

I. Introduction

Hello, my name is Lauren Blanchard and I am very pleased to be representing my colleagues as the president of MPCTA. I have been the chair of the Political Science department for six years. During my time here, I have served on the Academic Senate, the Equivalency Committee, the Committee on Committees, I have advised the MPC chapter of Alpha Gamma Sigma, and this spring I participated on the Enrollment Management workgroup and look forward to collaborating with the members of the Marina enrollment subgroup when it meets for the first time.

I was trained as a political theorist. I have spent a lot of time thinking about power—which is what political science is really about, government is just one of the venues where we see the practice of power. At the beginning of semester, I tell my students that they are already experts in power because it shapes how they interact with parents, friends, supervisors at work, among others. By that I mean, that there are many places and times in which the study of politics becomes helpful—and now I am hoping that is true. My field dedicates itself to understanding how people are persuaded to work together to devise and accomplish a shared goal, despite their different interests. At MPC in 2016, we are involved in very similar work—how do we create a vision for what the college can be that will convince students, staff, faculty, and administrators to work together to achieve it.

II. Description of Negotiation

The agreement between MPCTA and the District has been expired since July 1, 2014. We are entering into a third year working under an expired contract. As I am certain you already know, in the May 18th negotiations meeting “a concept” was discussed, and at the end of the session, each negotiating team agreed to go out and ask for input from the people they represent before the next negotiations session. This concept was based on a proposal from the MPCTA negotiating team. MPCTA held a special meeting to share the concept with faculty and presumably the District solicited input as well.

According to the concept of May 18, the faculty would have agreed to eliminate the Article 16.8 salary formula from the contract—as CBT recommended. The faculty would have agreed to end post-retirement benefits for new hires—as CBT recommended. The faculty would have agreed to continue negotiations related to student learning outcomes, mandated trainings, the grading factors and other reassigned time for which some faculty are eligible, and the division chairperson position—due to ACCJC and CBT recommendations. In return, our negotiators asked for a retroactive raise of 2% for 2015/16, a raise of 2% in 2016/17, and a 3% raise in 2017/18—which will surely be after the implementation of new procedures intended to make the college more efficient. This MPCTA- proposed concept, addressed two of the key concerns raised by CBT: the salary formula and post-retirement benefits. I point this out because, all too often at MPC, I hear faculty represented as resistant to change and impervious to the needs of the college during these days of lower enrollment and revenue. In this case, the faculty responded to CBT recommendations, asking that in return the college provide a guarantee of small, ongoing raises.

After discussion of this concept with the MPCTA and District constituencies, the Association and District met for two additional negotiating sessions. At the conclusion of the May 31 session, the District countered with a proposal that would have provided a schedule of small raises—though no raise for the 2015/16 academic year. However, the District team also required the elimination of the Division Chair position found in Article 23 and of the release time described in Schedule F of the expired contract. The discussion of what would replace these provisions of the contract would not take place until Fall 2016 – far after faculty would have agreed to elimination of the article and schedule. The District demand for faculty concessions that would then be defined at a later date is an unreasonable demand on the part of the District.

III. Concessions

During negotiations, MPCTA representatives acted in good faith. We offered to compromise on several of the provisions of our contract that were described as problematic by CBT. The District declined those proposals, asking instead that the Association agree to radically alter faculty workloads before the District would consider even a 2% raise for the 2016/17 academic year. A 2% raise is not much for a group of people who have had only a 1.08% increase since 2007 and whose salaries fall in the bottom quartile of community college pay while living in a high cost of living area, and asking for agreement to radically change faculty workloads without any clarification of that change is an unreasonable demand.

I would like now to focus on those workload concessions that the District asked our Association to agree to—while offering to include only one representative on a future committee that would redesign the faculty's workload. The District asked that we agree to eliminate Article 23 of the contract—which describes the role of Division Chairs— and schedule F of the contract, which provides the release time that allows faculty to manage vital programs that serve our community, including our athletic programs, Gentrain, the theater, and our learning centers.

The elimination of Division chairs would be a dramatic change to the way programs are managed at MPC. Change may be required, but it must be done in thoughtful manner. The move to eliminate Division chairs outright presents many problems. For instance, the Enrollment Management workgroup that CBT organized spent many hours creating a scheduling process in which Division Chairs play a key role in drafting the schedule. If there were no Division Chairs, it is clear that other individuals would need to assume that responsibility. Our newly minted scheduling process would need to change. So too would our evaluation process—in which Division Chairs have a leadership role, and which is a negotiable issue. Our hiring process would need to be revised, since Division Chairs play an active role in creating and submitting committee recommendations to the Academic Senate. Our budget processes would need to be reconsidered. The role of the division chair in all of these processes is described in Article 23, which the District asked to eliminate outright.

Provisions of the contract that describe release time allow our expert faculty to:

- manage programs,
- provide essential student services,
- create events at which the community comes together
- grade the numerous assignments in basic skills, English and math classes,
- or prepare to teach 4 or more different classes in a semester.

The faculty do each of these things because they are good for the college and good for students, and they provide a resource for our community. For instance, faculty assign numerous assignments that require detailed grading because they help our students to master course materials, and because they are often required so that our courses can be transferrable to the University of California and California State Universities. Full-time faculty prepare four or more courses in a semester because they have broad expertise, because they want to ensure that our students can take the courses they need for transfer, certification, and employment, and to ensure they can finish in a timely manner.

Eliminating the contract provisions that help them to accomplish these goals – without a clear plan to manage faculty workload afterwards – would be risky.

These changes, which would increase faculty workload, demonstrate the inadequacy of a 2% increase for faculty. Particularly, since we have seen only a 1.08% raise in the last 9 years. Removing the protections that allow us to line edit several dozen pages of written work per student or prepare classes, or coach sports teams, or maintain programs represent a substantial increase in the workload of faculty—more than a 2% increase in the workload of faculty. This means that so far in negotiations, the District has offered faculty a pay cut—and this after 9 years, without a reasonable pay increase.

IV. Hope for future negotiations

I started this presentation by talking about collective action—which is what you need to create institutional change. Collective action requires trust. Even relationships that are designed to be oppositional—like that of an employer and a Union—require some degree of trust.

The faculty have sought to build trust by offering to compromise on 16.8—despite the fact that the formula described in that article would provide faculty a much needed raise for the 2015/16 academic year. The faculty have offered to compromise on post-retirement benefits. The faculty have offered to negotiate a wide-range of efficiencies. However, we now need the District to agree to come to the table and negotiate these matters, keeping in mind the issues that I have described and that will result from radically altering the faculty workload.

MPCTA has agreed to continue negotiations over the summer but have not yet received any proposed dates. The dates we offered were declined. The District must now work to build trust on our campus, and it can begin by agreeing to negotiate in good faith with representatives of faculty.

