Delegates Mark a Year of Struggle and Gain at Annual Assembly at Bridgewater State College

Ben Jacques

MSCA delegates from the nine state colleges gathered at Bridgewater State College April 29 to do the work of the union, including passage of a new budget with no increase in member dues. They also welcomed new officers, celebrated member and committee achievements, and honored leaders stepping down from office.

In her President's Report, Markunas summarized MSCA achievements during the last year, chiefly the Herculean task of securing funding for the 2004-2007 day unit contract. “We had the best contract in higher education.” And it was only through “the persistence of our leadership and the faith of our membership” that it was settled and funded, she said.

She credited union leaders and members for “a very successful campaign to uphold our governance system.” In a state-wide referendum in February and March, over 93 percent of faculty and librarians casting ballots voted to preserve the contract, she said.

And she credited Deb Foss, chair of the MSCA Nominations and Elections Committee, for a fair, well-run MSCA Officer election this spring. “Deb worked hard with the Elections Committee to revise the campaign rules, to set a realistic campaign calendar, to maximize participation . . . , and, most importantly, to secure the services of a new election vendor, the Labor Guild of Massachusetts, which administered the election fairly, competently, and at a much lower cost than the previous vendor,” Markunas said.

President’s Message

Reflections on a Missed Step: What I Learned on My Spring “Vacation”

Patricia Markunas

On the evening of April 30, I was walking down the newly carpeted staircase from the second to first floor of our home. My toes missed the hardwood under the new and unfamiliar carpet, and, because of the circular design of the staircase at that spot, I fell four steps, bouncing my left leg hard several times. After sliding the rest of the way downstairs, I could not stand up and had to crawl to the telephone to get help. I was alone and, until that moment, had never experienced a serious injury, a night in the hospital or major surgery.

I was rushed to North Shore Medical Center, where the orthopedic surgeon on duty told me that I had fractured my ankle in at least eight places and would need emergency surgery the following day. The surgery was lengthy but successful. I was sent home with a walker, crutches, a wheelchair, and instructions to bear no weight whatsoever on my left leg — encased in a fiberglass cast — for six to eight weeks. Physical therapy will be required to regain my strength, and the recovery is expected to take a full year.

Despite these challenges, my predominant thought since April 30 has been how lucky I am. Lucky that the injury wasn’t worse. Lucky that the EMTs came right away and that I was taken to a great medical care facility. Lucky that the semester was nearly over and my responsibilities as MSCA president were less demanding than has been true at other times. Lucky that I have health insurance, sick leave, a husband and a sister close by. Lucky that it’s May and not January or September.

Most of all, I realized how lucky I am to live three blocks from a campus where people care for one another. A colleague from the Salem State Nursing Department, Leah Sak, monitored my progress at the hospital and made sure the staff was attentive. Friends and neighbors stepped right up to help move furniture to allow me to live and work on one floor, run my errands, get my mail, help me with meals and “house errands,” bring me to campus with my wheelchair and just generally take care of me.

Statewide, I am no less lucky. Gail Price and CJ O’Donnell took over responsibilities for the MTA Annual Meeting and other meetings that I could not attend.

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My secretary, Jane Fiste, handled everything in the office without missing a beat. My friend Susan Stroutige proctored my final examination, and my friend Amy Everitt has taken me to doctor’s appointments.

Psychological support came in the form of flowers, fruit baskets, food, books in print and on CD, and lots of good wishes from around the state. I thank every faculty member, librarian and administrator who took the time to send a get-well card or email message to me. That people around the state — sometimes, even people I did not know — were thinking of me and wishing me well was the highlight of my day. I cannot thank all of you enough for your help and support.

Support also came from experiencing first-hand the importance of the state college mission to train nurses for the Massachusetts health care sector. A former student arrived by my bedside in the middle of the night to fix my IV pump. The nursing staff and my case manager raved about the quality of Salem State’s nursing graduates. I read recently that one does not go to the hospital for medical care — one goes to receive nursing care. I am proud to be involved in the education and training of the people who provide that care.

Over the years, I have attended meetings when issues of access and accommodations for physically handicapped people were discussed. Glibly, I would remark that we should support such access and accommodations, for after all, “the handicapped are the only minority group that anyone of us can join on the way home this afternoon.”

I won’t be so glib the next time I say those words. I intend to write a thank you letter to former Senator Robert Dole for sponsoring the Americans with Disabilities Act in 1990. Salem State’s campus may not be perfect in terms of accessibility, but I know it’s a whole lot better than it would be without landmark disability legislation at the state and federal levels. The same goes for local restaurants, banks, theaters and other places that I have visited this month.

A lesson of experience? You bet. Restful and relaxing? Quite the opposite. A message to slow down! If so, I’m not paying attention to it. I am even more committed to getting health insurance benefits for part-time faculty and to keeping our contractual rights and support over the past five years made it possible to bring our union back together and move ahead.

Markunas expressed appreciation to MTA consultants Donna Strutins and Robert Whalen, and their director, Priscilla Lyons, “for unwavering help, advice, and support during very difficult challenges faced by our union.”

At the luncheon she awarded certificates of appreciation to several MSCA directors completing service: Brad Art, chapter vice president, and Gerald Tetrault, chapter president, both from Westfield State; Peter Hogan, chapter president from Fitchburg State; and Paul F. McGee, chapter president from Salem State.
Anne Wass Elected New MTA President

Anne Wass, vice president of the Massachusetts Teachers Association, was elected president at the association’s Annual Meeting in May. She will succeed Catherine Boudreau, MTA president since 2002, who completes her term on July 15.

Wass has served on the MTA Board of Directors and the state Executive Committee, and has been president of her local association in Hanover. For many years she has chaired the training program for new local presidents at the MTA Summer Conference in Williamstown. She is currently on leave from her job as a sixth-grade teacher in Hanover, where she has taught for 31 years, and won the Plymouth County Education Association’s Honor Award and the Lozzette Quinlan Award.

The MTA represents over 100,000 teachers and professionals in Massachusetts, including approximately 2,400 MSCA members.

Paul Toner Is New MTA VP

MTA delegates also elected Cambridge middle-school teacher Paul Toner as vice president. As president of the Cambridge Teachers Association, which represents 1,100 teachers, staff and paraprofessionals, Toner has chaired negotiations for 12 consecutive bargaining agreements.

Toner has focused on issues related to salary, benefits and working conditions, and has hosted forums on such issues as “Closing the Achievement Gap.”

A graduate of Boston University, he holds a master’s degree in education from UMass/Boston and a law degree from Suffolk University.

Two New Directors from Westfield

Elected last month as president of the Westfield State College chapter, Ken Haar, joins the MSCA Board of Directors in July. Since 1982 Haar has worked at Westfield State in both administrative and teaching roles. While administrator of the Computer Center, he served as president and grievance officer of the Westfield State chapter of the Association of Professional Administrators (APA). Joining the faculty fulltime in 2001, he has taught at the Computer Science and Education departments. As an MSCA chapter officer, he has served as grievance officer and general secretary.

Elected to the MTA, he has been on the statewide Candidate Recommendation Committee for the past four years as a representative from the 1st Congressional District, and is serving his second year on the MTA Student Membership Committee.

Jack Shea, a member of the MSCA chapter executive team at Westfield State College, will join the Board of Directors for a two-year term. He is associate vice president of English and coordinator of the Theatre Arts Program.

Shea has previously served as chapter treasurer and grievance officer. He earned an A.B. degree in history from Stanford University, and master of arts and master of fine arts degrees in theatre arts from the University of California, Los Angeles. He is a member of Actors’ Equity Association, the Screen Actors Guild, and the American Federation of Television and Radio Artists.

From Fitchburg Hetzel and Mrvica Join Directors

Following his election in May as president of the MSCA chapter at Fitchburg State College, Charles Hetzel returns to the Board of Directors.

Professor of education and faculty member since 1987, Hetzel submitted the following: “I look forward to working as a transitional president. We’re so pleased to have a diverse mixture of people serving on our executive committee—fine, energetic, intelligent people. I come back with great hope and look forward to working with old and new friends.”

Ann Mrvica, elected chapter vice president of the Fitchburg State chapter, also joins the MSCA Board. Professor of communications media, she teaches a variety of television production courses. Mrvica has served on the executive committee at Fitchburg and has represented Fitchburg faculty and librarians as a delegate at several MSCA Delegate Assemblies.

“The union is its members and I hope that their support will carry over into the actions and participation that are needed to keep the union vital,” she wrote. “I am particularly concerned about our low salaries and want to work at the state level on that issue.”

Mrvica earned a doctorate in education from the University of Massachusetts.

Concannon Returns from Mass Maritime

Gerald Concannon, a veteran union activist at Mass Maritime Academy, has been elected chapter president, and will continue on the MSCA Board.

A professor of English and literature at the Academy for 33 years, Concannon previously served as chapter president for 17 years and as grievance officer. He was a member of the Constitution Committee when the MSCA was formed and has been an MSCA director for 30 years.

Concannon said he believes his experience will help give the chapter stability as it deals with a mix of campus problems and issues.

Salem’s Everitt is New Chapter President

Amy Everitt, chair of the Sport, Fitness and Leisure Studies department at Salem State College, has been elected president of the Salem State College chapter, and joins the MSCA Board of Directors.

A member of the faculty since 1995, Everitt has served as chapter vice president for four years. She is also a member of the statewide Elections Committee.

Succeeding Paul McGee as chapter president, she said her main goal is to “keep people involved, and to get as many new people involved” as possible in union participation on behalf of the faculty and librarians.

Teaching both undergraduate and graduate courses, Everitt’s specialty area is athletic training and the study of kinesiology, or human movement. She earned a doctorate from the University of Massachusetts at Lowell.

C. J. O’Donnell Is New VP; Glenn Pavlick Is New Treasurer

C. J. O’Donnell, president of the Massachusetts Maritime Academy chapter, assumes his new role this month as MSCA vice president, following his election in April.

O’Donnell has been a member of the MSCA Board for seven years and served as a delegate to both the MSCA Delegate Assembly and the MTA Annual Meeting. He chairs the DGCE bargaining committee and has served on the day unit bargaining committee for seven years. For the last five years, he has chaired the Salary Database Committee.

Glenn Pavlick was elected MSCA treasurer in the spring elections, joins the executive team and the Board of Directors.

A faculty member at Bridgewater State since 1984, he teaches mathematics and computer science.

Pavlick has served on the Bridgewater State chapter executive board since 1991, and for seven years was chapter president.

From the Editor:

This issue of Perspectives is my last, as I am stepping down as editor. Thank you to all our contributing editors, especially Susan Sturgeon, Lou Caton, Alan Feldman, and Maynard Seider for stories, photos and ideas, and to the members who submitted letters and reviews. Thanks, too, to the MSCA officers, directors and committee chairpersons who have often helped out by providing information, updates and photos. Much gratitude goes to Donna Sirutis, Arlene Isaacson, Bob Whalen, Jim Sacks and Jerry Spindel at the MTA for their reports, stories and photos. Thanks also to Susan McCarthy for her creative work in design and layout. Finally, thanks to Pat Markunas for her steady support, and for setting high standards in MSCA communications.

Ben Jacques
MEMBERS MAKING NEWS

Portraits of the Human Spirit

Framingham State’s John Budz reveals the lives of students, faculty and staff in campus exhibits of his photography

Ben Jacques

The date was December 10, 2004, “the iciest, wintry-est day of the year,” remembers John Budz, professor of psychology at Framingham State College.

But that didn’t keep 200 people from attending the opening of his Faculty Portraits photography exhibit in the Whittemore Library—40 color photos matted and displayed in long, horizontal panels installed in reading areas. The informal portraits capture members of the faculty doing what they do, teaching, reflecting, laughing, mentoring, conversing.

“I tried to reveal the spirit of the students,” Budz says of his initial photography project.

With the president’s encouragement and support, Budz expanded his work on campus, photographing students, faculty and staff in a wide range of activities and poses. He praises Heineman, formerly chair of the English department, for believing in his potential as a photographer. “She saw in me what no one else saw.”

Commissioned by Heineman, who also retired in 2005, he created permanent exhibits in the Student Union, Library, Athletic Center, and Dwight Hall, the administration building. Using the installation panels he created with lexan plastic, he periodically updates the exhibits, adding new portraits.

A photo session with Budz is sometimes a flurry of action. Diagnosed 25 years ago with a “movement disorder,” Budz has trouble staying still. “I jump around a lot,” he admits. “So I use a tripod. It hasn’t stopped me a bit.” Later, he adds, “Art excites me. I feel it in my body.”

He is also likely to ask his subjects to move. Shooting a professor who teaches film, he told him to climb up on his desk, tossed two empty film reels up to him, and snapped photos from below.

The photos are black-and-white representations of Budz’s color photographs.

John’s photographs always catch you unaware and capture peoples’ aura,” the college president Helen Heineman said at the opening.

“You create beautiful images that pay tribute to the human spirit,” English Professor Art Nolletti, Jr., wrote.

It all started when a student, a player on the women’s rugby team, asked the psychology professor and amateur photographer if he would photograph the team. Budz, who retired in 2005, but continues to teach part-time, showed up on the field at 6 a.m. to photograph.

At a pep rally to drum up support for the club team, he presented team members with thirty 8 x 10-inch photos. When President Heineman saw the pictures, she was fascinated, and asked to see more.

Budz now spends much of his time in his office at home, where, as a licensed psychologist, he conducts a private practice. Or you can find him in his studio, where he runs a portraiture business; the subjects ranging from children to opera singers, or making prints from his digital images of street scenes and skyscrapes.

Switching from film to digital three years ago, he works only in color. And he prints directly from his camera images. “I never use Photoshop,” he says. “I tell my students, ‘Shoot as if Photoshop doesn’t exist.’”

Throughout his studio and home, where he lives with his wife, Fitchburg State College English professor Judy Budz, large color prints compel the viewer’s eye: a jazz musician at the keyboard, an immigrant family in London, a woman’s face in a window in Italy, and weary French firefighters with shiny helmets battling a blaze.

The firefighters photo was displayed in a campus memorial service after Sept. 11, 2001, along with an unusual photograph of the American flag, a print of which Budz later presented to President George W. Bush.

Budz has also done documentary series, on subjects ranging from the Nazi concentration camp at Dachau to one he did for the Culinary Institute of America. He has done series on themes, such as his Portals of Life photographs, which show architectural openings leading to further openings—doors, windows, landscapes.

Psychologist that he is, Budz is fascinated with how photographs become stimuli. Many of his photographs reveal tension, requiring a response from the viewer. The professor has a term for this, “dialectical photojournalism.” In fact, he’s writing a book about it.

“In dialectical photojournalism, you create opposition, dissonance, conflict in a photo,” he says. “Viewers project themselves into the picture and are then asked to resolve that tension in their own lives.”

Sometimes the conflict is explicit, as in the firefighters’ photo. “Sometimes it’s something as subtle as the American flag.”

Budz’s work has appeared in several off-campus collections and venues, including on the cover of the Massachusetts American Psychological Quarterly, and on stage during a symphony orchestra performance.

On campus, his photos continue to document the lives and spirit of public higher education. Their impact is perhaps best stated in one student’s response: “This photo makes me proud to be a student at Framingham State College.”

The photos are black-and-white representations of Budz’s color photographs.

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