

June 29, 2021

President's Updates
LCC Faculty Colleagues,

Whether you are teaching or not, I hope that you all are finding some time for restoration this summer after a most extraordinary period of teaching through the pandemic. I'm writing with a number of updates on behalf of LCCEA regarding: Fall reopening, OEBC insurance, contracted faculty searches, proctored testing, membership dues, legislative news including part-time faculty healthcare, a recent U.S. Supreme Court decision, and our union.

Fall Reopening, Vaccines, and In-service

Details about Fall reopening and in-service are still not yet finalized as guidance continues to change.

The [CDC released new guidelines](#) for institutions of higher education that distinguish between "fully vaccinated" campuses, which do not require stringent safety measures such as social distancing and masking, and campuses that are not "fully vaccinated" that maintain more rigorous standards. At the same time, Governor Brown is eliminating all masking requirements as of June 30 even though the statewide goal of 70% of the population vaccinated with at least one shot has not yet been reached. This leaves many decisions up to individual institutions.

As reported at the union general membership meeting in May, more than 300 faculty participated in the LCCEA All-Faculty survey in April with 2/3 of respondents indicating support or strong support for a vaccine requirement and 1/2 indicating strong support. Respondents also reported high vaccination rates with 89% having already received one or more shot, another 5% planning to do so, 2% unsure, and 4% not planning to receive the vaccine as of April. It is not clear whether LCC will implement a vaccine mandate, which would likely allow for exemptions for medical and other reasons. Lane County Public Health has requested that LCC require vaccines, and the LCC Reopening Team voted today to support a vaccine requirement though the future of the Reopening Team is uncertain due to the anticipated rescission of OHA/HECC reopening guidelines later this week. More information will be provided as it becomes available.

As for Fall in-service, while the format (e.g., virtual, in-person, or a combination) has not yet been determined, the schedule is as follows. The first day of the work year for contracted faculty is Tuesday, September 21. Part-time faculty teaching in Fall will be eligible for 24 hours of inservice /

meeting/ workshop compensation. (Please note: one paid work day was added to the work year in the 2019 -2024 contract. This includes one half day added for professional development and one half day added for class prep.)

Tuesday morning: Professional development activities

Tuesday afternoon: Faculty Sabbatical reports

Wednesday morning: Department/ division faculty meetings

Wednesday afternoon: Reserved for class prep

Thursday morning: Reserved for College President (i.e., all-campus convocation)

Thursday afternoon: Reserved for LCCEA meetings

Friday all day: Reserved for class prep

OEBB Insurance and Mandatory Open Enrollment

Your LCCEA Insurance Committee members Kelly Collins, Susie Cousar, Tawnya Gillespie, Russell Shitabata, Nancy Wood, and I met in late May to review and select OEBB plans for next year. The medical, dental, and vision plan options available to faculty will remain the same, and there are no increases to plan co-pays or plan deductibles. Insurance rate charts will be forthcoming later this summer. LCCEA representatives are working collaboratively with HR to ensure their accuracy. Faculty contributions for employee-only insurance will remain the same while there will be increases to other tiers, which are limited by our contract's cost neutrality (Art. 33.3.2.4) and stop loss provisions (Art. 33.3.2.3). Employee contributions (other than employee-only) will continue to increase incrementally until reaching the maximum threshold of employee contributions of 5% of monthly premiums for employee + child(ren) and employee + spouse/partner tiers and 10% for full family for full-time faculty. Part-time faculty rates will continue to match full-time faculty for employee-only coverage, with the College paying 84% of medical for employee plus tiers and 67% for full-family.

Please note: OEBB open enrollment is mandatory this year. This means that all faculty wishing to maintain medical, dental, and/or vision coverage must participate in open enrollment online via the OEBB website between **August 15 - September 15**. Faculty who have other insurance coverage and wish to waive LCC-provided insurance are eligible to receive a monthly stipend of \$203/mo for 21-22.

Faculty Searches

There have been numerous challenges for contracted faculty hiring for Fall. For instance, three positions that were approved to be posted in April are still not yet posted. At this point, it is unclear whether the College will fulfill

its contractual obligations regarding the minimum threshold for full-time faculty. In addition, such delays in posting positions, short timelines, and off-cycle and summer hires contravene the goal of ensuring a robust applicant pool and diminish our ability to recruit faculty from diverse backgrounds.

The LCCEA Racial Equity and Social Justice Committee members Wynona Burks, Susie Cousar, Cybele Higgins, Rosa Lopez, Lori Tapahonso, Nancy Wood and I have been working over the course of the academic year on a review of the contract and a set of forthcoming recommendations to support recruitment and retention of BIPOC faculty and will continue advocacy around these goals in the coming months.

Proctored Testing and Solidarity with LCCEF

Students and faculty throughout the college rely on in-person proctored testing for online courses. LCCEA and LCCEF have jointly advocated for the restoration of the regular schedule and sufficient staffing for Instructional Testing Services (ITS) beginning in Fall. A reduction in services would constitute a change in working conditions with workload implications that could necessitate bargaining. While there will likely be more online courses in Fall, ITS has a history of meeting student and faculty demand for proctored testing when student enrollment at LCC was double the current level. The College has committed to restoring the service with the goal of maintaining regular operating hours, including weekday evenings and Saturdays. We look forward to continuing to advocate to ensure sufficient resources are made available to meet student and faculty needs. This is one example of many instances of solidarity and recent joint advocacy with our sister union, the LCCEF.

Membership dues

The LCCEA Executive Council voted this month to adjust membership dues for inflation, beginning in October. This means dues for FT faculty members will increase by \$1.70/month, and dues for PT faculty members will increase by \$0.82/ month. Any LCCEA dues increases in excess of COLA adjustments would be the subject of a vote of the full membership. In addition, OEA has adopted a new system for assessment of part-time faculty dues, which is based on salary rather than FTE. As a result, the majority of part-time faculty will see a decrease in OEA dues.

Oregon Legislative Session Ends with Huge Wins for Higher Ed

Thank you to all the faculty who participated in legislative advocacy this session!

The legislature budgeted **\$703M for community colleges** for the 2021-2023 biennium – an **increase of 9.7%** from the past two years. This allocation, coupled with federal relief funds, which total \$27.6M for LCC, including \$10.9M for students and \$16.7M for institutional use, ensures that Lane will have far greater fiscal stability than any time in recent memory.

Oregon is making history with **healthcare for all part-time faculty statewide** working at least .5 FTE or greater for three of four terms per year through the establishment of a new statewide fund to pay for coverage. (See [SB 551](#), which passed last week, for details.) While most LCC part-time faculty receive benefits, the majority of community colleges do not provide insurance coverage for PT faculty. Benefits provided to LCC faculty will not change. However, the new fund will produce substantial savings for LCC, which is reserved for labor relations under the law, which means that your LCCEA Bargaining Team will have the opportunity to negotiate over how to use the funds for the benefit of faculty.

Other achievements for community colleges during this legislative session include: faculty and staff voting rights on the HECC (Higher Education Coordinating Commission), which includes one OEA representative; an increase of 17.7% for the Oregon Opportunity Grant (need-based funding for students); faculty representation on a statewide transfer council tasked with common course numbering for lower division courses; a fully-funded benefits navigator position for every college to help students access government assistance; and the establishment of a Taskforce on Student Success, designed to set the stage for substantial investment and systemic change in higher education for the next biennium.

With the full weight of 40,000+ members, OEA helped achieve substantial gains for community colleges.

U.S Supreme Court Decision and Our Union

On June 7, the U.S. Supreme Court denied a petition to review the *Thompson v. Marietta Education Association* case that sought to challenge the collective voice of public employee unions. This case was one of a series of multiple similar challenges that were filed after the 2018 *Janus* ruling that had been making their way up through the courts with funding from some of the same ultra-conservative foundations such as the Freedom Foundation and National Right to Work Legal Defense Fund. The case sought to end the right of exclusive representation, which is the foundational principle upon which unions function, the defining doctrine that places “collective” in “collective bargaining” and which provides for a shared voice and solidarity in order to promote fairness and equitable treatment for all members.

For SCOTUS to rule otherwise would contravene the public interest. Public sector unions and the common good are inextricably linked. Public employee unions are in the best position to make necessary structural and systemic changes to reduce inequity, whether it be through incremental change contract-by-contract at the local level or through concerted, organized efforts at the state and national level.

On whole, union members receive [better wages than comparable non-union workers](#). The majority of public union employees nationwide are [women, and one-third are African Americans, Latinx, and Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders](#). Union members see smaller race and gender wage and wealth gaps. (See: <https://www.epi.org/blog/unions-help-narrow-the-gender-wage-gap/>, <https://www.americanprogressaction.org/issues/economy/reports/2018/06/28/170469/combating-pay-gaps-unions-expanded-collective-bargaining/>, and <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/economy/reports/2018/09/04/454781/union-membership-narrows-racial-wealth-gap-families-color/>) Union members also have [better access to healthcare and benefits](#).

Being a union member is not only about our individual or collective wages and benefits, it is about supporting the conditions that allow us to do our best work. And importantly, it is about ensuring that public institutions and critical services have sufficient funding to meet community needs. Our own union's successes in the Oregon legislature in winning healthcare for part-time faculty statewide and galvanizing support for transformative funding for public education are examples of this critical societal function unions support for the common good.

As faculty, we work every day to support our community college mission of access and equity, and we did so with the unprecedented challenges of the pandemic over the past year.

It is an honor to work with you all and to participate in our collective work.

In solidarity,
Adrienne