Huge turnout to protest budget cuts
Students, teachers and staff rally in support of education

Taking the energy of the marches to the next level
Long-term planning for political success

Ryan Vanderpol: Get on the bus!
A student leader on what he wants to accomplish in Sacramento

Following Cesar Chavez’s path
The CFT’s pilgrimage for a better future
The need for change in Sacramento

By Gus Goldstein

By the time you read this, March 4 will be behind us but March 22 will still be ahead. I hope you have made arrangements to go to Sacramento and/or to allow your students to do so. Community College Chancellor Jack Scott, when he was in the legislature, assured our Vice-Chancellor for Governmental Affairs Leslie Smith that filling the Capitol Mall with students, faculty, and staff in the legislature, assured our Vice-Chancellor Jack Scott, when he was

future of California by stopping their legislature take responsibility for the do it again. State Chancellor, Scott is asking us to absolutely does make an impression with students, faculty, and staff in the legislature, assured our Vice-Chancellor Jack Scott, when he was in the legislature, assured our Vice-Chancellor for Governmental Affairs Leslie Smith that filling the Capitol Mall with students, faculty, and staff.

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California is the only state in the nation that has a 2/3 requirement both to pass a budget and to raise taxes. In 34 states, taxes can be raised with a majority vote of the legislature. Virtually all of those states support higher per-pupil spending on education than California does, though they don’t aspire to keep community college fees as low as we do. Nonetheless, we CAN afford to do both. We just need the vision and the will.

Another initiative to sign is the Majority Budget Initiative or On-Time Budget Initiative. This one is more likely to pass in November, but it has to get on the ballot, first. It would change the 2/3 to pass a budget to a simple majority but would leave the 2/3 to pass taxes untouched. It would also penalize lawmakers for missing the budget deadline. Go to CFT.org to download petitions to circulate.

CFT march in Central Valley

Here is another opportunity to show your support for change in Sacramento: The CFT’s March for California’s Future up the Central Valley has been underway since March 5 (see story page 7). The marchers are going from city to town roughly every day—how appropriate! —the marchers will be walking from Planada to Merced. We are looking to organize a contingency of CCSF folks who want to march with them on that day.

Another opportunity to participate will be the next week. On Tuesday, April 6, the marchers will be walking from Turlock to Modesto, the closest that they will come to San Francisco. We could join them there at the Modesto Community College campus. If you are interested in participating in either trip, call the AFT office at (415) 585-2121. We will also be sending some buses up to Sacramento to meet the marchers when they arrive at the Capitol on April 21. More about that as the date approaches.

Elections for Union Officers

The biennial election for officeholders and precinct reps for our local comes up soon. Nominations may have closed by now, but there will still be nominations from the floor at the General Membership meeting on March 23. I appeal to you to consider running for offices that have been held perennially by some of our devoted—but-overworked-and-worn-out current office holders. We could use some fresh faces and renewed energy. As I write this, I don’t know who might be considering continuing in office and who might be considering stepping down, so please don’t infer that there is anyone in particular that I’d like to see do so. But I suggest it is time to pass the torch to a newer generation of leaders, while keeping continuity by finding ways that some long-term officeholders could serve in non-elected positions to ease the transition. (ggoldstein@aft2121.com)

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Contributors: Allan Fisher, Gus Goldstein, Chris Hanzo, Ed Murray, Carmen Roman-Murray, Rodger Scott, Ryan Vanderpol

AFT 2121 Election Timeline

Tuesday, March 23, 2010
General Membership meeting, Ocean Campus, Arts 302, 3:00 pm.
Nominations can be made from the floor of the meeting.

Friday April 9
Candidate’s statements due in the AFT 2121 office by 5:00 pm.

Friday, April 16
First-class mail out of election ballots to AFT 2121 members.

Friday, May 9
Deadline for return of election ballots by 5:00 pm.
The true meaning of COPE
Marches and rallies galore this spring—but what happens after that?
By Ed Murray

Many rank and file teachers’ union members and other supporters of education dutifully get on the bus, participate in the local march, and do whatever else they are asked every year to fight for adequate funding for our schools. AFT 2121 members and other City College staff have consistently turned out for years in huge numbers for marches in Sacramento, rallies in Civic Center, and even candlelight vigils in the Yerba Buena Gardens. We know empirically that those actions have helped to amend the community college budget upward, or at least to stave off the worst of planned cuts. We are proud of and appreciate our members for their activism.

However, some of our members have begun to question (and rightly so) if something more substantial and lasting could follow these spasms of energy. To paraphrase what some AFT members tell us, “These mass actions always seem to be done out of desperation—we’re always on the defensive. They take so much work, and what happens afterward? Can’t we develop a long-term plan to capitalize on the energy of the mass actions?”

Enter Jim Araby, a young activist who recently began working for the California Federation of Teachers as its political organizer. One of Jim’s charges is to help coordinate the big campaigns at the state level, but in between and even in the midst of the big events, Jim spends most of his time meeting with leaders and members at CFT local unions like ours to strengthen the capacity of their Committee on Political Education or COPE.

While for many AFT members COPE represents only an auxiliary union bank account for contributing to candidates the union officially endorses, Jim’s definition encompasses far more: “Strengthening COPE involves first educating members about the political realities facing educators, and then working with them to help them develop the skills they need to work effectively at the grass roots level. “After education,” Jim points out, “making sure all your members are registered to vote is crucial.”

Jim notes, “Ninety percent of the funds that come to California’s public schools is allocated to us by decision of elected officials,” including community college governing board members, state legislators, county supervisors, mayors, all the way up to governor. Your Union’s overarching goal is to build an organization with the power to help elect government officials who share our values and who will support us on funding and other education issues.

President Gus Goldstein and Jim have planned an AFT 2121 day of political action training with Jim Araby from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Saturday, April 17 at the Pierre Coste Dining Room.

Political action training with Jim Araby

Have you gone to rallies? Protested in Sacramento? Want to continue to build momentum to change the way Sacramento works? Want to unite students’ and educators’ voices to rebuild California’s educational system? Come to a morning-long political action training Saturday April 17.

• Get clear about the issues
• Learn how to organize for success

CFT’s Statewide Political Field Director Jim Araby will guide us.

Where: Pierre Coste Dining Room
When: Saturday, April 17 from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Continental breakfast and a light lunch will be provided. You MUST pre-register by April 14. Call the AFT Office at 585-2121 x112 to leave your name and a contact number with Pablo Rodriguez. The training is limited to 75 people, so call ASAP! See you there!

AFT budget priorities
CCSF must seek new revenues
By Chris Hanzo

CCSF faces a deepening fiscal crisis. The Governor’s proposed budget for 2010/11 provides a negative COLA and continues on the heels of deep cuts to the categorical programs. The result is that CCSF faces a $10 to $15 million deficit in next year’s budget. The CCSF Board of Trustees is trying to set priorities as it works through the crisis. We’ve established our own priorities during negotiations and separately with Chancellor Griffin.

• No layoffs. Where cuts are necessary, “extra pay” assignments, including overload and summer school,

would be the first to go. The priority is to protect faculty jobs.
• A “hold harmless” on the loss of health coverage as a result of the cuts. Part-timers who lose benefit eligibility because of a cut in their assignment below 50% FTE will retain benefits through 2009/10. AFT is negotiating for a continuation of the “hold harmless” through 2010/11.
• Reduce administrative costs through cutting consultants, salaries, and the number of administrators.
• Pursue organizational restructuring where possible to preserve resources for instruction and student services.
• Cutting travel and other activities or services that are less essential to the immediate survival of the college.

We call on the CCSF Board of Trustees to work hard to bring new sources of revenue to the College.

• We agreed to freeze salary step advancements last year after the crisis struck. Now, the College must plan for a resumption of salary step increases.
• The Health Service System is implementing a big increase in health care premiums. The District faces another inordinate rise in health care costs for 2010/11. Blue Shield got an 11% increase through the Health Service System, which CCSF now must absorb. Our priority in the current negotiations with the District, in view of the huge sacrifices already made by faculty, is that this increase is borne by the District. Faculty and other CCSF employees already pay too much for health care and cannot afford to pay more.
• AFT represents 1800 faculty at CCSF who, under our “fair share” agreement with the District, should garner 67% of the total salary and benefit “pie” in the District’s budget. Because of program cuts and the salary freeze, that percentage has dropped. If and when new revenues come into the District, agreed-upon priorities for improving faculty compensation must be funded to restore our fair share.

We call on the CCSF Board of Trustees to work hard to bring new sources of revenue to the College. We will be serving more students than ever next year. We must call on both the State legislature and the people of San Francisco to support CCSF with new revenues. (chanzo@af2121.com)
February 24
Town Hall/Teach-In

“I joined the dancers because I wanted to do something to help. Dance conditioning and water aerobics classes literally saved my life after an accident. Now I’m a full-time student and the outlet of dance is so important. People who don’t do it don’t understand. We want this Better Budget Dance to show everyone why this is important to us.”

—Mo Awobo, dance student and Better Budget dancer

“It’s not an accident that prisons are getting a lot of money and education is being cut.”

—Eric Banks, CCSF student and member of the Vampire Slayers Club

“In tough times like these, it’s important that students and faculty join together and advocate for one another because this is our community. Shared governance is an unknown process to students. It’s very valuable and is the best way to make change within the community. While it’s important to advocate for change on the state level, simultaneously we need to be making sure that we’re making change from within and that students are involved.”

—Lena Carew, Associated Students Shared Governance Coordinator

“It’s really exciting that people are waking up. They just have to continue to wake more people up and get the change that we were promised.”

—Tim Killikelly, Social Sciences
“They’re cutting a lot of classes. There’s no summer school. There’s thousands more students and not enough room in the classroom. In my algebra class, I was sitting on the floor for the first few classes.”

—Laura Thompson, City College student

“The students are downright inspirational to me. Their enthusiasm for this “Better Budget Dance”— their desire to be engaged, to show up for what matters —makes the project really meaningful. The dance makes space for their voices to be heard.

In these hard times, our students deserve all the support we can give them. Dancing uplifts our spirits and mobilizes our energy to take action. Alice Walker says ‘Hard times require furious dancing,’ and I wholeheartedly agree.”

—Kathy Burick, P.E.

“I believe if people become aware, they’ll take action. We’re fighting for our educational lives.”

—Rigo Montalvo, tutor, Learning Assistance Center, City College
Get on the bus!!!

Teamwork crucial for March 22 mobilization to Sacramento

By Ryan Vanderpol

Why March? Why should we March in Sacramento, you ask? In the tradition of Plato, I’ll reply in question: Why read? Why learn to write? Why come to school? Why breathe? Okay – that’s a bit too cliché!! But seriously, I’m riding the bus on March 22nd because I care about my future. Moreover, I care about the future of millions of students across the state of California. I truly think that the energy CCSF brings to Sacramento on March 22nd will affect countless people in countless ways.

Community college has powerfully affected my life – it has taught me invaluable lessons and presented so many new possibilities. Going to Sacramento on March 22nd is a way for me to share some of these possibilities with other people. Every step I take in Sacramento will help keep fees low and student services open. Each foot of ground that I cross in Sacramento will be a contribution to students that follow me in coming years. If I march on March 22nd, I will help an EOPS student get a book voucher for a much needed textbook. On March 22nd I will help keep tuition low, enabling low-income Los Angeles residents to attend their local community college. On March 22nd I will aid community college childcare, helping a mother in Reno study for another hour while her precious child is tended to. When I get on the bus on March 22nd, I will lend a hand to millions of people for whom community college offers a new way of life.

Lofty ideals, you say? Am I hoping for too much, you ask? I will concede that yes, these soaring goals are far higher than I could ever personally reach. Alone, my march would be nearly meaningless. But I am not going to Sacramento alone. When I march alongside thousands of students, faculty, classified employees, and administrators, millions of small strides will combine into one powerful event. United, we will converge on the steps of the California State Capitol Building. Unified, we will reach soaring goals. If we all get on the bus and go to Sacramento, we truly can reach out and change the future for education.

Whew, that is a high mark to aim for, huh?! Turning such a dream into reality requires a great deal of preparation. Since last November I’ve been in meetings with people from SEIU 1021, AFT 2121, and the administration. I remember an initial meeting where I think my excitement for the March made a particular impact. It was one of the first planning meetings for the rally, and it was a blustery November day. Initial talks began about how many buses we thought we could send. With exuberance, I said, “I really think that the Associated Students can step up and more than double what we sent last year.” I excitedly continued, “We can send 30, even 40 buses!” I’ve always been the sort to shoot for the stars. I also knew that the students of City College of San Francisco were excited to mobilize in the face of budget cuts and a closed summer session. Prior to that, I don’t remember hearing estimates of buses CCSF would send. After that, 100 buses has been the mark that we have all been shooting for.

In addition to my goal of sending so many buses, I’ve worked hard to build the infrastructure necessary to mobilize so many students. I came up with the idea for a web page (www.ccsf.edu/mm) where students can sign up to march and teachers can ask for students to talk about the march and its importance in their classrooms. I worked closely with the Office of Governmental Affairs to realize ‘Diamond’ Dave Whitaker’s idea of educating students about CCSF’s budget, and the resulting budget ‘Town Hall & Teach In’ was a success. Over the winter break, I authored a resolution that the Board of Trustees passed on February 25th supporting not only the March in Sacramento, but also the March 4th efforts. I also worked alongside CCSF’s General Assembly to make the March 4th rally a strong event (make no mistake, there are many people in the General Assembly that deserve far more credit than myself for the campus festivities on March 4). I’ve also organized and led March 22nd planning parties where students get excited for the rally and plan outreach.

Despite all of this planning and hard work, we still face the biggest challenge – actually getting students on the buses! The way I see it, there’s only one way that that this will happen – teamwork. Everything that I have done up until this point has only been possible through the hard work of countless people. Without a dedicated team of creative people, my idea for a website would never have been realized. The Town Hall & Teach In was successful only because faculty, classified staff, administrators, and the Board of Trustees contributed their valuable time and energy. The March 4th rally made a resounding impact only because we all locked arms and rallied together. If we really want the March 22nd March in Sacramento to be something special, something monumental, we have to continue to work together. In short, we all have to GET ON THE BUS! (mimquestions@yahoo.com)

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Take Action Now on Two Fronts for Meaningful Budget Change

Make sure you sign the two budget initiative petitions endorsed by your Union to help them qualify for the November ballot.

1. The California Democracy Act: Aims to restore fiscal sanity and political gridlock by including the following sentence in our state constitution:

“All legislative actions on revenue and budget must be determined by a majority vote.”

The CDA rolls back the present two-thirds vote needed to pass both budgets and bills that increase taxes.

Do we want to return to majority rule in California? Hell, YES! Here’s how to help make it happen:

1. Go to www.californiansfordemocracy.com for directions on how to download petitions, sign and submit them.

AND to become a petition circulator and sign up family, friends, and neighbors. Act NOW because the deadline for petitions is early April!

2. Watch your email for opportunities to sign up for AFT 2121 events with your Union brothers and sisters.

The best of all possible worlds? Both initiatives qualify for the ballot—and both pass in November. Let’s work together to make history. California can support public education again!

2. The Majority Budget Initiative, aka the “On-Time Budget Initiative”: Allows a simple majority of state legislators to pass the yearly budget replacing the currently required two-thirds threshold. Our statewide organization, the California Federation of Teachers, is supporting this measure. It doesn’t touch the two-thirds threshold on bills to increase taxes.

Why support this half a loaf measure? Because it has a great chance to win in November.

What is it called the On-Time Budget Initiative? Because it penalizes legislators financially for every day the budget is overdue—it gives us a great chance to win in November!

Hit the CFT webpage, www.cft.org, for directions on how to download petitions, sign and submit them. All the information is there for us to support the Majority Budget Initiative.
By Carmen Roman-Murray

Just as the great organizer Cesar Chavez led a watershed march to fight for migrant farm workers’ rights, the California Federation of Teachers, and a coalition of labor, education, and community organizers are following that historic path looking for better public education, better public services, and the chance to reclaim the California dream.

From March 17 to April 6, 1966, members of the United Farm Workers Union and their supporters marched through the Central Valley from Delano to Sacramento, a 340-mile Peregrinacion, or pilgrimage, as a tactic of the grape boycott begun the year before. They marched to tell the world about their cause and their struggle for survival and dignity in their jobs. Forty-four years later, the CFT similarly hopes to wake up the public to our cause with the “March for California’s Future,” which began on March 5 in Bakersfield.

A core group of teachers and other public workers will be joined by supporters along the way on each day’s trek, and most stops at valley cities and towns will feature teach-ins, town hall meetings, voter registration drives, and signature-gathering for a majority-rule budget initiative. As CFT President Marty Hittelman said, “What we need in public discussion is a clear picture of the problem and then a plan to fix it. And we all need a sign of hope that change will come.”

We want to tell Californians and especially our elected officials that balancing California’s budget by making students, teachers, and public workers suffer is not acceptable. All working-class Californians are hurt by the lack of equitable taxation policies. Fair policies need to be enacted, so that we can once again invest in our future through public education and provide other essential public services that benefit us all.

Cesar Chavez wrote to prospective supporters during the Peregrinacion of 1966, “Although this is primarily a march of farm workers, it is important that all who have a concern for social justice and human dignity demonstrate their unity with us.” Our students are the future of California and of the country, and they deserve a quality education. Our workers deserve decent wages to support themselves and their families, and we all deserve to live the California dream. Education gives people hope and connection and the power to achieve what they want. The cuts to the education system in our state mean that students can’t get classes they need to graduate or to get jobs. They mean students have to drop out of classes because they can’t afford the books. They mean people trying to enter programs to get out of poverty are turned away. They mean teachers lose their jobs or have to struggle to do their best at jobs where they are overloaded. That’s why fighting for funding to re-establish a great public education system is key to the struggle for social justice and human dignity now.

Our march, our Peregrinacion, is also a spiritual event. It offers a healing power because, when you walk for a cause, you get a chance to reflect, to clear your mind, and to think about what you are up against. You can also figure out what it is that you want and how to achieve it. Some AFT 2121 members have already signed up to join the march for a day or two. Will you join us and help turn the course of history, as thousands did with Cesar Chavez in 1966? (croman@ccsf.edu)

We will have a caravan on the following dates:

March 31
April 6
April 21

For more information, call Ed Murray at 415-585-2121.
By Allan Fisher and Rodger Scott

Humberto Montes de Oca and Pipino Cuevas, two leaders of the militant and progressive Mexican Electrical Workers Union (SME), traveled to Northern California for 10 days in February. They spoke at union halls, labor councils, community organizations, and on community college and university campuses. Humberto and Pipino also met with various elected officials and joined a folksinger and poet at a program in the South Bay. At the San Francisco Labor Council event, Humberto described the Mexican military’s takeover in October 2009 of the publicly-owned electrical facilities run by the SME union, which led to the firing of 44,000 workers and freezing the union’s assets. The government is also trying to decertify SME as part of an ongoing agenda to privatize important public institutions and drastically reduce government social spending. Brother Humberto said that Mexican officials had targeted SME partly because of its militant and consistent opposition to NAFTA and to the privatization of public services. Humberto said SME has strong popular support, and that their recent rallies in Mexico City have had as many as 250,000 demonstrators. He spoke of the repression of the workers and the threats against SME’s leaders since the lockout, and described the various union-busting attacks against SME before President Felipe Calderón ordered the military takeover of the public electrical facilities last October.

In spite of these struggles, SME recently organized a demonstration at the U.S. Embassy to express solidarity with undocumented immigrants living in the U.S., and at another massive rally in Mexico City, SME and their allies expressed enthusiastic support for the March 4 actions in California to protest attacks on education and public services.

Unions in California are in similar struggles against extreme budget cuts and recurring privatization schemes. The Delegate Assembly of AFT 2121 expressed solidarity with the heroic SME unionists and made a contribution, as did other public and private-sector unions. The Los Rios Federation of Teachers in Sacramento recently sent a check for $1,500. We admire the courage, integrity and perseverance of our SME sisters and brothers who are in the vanguard of the popular opposition to the Mexican government’s repression of working people at a time when the country is being destabilized by violence associated with the “war on drugs” and the rapidly deteriorating economic and social conditions, especially among the working class.

Getting to spend time with Humberto, who was an artist before becoming a labor organizer, and Pipino, a graduate engineer and animal lover, and hearing them describe in simple human terms the struggle of the Mexican people for dignity and justice encouraged and energized us in the greatest struggle in this country since the 1960s. When one of our activists observed Humberto and Pipino spending so much time on the computer and asked if they were working on their memoirs, Humberto smiled and said they were writing articles, sending emails, and doing research for their presentations, then added that technology is a great asset when it serves the people. (afisher@ccsf.edu, xgtel@prodigy.net)