

CURRENT ISSUES

Is it a Grievance or a Complaint?

by Linda Chan

“My hours have been cut.” “My Dean talks harshly to me.” “My colleagues won’t include me in their discussions.” “My colleague made a sexual comment to me.” “My Dean is not giving me any classes.”

These are common comments made by members to the union. In some cases, there is a just cause for a grievance and sometimes they are just complaints. So, what is the difference? A grievance is a violation of the contract. If at any point during employment the employer violates the contract, then the employee has the right to grieve the transgression. If it is not in the contract, then whatever the employer is doing is considered fair unless it violates the law. If it violates the law, the union has the right to file a complaint with the Public Employee Rights Board also known as PERB. Only one of the above comments is a legal violation. The others are not even possible grievances. There is no law against bullying by an employer. The employer has the right to cut hours or not give any classes whatsoever.

To have a grievance there must be something in the contract to support it. Most community college contracts (including our own) only state what is required by law. A con

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Mission Statement

Citrus College Adjunct Faculty Federation, (CCAFF), is dedicated to serving its membership by working to:

- Assure a level of professional respect from the District reflected in its policies and practices consistent with the achievement, dedication and professionalism of its adjunct employees.
- Through contract negotiations, maximize members ability to earn a fair wage consistent with education industry standards.
- Work to provide working conditions for adjunct faculty that maximize their effective interactions with students and co-workers.

tract is an agreement between two parties (in this case, the district and the bargaining unit that represents the employees) that can go better than what the law has to offer. Most districts are unwilling to give more than what the law requires. To make changes to the contract there must be some negotiations between the district and the representing bargaining agent (CCAFF). This is where your engagement as a member of the union becomes very important. If the district believes that

the membership is apathetic then it generally gets whatever it wants in terms of negotiated items. However, if the union is strong in its membership support then it becomes more difficult for the district to push their interests and easier for the union to put forth its interests. We need you to help us in this endeavor. You can help by participating in meetings, staying in contact with leadership or participate in union activities such as going to the Board of Trustees meetings. Making a public comment or just being there would be helpful. (The Board of Trustees-meeting schedule can be found at: <http://www.citruscollege.edu/admin/bot/Pages/default.aspx>)

During current negotiations there are many issues we are interested in strengthening within our contract. We are prioritizing retention of part-time faculty. As of January 1, 2017, a “rehire right” law (Ca. education code section 87482.3, http://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/codes_displaySection.xhtml?sectionNum=87482.3.&lawCode=EDC) was passed that requires the districts to negotiate rehire right language. We strongly believe that our current contract (see our current contract at our website: www.CCAFF.com) does not meet the requirements of the law however, the district disagrees. We need you to be willing to support us in this effort so that we can fight for you when your classes or hours are cut.

Bill's Beef

Don't Impeach Trump

by Bill Zeman

I know. Sounds crazy right? Donald Trump is clearly many bad things: race baiter, red baiter, narcissist, elitist, corrupt, misogynist, nativist, and stuck with the emotional development of a 9-year old. As bad as this may be, consider what happens if we impeach him; we get Mike Pence. Pence does not clearly exhibit many of the attributes on the list above, but is that because he does not share these characteristics or because like most traditional politicians, he is skilled at not showing it. In the following paragraphs, I will attempt to prove that we are better served if we stay with Trump.

How is Pence worse than Trump? A quick Google search will show you that Pence is a serious adult who has a long history of attacking Social Security and Medicare. Trump has said he will not cut Social Security, and so far that has stopped the majority Republican congress from rolling out a new iteration of privatization. Trump has said the same thing about Medicare, and although it is true that the Republican health care bills would have cut Medicare, Trump's support for these has been inconsistent; he called one "mean." It is quite true that Trump can't open his mouth without lying, and we can't trust that he won't reverse himself on Social Security, especially when he surrounds himself with so many who want to cut it. But, thankfully, Trump is terrible at building unity and so far Congress has not been able to pass any major legislation. Pence was a member of Congress before he became gover-

nor of Indiana Indiana and has many friends there and knows how to work with legislators smoothly. Look at all the terrible things he got done with the Indiana Republican majority legislature. If you want to give the Republicans a better shot at dismantling the social safety net, go ahead and impeach Trump.

What did Pence do as governor of Indiana? "The growth in the number of charter schools and the use of private school vouchers...exploded," according to a news article by NPR last year. He took the state out of Common Core and weakened the power of the Superintendent of Education. Even though the Indiana budget had a surplus, Pence pushed through cuts to the states colleges and universities and cut \$27 million from the state's "Family and Social Services Administration." Under Pence, Indiana led the way with a draconian religious liberty law that gives religious people rights to refuse service to gays. He believes homosexuality is a choice and supported a law that would promote gay conversion therapy while he sat in congress. In 2013, Pence signed a law blocking local governments in Indiana from setting minimum wages higher than the federal level. In 2015, he repealed the state's prevailing wage law and his administration successfully defended Indiana's right-to-work legislation. He killed Indiana's inheritance tax and reduced corporate taxes to the second lowest in the nation, as well as giving the rich a hefty cut in their income taxes. Pence's Republican-controlled Indiana General Assembly repeatedly tried to roll back renewable energy standards and ended Indiana's energy efficiency standards. Pence led the fight against Obama's EPA's Clean Power Plan and is a long time coal supporter. Pence signed a law

allowing guns on school campuses, and signed a law limiting lawsuits on gun manufacturers. Pence also defunded Planned Parenthood, which effectively eliminated HIV testing in much of the state and did not fund testing in these areas even after an HIV outbreak that started in late 2014. Pence passed such extreme anti-abortion laws that they were overturned by conservative courts. Pence tried to form an alternative Indiana government news agency, and tried to block Syrian refugees from settling in the state. These last two episodes illustrate how Pence tried to do many more regressive policies, but was blocked or reversed by progressive activism. A thorough review of Pence's more progressive policies will show that frequently he started out against them, but was forced to reverse course.

One could argue that Trump is bad on most of these issues also, but remember, he is not an ideologue. For all the negatives Trump brings, none of it seems to be set too firmly in his views, and he has already demonstrated that when his ideas run into cold hard facts, he quickly reverses. Pence is the opposite. He famously said, "I'm a Christian, a Conservative and a Republican, In that order." He has operated from that stance as a Tea-Party governor and would fit in nicely with the Freedom Caucus as president. Trump has shown signs that he may work in a bi-partisan manner with Democrats. This has been in spite of the Republican Congressional leaders themselves. Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell and Speaker of the House Paul Ryan have not reached out at all to the Democrats. Pence teamed up with the Republican-led Indiana legislature to ram home a conserva-

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tive agenda. If you want a conservative ideologue who would operate hand in hand with Ryan and McConnell, go ahead and support the impeachment of Trump.

Member Benefits

by Anne Battle

Now that you've gotten through Black Friday and are starting to recover from most of the hype that has been assaulting your ears for the past month, why not do a little reflecting on whether or not you have been a "smart shopper?"

If you have pulled out your AFT membership card and logged into www.unionplus.org, then you should have saved yourself a lot of dough this holiday season. On the other hand, if you didn't succumb to the hype and are still looking for some deals this season, try looking at the website to see whether or not you can find just what you're looking for – there are many different options just for union members.

Want to use a credit card to delay paying for all those gifts? AFT has a Mastercard which has no annual fee. The interest rate you receive is based on your credit history and there is 100 percent fraud protection.

Hoping to get away for the holidays? Try using Go Ahead Tours. They offer you a discounted rate (\$200 off any Go Ahead tour package). You could also look at Endless Vacation Rentals to find a spot from among more than 200,000 accommodations in over 100 countries. Wyndham Hotels will provide you with another option by giving you more than 6400 hotels which will give you a discount off the best available unrestricted rate worldwide with advance reservations. If

you need a car to go along with that package, you can book rental cars from Alamo, Avis, Budget, or National at some really good rates. Are you a fan of online shopping? AFT Advantage gives you and your family exclusive access to an online shopping program. You can find the perfect gift whether it be something electronic, something to wear, tickets for a night out, some new furniture or simply just flowers for a loved one.

Cell phone user? As an AT&T subscriber, you are able to get 15% off your wireless phone plans. Would you like to get a new computer? Dell is one of the many vendors who offer online savings if you are a new buyer. If you need to be practical and are looking to replace some of the appliances in your home, AFT offers a way to get them at a discount.

So many options are available. All you need to do to take advantage of all the "perks" offered to union members is to simply go online to register your card to make sure it is activated. If you have questions about your AFT membership card, email membership@aft.org or call 1-888-238-5646 (1-888-AFT-JOIN) and you will get answers.

So this holiday season, make your membership work for you and check out the many different ways you have to save money.

Adopting a New CMS

by Laura Wills

A new source of stress was added to the usual pre-semester planning this fall: the obligatory switchover

to Canvas - the new online course management system (CMS). For those unfamiliar, Canvas replaced the previous Blackboard CMS, which had been in use for well over a decade at Citrus College. This change impacted all faculty, since all –or nearly all- use a CMS in some capacity, whether they are teaching online or not. I have taught several fully online courses before using Blackboard and a few hybrid classes using Moodle Rooms, but Canvas was new to me - as it was for the majority of instructors this semester.

For those unaware: in early 2015, the California Community Colleges' (CCC) Online Education Initiative (OEI) voted to adopt Canvas as the CMS for the state's community colleges. The OEI is providing Canvas access to all community colleges at no cost through the 2018-2019 academic year. After this, it is unclear whether the OEI will be able to secure additional funding and thus whether the colleges will need to pay part or all the cost of running Canvas.

As for why the OEI voted for Canvas, this was their press release following the February 2015 vote: "Support for Instructure's Canvas system was nearly unanimous among the OEI's Common Course Management System (CCMS) Committee members, with overwhelming support from student participants."

After reading this, I was curious about my own students' opinions.

As it turns out, this semester I am teaching a fully online lecture course and two corresponding face-to-face labs. The students in these labs are all enrolled in the online lecture course and so I used this opportunity to ask them about their experience with Canvas and how they

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would compare it to Blackboard.

The students I questioned were not new and so had experience using both Blackboard and Canvas. One student had specific complaints regarding the “Discussions” section where students submit posts and replies to discussion forums. A few students found the discussion thread interface on Canvas “confusing.” However, nearly all of the students praised the phone/tablet application (app) that Canvas provides. They reported that the app allows them to receive assignment, grade and announcement alerts and that they can also submit assignments and take tests through the app. They also found the calendar feature on the app helpful; the calendar displays task and quiz due dates for all the classes in which the student is enrolled. Their overall impression was that on computer Canvas was similar, if not worse than Blackboard, but the app swayed their vote in favor of Canvas.

Like most everyone else at the college, I have been using Canvas for only three-fourths of a semester and although this may not have been enough to acquaint myself with all of its features, it has been enough to take note of several deficiencies and a few improvements compared to

Blackboard. One general observation is that although students have been granted greater course accessibility and customization through the app, I have had the opposite occur. Here are some of the main problems that I’ve personally encountered with Canvas:

Content Areas: One of the main losses of customization (compared to Blackboard) is the inability to create or change any content areas. Instructors are essentially left with only the “Modules” section in which to add any and all course material. After enough weeks have passed, information posted at the beginning of the semester would be rendered all but lost in this bottomless pit.

Grade Book: Additionally, instructors cannot add columns to the Canvas grade book. Currently, the only way to do this is to download the grade book, create the new column in Excel and then re-upload the modified grade book into Canvas. “Tedious,” “time-consuming” and “unnecessary” were just some of the choice words that came to mind when I first discovered this.

Announcements: Yet another annoyance is that announcements cannot be hidden; only deleted. This is especially frustrating when importing from a previous course package and a long list of announcements imports into the new course. Ideally, the instructor would be able to hide or delay these announcements to use at a later date in the new course, but is instead forced to delete them. Why the option to hide or disable comments would not have been implemented is anyone’s guess, but it is one that I’ve seen many instructors criticize in Canvas support forums.

Extra Credit Tests: Another big complaint that I and other instructors seem to have is the inability to

create extra credit quizzes or even extra credit questions. The only solutions I seem to find involve manually adding points after the tests are submitted - a less than ideal solution, to say the least.

To be fair to Canvas and to counter my litany of complaints, I have also seen improvements. For one, test construction and editing improved. The inbox feature has also been handy for me. The inbox is easily visible and accessible on the side panel and is designed to allow instructors to contact students across all courses taught in that semester. This is a definite improvement to the Blackboard communication system which remained slightly buried and restricted to only the opened course.

However, the biggest benefit - to students at least - is probably the app. I, like the students, think the Canvas app is a huge plus. Through the years, I have seen the rise of use in hand-held portable devices in accessing and submitting course material; this is definitely the new direction of online education and one big opportunity that Blackboard missed.

In short, I think Canvas has the potential to be a great CMS, but they must iron out their wrinkles first. If not - and especially if Blackboard develops its own app- it’ll be a hard sell for colleges to maintain Canvas in the 2019-2020 year if they have to pay full cost.

Lastly, if you would also like to suggest an improvement or “feature idea” directly to Canvas, be sure to use the “Help” link on the side panel once you are logged in.

AFFILIATIONS

Citrus College Adjunct Faculty Federation (CCAFF) maintains an affiliation with:

- The American Federation of Teachers (AFT)
- The California Federation of Teachers (CFT)
- AFL-CIO
- The California Labor Federation
- The Los Angeles County Federation of Labor