

From: Theresa Jeffries

Attending the Conference on Collective Bargaining and learning so much more.

Recently the National Center for the Study of Collective Bargaining in Higher Education and the Professions (NCSCBHEP) held their annual conference in New York City. This year's conference title was "Joint Labor/Management Meeting: Academic Bargaining in an Era of Constraint." Speakers included Dennis Van Rockel, the President of National Education Association (NEA); Randi Weingarten, President of the American Federation of Teachers (AFT); Garrick Utley, President of The Levin Institute and longtime broadcast journalist; and many other speakers in numerous worthwhile breakout sessions scheduled over the course of two days. Sessions I attended included *Representing Contingent Faculty: Can Separate be Equal?*, *Negotiations 101, 102*, *At the Table: Bargaining during Tough Times*, *Strategies and Trade-Offs*, and *The Economic Crisis: Health Care Impacts*.

Choosing sessions to attend was complicated by the quality of sessions competing against each other. While I anticipated I would attend the two presentations on negotiation, I waited until I was there to determine my other sessions. Attending the session on contingent faculty was prompted by my curiosity about how part-time faculty is represented at other campuses nationally and what kinds of issues are recognized regarding the needs of this population. The healthcare session proved heated as some presenters from the health insurance industry rubbed the crowd the wrong way by suggesting that medical care is a privilege abused by some insured unnecessarily using too much of it; audience members quickly rallied. I had many people approach me afterward because of a comment I made about the amount of power we could have to negotiate healthcare if nationally all college and university employees could go to the table as a cohesive bargaining unit. The session *Bargaining Through Tough Times* proved quite entertaining as one of the panelists, Stanley Aronowitz, a longtime union icon declared "transparency describes cellophane, not bargaining!"

Overall this was an extremely informative and engaging experience. While I am not yet ready to actively participate in future negotiations, at least the conference left me with a better idea of what occurs, what to expect, and offered a valuable opportunity to learn more. I would like to thank the 4Cs for providing this opportunity. I would also like to extend a special note of appreciation to Mr. Richard Boris, President of NCSCBHEP, and Michelle Savarese of NCSCBHEP who both made me feel welcome and well cared for.