President’s Corner

Charlie Clarke, FA President

It’s been a while since our last newsletter. As is frequently the case, we’re busy on a number of fronts. So briefly, I’ll be updating you on a number of issues.

First, let me begin with the New York State finances. As we enter the 10th week of the fall semester an ill economic wind blows. Inflation has warmed up with the August CPI indicating that prices have risen 5.4% over the index a year ago. New York State faces a current-year budget shortfall of $1.5 billion and a possible $12.5 billion deficit in 2009-10. The financial services tax base for New York may be permanently reduced by the recent market collapses. In response to this, NYSUT is striving to protect the current FTE reimbursement rate for community colleges. The trick is to convince the Governor and the Legislature that SUNY, particularly community colleges, are a critical resource for the economy of the state. If we are subjected to cuts in our funding, Dr. Tyree has assured me that the College will promptly share the contingency plans once we have an idea of the severity of the situation.

On a positive note, we are in the first year of a four-year contract that has modest salary increases, good health benefits and substantial job security. Additionally, the final SUNY census figures are in and there is a 5.1% increase in FTE’s for the fall semester. Hopefully this trend will be sustained for the spring and summer semesters. Furthermore, the College continues to maintain a healthy fund balance of $15 million and a substantial component of the College’s long term liability for retiree benefits is now funded.

Professional Development

Academic departments are converting students enrolled and attending beyond the maximum course class size into workload credit and professional development funds. Extra students enrolled in classes are the primary source of funds for professional development at MCC. All faculty should be aware of the professional development funds available to their departments and divisions. You should feel free to make requests to your chair, dean, director, etc., for support of your individual plans for professional growth.

Evaluation, Retention, and Promotion

Departmental evaluation processes are also in full swing. This is often a period of vigilant unease for those faculty who are still in their 5 year probationary period. Although most faculty will be renewed, faculty on 10-month appointments should be aware that the deadline for notification of non-renewal is December 31 and for those on 12-month appointments it is February 28. We have a notification process where “no news is good news.” This is also the period in which promotion requests are being deliberated and recommendations are being developed at the departmental level. These recommendations will be evaluated over the next three months by Deans, Vice Presidents, and the President and typically the selected will be affirmed at a Board of Trustees meeting in March, 2009.

(continued on page 2)
Open Enrollment on Benefits

November is also the period of open enrollment for selecting our health care programs, flexible spending options, and retirement options. The health care program that you select will vary in benefits and in cost. You must be mindful of your individual and family needs and budget. Higher co-pay programs are less expensive. Please pay close attention to Mike Goho’s article in this FAN. In turn, you should be anticipating what additional out of pocket health care and child care costs you will incur. Much, if not all, of this cost can be paid in pretax dollars if you set aside that amount in your flexible spending account for the 2009 year. Finally, although retirement is many years off for most, this is the time of the year where you decide how much money you want to put into your 2009 tax deferred annuity election. Although the markets are presently a disaster, early career tax-deferred contributions can provide for a comfortable and secure retirement.

Labor Management

The Labor Management Committee met for the first time this semester on October 15. The next meetings are scheduled for November 12 and December 10. I’ll be serving on the FA Team with Mike Goho (Chief Negotiator), Taine Vinci, Bethany Gizzi, Paul Wheeler, and Cheryl Mahoney. Diane Cecero’s (Chief Negotiator for Management) team will include Alberta Lee, Kimberley Collins, Tony Felicetti, Mike Quinn and Ann Topping. In an effort to complete the 2008 negotiations in a timely manner, the Negotiating teams agreed to establish sub-committees to complete the details on several contractual issues. In the next issue of FAN, I hope to provide you with a detailed report on the work of the sub-committees.

In closing, I encourage your attendance at our annual Holiday Party, scheduled for Friday, December 5 at the Strathallan. It’s a wonderful time to reconnect with friends and colleagues. Details are in this issue of FAN. As always, feel free to contact me with any questions.

FA Mediation Project

Attention All Unit Members!

The FA offers a private, confidential, and safe way to resolve interpersonal conflict in the workplace through the use of trained (faculty and professional staff) mediators. Mediation is strictly confidential and a process that treats all participants respectfully. Mediation is an opportunity to engage in addressing inter-personal conflict with no paper trail and no involvement from superiors, union or administrators. If you find yourself in need of this service, please contact:

Marlene Goho
Administrative Director, FA
292-2528

All Inquiries are confidential.

Attention All Unit Members

It’s Open Enrollment Time

Deadlines are fast approaching to make changes on the following benefits

• Health Care Selection
• Flexible Spending Accounts
• Supplemental Retirement Accounts

The deadline for changes is December 1, 2008
Three Decisions You Must Make Now

Mike Goho, Contract Administrator

Your 2009 Health Care Premiums
You Must Make an Informed Decision by December 1st

The 2008-2012 Contract contains new provisions for health care premiums. Over the course of the contract, full-time employees covered under Article 20 (Health Insurance) will be required to pay for some amount of their health care premiums. Depending on which health care plan you choose, you may be asked to pay part of the health care premium in calendar year 2009. The table below shows the premiums for the current calendar year and for the upcoming year. For calendar year 2009, the College will pay the entire premium if you choose the Standard POS plan. It is very important for you to study the benefits of all the plans offered and make a reasoned decision about how much you are willing to pay for enhanced coverage. The difference between the two (2) POS plans is largely the amount of the co-pays required. In my case, I have a decision about whether to stay in the Enhanced POS or switch to the Standard POS. For most routine usage (doctor visits and prescriptions) co-pays will increase by $5. I see this decision governed by whether or not the difference I will pay in co-pays is worth $700. I haven't yet made a decision, but I will during the coming weeks. It is important that all of us sit down and examine the health care plans and their costs and benefits to us and our families. Then make an informed decision. Open enrollment for health care plans will last through December 1. If you choose not to change health care plans, you will stay in the plan you have currently.

Comparison information on the health care plans is available from Human Resources. Plan rates (three plans: Enhanced Blue, Standard Blue and Blue PPO and per pay rates) are also available in hard-copy (Human Resources) and also online at www.monroecc.edu – select: Employees/Employee Resources/forms and publications/Human Resources/Health Care Rates for Faculty/Administration.

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Flexible Spending Accounts

Mike Goho, Contract Administrator

Don’t Pass Up the Chance to Save!

No matter which health care plan you choose, you should be taking advantage of establishing a Flexible Spending Account (FSA). Too many of us do not take advantage of this fantastic benefit. A FSA allows you to set aside pretax dollars to pay for eligible medical expenses such as co-pays for doctor visits and prescriptions. Then you can be reimbursed from your FSA after these expenses are incurred. A separate FSA can be used to set aside pretax dollars for dependent care expenses. The Faculty Association has published a primer on Flexible Spending Accounts at www.monroecc.edu/go/fa. Follow the link to “Your FA Contract” then to “Understanding Article 25 – Flexible Spending Account.” This year, you may set aside up to $3,000 for health care expenses and up to $5,000 for dependent care expenses. A complete list of eligible expenses can be obtained from Human Resources or by going to the following website, www.excellusbcbs.com/download/files/fsa_expense_listing.pdf.

If you don’t use a flexible spending account now, please consider this: Using a Flexible Spending Account can provide you as much as $1,000 more dollars this year to help pay for medical expenses that you are going to pay for anyway. The amount will vary depending on your individual circumstances, but there is no one who would not benefit from using a FSA.

You have already received the paperwork for establishing a FSA for calendar year 2009. They are due back to Human Resources by December 1. Get busy.

403(b) Accounts
You also have received paperwork for setting aside money in a 403(b) account, also called a supplemental retirement account (SRA). Participating in an SRA has a number of benefits. One can plan on making retirement more secure. A person has the advantage of investing using pretax dollars. This allows you to invest more money in your future than if you chose to invest money after taxes are removed. One problem with 403(b) accounts is that SUNY severely limits the options which can be chosen for investment. Currently, you may choose to set aside your 403(b) election with TIAA/CREF, MetLife, Fidelity, ING, and AIG (yikes!). The good news is that this is your investment. You may choose to transfer your 403(b) investments to any company of your choosing after the investment has been made in the options mandated by SUNY. This process is cumbersome, but it can be done. Let’s hope that SUNY allows more choices in the future.

Your paperwork must be returned to Human Resources by December 1.
Mark your calendars for the
Faculty Association
Holiday Party

Friday, December 5, 2008
The Grill at Strathallan
550 East Avenue
(Parking is available at the Strathallan)

The evening will include:
Appetizers and Cocktails beginning at 6:00 p.m.
Dinner Stations beginning at 7:00 p.m.
Coffee and Desserts
Music & Dancing throughout the evening
Cash Bar
Door Prizes

Spouses, partners, or guests are welcome!

Tickets will be available for $20 per person starting on
October 13th. You can purchase tickets from the
FA office and from the following individuals:
Kathy Baxter (Career Center), Regina Fabbro (3-541),
Christy Fogal (8-306), Christine Plumeri (Damon)
(Checks payable to the Faculty Association)

The FA Holiday Party is open to all faculty, staff and administrators.
We hope you will join us and we look forward to seeing you there!
What's all the buzz about?

You might have heard your colleagues talking about MAP, the Member Assistance Program available from NYSUT Member Benefits Trust. Or maybe you've already joined. But if you haven't, you may want to once you read about MAP's benefits.

By joining MAP, an e-mail based program, you'll be among the first to hear about new, endorsed programs and program updates. You'll receive special offers and reminders from Member Benefits or from providers of its endorsed programs. Your opinions will be solicited on new programs under consideration for endorsement. When possible, you'll help Member Benefits test potential new services and provide feedback.

Often, MAPers are entered into drawings for prizes donated by providers of endorsed programs and Member Benefits. Since MAP's introduction, MAPers have entered drawings for a Bose Wave Music System, free admissions to the National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum, 100 gallons of heating oil from Heat USA, a summer fun pack filled with a variety of items, a DVD player and OfficeMax gift cards. In addition, new MAP enrollees and existing MAPers are automatically entered into quarterly drawings; to date, prizes included digital cameras, a cross-cut shredder and an iPod nano.

MAPers receive e-mail communications from Member Benefits and occasionally from its providers of endorsed programs. On average, a MAP e-mail alert is sent once every three weeks.

Rest assured, Member Benefits will only share your e-mail address with endorsed program providers and then only under controlled circumstances. Once a program provider receives approval from Member Benefits to send you an offer or information, the vendor will be required to destroy the e-mail listing after sending the communication.

This exciting program allows you to help shape future programs and services exclusively available to you and your colleagues.

Help make a difference. Become a MAP team member. Enroll on our secure page by logging on to www.memberbenefits.nysut.org and clicking on the “MAP Sign-up” navigation tool on the left-hand side of our home page.

For information about this program or about contractual expense reimbursement/endorsement arrangements with providers of endorsed programs, please call NYSUT Member Benefits Trust at (800) 626-8101, e-mail benefits@nysutmail.org, visit www.memberbenefits.nysut.org, or refer to your NYSUT Member Benefits Trust Summary Plan Description.

Agency fee payers to NYSUT are eligible to participate in NYSUT Member Benefits Trust-endorsed programs.