PONDERINGS OF THE PRESIDENT
By Laurie Ordin

We, as teachers, think a lot about quality education. It seems like it’s on the minds of everyone else these days, too. Politicians, educational consultants, and corporate leaders seem to be leading the way these days, dictating the ways that schools can be improved. High stakes testing and eliminating the influence of teachers’ unions are remedies that are right at the top of their lists. Rewarding schools for high scores and punishing, even closing down, schools with low scores seems to be the rule of the day. I wonder how many of these same politicians, consultants and corporate leaders have ever spent a few years in the classroom. The people I know who work for some of these consulting firms have PhDs or EdDs in education, but most of them have never taught, except for a summer program here or a year there.

Of course, parents want the best education possible for their children, and may spend a great deal of money trying to guarantee that. Some send their children to private schools. Others stretch their budgets as far as they can to live in neighborhoods with good public schools. The questions then become:

Where are these good public schools and why are not all of the public schools good public schools? The answers, as far as I can tell, are that the good public schools are in the wealthier neighborhoods and that privilege brings resources to those schools.

Lack of privilege brings with it challenges that make it difficult, if not impossible, for parents to advocate for their children either with their voices or with their checkbooks. I remember getting letters instructing parents about the registration process that took place for each of our children at the beginning of every year. The instructions included the mandate to bring our checkbooks, which would be opened wide and often at each registration station. >>
There were stations for art, music, athletics, PTA, and supplemental foreign language instruction, among others. At the last station we were presented with our child’s program schedule. Auctions, progressive dinners, house tours and other fundraisers brought in additional funds to enhance the education of the children of our district. I recall working at one of a number of house tours, standing guard in the magnificent living room of one of the houses, presumably to make certain that nothing was removed by any of the guests. I would think to myself that I wonder how many parents in the Richmond or Oakland school districts would be opening their homes (if they had a home) so that people could pay $40 a head to take a peek. How many of them have jobs? How many of them are minimum wage jobs? Is that enough to feed their children? Do their children come to school hungry? Do some of the parents even have the energy, after taking multiple buses to and from work, to come to talk to their child’s teacher about his/her progress, or more likely, the lack thereof?

While I’m sure that it is true that we have real problems about education quality, and that some of that can be traced to teachers who could do a better job, it seems to me that we should be spending much more time considering the effects of poverty on our children’s educations and their futures. If we must look at this from a self-interest perspective, these are the children who will be taking care of us as a society as we age.

I don’t think that it is a coincidence that as union participation in this country has been drastically diminished, the chasm between rich and poor has become enormous, the middle class is becoming a thing of the past, and we can see this reflected in the inequality of our schools. The educational success of children, in general, is proportionate to the financial health of the families from which the children come.

It is dysfunctional for a society to have such drastic contrasts between classes of citizens. These contrasts are the makings of revolution. When I talk to people from Northern Europe, they scratch their heads and ask me what is wrong with us. They wonder how we can think that we live in a land that values “liberty and justice for all.” They ask, “Where is the justice?” They live in societies that, for the most part, believe that food, housing, quality healthcare and education are basic human rights. They look at us and see people who feel that if someone is poor, it’s because she/he deserves to be poor.

I think that union participation is a step in the right direction toward creating a more caring society. After all, isn’t that what it means when we band together for the common good? Let us do our small part in this lovely corner of the world. Let’s work together for fair working conditions and compensation so that families can provide the resources and energy that their children need to support their educations. Perhaps children who are well fed, well housed and healthy will have better Student Learning Outcomes.

As always, stay in touch, stay informed, and stay involved. □
In the late 1800s, Wilhelm von Osten a German high-school math teacher began parading a horse around Germany that he claimed had mathematical intelligence. The horse could use his hoof to tap out numbers written on a blackboard and even respond to verbal questions. If asked the square root of twenty-five the horse would tap five times. He could identify days of the week and spell out people’s names using taps to indicate letters of the alphabet, one tap for A, two taps for B, etc. Von Osten called his horse “Clever Hans” and he became a sensation and drew large crowds of curious onlookers.

But there were many skeptics, so Germany’s Board of Education established the “Hans Commission” to investigate. The commission included two zoologists, a psychologist, a horse trainer, several school teachers and a circus manager. After extensive study they concluded that there was no trickery or collusion involved.

The Hans Commission then turned the investigation over to a psychologist named Oskar Pfungst who soon discovered that Hans was only successful if: (1) Hans had an unobstructed view of the questioner, and (2) if the questioner knew the answer to the question that Hans was being asked. So Pfungst concluded that although there might be no collusion, Hans was probably responding to subtle body language cues transmitted by the questioner.

If an answer required five taps, the questioner’s body position unconsciously changed after the fifth tap, and Hans would perceive this and respond accordingly by stopping his tapping.

Today the term “Clever Hans Effect” is used to describe the influence that a questioner’s subliminal signals have upon a subject. So in modern scientific research the “double blind” method is used, where the researcher and the subject are both unaware of details of the experiment until after the results are recorded.

Perhaps it is the Clever Hans Effect that explains why our administration is so successful in persuading members of our faculty that cuts in our instructional program are needed to save our school. It’s not a matter of trickery, but rather their subtle suggestions that faculty (especially adjuncts) might not have jobs come 2014 unless we all agree to downsize. In other words, keep our mouths shut and accept the financial analysis presented to us by our Vice-President for College Operations. And certainly don’t think of asking for a pay raise in our upcoming contract.

Some of us in UPM are skeptical. So maybe, like in Germany, we need a kind of Hans Commission to study whether the signals coming from our Administration are bogus. We can call our commission the Harrison Commission and it should investigate whether the Clever Al Effect is making fools of us all. □ A.L.

There are subtle suggestions that faculty might not have jobs come 2014 unless we all agree to downsize.
I would respectfully implore the President, Vice-President and Deans not to proceed with the proposed plan of reducing both the Fall 2013 and the Spring 2014 instructional credit program by a total of 70 classes or more than 210 units. We have reached a point where we are moving beyond the reduction of specific classes to undermining disciplines, programs, and the abilities of a significant number of our students to graduate and transfer in a timely manner.

At the beginning of the Fall semester 2012 we were notified that we would need to make reductions in instructional expenditures to place our expenses in line with anticipated revenues. Using the data that was presented to us by Administration we met and configured instructional reductions that would resolve income shortfalls. As a result of several dialogues departments were asked to eliminate instructional units from both the Spring 2013 and the Summer 2013 course offerings. We were informed that the severance package for certificated staff would also reduce our financial liabilities.

Now we find ourselves less than 6 months later attempting to undergo the same process and make further and deeper cuts in our instructional program. At the department chairs meeting of January 19th President Coon presented a wealth of data that outlined income and expenses and offered a variety of options for how reductions might be made.

The reduction of 70 credit classes over the next academic year will “gut” both course offerings and disciplines. This level of course reduction will make it more complicated for students to complete their academic programs at College of Marin. There is a good chance that courses offered in the early mornings, late afternoons and evenings will be reduced. Disciplines that currently offer multiple sections of courses will be reduced to fewer options. In the process of reducing options for courses we will impact those students who have the least amount of flexibility with their schedule. By offering fewer sections of transfer and graduation courses the enrollment in those courses offered will rise and class sizes will be bigger – complicating the lack of large classrooms on campus.

How much can be saved by not filling open positions in the non-instructional area? If there are to be criteria for instructional reductions there should also be criteria for non-instructional reductions. If we have reduced instructional units for 2013 – 2014 then there should be reductions for non-instructional expenditures.

The overwhelming burden of reduction should be placed on the non-instructional management side of the ledger. During the last year we have had two Vice-Presidents who were hired and then released. We have spent additional monies on the College of Marin Foundation process and on contract services to complete the accreditation process for WASC. In many cases these tasks should have been completed by existing College of Marin staff.

Throughout these last several years of the WASC process it has been without question the faculty and the classified staff that have worked long hours, often without compensation, to make sure that College of Marin was in compliance. The faculty and staff are the ground floor of why College of Marin is free from the anxiety of negative WASC actions. We should not bear the heavy load of deeper and onerous reductions. Ultimately the burden of cuts falls on our students – our clients. We owe it to them to do everything possible to ensure that our Community College works in their best interests.

Let’s be fair and work together with transparency and vision to ensure that we do not take the “community” out of community colleges. □
CONNECTING THE DOTS
News and Opinion
by Arthur Lutz

LEONARDO’S BLUNDER

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everybody makes mistakes. Even the great Leonardo made blunders.

When Leonardo Da Vinci painted his Last Supper (1495-1498), rather than painting on wet plaster with water-based egg tempera (a technique that had been used successfully since antiquity,) Leonardo decided to work on a dry wall using oil-tempera, a newer technique that yielded more brilliant colors but was not time-tested. It was an unfortunate decision. Within fifty years, the mural lost its vibrancy and started to flake, so that today, despite numerous attempts at restoration (some quite ruinous) most of the splendor and detail in Leonardo’s masterpiece is lost. Sometimes, newer approaches and techniques do not work as well as older practices that have successfully stood the test of time.

The online giant Yahoo seems to have come to this same conclusion because just last month they decided to reverse their policy of letting their employees telecommute, and have reverted to their former successful practice of requiring all employees to do their work in company’s offices.

In a memo explaining their return to their former practice, Yahoo’s CEO said, “face-to-face interaction among employees fosters a more collaborative culture.”

California Community Colleges might follow the lead of Yahoo and also preserve the time tested pedagogical practices that have proven successful for centuries, i.e. face-to-face instruction, rather than trendy online, distance-learning. As Robert Samuels expressed it in his essay titled, “Being Present” (Inside Higher Education, 1-24-13); “The idea of anytime, anywhere education defeats the purpose of having a community of scholars engaged in a shared learning experience. [It] undermines the social nature of education; the end result is that not only are students studying and bowling alone, but they are being seduced by a libertarian ideology that tells them that only the individual matters.”

The attrition rate in online classes is significantly higher than in face-to-face classes. Some Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) offered by Harvard, Princeton and Stanford, have dropout rates of 90%.

But besides questions of pedagogical effectiveness, online education can also have negative impacts on faculty. Some MOOCs have many thousands of students enrolled, so it’s an easy and convenient way for administrators to eliminate teaching positions.

While our UPM Contract establishes parity for class-size maximums in online and f-f classes; and while there has been no suggestion that our District intends to significantly expand our online offerings at this time, we should be alert to the possibility, and to the potential downside for our faculty (as well as for our students).

Judging from the present condition of the Last Supper, the great da Vinci was probably hasty when he decided to use new and untested painting techniques. When it comes to online education at College of Marin, let’s not repeat Leonardo’s mistake. □
Thursday, March 8th is observed throughout the world as **International Women’s Day** – a day to show solidarity with women’s struggles for economic, political, and social justice.

It was started in 1919 by European Socialist parties but was first observed as a popular event in the U.S. after 1977 when the UN General Assembly invited member states to proclaim March 8 as the UN day for women’s rights.

Even before 1977, however, there were many American women fighting against employment discrimination and unequal pay, and were organizing workers in the struggle for a more equitable workplace.

One of these women was **Elizabeth Gurley Flynn** the great IWW activist feminist labor leader who inspired hundreds of thousands of working men and women as they fought against injustice and discrimination. She died in 1967, but not before Joe Hill wrote his ballad “**Rebel Girl**” in her honor.

Flynn was born in 1890 in Concord, New Hampshire and educated at local public schools. When she was sixteen she gave her first speech, “**What Socialism Will Do for Women**”, for which she was expelled from high school.

She became a full time organizer for the **Industrial Workers of the World** and organized campaigns among garment workers, silk weavers, miners, and restaurant workers. Theodore Dreiser described her as “an East Side Joan of Arc”. She was arrested ten times for labor activism but never convicted.

In 1920 she was a founding member of the **American Civil Liberties Union** and was active in the campaign to free Sacco and Vanzetti.

During WW II she played an important role in the campaign for equal opportunity and pay for women and the establishment of child care centers for working mothers. In 1942, she ran for Congress in New York and received 50,000 votes.

In July 1948, Flynn and a dozen American Communist Party leaders were arrested and accused of violating the **Smith Act** by advocating the overthrow of the US government by force and violence. She spent two years in Federal prison.

Gurley Flynn died in 1964, 74 years old. She is buried in Chicago’s Waldheim Cemetery near the graves of her activist comrades Eugene Dennis, Bill Haywood and the Haymarket Riot martyrs. A life well lived.

During her time in federal prison Gurley Flynn wrote the following:

> "History has a long-range perspective. It ultimately passes stern judgment on tyrants and vindicates those who fought, suffered, were imprisoned, and died for human freedom, against political oppression and economic slavery."

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**Words & Music by Joe Hill**

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**MARCH 8 – INTERNATIONAL WOMEN’S DAY**
THE REBEL GIRL
by Joe Hill

There are women of many descriptions
In this queer world, as everyone knows,
Some are living in beautiful mansions,
And are wearing the finest of clothes.
There are blue blooded queens and princesses,
Who have charms made of diamonds and pearl;
But the only and thoroughbred lady
Is the Rebel Girl.

(Chorus)
That’s the Rebel Girl, That’s the Rebel Girl.
To the working class she’s a precious pearl.
She brings courage, pride and joy
To the fighting Rebel Boy
We’ve had girls before, but we need some more
In the Industrial Workers of the World.
For it’s great to fight for freedom
With a Rebel Girl.

(Written for Elizabeth Gurley Flynn)
DEAN JOKES

Dean was filling in for a biology professor and giving a lecture on William Harvey and the circulation of blood. Trying (with some difficulty) to explain the subject he said:

"Now students, if I stood on my head, the blood would run into it and I would turn red in the face, right?"

"Yes", the class agreed.

"Then why is it that when I am standing upright the blood doesn't run into my feet?"

"Because" one student replied, "your feet aren't empty."

AND THEN THERE'S THE ONE ABOUT...

The tourist who was visiting an island inhabited entirely by cannibals. And he came upon a butcher shop which sold human brains, priced according to their source.

The sign in the shop read:

Student Brains: $9 per pound
Faculty Brains: $12 per pound
Department Chair's Brains: $15 per pound
Deans' Brains: $75 per pound

After reading the sign the tourist said to the butcher, "Wow, Aren't those Dean's brains a bit overpriced?"

To which the butcher replied "Are you kidding?! Do you know how many Deans you have to kill to get a pound of brains.

UPM STAFF AND COMMITTEES 2012 - 2013

Vice-President Hubert H. Humphrey
On March 14th, a few representatives of the College of Marin community crossed the Golden Gate Bridge on our way to the San Francisco Civic Center at the request of a group called Save CCSF. At about the same time, students, faculty and staff from City College of San Francisco were marching through the streets to the San Francisco City Hall, and groups from other nearby colleges were starting to converge on the same point. When we got there, we formed an energetic crowd of about 2000 people concerned not only about the future of City College, but about the future of public education in general in our region, state and nation.

The immediate cause for concern should not surprise anyone at COM. The Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC) had issued a sanction to CCSF. However, the treatment of CCSF was particularly harsh. In July, 2012, it issued a “show cause” order to the college, giving it only 8 months to respond. There were certainly financial concerns, but help seemed to be on the way.

As people did at COM, people at CCSF worked to help pass Proposition 30. However, in addition, in an indication of strong popular support for the college, in November of 2012 the people of San Francisco passed a parcel tax by a majority of 73% to help the college avoid cutting classes and laying off teachers. The March 14th march and rally were a vigorous response to the recent announcement that the college would still cut classes and lay off teachers.

A series of passionate speakers at the rally pointed out the connections between their personal experiences and the overall attack on public education that is now underway in the United States. They emphasized that an attack on one school is part of an attack on all schools. Since City College is one of the largest colleges in the country, it makes sense that we should all pay attention to what is happening there. Several student organizers explained how City College had been the bridge between hopelessness and bright futures for themselves and their families. Faculty recounted how they had been told in negotiations that free or low-cost public education was simply not a priority anymore – at least nowhere as much as bailing out banks or fueling the war machine. Even one of the members of the Board of Trustees added his voice to the protest.

Yet perhaps the most useful information for those of us who are not at CCSF came from the person who had traveled the farthest to be there. Debby Pope came as a representative of the Chicago Teachers’ Union. She shared with everyone her insight into how her union had won its recent strike with overwhelming community support, even from most of the parents of their students. She said that they had laid the groundwork years before by asking many different individuals and organizations in the community what their concerns were and how the Chicago teachers could help them. This was followed by years of collaborative work that built the strength that counted when times got tough.

Yes, we would do well to ask what issues in Marin could benefit from our closer attention and which individuals and groups could benefit from our help. But we can also look across the bridge and help our fellow community college. Another rally is scheduled for April 14th. More information can be found at SaveCCSF.org.

SOLIDARITY
UPM MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

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

Name: _________________________    SS#: ______________________________
Address: _______________________    City: ________________    Zip: ___________
Date: __________________________    Email: _____________________________
Home Phone: _____________________    Campus Ext: _______

Check the appropriate category:
___ I am a permanent credit or non-credit employee or leave replacement
___ I am a temporary credit or non-credit employee on the semester system
___ I am a Community Education instructor

Return to the UPM mailbox or to the UPM Office, TB-124.
And please make sure you have completed the UPM payroll deduction option, in Human Resources.

Please Note: Unless you have filled out the above UPM Membership Application, you are only paying a representation fee and you are not entitled to UPM’s full membership benefits.