

The college we deserve!



By Tim Killikelly

Over the last several years the accreditation crisis at City College has had a devastating effect on all of us. The community that supports a vibrant, robust, open access City College has lost out. The students who continue to take classes at City College live under a cloud of uncertainty about their educational and occupational future. The nearly 25,000 students who are not going to City College because of either misinformation about our accredited status or who are waiting simply to see if we remain open have lost educational opportunities. The

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faculty and staff find their livelihoods held in limbo and wonder what will happen to them and their families. Our faculty is paid 3.5% less than we were in 2007. We are now one of the lowest-paid faculties in the Bay Area and in the lowest quartile in the state while we live in one of the most expensive areas in the United States. The continuation of these arrangements is unsustainable for our entire community and not what we deserve.

What kind of City College of San Francisco do we deserve? Students deserve an affordable, quality

education. We all deserve a bottom-up process where the community will be deciding through their representatives what kind of public college it wants to be. The city deserves the best faculty to come and teach at CCSF to maintain our educational quality. Last year, Chancellor Tyler made an argument justifying “salary-gate”. He said that to attract the best administrators CCSF needed to pay them more, even if it was off the salary schedule! It is now time that we attract the best faculty and staff by paying adequate wages to the people who are the backbone of CCSF.

The negotiations that will be happening this semester for our new contract are crucial to what kind of future City College of San Francisco will have. We need to be restored to the top quartile of California Community College districts in salary. There must be a place for a strong professional development program for faculty. This begins with hiring new full-time faculty at CCSF. Our community deserves a college where the faculty members are supported around innovative teaching methods that they can bring back to the classroom.

We deserve a diverse set of programs that reflects the values of our community. That means supporting an entire range of classes that support lifelong learning, cultural enrichment, and life skills. This must include protection of our diversity collaboratives and our noncredit programs. We also deserve classes for

transfer to CSU and UC. We deserve support for our Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs and a strong workforce development program. Although City College does a wonderful job of educating our most underprepared students, we need to continue to close the achievement gap in all areas so that we can provide opportunities for all. This is what the mission of a community college should be; it should not be narrowed.

Reclaiming this college we deserve will not take place without

the return of our democratically and locally elected CCSF Board of Trustees. They need to be making decisions about City College’s future, not an unelected Special Trustee with Extraordinary Powers. The recent Civic Center relocation fiasco is a prime example of what happens when administrators are not accountable to the community. Students and faculty were not informed of the closure of the Civic Center building until the Friday before Monday start of classes. They were told to come back three weeks later to the buildings at CCSF’s Gough Street location, only to be informed on the Thursday before Monday, Feb. 2, that Gough Street was not safe either. We need our Board back!

But there is hope on the horizon on several fronts. When the District sought to impose a compressed calendar, which would have forced an extra five hours of work per week on Civic Center faculty, our union resisted and we won.

Another hopeful sign is the recent decision of Judge Karnow. He confirmed what we have been saying all along: the ACCJC broke the law! Now is the time for others to take action and to rein in this rogue agency. The damage the ACCJC has wrought goes way beyond City College of San Francisco. Colleges in the statewide community college system live in a climate of fear about what the ACCJC might do.

In January, the Board of Governors ended the monopoly of the ACCJC. There now needs to be further action taken to find either a new accreditor or alternative accreditors. The state legislature needs to create a fair and transparent accreditation process that focuses on educational quality and improvements in student success. On the federal level, the Department of Education needs to disaccredit the ACCJC, and federal legislation on accreditation reform is needed. All of these are now possible because our union has been persistent and tenacious in telling the truth about the ACCJC.

We have changed the narrative through our work and commitment to voicing the truth. We will remain steadfast in fighting alongside our students and the community so that we can all have the college we deserve. (tkillikelly@aft2121.org)

On the cover:

CCSF supporters rally in January for access to Civic Center campus.

Photo: Chris Hanzo

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Special thanks to

Patricia Arack
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