

Looking Forward

A game changer for Hancock faculty



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- By Mark James Miller
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In my column last year, (Lots At Stake As Bargaining Begins, Jan. 28, 2017) I stated that achieving “parity” with our full-time colleagues at Allan Hancock College has long been the *raison d’etre* of the Part-Time Faculty Association, (PFA) and would play a significant role as both sides sat down to begin discussion of the 2017-20 collective bargaining agreement.

The negotiations were concluded Nov. 7 of last year, and the PFA made significant headway toward achieving that goal, as well as making a number of other improvements to the contract.

With the agreement of both sides, parity is now defined as 81 percent of a full-time workload, up from 76 percent, preparation time is now officially acknowledged, the number of people covered by the collective bargaining agreement has been increased, and most important of all, a new classification for part-time instructors has been created — associate faculty.

The Part-Time Faculty Association of Allan Hancock College represents all part-time academic workers at the college, instructors, counselors, librarians, certified nursing assistants and all service employees.

In recent negotiations, the bargaining unit was expanded to cover assistant athletic coaches who heretofore had not had any representation. As they are now part of PFA, they will be protected by the PFA collective bargaining

agreement and will now be contributing to the State Teachers Retirement System. The same also applies to instructors who are temporarily teaching over the .67-percent maximum teaching load allowed for part-time instructors.

Another gain for part-time instructors is the low-enrollment option. Typically, if a class has less than 15 students enrolled by the week before classes begin, it will be cancelled. Under the low-enrollment option, if the instructor and administration agree, the class can go forward and the instructor will be paid at a reduced rate proportional to the number of students enrolled. For example, if there are 10 students enrolled, the instructor would be paid two-thirds of his/her normal salary.

The most significant change to the collective bargaining agreement is the newly-created associate faculty classification and title that will apply to long-term, part-time instructors if they meet the qualifications and they elect to assume it.

Hancock President Kevin Walthers said, “Over the past five years, Allan Hancock College has worked to acknowledge the contributions from our part time faculty in a number of areas, including creating a pay system that is equitable in relation to full-time faculty. Associate faculty status builds on that concept by recognizing the contributions of those who have been with us over the years.”

Walthers’ words are echoed by Human Resources Director Kelly Underwood: “Allan Hancock College is proud of its history of recognizing the contributions and success of its faculty, staff and students. The associate faculty program is another example.”

Part-time instructors who meet the requirements for associate-faculty status will have their teaching load guaranteed from semester to semester, something that has never existed before, they will realize a 6.56-percent increase in pay as well as an additional step on the salary schedule.

The establishment of the associate faculty position is an important step forward for the part-time instructors at Hancock College and for the college district. It will give part-time instructors of the future an incentive to remain at Hancock, and it also recognizes the importance of their work.

The Board of Trustees and administration deserve to be commended for their willingness to initiate such an important change in how part-time faculty is perceived. Working together, the PFA and the administration have broken new ground for the betterment of all concerned.

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