

# Congress Chronicles

News from the Congress of Connecticut Community Colleges, SEIU Local 1973 • Spring 2010



**Making Political Choices:** 400 members from state employee unions heard from Connecticut's gubernatorial candidates. (See story page 5) Above: 4C's staff Bob Reutenauer listens as Mary Glassman addresses concerns about the cost of higher education. Right: John McNamarra (CCC), Donald Rogers (HCC) and Herb Gerjuoy (TXCC Retiree) are among those amused by Ned Lamont's remarks. Below: Union members applaud Dan Malloy's pledge to fight privatization.



Photos by Matt O'Connor, CSEA

Teaching Paralegals,  
Promoting Respect, and  
more member activities

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Exploring Options for  
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## Congress Chronicles



**Congress of Connecticut  
Community Colleges**

SEIU LOCAL 1973

907 Wethersfield Ave., Hartford, CT 06114  
phone: (860) 296-5172 • fax: (860) 296-6219  
e-mail: info@the4cs.org • web: the4cs.org

*Editor: Mary Van Buren*

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# ActionCalendar

## Delegate Assembly

*Sat., May 8, 10:30 am to 12:30 pm*

*4C's Office, Hartford*

Delegate Assemblies are open to all 4C's members. Join us for discussions of current issues affecting members, our profession, and our system.

## Membership Celebration

*Friday, May 14, 6:30 to 10:30 pm*

*Grand Ballroom, Foxwoods Casino*

Join your colleagues for great food and great fun. Save the date! More information will be sent out soon.



### 4C's Seeks Candidates for Union Comptroller

The Executive Board and Delegate Assembly will select the union's Comptroller at their May meeting. The President and the Finance Committee will nominate candidate(s) for the position.

**Members interested in being considered for the post should send their name and qualifications to 4C's President Steve Cohen by April 30.**

The Comptroller is responsible for the financial operations of the 4C's, including processing invoices, payroll, preparing tax returns, generating financial reports, drafting the annual budget, making investments in accordance with the union's investment policies, and more.

Candidates for the position are required to have special knowledge in areas pertinent to fiscal management.

The annual compensation for the position, which begins July 1, 2010, is the equivalent of 12 PTL level II credits, \$17,244 for the coming year.

For more information, contact Steve Cohen at [steve@the4cs.org](mailto:steve@the4cs.org) or 860-296-5172.

# The Gathering Storm

Hello everyone. I hope the beginning of spring treats you all well.

The good news for us this spring is that the Community Colleges are enjoying record enrollments and that the federal stimulus law will keep our state block grant from being cut for the July 1, 2010 through June 30, 2011 fiscal year. Further, tuition will increase again in the fall, so funding for next year should be more than adequate.

Yet, these budgetary cushions may not shield us if the Connecticut and national economies do not improve and the distant budgetary storm clouds do not dissipate.

By now many have read or heard about further state employee concessions desired by Governor Rell as outlined in a letter from Office of Policy and Management Secretary Robert Genaurio. (The letter and SEBAC's response are posted on the 4C's website, [www.the4cs.org](http://www.the4cs.org).)

The governor's wish list of additional concessions represents nothing more than political posturing because she knows SEBAC will almost certainly not be making further concessions at this time.



However, next winter's scenario may be very different. With budget deficit projections of as much as \$4 billion (out of an almost \$20 billion budget) and with the November election behind us, this coming January may usher in a very difficult year for Connecticut's state employees. Our job security ends with the fiscal year on June 30, 2011, and if an anti-public service, pro-budget cuts governor is elected, some of Governor Rell's proposals could well become part of the state's negotiating position with SEBAC. Even worse, if a governor interested in shrinking state government gets elected, there could be virtually no concession discussions, just layoffs.

We cannot control the state economy, but we can help to decide who will lead us in the future and what governing philosophy will drive future budgetary decision-making. Now is the time to begin to pay attention to the state's political aspirants, particularly those seeking to be the governor, but also those seeking state representative and state senate seats. Listen carefully to the candidates' views, and offer your support to those who support public services and the state employees who provide them.

As House Speaker Chris Donovan said at a recent SEBAC meeting, "Cuts are you," since much of the state budget goes for personnel costs.

Let's support candidates who believe cuts in public services, if they must occur, should be minor. The leaders we elect can be important shields for us if a ferocious winter storm does occur—or they can add to the maelstrom, so let's choose our elected leaders wisely.

# UnionUpdates

## The 2010 Willis Process for ACL Job Reclassification is Underway

Ten ACL members are busy this month completing the comprehensive job content questionnaire that accompanies the annual Willis job classification review. These are members whose jobs have changed significantly over the past year.

The process uses an objective measure of the level of mental demands, knowledge and skill, and accountability needed to perform the job to rate each position.

A joint labor management committee is trained and led by a consultant to review the materials supplied on each job. Thanks should be extended to 4C's members **Carl Antonucci** (Library Director, Capital) and **Dave Welsh** (Financial Aid Director, Tunxis) who along with an AFSCME member and three management people spend several days in May working on this committee.

Results should be known in early summer.



### Union Hunting and Fishing Club

The Union Sportsmen's Alliance (USA) is a one-of-a-kind

hunting and fishing club designed exclusively for conservation-minded union members, retirees and their families that hunt, fish and enjoy the outdoors.

The USA will help you plan trips, learn tips, swap stories and save a bundle through the only hunting and fishing club designed exclusively for Union sportsmen, sportswomen and their families.

Membership is \$25 and includes several benefits. You can join or find out more at [www.unionsportsmen.org](http://www.unionsportsmen.org).



**Asnuntuck Welcomes New Members.** ACC Chapter Officers welcome new employees by taking them out to lunch. *New members are on the left: Elle Van Dermark, History; Michelle Coach, Biology; Sage LaCroix, Biology; Heidi Fitzgerald, Accounting and Business. Chapter Officers are on the right: Maki McHenry, past co-chair; Tim St. James, ACL Officer; Bill Searle, Part-time Officer; and Nick Lefakis, Faculty Officer.*

## TxCC Member Witnesses History-in-the-Making

**Robyn Brooks**, Tunxis adjunct and Part-time Officer, was in Washington DC during the week of Congress' final debate and vote on Health Care Reform. SEIU International President Andy Stern (pictured with Robyn) joined SEIU staff and union members at SEIU Headquarters to watch the proceedings.



"It was exhilarating to be in the 'War Room' with fellow SEIU members and staff from around the country and witness this historic event!" Robyn said. SEIU locals across the country contributed staff to the campaign for health care reform. The room where they worked was affectionately dubbed the "War Room."

The Tunxis adjunct spent spring break in DC visiting her daughter, Jessica Kutch who is the SEIU Online Campaign Manager for Health Care Reform.

Robyn and Jessica also joined 200,000 others at the March For America in support of immigration reform. "Many of the marchers were service employees from locals in Connecticut. I was proud to be a SEIU member and support our brothers and sisters at this important national rally," Robyn reported.

## Making Political Choices

On March 20, four hundred members from the 13 unions in the State Employees Bargaining Agent Coalition (SEBAC) turned out to meet Connecticut's 2010 gubernatorial candidates.

All the major party candidates were invited; five Democrats and one Republican came to the forum to share their vision for Connecticut and to answer questions from public service workers about their plan to create more jobs and brighten the state's economic forecast.

Candidates who attended were Democrats Juan Figueroa, Mary Glassman, Ned Lamont, Dan Malloy, and Rudy Marconi. The lone Republican accepting the SEBAC invitation was Tom Marsh.

Candidates were each offered 20



SEBAC sponsored a gubernatorial forum, inviting both Democratic and Republican candidates to share their vision for Connecticut with state employees.

Videos of the event can be viewed at [www.inthistogetherct.org](http://www.inthistogetherct.org).

minutes to present their goals and priorities to the large group. They then met with two smaller groups to go into detail about their views on education and health care issues and on other issues affecting state employees and their families.

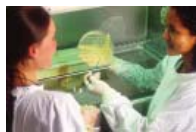
See videos of the individual candi-

dates at [www.inthistogetherct.org](http://www.inthistogetherct.org).

As we go to press, a second gubernatorial forum is being organized by the SEIU unions in Connecticut, including the 4C's. This forum is scheduled for April 10 and a report on it will be posted on the 4C's website.

## Connecticut AFL-CIO Scholarship

The Connecticut AFL-CIO is offering a \$500 tuition award to any accredited college or univer-



sity. Applicants must be a high school senior who is an AFL-CIO union member or the child of a dues-paying member.

The application requires their high school transcript, evidence of acceptance to a college or university, and an essay of no more than 500 words to answer the following question: ***How do unions give people voice in the workplace and politically?***

The closing date for submission is May 7, 2010. For an application form, contact the 4C's office: 860-296-5172 or [info@the4cs.org](mailto:info@the4cs.org).

## 4C's Annual Budget Will Be Available on the Union's Website

The 4C's Finance Committee is presenting its budget proposal to 4C's Delegates at their April 10 meeting. The process calls for Delegates to bring the budget proposal back to their campuses and solicit input from members.

The budget proposal will be discussed

by Delegates at their May 8th meeting, at which time a final budget will be adopted. The budget will be posted on the 4C's website after its adoption.

All members are welcome to attend the Delegate Assembly.

## CCC Breakfast Invites an Open Dialogue with Area Legislators

John McNamara, CCC Director of Institutional Advancement and a 4C's Delegate, introduced legislators at an annual Legislative Breakfast sponsored by the Capital Community College Foundation. The event provided an opportunity for legislators to learn about critical issues facing the college. Participants discussed how the college and area legislators can work together to meet the community's varied educational needs.



# Exploring the Possibility of Allowing ARP Members to Move to SERS

There is **NO** agreement that currently allows members to change retirement plans. The unions would have to win this either through the grievance/arbitration process or legislatively through the General Assembly.

For the last two years, our members in the Alternate Retirement Program (ARP) have been worried about their retirement income due to the massive decline in the stock markets. Some worry they may never be able to retire.

During last year's concession negotiations, the 4C's and the AFT considered the possibility of negotiating a one-time option for ARP members to move to the State Employees Retirement System (SERS) with the ability to buy past service credit. At that time, the other higher education unions did not wish to raise this issue.

Since then however, the other higher education unions have heard from their members who are in the ARP who want to move from the ARP to SERS. Further, there was evidence that some employees at the UCONN Health Center and the Connecticut State Universities were required to join the ARP as a condition of employment; this is called 'steering'. Steering is a violation of our Pension Agreement.

As a result of what was discovered regarding steering and the problems our member have raised regarding their inability to retire under the ARP, the 4C's and the other higher education unions in SEBAC have done the following:

- Filed a SEBAC Grievance, which is currently in process, to allow those who were steered into the ARP or feel they were misled into selecting the ARP to move to

SERS with the ability to buy past service credit.

- Worked to persuade the General Assembly to allow all those in ARP the right to move to SERS with the ability to buy past service credit. The legislation died in Committee this year, but may re-emerge in future years.
- If we are not successful in getting the Legislature to give our member the right to move from the ARP to SERS, we can raise the issue as a proposal in the 2017 Pensions and Healthcare Negotiations.

In order to have any chance of winning approval for the ARP to SERS transfer, our proposal would have to be cost neutral to the State. The 4C's and the higher education unions have hired an actuary to look into the questions that have been raised concerning the costs to employees in such a scenario. You will find below the questions that were asked and the actuary's responses.

**Question:** How would the transfer from SERS to the ARP be "cost-neutral to the State?"

**Answer:** The way actuaries determine what is cost-neutral to the plan is to apply standard assumptions about mortality and expected retirement age, and then compute the cost to the plan using the same earnings assumptions they otherwise use for SERS. Participants would get the number of years of service their money would buy.

**Question:** Can we pool rates somehow so that those closer to retirement don't pay more for years of service than those further away?

**Answer:** Those closer to retirement will have to be charged higher rates for service credits than younger participants who are further away from retirement because of the time value of money -- that is, if one puts in \$100,000 and waits 10 years to retire, that's worth more to the plan than if one puts in \$100,000 and retires the next day. For this reason, the cost on an actuarial present value basis of a \$3,000 a month benefit payable immediately to a 57 year-old employee with 27 years of service is approximately \$505,000. If the same employee with the same years of service were only 49 years old, he/she would be charged only about \$335,000. The difference is primarily attributable to the time value of money. If the rates were pooled, i.e., if younger participants not yet eligible for retirement were charged more than the actuarial costs of their purchased benefit in order to subsidize the older participants, younger participants likely would never agree to the transfer from the ARP to SERS.

**Question:** Can we use the purchase of service rules for military service or for municipal employment as a model for how we could use ARP money to purchase SERS time?

**Answer:** The analogy to purchase of service credits for military service and municipal employment is not valid because the only military service that

may currently be purchased is War service and this type of purchase is heavily subsidized. Also, with respect to municipal service, it is more in the nature of a wash, i.e., a transfer from one defined benefit plan to another defined benefit plan, than a purchase of service per se.

**Question:** I have many years of service with ARP as my plan. Will my ARP assets be sufficient to purchase an equivalent amount of service under SERS?

**Answer:** The amount of service your ARP savings would buy will vary individual by individual, depending on a number of factors, including how well that person's ARP account has done in the stock market and the SERS Tier to which the person would be transferred. We will develop an actuarial chart that people can use to determine how many years of service their ARP accounts might buy. But our estimate at this point is that most senior workers will not have sufficient savings in their ARP account to come close to purchasing their full number of years of service under SERS.

**Question:** We heard they had already solved this problem in Florida, and that legislation has been passed allowing the transfer of alternate retirement service into the Florida equivalent of SERS, and that the legislation was found to be cost-neutral. Doesn't that mean we could easily do the same here?

**Answer:** Florida's statute was found to be cost-neutral precisely because the employee was required to transfer

his or her own money whenever it was necessary to make it cost-neutral. That statute says:

*The employee must transfer from his or her State University System Optional Retirement Program account, **and from other employee monies as necessary**, a sum representing the actuarial accrued liability immediately following the time of such movement, determined assuming that attained service equals the sum of service in the defined benefit program and service in the State University System Optional Retirement Program.*

The Florida legislation also required



illustration from MSNBC.com

## Some Worry They May Never Be Able to Retire

the employee to pay the full cost of the defined benefit plan's liabilities based on the assumption that the transferee would retire immediately -- something that may well happen here in Connecticut:

*The cost for such credit shall be an amount representing the present value of that employee's accumulated benefit obligation for the affected period of service. The cost shall be calculated as if the benefit commencement occurs on the first date the employee would become eligible for unreduced benefits, using the discount rate and other relevant actuarial assumptions*

*that were used to value the Florida Retirement System defined benefit plan liabilities in the most recent actuarial valuation.*

**Question:** Could we approach this a different way -- leave ARP participants in ARP, but allow them to transfer to SERS upon retirement?

**Answer:** The upon retirement transfer approach isn't perfect, since it leaves ARP participants subject to the whims of the market until the day they retire, unlike SERS participants, whose benefits are defined by plan rules, rather than market success or failure.

However, the upon retirement approach does have the benefit of simplicity and clear cost-neutrality, and we will model this idea, as well as the idea of an immediate switch from ARP to SERS through the purchase of SERS service time. Both approaches, either individually or in combination will be examined to see if they are feasible,

and if they would provide practical relief to ARP participants.

It is also possible, assuming that the IRS approves, that ARP participants could be given a one-time opportunity to switch in addition to the process described above at the time of retirement. However, the one-time switch would raise all the actuarial and cost questions discussed above.

**Question:** I've heard there are some complications involved with our purchasing service beyond

*continued page 11*

# 4C'sMembers

## Teaching *Paralegal* Eagles

Want a career in the legal field, but don't want to be the butt of lawyer jokes? Perhaps a Legal Assistant/Paralegal program is for you.

Three Connecticut Community Colleges offer highly acclaimed Legal Assistant or Paralegal Programs, where in just two years, students can gain very marketable skills. Norwalk, Manchester, and Naugatuck Valley offer an

Associates Degree program and a certificate program for those who have a degree in another field.

**Tom Jackson**, Program Coordinator at Norwalk, stresses that the Legal Assistant Program is not a pre-law program, but rather is designed around the work that paralegals do. "The paralegal program is document oriented, as opposed to legal theory

oriented," he said. "Students leave the college prepared to go to work."

Students learn how to prepare legal documents for things such as real estate transactions, inheritance cases, divorce proceedings, bankruptcy, business incorporations, and more. Graduates may work with private law firms, corporate legal departments, banks, real estate firms, and government agencies.

Entry level salaries are typically in the \$30,000s to \$40,000s. Tom says students with Bachelor's Degrees who are switching careers tend to get bigger salaries, especially those with corporate work experience.

This year will mark more than one thousand graduates from the Manchester Paralegal Program! The program began in 1974 and currently enrolls 130 students. Program Coordinator **Nance Kriscenski** says about a quarter of her students come from other fields and are enrolled in the certificate program.

She cites a CT Department of Labor prediction that "employment in this occupation is expected to grow faster than average, and the number of annual openings will offer very good job opportunities."

**David Clough** is the Program Coordinator at Naugatuck Valley, where the Legal Assistant/Paralegal Program offers a new career opportunity for people who have had



**Tom Jackson**, Coordinator of NCC's Legal Assistant Program, points to some of the documentation required to earn the approval of the American Bar Association.

no previous experience with legal work. For people already employed in legal work, the program will upgrade their skills.

A superb faculty is, of course, what makes all three paralegal programs successful. In addition to Attorneys **Krescenski**, **Jackson**, and **Clough**, Attorney **Sharon Serow** (MCC) and Attorney **Lia Barone** (NCC) round out the full-time faculty.

Adjuncts are also attorneys who specialize in different fields of law, "They give students a perspective on substantive areas of law and the role of the paralegal in different employment settings," Nance says.

Tom says some of the faculty, including Professor Barone, started out at paralegals and that this presents a good image for students.



Holding the flags received in recognition for their support of American troops are: (first row) Joanne Kane, Maria Rago, Beth Egan; (second row) Julie Cotnoir, Andrea Skidgel, Jody Weller, Mac McHenry, Gail Labbadia, Nick Lefakis.

### ACC Folks are Flagged for their Generosity

Asnuntuck employees have developed a special relationship with an Airborne group from Alaska. Folks at the college have donated "care packages" for the troops who have served three tours in Iraq and one tour in Afghanistan.

The group has shipped 14 boxes, weighing a total of 158 pounds, to Afghanistan. The boxes were filled with donated goods, from snacks to books to toiletries. Mittens, scarves, and hats for the community children were donated as well.

To show their gratitude for the generosity of strangers, the troops flew American flags (a new flag each day) over their base in Khowst Province, Afganistan. They sent eight of these flags to Asnuntuck employees.

"When a package arrives from their New England fan base, there is such excitement and wonder. They appreciate the support and kindness of all," relayed **Maki McHenry**, who communicates with the group's sergeant.



Debbie Colucci, MCC Affirmative Action and Staff Development Coordinator, hopes to make the college a more respectful and welcoming place.

## At MCC: Equally Welcome, Equally Valued, and Equally Heard

MCC is working to create a workplace, where everyone is equally welcome, valued, and heard. To achieve this, **Debbie Colucci**, Affirmative Action and Staff Development Coordinator, has launched the Respectful Workplace Initiative.

Debbie describes the two and a half hour workshop as “team building with a diversity flair”. She said her goal is to create a dialogue, to make people aware of actions or words that may be hurtful, and to offer strategies for speaking up.

“When we talk about diversity, most people think of race, ethnicity, or religion. Here, we are expanding that definition. For example, one participant mentioned how hard it is to be a Republican,” Debbie said. “We want respect for everyone; a workplace that is free of harassment of any kind.”

The workshops bring people together from different areas of the college and gives them a chance to talk about themselves and their work environment. “We use several fun ac-

tivities; it’s very interactive,” Debbie said. Every workshop includes case studies, including real examples from MCC.

Training is based on the theme from the video “Ouch! that Stereotype hurts.” It offers specific strategies for speaking up against disrespect, stereotypes, and demeaning comments.

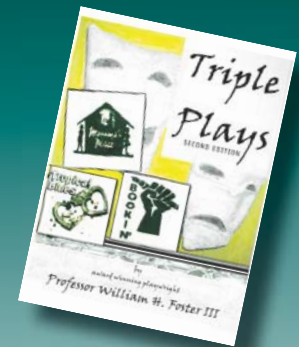
As enthusiasm about the training spreads, members are signing up for one of numerous workshops scheduled throughout the semester. Participation is not mandatory, but expected. Faculty, staff, EAs, and managers are currently attending workshops, while Part-time Lecturers will be invited to attend in the fall.

“Debbie is making a very sincere effort to improve the quality of the way faculty, staff and our students interact with each other. I am certainly in favor of any effort to help people get along with each other,” said **David Flynn**, MCC Marketing and Public Relations Dept. and a 4C’s delegate.

In March, Debbie’s efforts will gain an even wider audience when she presents the project to the League of Innovation in Community Colleges.

“Most of us spend more time with our colleagues than we do with our families. It’s worth the effort to make our workplace the best it can be,” Debbie concluded.

## NVCC Professor’s Book Enhances Classroom Discussion



McGraw-Hill has recently published a revised edition of NVCC English professor **Bill Foster’s** book, “Triple Plays.” This collection represents 3 of his 10 written and produced plays.

Originally published in 1997, Bill has been using the book as part of his Literature classes ever since. “I use the plays in my class discussions on the playwright’s motivation and artistic creation. I have found they really help my students to understand the writing process,” Bill commented.

The artwork for the book’s cover was designed by Phillip Modeen, an NVCC alumnus.

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# The 3% Employee Contribution for Retiree Medical Coverage Explained

A provision agreed to in last year's Concession Agreement requires active employees to contribute 3% of wages toward retiree healthcare during their first 10 years of employment. This provision applies to new hires and to current employees with less than 5 years as of 7/1/10, but with credit for years worked.

On March 11, 2010, a State Comptroller's Office memorandum outlining the administration of the 3% contribution for Retiree Health Coverage was circulated. It was reviewed and agreed to by the parties as an accurate implementation of the SEBAC Concession Agreement on this issue. Here are some important points which will affect our members.

## New Employees

If you were hired on or after July 1, 2009 and are in a health-care eligible job (including ACLs working 17.5 hours per week or more and faculty with 9 or more credits a semester) you will pay 3% of your total compensation to the Retiree healthcare fund for 10 years.

## Employees Rehired after July 1, 2009

Rehired employees will have to pay 3% of total compensation for 10 years, however, prior state service during which an employee was eligible for health benefits will count toward the 10 years of service.

*For example, if you were rehired after July 1, 2009 and had 5 years of service during*



**A provision of our Concession Agreement requires new hires and employees with less than 5 years of employment to contribute toward retiree healthcare.**

*which you were eligible for employee health benefit coverage those 5 years will be credited toward the 10 years of contribution resulting in 5 years of additional contribution.*

## Active Employees with hire Dates Before July 1, 2009

Employees who have less than five (5) years of service during which they were healthcare eligible as of July 1, 2010, will be required to make the 3% contribution until they have a total of 10 years of service during which you were healthcare eligible.

*For example: you were hired as a full-time faculty member in 2008. You have two years of service during which you were healthcare eligible as of July 1, 2010. This will mean you will have to make a total of 8 years of contributions.*

If you have less than 5 years of

health-care eligible service, but will soon be 62 and wish to retire with the retiree health care benefit, you may as long as you have at least five years of healthcare-eligible service at age 62 or older.

*For example: you were hired July 1, 2008 into a full-time position and are currently age 60. You will have to work and make contributions for three more years to be eligible for retiree health-care benefits.*

## How Leaves are Counted

Up to 1 year of unpaid leave will count toward determining your obligation to make the 3% contribution.

## Who is not Required to Make the 3% Contribution

1. Part-time employees who are not eligible for healthcare benefits, including ACLs who work less than 17.5 hours per week and adjuncts who teach 8 credits or less.
2. You may opt out of Retirees Healthcare coverage and not pay the 3% if you can demonstrate you have other retiree healthcare coverage. COBRA, Medicare or your spouses' policy are not considered other coverage. If you opt out under this rule and subsequently the retiree coverage you were counting on is unavailable, through no fault of your own, you may then become eligible for State retiree healthcare benefit as long as you pay the 3% as required under the agreement for 10 years.

## The 3% Employee Contribution Explained

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- If you are a part-time employee who in some semesters may be eligible for the state's healthcare benefits but on other semesters may not, you are not required to make the 3% contribution and you will not receive retiree healthcare benefits.

*For example: you are an adjunct who*

*works for the community college system and UConn, and some semesters you teach 9 credits between the two institutions and other semesters you teach only 6 credits. This rule covers you. You are not required to make the 3% contribution.*

If you have many years of state service where you work some semesters with the healthcare benefit and others without and you determine that through your lengthy service you have accumulated 20

semesters where you were healthcare eligible, you may then purchase the past service credit for retiree healthcare benefits.

*For example: you are an adjunct with 20 years of total service of which 10 years (20 semesters) you worked at least 9 credits, you can then pay the 3% retroactively so that you can receive the retiree healthcare benefits. Remember the purchase is for 10 years of healthcare eligible service at 3%.*

## Exploring the Possibility of Moving from ARP to SERS

*continued from page 7*

the actuarial cost. What are those complications?

**Answer:** For those members (a minority) of ARP who are not covered by Social Security, an analysis needs to be done about whether if they join SERS, Social Security coverage would be mandatory. Although being covered by Social Security is a good thing, some of these people might get covered by the Social Security tax – thereby requiring that they and the State each contribute 6.2% of the employee's pay in Social Security Taxes – but not accumulate the necessary 40 quarters of Social Security coverage to get a benefit upon retirement. The other complication would occur with an employee whose ARP account is insufficient to cover the amount of SERS coverage they seek, who chooses to contribute some of his/her non-ARP savings to buy SERS time. In those cases, care would need to be taken to avoid "double taxation" -- that is, earnings that are taxed both at the time they earned and then later upon retirement.

**Question:** Isn't the immediate switch a good idea for the State, because it

would act like a retirement incentive system, saving money for the State by encouraging more expensive senior people to leave and replacing them with lower paid junior employees?

**Answer:** Proposals that encourage employees to retire immediately - or sooner than previously anticipated - are often justified on the basis of the argument that they save money, since the affected institutions will save on the salary differentials between long-service and newly-hired employees. It is true that these savings exist, although the resultant loss of continuity and experience can significantly impact services.

Also, the additional costs of health care for two individuals instead of one should also be taken into account as well as the increased pension costs before the anticipated retirement date, which immediately creates an increase in the plan's accrued liability.

The salary savings are also mitigated when an employee who did not participate in Social Security is replaced by an employee who does. In that case, the employer cost is an additional 7.65% of pay.

**Question:** But would the influx of ARP savings into the SERS plan make the plan better funded?

**Answer:** This influx will not in any way reduce the size of the System's unfunded accrued liabilities. A slight increase in the percentage funding level by increasing assets and liabilities to the same extent does not improve the financial health of SERS, since the same total dollar amount of unfunded liabilities would continue to exist.

**Question:** The way the State handles budgeting between the higher education institutions and the General Fund provides an incentive for colleges and universities to have people choose the ARP, even though the normal cost of SERS service under the current Tier IIA is substantially lower -- around 5% -- than the 8% the employer contributes to the ARP. Can't we stop this so that in the future, higher education institutions no longer have this incentive?

**Answer:** We're looking into this, but for various complex reasons there is no assurance that we can modify this formula.





**Congress of Connecticut  
Community Colleges, SEIU 1973**  
907 Wethersfield Avenue  
Hartford, CT 06114  
(860) 296-5172 • [www.the4cs.org](http://www.the4cs.org)

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## Legislative Update

*From Atty. Robert Shea,  
4C's Lobbyist*

The following is a brief status report of legislation currently pending before the Connecticut General Assembly. By way of background, the current fiscal year (FY10) which ends on June 30th, has nearly a \$500M deficit. The looming deficit for FY11 is estimated to be as large as \$700M.

The members of the General Assembly and the members of the Executive Branch are all working hard to try to solve the budget problems. Budgetary cuts are being made and proposed, with the hope that regular citizens will not be unduly harmed by the corresponding loss of services that go along with the cuts. At the same time, the budget officials are reviewing potential revenue-generating concepts, even though many people at the Capitol recognize that the current economic conditions make it difficult to impose new taxes on most of Connecticut's hard-working citizens.

To date, the Community & Technical Colleges budget has not suffered severe cuts. This is due in large part



**State Rep. Mae Flexer (D-Danielson) addresses a group of staff and students from QVCC in the Hall of the House.**

to the fact that the Community Colleges are bursting at the seams with new students looking for new programs to help them get prepared for the tight and ever-changing job market. It would be very difficult to cut our budget without hurting these students. Additionally, the requirements relating to federal stimulus grants for higher education programs make it very difficult for the Legislature to cut successful community college programs.

On Thursday, March 26th, the Legislature's Appropriations Committee voted

in favor of an Interim Budget Adjustments bill (House Bill 5018). This bill did not contain significant changes to the Community & Technical Colleges Budget. It is likely that the Budget Bill (HB 5018) will be further amended before final enactment later this Spring – and I will keep the 4Cs informed of developments.

The Legislature is also working very hard to push legislation that will help create new jobs and new education & training programs to help us bust out of the sluggish economic conditions. Bills have passed in Committee, for example, that would help unemployed workers pay for college tuition and that would encourage education programs and job creation in green technology and in life science and health information technology fields.

Please see the "Action Center" area of the 4C's website ([www.the4cs.org](http://www.the4cs.org)) for more detailed information on pending legislation that may be of interest to 4C's Members.