POUNDERINGS OF THE PRESIDENT
By Laurie Ordin

Earlier this year, as I was considering stepping into this position as UPM president, one of the many things that made me swallow hard was the thought of having to write a monthly column. As most of you know, I’m a math person, and when it comes to having to write an article, just the thought of it makes me appreciate what others must feel when they experience math anxiety. I remember being in college and having to write long papers. What could I possibly go on about for 15 pages? What a relief my mathematics classes were! If I could solve a problem in a minimum number of steps I was considered elegant, not shallow. I quickly realized that being a math major was solving yet another type of problem. I would have to write fewer papers than if I were to choose a major that challenged the other side of my brain.

But here I am, trying to write a column every month and hoping not to bore all of you to tears. Of course if you are anything like I am, you read whatever is sitting in front of you, including cereal boxes and milk cartons. And if you have read this far, maybe you are one of those milk carton readers and I have a captive audience! So what should I do with a captive audience right before a presidential election?

I really don’t think I need to spout off about the presidential candidates. Most people know who they are voting for and it’s pretty certain that all of California’s electoral votes will go to President Obama. We may feel that our votes for the top office don’t count here in California, but at least we can take comfort in knowing that we have been spared the onslaught of nasty campaign ads that have plagued the battleground states.

So let’s go down the ballot. I’m not certain that I am allowed to try to sway you here regarding things political since this newsletter is delivered to your CoM mailboxes, but I feel free to use this column to inform you about a couple of very important ballot measures, Props 30 and 32.

PROPOSITION 30: This proposition raises the personal income tax rate on individuals making more than $250,000 a year and couples making more than $500,000 a year for the next seven years. Just a wild guess, but I’m thinking that not too many of us will be affected by this provision.

(Continued on page two)
(Ponderings continued)

It also raises the state sales tax by a quarter of a cent for four years. Those additional tax dollars would go to K-12 schools and community colleges. The measure also guarantees that local governments will receive a basic level of funding each year to implement realignment. Revenue from Prop. 30 is already built into this year’s budget. IF IT FAILS, EDUCATION AND PUBLIC SAFETY PROGRAMS WOULD LOSE $5.9 BILLION BETWEEN NOW AND NEXT JULY.

PROPOSITION 32: This proposition prohibits unions and certain types of corporations from donating directly, using payroll deductions, to political candidates and ballot measure campaigns. It exempts the largest and fastest growing type of political spending, known as “independent expenditures.” This is the political spending of super PACS, which can raise and spend unlimited amounts. Others exempt from this proposition are big banks, big oil, big insurance, and hedge funds, among others. It is interesting to note that those who are exempt from this proposition are the same groups who put it forward and who are spending huge sums to try to pass it. The measure would specifically restrict unions’ method of fundraising for political purposes, since unions are about the only entities that use payroll deductions from their members to raise money for political causes. Corporations tend to make political donations from their own coffers. The Howard Jarvis Taxpayer Association is among the supporters of this proposition. The League of Women Voters is among the opponents of this proposition.

The following are brief descriptions and CFT recommendations on all of the CA propositions:

PROP 30: YES (See above.)
PROP 31: NO (Locks in underfunding of education.)
PROP 32: NO (See above.)
PROP 33: NO (Raises insurance rates for low-income drivers.)

PROP 34: YES (Ends the death penalty.)
PROP 35: YES (Increases penalties for human trafficking.)
PROP 36: YES (Reforms “3 strikes” law by mandating life sentences only if the third felony offense is “serious or violent,” and reviews current life sentences.)
PROP 37: YES (Labels genetically engineered foods.)
PROP 38: NO POSITION (Alternative K-12 school funding proposal. If both 30 and 38 pass, the higher vote getter will be enacted.)
PROP 39: YES (Ends tax advantages enjoyed by out-of-state corporations, closing a $1 billion tax loophole. These funds can be used to develop alternative energy sources.)
PROP 40: YES (Upholds fair Senate boundaries)

If you would like to read more about these ballot measures, I have found that some very good websites to visit are www.cft2012.org and www.kqed.org (click on state propositions guide.)

As always, stay in touch, stay informed, and stay involved.

AND VOTE!!!!

UPM Newsletter October 2012
The Privatization Agenda

Public education in America is under attack.
The reason for the attack is not because public schools are failing to educate or because of fiscal mismanagement; or even because of monetary shortfalls. The real reason that public education is under attack is because it is a 600 billion-dollar-a-year industry that private investors see as one of the most lucrative investment opportunities in America – one of the last industries in this challenged economy from which huge profits may be gleaned.

As such, venture capitalists and corporate financiers are investing huge sums to convince the public that public education is failing both pedagogically and financially and that a private school system would do better. If their attempt to discredit public education and replace it with a privatized system is successful, their windfall profits will be enormous. So they have mounted a concerted effort to defame public education in order to gain control over this very lucrative public sector.

Their game plan is to use initiatives like “No Child Left Behind,” and “Race to the Top,” to convince taxpayers that public schools and public school teachers are providing an inferior education, and at too high a cost.

With the help of so-called ‘educational reformers’ and media flacks, and with movies like “Waiting for Superman” and “Won’t Back Down” (a cynically contrived critique of teachers’ unions,) they have managed to put public education advocates on the defensive.

But teachers unions are fighting back and are working to defeat the school privatization agenda. And so in order to defeat these union efforts the corporate privateers are attacking faculty unions with ballot measures like Proposition 32, which would restrict unions and their membership from effectively engaging in an anti-privatization struggle. It disallows the collection of union dues for political activities. If Prop 32 passes, faculty will lose their ability to speak against the loss of public education with a unified voice.

The American Federation of Teachers (AFT), CFT, CTA, CSEA, our UPM Executive Council and many other progressive and non-partisan education organizations urge that you VOTE NO ON PROPOSITION 32. Help preserve the right of faculty to engage in protected political speech and defeat a measure that seeks to destroy public education in America. □
UPM BARGAINING UPDATE
John Sutherland, UPM Co-Chief Negotiator

The UPM Bargaining Team has been working hard over the past months to negotiate reopeners that benefit its membership. Among other things, we proposed wage raises, increase Department Chair compensation, temporary employee equity, and a retirement incentive package. The District, to the contrary, wanted nothing to do with increasing wages/compensation or employee equity, and it wanted to reduce medical benefits for part-time unit members. It also wanted to substitute an elaborate, work-intensive evaluation procedure for the perfectly adequate process we currently have.

However, on October 2, 2012, we reached an agreement, which was subsequently ratified by UPM membership on October 13. Though we did not achieve a wage increase, we did find common ground on a retirement incentive deal that benefits all unit members. Details of the agreement and the incentive package can be found on the UPM website at www.unitedprofessorsofmarin.org.

The agreement does much to enhance and maintain the working conditions that we now have. First, it offers an incentive to qualified and dedicated unit members who are considering retirement, and in doing so, it frees up units to our valuable part-timers. Although it allows return rights for retirees (RETCUM status), it limits the number of units that a retiree can teach to six, and then for only two semesters. This arrangement will certainly increase the number of part-time available units throughout the college, as well as reduce overall college costs.

As important, because the agreement rolls over all other proposals by both UPM and the District, it delays the District’s plan to reduce medical benefits to part-timers. In addition, the savings will free up monies for future salary increases for all unit members as well as for continued medical benefits for part-timers. The agreement also puts off the District’s intent to implement a massive change in evaluation, one that would create more time and work for everyone involved, at no additional salary increase.

This round of reopeners has brought to light the District’s plans to reduce benefits and wages while imposing additional work. But your Bargaining Team has fought and succeeded in maintaining fair and favorable working conditions for all unit members.

JOINT STATEMENT FROM COM PRESIDENT COON & UPM PRESIDENT ORDIN

Dear Colleagues:

We are pleased to confirm the Marin Community College District has successfully negotiated an agreement with United Professors of Marin that will incentivize retirement for senior faculty who may have been considering retirement in the near future.

Eligible faculty will be receiving a package in the mail which outlines the details of the Supplemental Employee Retirement Program (SERP), including provisions for special return rights, fringe benefits for retirees, and a timeline for decision making. Please take some time, at your earliest convenience, to consider this offer to see if it would be something that would benefit you. Time is of the essence.

We would hope that the outcome of this agreement will be positive for all of the parties involved.

Best regards,

David Wain Coon, President/Superintendent, College of Marin
Laurie Ordin, President, United Professors of Marin
Oct. 19, 2012
Remembering Colleague and Friend Tony Monteith

1944 -- 2012

Murray Peterson

College of Marin Emeritus Professor Anthony Monteith died unexpectedly at Kaiser Hospital on October 8th. We are deeply saddened by his premature passing. Tony loved life and lived it fully. His 37 years at College of Marin provided a rich legacy; much of which is embodied in the students whose lives he profoundly affected. Tony’s goal was always to facilitate a student’s learning and understanding of mathematics, whether it be in the classroom or in a math lab setting. His consistent objective was to get students to take responsibility for their own learning. As head of our Math Lab for over six years, Anthony spent a good portion of his teaching career in individualized instruction.

Here at College of Marin Tony worked with colleagues on curriculum development, reorganizing the structure of our pre-calculus mathematics sequence. His work included establishing criteria for pre and co-requisite courses.

Anthony’s interests and concern for good mathematics education extended beyond the College of Marin. He was also involved in articulation projects with High Schools and K-12 in our local area. During his teaching career Tony spent time as Department Chair and as a member of the Scholastic Standards Committee where he was committed to maintaining high but fair academic standards. Within the Mathematics Dept. he sponsored a Mathematics Club and coached students competing in statewide mathematics competitions involving the American Mathematical Association of Two Year Colleges (AMATYC). Tony was a dedicated teacher who had a contagious enthusiasm for teaching and learning. He was liked and respected by both students and colleagues. In 1994 he was the recipient of the COM Teaching Excellence Award sponsored by CMC3.

Anthony’s life extended dramatically beyond the classroom. After retiring in 2007 he took up welding and worked on his Land Rover at IVC. He became a competent sailor owning and sailing his 1942 – 32 ft. John Alden sailboat. He and his wife Patty sailed to Hawaii and back in the late 1970’s and he repeated this feat with his nephew in the late 80’s. In recent years Tony and his daughter raced their Pelican. Much of his recent life has revolved around Patty, daughter Brynn, son in-law Fred and their two daughters, Romy and Zola.

Indeed, a rich rewarding life has been cut short, but we all have wonderful memories of Tony, whose face would light up with delight whenever we encountered him. He truly will be missed.
“FOR THE GOOD OF THE ORDER”
A SAMPLING OF MYTH, MIRTH AND MISCELLANY FOR THE UNION FAITHFUL

LAST MONTH’S CRYPTOGRAM
“ZHH DJZD JZETQ HZMSE VQ DEXQSG DS ZTXEVYZ” -Zmezjzt Hygyshg-

A PASSING THOUGHT
At College of Marin, we are expected to treat all our students with respect, dignity and equity, both personally and administratively.

So how come our Career Technical (CTE) students are REQUIRED to take General Education classes in order to receive their A.S. degree, but our General Education (Academic) students are NOT required to take any CTE classes to fulfill THEIR degree requirements?

If the aim of education is to develop “well rounded” people, wouldn’t it help to “round out” our academic students by requiring that they take some CTE classes, just as it “rounds out” our CTE students by requiring that they take GE classes? Don’t technical proficiencies and industrial skills exhibit the same critical thinking competencies that we value and require in “academic” classes?

Or at College of Marin are we following the Big Brother dictum that, all students are created equal, but some students are created less equal than others?

If George Orwell were alive, wouldn’t he be calling this apparent inequity, ELITISM? □

SAVING LIVES
A community college math instructor was writing an algebraic equation on the board when a pre-med student interrupted. “Why do we have to learn this stuff?” the student complained. “To save lives,” the professor answered. The student was quiet for a while and then raised his hand and groused, “So how does math save lives?”

“Math saves lives,” the teacher said, “because it keeps certain people out of medical school.”

“I have always felt that it was important for everyone who was a worker to join a labor organization.”

-- Eleanor Roosevelt
LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Editor:
The September issue of the Union Newsletter contained the following “Passing Thought”:

Most educators would agree that K-12 children learn best in small classes with teachers who have time for personal interaction with their students. So how come, when it comes to Community Colleges, many of these same educators think it’s perfectly okay to have large distance learning classes where instructors have very limited interaction with their students? Does the way one learns really change between the age of eight and eighteen?

In response to the last question posed above, yes, the way one learns really does change between the ages of 8 and 18. As a student progresses through school s/he discovers what learning style(s) work best for them. The way we learn in third grade may lay a broad foundation for learning in general (you have to start with something), but by the time we graduate high school many students have discovered their own personal style.

This provides the answer to the first question posed above. Community colleges have come to realize that students learn in different styles, at different paces with different needs. Distance learning classes are just one option available to students. And as anyone who has taught a DE class knows, it is not necessarily the best option for every student, which is why there are still other choices available.

Readers of this newsletter should also be aware that, at College of Marin, class sizes are determined by our Collective Bargaining Agreement and a DE class does not have a class size larger than its comparable on campus section. Furthermore, lecturing in front of a student is not necessarily a greater interaction. Distance education courses must specify in the course outline on file with the Curriculum Committee the types of interactive communication that are available to the on line student in that particular course. In many instances, the potential for interaction is as great, if not greater than, as it is on campus.

Finally, this publication should not negatively question (if not negative, why ask the question?) teaching modes available to the members of its Union. DE classes not only provide options for students, but they also provide options for faculty.

Ira Lansing
Mathematics Department & DE instructor

EDITOR’S RESPONSE

Whether learning styles change between the age of eight and eighteen as Ira asserts is debatable, however what is hardly debatable is the marked difference in student success rates between face-to-face classes and distance education classes. In a recent five year Washington state study reported in the Chronicle of Higher Education (July 2011), overall student success and completion rates were eight percent higher in face-to-face classes than in DE classes; twelve percent higher in English and math. And In California, Community College Chancellor Jack Scott reported that student success rates were ten percent higher in face-to-face classes than in DE classes, with far fewer dropouts. And here at College of Marin there is a fifteen percent student success rate advantage in our traditional format classes as compared with our DE classes. If student success is a good measure of how one learns, then Distance Education clearly doesn’t measure up to traditional face-to-face instruction.

Our Union supports and defends faculty who teach, or wish to teach DE classes, but there are reasons to be concerned about an expansion of Distance Education at CoM. If you look at the individuals and organizations that are promoting and financing Distance Education in America, it’s apparent that they are less interested in pedagogy or in providing educational choice for students, than they are in privatizing public schools so as to get access to the 600 billion dollars that America spends yearly on public education.

If they are successful, public education will become a relic of the past, and we’ll all eventually be teaching or studying at for-profit Distance Education schools like the University of Phoenix, where faculty have no collective bargaining rights and where their student success rate for graduation in So. California is ~4%.

I don’t believe that these are the kinds of “options,” we should be encouraging at College of Marin.

Arthur Lutz, Editor
UPM Membership Application

I hereby apply for membership in the United Professors of Marin, AFT Local 1610

Date: ________________________ Email: ________________________
Name: ________________________ SS #: ________________________
Address: ________________________ Department: ________________
City: ________________________ Zip: ________________________
Home Phone: ________________________ Campus Ext: ________________

Check the appropriate category:
_____ I am a permanent credit or non-credit employee or leave replacement.
_____ I am a temporary non-credit employee on the quarter system.
_____ I am a temporary credit or non-credit employee on the semester system.

Return to UPM Kentfield campus mailbox or UPM Office, Science Center 136

THE CALIFORNIA FEDERATION OF TEACHERS – AFL/CIO – RECOMMENDS:

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