

THOUGHTS ON MIDWINTER DAY

(Continued from Page 1)

it would benefit the college overall. Carl H. has rightly pointed out that what is discussed at these retreats is vital for student retention and, consequently, planning and resource allocation in our future. Which is why everyone is expected to attend, whether you teach a class or not.

No matter how informative or useful the sessions at a college-wide retreat day, their impact will necessarily be muted when the majority of instructors do not attend.

MISSED OPPORTUNITY? NOPE!

In early February, many adjuncts stopped by the adjunct office to meet Mike Ostrand from NYSUT's Member Benefits and learn more about the many free and affordable benefits that TC3AA's "parent" union, (NY State United Teachers) offers to members. BUT even if you missed Mike's visit, it's not too late to learn more about (and take advantage of) the opportunities available to you by joining the TC3AA (which, by extension, also makes you a member of NYSUT, AFT, and the NEA). Mike welcomes phone calls and emails from any TC3 adjunct. You can Call Mike at 518-213-6000, x1231 or email him at mostrand@nysutmail.org.



TC3AA HONOR SC/ROLL: Please join us in extending congratulations and best wishes to our colleagues **Kerry Curran** on her appointment as a fulltime faculty member in English, and **Eric Jenes**, on his promotion to .8 librarian, and **Butch Westlake** on being chosen for the 2016 Chancellor's/Trustees' Award for Excellence in Adjunct Teaching.

ROOM 122: A ROOM WITH A VIEW

Recently, the administration of Cayuga Community College ended the expensive and unnecessary legal battle it's been waging against its own employees for two years.

Last month, after the Public Employment Relations Board (PERB) upheld the April 2015 decision of Judge Nancy Burritt, the College agreed that it would not pursue further appeals to stop the Cayuga Community College Part-Time Faculty Association from being certified as the union for CCC adjuncts.

It's been clear for a long time that CCC's claim that adjuncts "most appropriately" belonged in the same union as the longstanding union for CCC fulltime faculty was a thinly veiled attempt to delay (and ultimately) derail the adjuncts' quest for union representation. Though CCC technically had the legal right to pursue this claim, the more relevant question is were they within their moral rights to spend taxpayer money on lawyers fighting their own employees? And we believe the answer to that question is a firm "NO!"

The TC3AA is awaiting its own ruling from a judge on our right to have our union separate from the Faculty Association. Especially in light of this recent development at CCC, we call on President Haynes and TC3's BOT to refrain from any further legal appeals once Judge Carlson issues his ruling later this Spring and to then recognize the TC3AA as the Union for the College's adjuncts and tutors.

Room 122

The Newsletter of the TC3 Adjunct Association (TC3AA), Local 8104, NYSUT/NEA/AFT
the Union for Adjuncts at Tompkins Cortland Community College

Contact Us: tc3adjunctassociation@gmail.com

Find us at www.tc3adjunctassociation.wordpress.com and "Like" us on Facebook

Issue 2, Volume 1

March 2016

THOUGHTS ON MID-WINTER DAY

By Patrick Sewell (Environmental Studies Adjunct and TC3AA Executive Council Member)

A couple of years ago I had the opportunity to attend TC3's Fall Day college-wide retreat for the first time, and I found it to be an extraordinarily worthwhile event. And after attending last year's Mid-Winter event, I am came away with a similar feeling. Carl's talk provided a fabulous macro-view of the institution; laying out TC3's challenges and goals, and developing a sense of overall institutional orientation. And then we worked in small groups, *as an institution*, to address these challenges.

My point is that college-wide retreat days are perfectly crafted to address the complicated issues that are facing our institution. And I think they could have a profound impact, except for one big problem; only 1/3 of our teachers are there. The other 2/3, adjuncts, are not compensated to attend and historically do not attend. How effective can a staff development day be when a large portion of the staff does not attend; and more importantly, *the staff not attending is the group most directly involved with the issues being discussed?*

Of course not all adjuncts could attend even if they wanted, because of other job obligations

like teaching at a different college. But the point is that currently adjuncts receive **no** compensation for attending college-wide retreat days. Many adjuncts, like myself, work two jobs and so lose a potential day's worth of wages when we attend. I effectively paid \$100 to attend Mid-Winter day because I passed up an available shift on Friday.

So when I attended a fantastic talk *created and given by adjuncts*, I was doubly impressed and triply annoyed; why are we not incentivizing these people to attend our own pedagogical conference?

And I want to stress that the reason for raising adjunct participation in college-wide retreat days is that *(Article Continued on Page 2)*



Some of the adjunct and tutor attendees at this year's Mid-Winter day (L-R): Steve Weed (English), Kaylin Lemchak (BLC), Devina Pukila (Psychology), Eric Jenes (BLC), Alice Caroompas (English & BLC).

TC3's adjuncts come with diverse professional and academic experience and from a myriad of backgrounds and personal life situations. Unsurprisingly, different adjuncts have different reasons for wanting union representation. That said, it's obvious there are fewer differences in priorities than there are commonalities—as one example, it would be hard to find anyone who doesn't agree with one of the major goals of the TC3AA: to make the College an even better place to work and to learn for current and future generations of adjuncts and students. Below, two members of the TC3AA Executive Council share some of their personal reasons for supporting union representation. If you'd like to be profiled for "Why a Union? Why Now?" in a future issue of Room 122, email us at tc3adjunctassociation@gmail.com.

WHY A UNION? WHY NOW?

By Robert Earle (Philosophy, English, and Environmental Studies Adjunct & Tutor)



TC3 adjuncts have formed a union because we desire regular and reasonable pay increases, access to benefits (including health insurance), and job security. Though the reasons vary, these are the most common I have heard. Each of these resonates with me personally. If not for union benefits through my adjunct work at another college, I would have to give up my teaching career, and my family would be in a state of economic desperation.

In 2015, I taught 14 classes (ENGL100, two SO-CI101's, a RDNG11 six learning community, ENV105, three ESL's, and six PHI classes at SUNY Cortland). I also tutored an average of 6.5 hours per week. As a result, my family of three was able to live in relative comfort, though student loan agents regularly hound us. I love teaching, but "less is more" is clearly an applicable aphorism.

Here's a shocking truth I know very well: if you teach two courses at any SUNY four-year college you can buy-in to a health insurance plan (90% employer contribution) and receive free dental and vision coverage. Indeed, just this week I submitted an \$800 reimbursement form for childcare expenses. I'm not being hyperbolic when I say that without those protections won for contingent faculty by United University Professions (UUP), my wife and I would have had to put off starting a family and my daughter would not yet be with us.

My philosophy for "making it work" as an adjunct

can be summed up in one word: diversification. The alphabet soup of departmental affiliations above is the result of an effort to ensure consistent employment. Opportunities can be lost due to politics, whim or who knows what. In the Spring 2015 semester I had a class section cancelled due to low enrollment. This semester that section was accidentally given to someone else because the cancellation the year before had resulted in an oversight (despite my multiple email reminders). My labor is the definition of precariousness. This is a shame because I take pride in my work as a teacher.

Even more so than fair wages, benefits and job security, what adjuncts want most is representation. Should I be mistreated, I want to know someone other than a supervisor will be obliged to provide support. Sadly, some have unfairly pitted the TC3 Adjunct Association against the interests of the college, as if continued exploitation of the majority of the teaching faculty were the only means of ensuring TC3's economic sustainability. If such were the case, we would really be heading for trouble! Rather, adjunct representation will actually greatly benefit the college, enabling TC3 to continue to attract and retain the best instructional candidates.

Perhaps your situation is different than mine. After all, adjuncts are a diverse class. But know that by signing a membership card you have acknowledged the TC3AA's critical importance for many of your colleagues, myself included.

WHY A UNION? WHY NOW?

By Diane Williams-Altman (Biology Adjunct and TC3 Alumna)



Many people over the past year of union organizing at TC3 have asked me "why do we need a union?" Don't we have it pretty good? Why rock the boat? The simple answer to this is that now is the perfect time to organize a union: when we have it "pretty good." Yes, in talking with adjuncts from other community colleges, it is quite clear that we do have it pretty good and that the administration by and large is committed to treating us fairly. For example, when an adjunct is out sick for an extended period, the college has compensated a substitute—while still paying the sick adjunct. The problem, however, is that we don't have this and other common practices in writing, which means that a change in administration may result in our losing the benefits we do have—good faith does not ensure continuity. Getting the specifics of common practice in writing simply ensures that those practices will continue long after everyone involved in negotiating our first contract has retired. I want a union for the adjuncts at TC3 for job security, for due process—what we have is great, but we need to have it in writing.

A written contract assures us that our employment and the conditions of our employment are not at the whim of the administration. Since TC3 adjuncts don't have a union recognized by the college's administration, we don't have a contract. What we do have is the good will of the administration—this is working for now. The time to form a union is NOT when you are in des-

perate need of the services the union can provide; you form a union before you need one in case someday things change. It's like owning a car: I have a car, I change the oil in my car, just in case; I get insurance for my car, not because I'm planning on getting in an accident, but the insurance is there if I do. In employment, having a contract equals having insurance.

Finally—and repetitively—it is important to put in writing what's already there. This is the heart of the matter for me. Again, we have learned that we have it pretty good at TC3, but that "pretty good" is at the pleasure of our administration and the full time faculty association. I cannot repeat this enough: they are doing their best to be sure that they treat everyone fairly and with respect. However, a change in TC3's administration can change the way adjuncts are viewed and treated.

Ultimately, any union is only about the people who make up the union. We are not out to get the administration. We are there to protect and support our members. This means that the more members we have the more the union will be representative of the needs and wishes of our membership.

If you are happy with the way things are, join the union to ensure the adjuncts will continue to have the support and respect we now enjoy.