PONDERINGS OF THE PRESIDENT
By Laurie Ordin

Since taking this job with UPM, the volume of my email has increased, seemingly by orders of magnitude. Much of it is from various people at CFT and AFT. Be thankful that I don’t forward all of it to each of you, but this past month I will try to summarize some important developments that have made their way into my inbox. Most of what follows is excerpted from a piece by Martin Hittelman called ACCJC GONE WILD. This piece was nearly 70 pages long, but I promise to only talk about some of your favorite topics from it...like SLOs!

CFT, the California Federation of Teachers, and other employee unions have recently filed a complaint with the U.S. Department of Education over the actions of a regional accreditor, the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges. College of Marin, as many of us know, is in the area of jurisdiction of the ACCJC, often less than fondly named “Benoland” after the President of the ACCJC, Dr. Barbara Beno. The unions had previously lodged their concerns directly with the commission, which accredits California’s two-year colleges and is an arm of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC.) The unions alleged that the accreditor had acted improperly in slapping a severe sanction, “show cause,” without any previous warning, on City College of San Francisco -- which faces possible closure -- as well as in its oversight of other community colleges. The commission last week rejected those claims, saying it has followed procedures. So the unions this week asked the Education Department to force the commission to respond more fully to the complaint.

Barbara Beno has served as the President of the ACCJC since August of 2001. During her term of office the ACCJC has changed from being a collegial accrediting agency that helps its colleges to satisfy accreditation standards by offering training and assistance to visiting teams and...
college constituencies, to one that issues sanctions with a vengeance. The Commission operates in secret and applies its standards in an arbitrary and inconsistent manner. It disregards the public policies of California. From time to time questions arise regarding conflicts of interest on the part of Commission members and staff. As a result of the secret operations of the Commission, it is difficult to determine who is voting or influencing a vote regarding a particular college’s accreditation.

Beno and the Commission members, have, since Beno took over, conducted a reign of terror in which any sign of disloyalty to the ACCJC or difference with any of their policies is met with threats of more severe sanctions. As one CEO once proclaimed, it is “her way or the highway.” As a result, most college administrators and faculty are afraid to speak out against the excesses of the ACCJC. Even visiting team members have been unwilling to step forward and expose abuses for fear of hurting the chances of their home institutions.

The goal of accreditation, according to the United States Department of Education, “is to ensure that education provided by institutions of higher education meets acceptable levels of quality.” In the Special Edition of the February 2001 ACCJC News it is pointed out that “In achieving and maintaining its accreditation a higher education institution assures the public that the institution meets standards of quality, that the education earned there is of value to the students who earn it, and that employers, trade or professional-related agencies and other colleges and universities can accept a student’s credentials as legitimate.”

The ACCJC does not value colleges for their quality of instruction, but instead the ACCJC issues sanctions that are based on the successful performance of excessive documentation and data gathering, reviews of policy and procedures, and adherence to education practices that are not based on scientific studies. Approaches to evaluation such as Measurable Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs), that are not recognized as model standard practices by the majority of college educators as illustrated by faculty resistance to the imposition of the measurable student learning outcome methodology, are imposed on the colleges using the threat of sanction.

SLO’s are written to describe what specific knowledge and skills a student should have and be able to demonstrate at the conclusion of a course, program, and/or degree. SLO’s are to be used to provide data collection to measure student academic success. The implementation of SLO’s requires considerable work and effort.

The problem with SLO’s in the eyes of many instructors is that they do not lead to better teaching and learning and are a very big waste of time. Instead they tend to lead to a standardized curriculum that does not address the full needs of the students. Such important elements as motivation, critical thinking, interest, creativity, and the ability to learn on one’s own are difficult if not impossible to measure with SLO’s — and thus become less important in the minds of those who would rate educational quality based on SLOs.

34 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 602.10 and 602.13 require that an accrediting agency “must be able to demonstrate that its standards, policies, and accreditation decisions are widely accepted in the United States by educators and educational institutions, licensing bodies (if appropriate), practitioners, and employers of graduates for accredited institutions/programs.” The ACCJC is out of compliance with this fundamental requirement.

The emphasis of ACCJC has not been on the value of the education to the student or to the colleges and universities that would accept the credits earned. Rather it has been on compliance with the ACCJC standards (the majority of which do not directly address the quality of education that students receive).

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CONNECTING THE DOTS
News and Opinion
by Arthur Lutz

ORNAMENT and CRIME

In 1910 the Austrian architect, Adolf Loos gave a controversial talk in Vienna entitled Ornament and Crime in which he decried the use of decorative features and surface ornamentation that adorned most buildings in Vienna at the time – features that he felt had no functional rationale other than to disguise the lack of coherent design and line the pockets of establishment architects.

It was a speech that had a great influence on younger and more idealistic architects and designers and was echoed in the ideology of the Bauhaus, the art and architecture movement that embraced a similar philosophy that the form of a building or a useful object should be mediated by its function.

The influence of Loos and the Bauhaus on design aesthetics can’t be overemphasized. Practically all modern architecture and industrial design pays homage to their dictum that “less is more” and that extraneous surface “embellishments” are both unnecessary and are often employed to obscure deficiencies in design.

In the area of Education, it’s too bad that modern educators haven’t arrived at the same conclusion – that extraneous pedagogical “embellishments” do not contribute to the goal of successful learning, but often hide more serious structural defects and are, in fact, often self-serving attempts by an establishment elite to promote their pedagogic hegemony.

I’m speaking of the pedagogical features that are being promoted by those in the “school reform movement” – features like school-vouchers, and merit-pay, and high-stakes-testing, and standardized-curricula, and two-tier-education, and distance-learning MOOCs, and charter-schools and SLOs etc. etc – features which, like the surface ornamentation on Viennese buildings, have little or no functional value, but are used to obscure deeper structural inadequacies in our educational system and serve to maintain elite control over our schools.

When Adolf Loos titled his speech “Ornament and Crime” he was suggesting that it was “criminal” to waste huge sums of money and labor on gewgaws and gargoyles and gingerbread and other architectural decorations that would soon go out of style – money that could have been better utilized for more important features like larger floor plans, or better detailing, or higher quality construction, or habitat that would be more affordable.

So how much money and labor-time has our college been forced to spend on the pedagogical “gargoyles” promoted by the “school reformers” in WASC, so that we might preserve our accreditation and they might maintain their pedagogic hegemony?

Wouldn’t the several hundred thousand that we spent in direct and indirect costs have better served our students if we had used it for additional class offerings or expanded counseling and library services?

It’s unfortunate that our college has been turned into ‘enablers’ of a disingenuous “school reform” agenda that does little for student learning and is out to destroy public education and eliminate our good union jobs.
WEINGARTEN

UPM offers its congratulations to all our newly hired faculty!

College of Marin is a great place to work and we hope that your tenure here will be rewarding, of long duration, and without untoward incident.

But as in any workplace, there may be times, because of misunderstandings or failures of communication, or for less benign reasons, that problems will arise with your supervisor. And because your supervisor has the right to evaluate you and recommend disciplinary action, situations might arise that can be troublesome and potentially job threatening.

Hopefully these situations will be rare, but if they do occur, UPM can advise you as to your contractual rights and responsibilities and help you resolve problems.

This is an important service and you should take advantage of it if needed. In 1975 The United States Supreme Court (NLRB v. Weingarten, Inc.) recognized the rights of employees to have union representation at any “investigatory interview” which an employee believed might result in disciplinary action.

These rights are known as Weingarten rights.

So if your dean or supervisor calls you for an interview regarding a matter that you have reason to believe might result in disciplinary action or other adverse consequences, you should assert your Weingarten right to have your Union Grievance Officer present at the hearing.

But YOU must assert this right – Management is not obligated to inform you of your Weingarten rights.

Once asserted however, management must honor your request and suspend the interview until your union representative is present, or they are guilty of an “unfair labor practice” and subject to penalties. If management denies your request, you may refuse to answer any questions. You cannot be disciplined for such a refusal.

When your union rep appears, he/she must: (1) be told the nature of the interrogation, (2) be allowed a private pre-interview conference with you before the questioning begins, (3) be allowed to speak and provide information at the hearing, and, (4) be allowed to give you advice on how to respond to questions.

Hopefully, you will never be faced with this kind of distressing situation, and although you are not required to have the assistance of a union rep at an investigative hearing, we believe that if you are directed to appear at one, you would be well advised to assert your Weingarten rights to have your union representative or grievance officer there to assist you.

Our UPM grievance officer is John Sutherland. Please call our union office to make contact with him if you need his advice or support or assistance at a hearing. 459-1524

All contacts with UPM are confidential. □

For further information on Weingarten see: http://www.berrylegal.com/legal-articles/pdf/weingarten-rights-for-employees.pdf

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WEINGARTEN RIGHTS

“If this discussion could in any way lead to my being disciplined or terminated, or affect my personal working condition, I respectfully request that my union representative or steward be present at the meeting. Without representation, I choose not to answer any questions.”
While not entirely comparable to our work and pay situation at College of Marin, this blog from the Huffington Post might open the eyes of our Trustees as they negotiate with us for our new contract.

ARE TEACHERS OVERPAID?
By Rob Furman
Elementary Principal, Author

This is a question that is always up for debate. Of course, if you ask teachers and people in the educational world, they will say that teachers are not only NOT overpaid, they are drastically underpaid. Other people who are not directly related to the world of education would probably say that they get paid enough or too much. The common reason given for people believing that teachers are overpaid is that they do not work summers and weekends and still retain a "decent" salary.

So how does one begin to debate this all too familiar question? My wife and I recently looked into hiring a nanny to look after our four-year-old. This started my thinking about the similarities between nannies and teachers. I decided to do a comparison. Typically nannies are not responsible for the education of the child. They are more responsible for the general well-being and safety of the child, which is only one part of a teacher's job. But just for comparison purposes we will use these two groups.

At the National Center for Education Statistics, the average salary for a full time public school teacher in 2010-2011 was $56,069. The average teacher class size as of 2009 was 15 students. It also seems logical to assume that most teachers receive health insurance even though it was not stated by the National Center for Education Statistics. The average health insurance in our district is $400-$500 a month for an individual. So include an additional $6,000 on top of that salary which brings it to $62,069 including health insurance for an eight hour day, 180 days. I do realize that most teachers now work over the 180 day mandate, but this is not formal research so we will use the 180 day calendar.

There is an organization called the International Nanny Association which was very helpful in finding the following information. The national average for a babysitting (nanny) assignment is $16.00 per hour. Typically this hourly wage will fluctuate based on how many children the nanny is watching. This hourly wage seems to be based on a maximum of three children. Also according to the International Nanny Association, many full time nannies receive full health coverage or at least 50 percent coverage. So that would include an additional $3,000-$6,000 for health care.

So now let's compare. If a nanny had 15 children, based on the three children per $16 per hour formula, for eight hours a day for 180 days (which excludes summers and weekends) they would make $115,200 base salary. For this example, we will use only half health care coverage at $3,000. The nanny's annual average salary would be $118,200.

The teacher's average salary for the same 15 students for eight hours a day for 180 days is $62,069. As you can see, this is less than half of what a nanny makes. According to the statistics from the National Center for Education Statistics and the International Nanny Association, it appears to me that the teacher is far from overpaid.

Teachers wear many hats. They are the educators, the nurses, the psychologists, the confidants, and so many times the only caring parent. There is a term that every teacher learns in school, In loco parentis, which means in the place of the parent. So the next time you consider if teachers are overpaid, ask yourself if parenting was a job, how much should you be paid? As both an educator and a parent, I can say without a doubt that there is not enough money in the world to ensure that my child is safe and educated by a great teacher because for eight hours a day that teacher takes my place as the parent and I can't even begin to show my full appreciation. □
The California Community Colleges Student Success Scorecard was just recently released for the cohort that has been tracked for six years through 2011-12. Many of the colleges which ranked highest in the various categories have recently been given sanctions by the ACCJC. Other colleges with low ranking have not. One typical example is City College of San Francisco. CCSF ranked fourth among the colleges in the state in the percentage of students who were underprepared for college but still achieved 30 units of transfer work over the six years tracked. It is clear from looking at the scores at the various colleges that the ACCJC has not successfully developed a methodology for considering academic quality and success. The scores on the California Community College Student Success Scorecard can be found on the California Community College website.

According to their own published report, the following are the reasons given for the ACCJC sanctions of January 2012:

- Six colleges did not have adequate procedures and did not appropriately implement program review of instructional programs and services.
- Twenty colleges failed to meet requirements regarding the use of assessment results in integrated planning.
- Twenty colleges were sanctioned for deficiencies in governing board roles and responsibilities; seven of these were colleges in multi-college districts where the key deficiencies were in district governing board operations.
- Fourteen colleges lacked appropriate and sustainable financial management. [It is increasingly impossible to achieve sustainable financial management when you are continually being starved of the necessary funds to run a quality college – this is my own observation, but not too profound.]
- Thirty colleges had miscellaneous other deficiencies, primarily related to staffing, library and technology resources, and evaluations.

Most recently, the ACCJC has entered a stage of micro-managing of district-level operations through sanctions on the colleges of multi-college districts. This includes attempting to dictate to college governing boards how they should operate and how district chancellors should operate in relation to local college presidents. It has even gotten to the point where Beno is calling college presidents and district chancellors on the telephone and demanding changes be made immediately or harsh sanctions will follow.

From 2003 to 2008 the six United States regional accrediting bodies issued a total of 126 sanctions to community colleges in the United States. 112 of these were issued by the ACCJC under Beno’s direction. ACCJC has continued to be out of step with the other accrediting agencies. Most recently, from June 2011 to June 2012 the ACCJC issued forty-eight of the seventy-five sanctions (64%) issued nationwide. The community colleges in California represent about 19% of the community colleges accredited nationally. In short, 19% of the colleges under ACCJC generated 64% of the sanctions. Clearly, something is rotten in Benoland... and we, my dear colleagues, work in Benoland.

So stay in touch, stay informed, and stay involved.

"YES, WE FIGHT FOR BREAD–BUT WE FIGHT FOR ROSES TOO.” – Bread and Roses – The slogan of the women who struck the Lawrence textile mills in 1912 and fought for higher wages and a more humane workplace.
ON JUNE NINETEENTH 1865 UNION SOLDIERS LANDED AT GALVESTON, TEXAS WITH NEWS THAT THE CIVIL WAR HAD ENDED AND THAT ALL THOSE WHO WERE ENSLAVED WERE NOW FREE. THE FORMER RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MASTERS AND SLAVES WOULD HENCEFORTH TO BE ONE BETWEEN EMPLOYER AND FREE LABORER.

The news arrived two and a half years after President Lincoln had signed the Emancipation Proclamation and there is evidence that the delay was because the news was deliberately withheld by the slave masters so that they might maintain their labor force on the plantations a while longer.

But when the news did arrive there was great jubilation, and June nineteenth (Juneteenth) continues to be celebrated in African-American communities as a day to celebrate the Emancipation Proclamation, and to honor those who endured the cruelties of slavery.

As of June 2012, forty-two U.S. States (including California) and the District of Columbia have recognized Juneteenth as either a state holiday or a special day of observance. This month there have been celebrations of Juneteenth throughout the Bay Area. □

REFRESHING TALK FROM A U.S. SENATOR – BORN ON JUNE 22ND

There is nobody in this country who got rich on their own. Nobody. You built a factory out there - good for you. But I want to be clear. You moved your goods to market on roads the rest of us paid for. You hired workers the rest of us paid to educate. You were safe in your factory because of police forces and fire forces that the rest of us paid for. You didn't have to worry that marauding bands would come and seize everything at your factory... Now look. You built a factory and it turned into something terrific or a great idea - God bless! Keep a hunk of it. But part of the underlying social contract is you take a hunk of that and pay forward for the next kid who comes along.”

— Elizabeth Warren (Ed. – Don’t students qualify as “the next kid who comes along”?)

HELEN KELLER

Born on June 27th, Helen Keller was a member of the American Socialist Party. She fought for universal suffrage declaring, “I am a militant suffragist because I believe suffrage will lead to socialism, and to me socialism is the ideal cause.” She joined the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) and in 1919 took part in a strike called by Actor’s Equity—joining the picket line against the debut of the film Deliverance, a film about her own life. Not only did she join the picket line, she also spoke at the union’s strike meetings in support of their dispute with management declaring, “I would rather have the film fail than aid management in their struggle with the players.”
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