table below shows, the post-tenure review ratings for Alternative One this past academic year continued the upward swing shown in last year’s ratings. After the conclusion of this year’s reconsideration and appeal process, only two “not acceptable” ratings remained, and the percentage of exemplary ratings reached 91%. Two campuses (Mass Maritime and Westfield State) had 100% exemplary ratings.

Westfield State’s newly appointed president Evan Dobelle granted changes in post-tenure review ratings in response to procedural grievances filed during the first two years of the post-tenure review Alternative One evaluation process. The three-year percentage of exemplary ratings now stands at 83%.

The consolidated grievance concerning procedural violations in the post-tenure review process during the 2005-2006 academic year is scheduled to begin arbitration on October 24, 2008. A comparable consolidated grievance filed at the end of the post-tenure evaluation process in the 2006-2007 academic year awaits a ruling from former Council of Presidents Chair Mary Grant, president of the Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts.

The upcoming academic year is the last one for which post-tenure review Alternative One is scheduled. Twenty-three faculty members opted to switch from Alternative Two to Alternative One after the MSCA and BHE/COP reached an agreement to allow these members a one-time opportunity to change the choice they made in 2005. These members will be evaluated with the 204 faculty members and librarians remaining in Alternative One next year. Information about the post-tenure review Alternative One process is posted on the MSCA’s website.

Post-Tenure Review Alternative One, Year Three
Final Ratings by Camp

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MSCA Perspective

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Post-Tenure Review Alternative One, Year Three
Final Ratings by Camp

Westfield chapter leaders Ken Haar (president) and Cheryl Stanley (MSCA bargaining committee) for Governor Patrick knew on June 2 that “We’re Ready” for an economic offer in bargaining. In the background is the Helen Heineman Ecumenical Center at Framingham State College.
New and Returning Faces Join the MSCA Board of Directors

Pat Markus, editor

Several new and returning members of the MSCA Board of Directors attended a workshop for new MSCA leaders on June 18 at Worcester State College.

The workshop included presentations by MSCA president C. J. O’Donnell, MSCA grievance committee chair Margaret Vaughan, MTA consultant Donna Sirutis and years truly on Board policies and procedures, communications, grievance procedures, union governance and elections, and working together.

Since April, six new chapter presidents and directors have joined the MSCA Board of Directors. Some folks have served on the Board in past years and others are new to the experience.

Donohue Takes Over Presidency at Framingham

Robert Donohue, a psychology professor for twelve years at Framingham State College, assumed the chapter presidency on April 24. He succeeds long-time MSCA activist John Ambach of the Government Department.

Robert earned his doctorate at the University of Florida. Besides training in infant cognitive development there, he served as vice president, grievance officer and chief negotiator for Graduate Assistants United. “In academia it would be hard to imagine a less powerful group than graduate assistants,” Robert noted in a recent email, “but by having a union we improved wages and benefits. We commanded respect and insisted on being treated professionally.”

Serving as the chapter’s representative to Framingham’s committee to reestablish on-campus day care services rekindled Robert’s interest in union activities. The goals of the chapter for the upcoming year include work for a fair contract, the protection of governance and the encouragement of more faculty and librarian involvement in the union.

“I hope that administrators, legislators and Governor Patrick realize that improving wages and working conditions of MSCA members, such that our faculty and librarians are compensated on par with peer institutions, will strengthen and improve the state colleges.”

Falke Succedes Shartin, joined O’Brien as VP at Worcester

After serving four years as chapter vice president, Anne Falke of the Chemistry Department took over the chapter presidency on July 1 from Dan Shartin of the Philosophy Department at Worcester State.

(Don’t think Dan is leaving MSCA activities altogether: On May 30, Dan was elected to complete the remaining four months of C. J. O’Donnell’s term as chair of the MSCA bargaining committee. C. J. resigned as chair when he became MSCA president on June 1.)

Anne earned her doctorate at the University of New Hampshire. Before that, Anne belonged to the Letter Carriers Association and an NEA-affiliated K-12 local in New Hampshire.

Anne became active in the MSCA for one reason: she wanted to see changes on the local level. “Desiring change, I could either complain about things as they were or I could do some-thing about it. I decided to run for the vice presidency.”

In a recent email, Arthur said, “I think it’s great that CJ [O’Donnell] could be elected president of the MSCA given that Mass Maritime is the smallest of the state colleges. I am confident that CJ will do a superb job and that the Academy will be proud to have one of its own as MSCA president.”

3 Perspective

Mass Maritime’s Aldrich Returns to Board

In contrast to David’s junior status, one of the state college’s most senior faculty members returns to the MSCA Board. Arthur Aldrich, a member of the professional maritime faculty at the Maritime Academy, attended his first Board meeting in nearly two decades on June 6 when C. J. O’Donnell’s becoming MSCA president created a chapter vacancy on the Board.

 Arthur Aldrich

Arthur joined the faculty at the Academy in 1974. He served as a charter member of the Board of Directors for about 12 years when the MSCA was first organized in 1977. Arthur holds a US Coast Guard merchant marine license and is a third mate of steam or motor vessels of any gross tonnage on the oceans. He is an Academy graduate with a masters of science from Michigan State University. Arthur is a retired US Navy commander and has served 30 times on the Academy’s annual training cruise.

In a recent email, Arthur said, “I think it’s great that CJ [O’Donnell] could be elected president of the MSCA….”

Donna Sirutis, MCLA/MSCA chapter president; and Robert Donohue, Framingham/MSCA chapter president. Standing are new directors Bill O’Brien (left), Worcester/MSCA, and David Eve, MCLA/MSCA.

Participants at the June 18 orientation session for new MSCA leaders include (sated l-r): Deborah Foss, MCLA/MSCA chapter president; Anne Falke, Worcester/MSCA chapter president; C. J. O’Donnell, MSCA president; and Robert Donohue, Framingham/MSCA chapter president. Standing are new directors Bill O’Brien (left), Worcester/MSCA, and David Eve, MCLA/MSCA.

Arthur holds a US Coast Guard merchant marine license and is a third mate of steam or motor vessels of any gross tonnage on the oceans. He is an Academy graduate with a masters of science from Michigan State University. Arthur is a retired US Navy commander and has served 30 times on the Academ-