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## FOOTHILL-DE ANZA FACULTY ASSOCIATION 30 January 2025 Volume 49 Number 4

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# President's Report: After Greenland, Canada, and the Panama Canal

## FA President Tim Shively

Well, it's been a while since FA's March 2024 "Statement in Support of a Ceasefire in Gaza" was published, but based on the news flooding in from the Middle East, it is evident that such local resolutions actually work on a global scale. I jest, of course, and while this is no laughing matter, it is a joyous occasion and cause for celebration: the bombings have stopped, the first hostages released, food trucks and other desperately needed aid finally on the way. For at least six weeks, if this fragile truce holds, we will have peace, while the details of the following

six weeks of ceasefire are negotiated. Even if this proves not to be the ultimate end of hostilities, it is a pause, a reckoning, a moment which should have occurred well over a year ago. And that is enough to be thankful for.

Meanwhile, a very different humanitarian threat emerges, one much closer to home. As the inauguration of the 47th President of the United States loomed, FA's Executive Council unanimously approved a "statement in support of undocumented and international students and employees" (following this article). While it may not generate quite the controversy of our previous effort, it does again raise existential questions about the purpose and function of a union, which we decisively view as extending beyond merely representing our members and protecting the contract. I'm reminded of Martin Neimöller's lament about the failure of citizens to step up against the spread of nazism in WWII era Germany. Indeed, facing a xenophobic incoming administration which despises organized labor as much as it does diversity and pluralism, today's unions arguably have the motive of self-

preservation in aligning themselves with other groups and organizations that defend basic human dignity and democratic rights. That begins with the most at-risk among us, and extends to all sectors of society, even beyond our state, and yes, even globally.

In an essay recently published in the New York Times, Chilean American author Ariel Dorfman speaks about how, while working for the 1970's Allende administration, he had constructed "a certain epic image of [him]self: someone willing to give his life in defense of a revolutionary government that was liberating the country from centuries of maldevelopment. It was a model for how this could be done peacefully, using ballots rather than bullets." He elaborates on how this self-image came crashing down around him with the 1973 military coup that overthrew Allende's government and established Pinochet's military dictatorship: "I allowed my regrets to fuel me and transform me into the creative person I needed to become in an era not of revolution, but of resistance to dictatorship." While I have no illusions that standing up for undocumented students on the (re)advent of Trump approaches the scale or gravity of resistance to the *US sponsored* overthrow of the democratically elected government of Chile ("as of yet," I am tempted to add), I am nonetheless mindful that educators all, in our various capacities and privileges, have a responsibility for ensuring that our students are safe, our colleagues' rights preserved and that reason prevails on our campuses, not just during the next four years, but into perpetuity. For what's at risk is not just the removal of our most immediately vulnerable but an entire cultural shift of the contours of higher ed.

I was recently disturbed to read an opinion piece in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* in which two faculty-administrators lionize the efforts of the State of Florida to eliminate DEI infused instruction in general education courses. They further remark that "in the new system, a department can offer a maximum of five general-education courses, a restriction encouraging them to choose what is most important and enduring in their disciplines." They then go on to acknowledge that this "old model is a conservative one, yes," and proceed to laud these efforts by state legislators and administrators, claiming that

Their actions will ensure a seriousness in first-year coursework that has been lacking. Humanities courses, for instance will include primary sources and "selections from the Western canon"--the regulations demand it. Curricula based on "unproven, speculative, or exploratory content" are "best suited" to electives or program-specific credit...No trendy approaches and exotic materials that they get once and never encounter again. One important step in creating an informed citizenry is, like Texas, requiring students to take six credits in American history.

It's bad enough to propose a model of lower division course work that unabashedly connects "informed citizenry" and "Texas" in the same sentence. Perhaps students should very well take a full year of history, even American history. But this model's elimination of international (or even inter-cultural) course content across the disciplines exposes the goal to be one of conformity and the limiting of options. Thankfully, such states' ideological "landgrabbing" has been duly noted for what it is in the next issue of the same publication. Yet, let's not grow complacent and assume that such could never happen here. Rather, we need to identify our vulnerabilities and shore them up as best we can.

Case in point: De Anza's recent adoption of a policy that requires elimination from the catalog of courses that are not offered at least once every three years. As a literature instructor, I can say that this is a disciplinary liability, as our program is predicated on a diversity of genre, period, national, ethnic, thematic, critical and cultural offerings. I have been assured that a required frequency of offerings is fairly standard procedure at most community colleges, including our sister college, Foothill. Yet the fact that De Anza's impetus was (from what I've been able to gather) a threatened lawsuit from a disgruntled student unable to enroll in a course which wasn't being offered makes me look back over my shoulder at Florida. No, I'm not suggesting there was any ill intent on the part of the Curriculum Committee or the Academic Senate, but I am saying that such structural changes need watching to ensure that they aren't capitalized upon in less friendly, more targeted efforts to blunt and replace a more multicultural, multinational curriculum (which yes, does include American Literature, History, Art & c) with a more insular, "Westernized" and ethnically limited model of offerings. For that is one definite threat coming down the federal pike.

As a system, we've certainly experienced a fair share of capitulation in the face of legislatively driven attempts to influence our educational structures, even extending into what are ostensibly matters of faculty primary reliance. For if there is never any shortage of jackassery in the halls of congress, the same is true to a lesser degree in our own state legislature. The short-sightedness of such endeavors as AB705 and 1705 and now Common Course Numbering (AB 1111) profess to be in the interest of students. And to some degree they have been, for some students. But driven by corporate interests, they often do as much damage as good (e.g. students being unable to enroll in the preparatory coursework needed to complete more advanced courses), often eliminating more vulnerable students altogether, followed by colleges touting their resulting higher "success" rates.

Given Trump's efforts to criminalize immigrants (don't pay any attention to those Jan. 6 pardons, folks, our crime comes from the border!), I'm just waiting for our felon in chief to attempt fomenting the same around DEI. In as much as he just signed orders to dismantle federal DEI efforts, and the chilling effect this has already had on many private enterprises' efforts, it's clearly a question of when rather than if this is going to impact our own. One suggestion I've heard thrown out there is to change the moniker, not to attract attention by having job titles that include the acronym (or Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in whole, for that matter). I propose LOVE, "Leveraging Opportunities for Validating Equity" (or some variation thereof). Certain quarters might require a little more LOVE than others, while others might be ready to do their own spreading, but I doubt the Feds are gonna want to go down as trying to stamp out LOVE on campus. We can do the same work under a different moniker and survive another day in the struggle. Courage, courage will be needed, like that displayed by my new hero, Episcopalian Bishop Mariann Edgar Budde.

To be sure, we're likely to face more than our fair share of challenges in the four years ahead. Some of them are bound to be internal, for just as there will be a resistance, there will be collaborateurs-at all levels of our institutions. And whether its locally or at the state level, we must do our best, when policies start smelling Vichy, to root out the moles and unify our ranks. Yet we must also build alliances. Even as we call out the farce of "institutional"

neutrality" when it's inappropriately invoked, we must support our College and District administrators—who will be under immense pressure to comply rather than resist—when they demonstrate a commitment to our values and principles rather than simply offering milquetoast assurances that these will be respected. Let's show them that we have their backs when they move forward agendas that challenge divisive mandates. For we will need their support to make it through the next four years—it's only together that we stand a fighting chance.

## JOIN OUR FACEBOOK PAGE

# Faculty Association statement of support for undocumented and international students and employees

The Faculty Association is committed to supporting diversity, equity and inclusion efforts, particularly as they involve Foothill-De

Anza students and employees. The looming threat posed to undocumented and international students and employees by the election and inauguration of Donald J. Trump gives us cause for concern that our College and District leaders must do everything within their power to prevent the removal of any protected status these individuals possess and their deportation from our shores. We recognize that the Governor and state legislators have been working on a series of legal mandates which will potentially provide some such protection, but we feel that the District itself must also make a firm commitment to providing sanctuary for our people.



While we realize that senior administration and the Board of Trustees must follow legal guidelines and education regulations in conducting the business of our institution, we feel strongly that they should not voluntarily participate in any raids, arrests, deportations or other

such harassments performed by Immigration and Customs Enforcement, the National Guard and other federal or state agencies, including actions initiated by unsanctioned vigilante citizen groups. Nor should they willingly share information about such students, their educational activities or known whereabouts and contact info--except as required by law.

For its part, the Faculty Association believes there should be training made available District-wide for all instructors related to undocumented and international students and how to best protect and support them and their interests in pursuing an education at Foothill-De Anza. This should include directing potentially impacted individuals towards fiscal, legal and other resources and educating faculty on how to conduct themselves should an ICE, National Guard or other federal or state directed raid occur on our campuses.

Although we wish to comply with existing statutes and regulations, we also will avail ourselves of our rights as union members to protest actions harmful to the employees we represent, including, to the extent necessary, legal and work actions. Should the law itself take a prescriptive turn against these at-risk students and employees, faculty reserve our first amendment rights as individuals to protest such actions and, for those of us willing to accept the risks of such activity, may even engage in civil disobedience. We expect the District not to challenge such actions, and hope that it may even join us in solidarity.

We also implore the Board of Trustees to demonstrate the District's commitment to the safety, welfare and education of these students and employees by adopting a written statement of principles that makes clear its stance and enumerates specific standards by which it will demonstrate support. From freezing non-resident tuition to extending AB 540 protections to all eligible students in the District, and other such measures, there are many ways the Board can walk the talk. We hope that we can work together in the common interest of protecting our most vulnerable.

FA Welcomes Our New Member



## Rose Huynh English at Foothill

## Know Your Contract: What Happens to Unused Sick Leave when Faculty Retire or Leave the District?

## Kathy Perino Chief Negotiator

Whether considering retirement or moving out of the area to a more affordable place to live, both full-time and part-time faculty frequently ask about the status of their unused sick leave if they leave the district. Usually, they ask "Do faculty get paid out for unused sick leave when they leave or retire?"



The short answer to that question is no, faculty are not "paid" for their unused sick leave when they separate from the District. However, what happens to the sick leave depends on the retirement system faculty select when joining FHDA, and the options for that depend on whether faculty members are full-time or part-time.

#### Full-time Faculty



Most full-time faculty are in the State Teachers Retirement System Defined Benefit system (STRS DB), and a small portion are in the Public Employees Retirement System (PERS) program. (Note: the PERS program is not to be confused with the CalPERS health benefits program.) Both STRS and PERS are state pension systems. When faculty retire from STRS or PERS, all unused sick leave is reported to the retirement system and is converted to service credit that is used in the monthly pension calculation.

As an example, suppose a 10-month (175-day contract) full-time faculty member has 1280 hours in their full-time sick leave bank and another 220 hours in their part-time sick

leave bank (from teaching overloads) at retirement.

To convert those hours to service credit, divide by 8 to convert the hours of leave to days, then divide by 175 to convert to service years: (1280 hours + 220 hours) / 8 hr per day = 187.5 days, 187.5 days/175 days per year = 1.07 years of service. When faculty retire, their pension calculation will have an additional 1.07 years of service added to their years of service.

Faculty who resign their position without retiring from STRS or PERS do not have the sick leave converted to service credit. What happens to it depends on where they go next. If faculty accept a position at another California public K-12 school or a California Community College, Ed Code allows them to transfer unused sick leave to their new district; the leave travels with them, but they

have to request the transfer when getting the new job (it doesn't happen automatically). If faculty resign their position and go to work for a private employer (no longer employed in the California K-14 system), their sick leave just stays at FHDA. If faculty eventually retire from STRS and get their pension, even if it is 10 years after leaving FHDA, that sick leave will be reported for service credit at that time.

### Part-Time Faculty

Upon employment at FHDA, part-time faculty have THREE choices for retirement systems: STRS Cash Balance (CB), STRS Defined Benefit (DB), and FICA (Social Security). What happens to sick leave when faculty resign or retire from the district depends on which retirement system is selected. What follows is a very brief description of the retirement options and the associated effect on unused sick leave.

### STRS Cash Balance (CB)

The majority of part-time faculty either elect or are defaulted into STRS Cash Balance (CB). Cash Balance does not provide a pension upon retirement; it acts much like a 401k (although it is not a 401k). Part-time faculty contribute 4% of their earnings to their CB account and the District contributes an additional 4%. CalSTRS manages the account, and at retirement faculty get the value of the account. There are options in terms of how the money is received (consult CalSTRS) but it is not a lifetime pension.

Since the amount received upon retirement does not involve a "service credit" calculation, unused sick leave is not reported to STRS. At retirement, there is no value from unused sick leave. It stays on record at FHDA, and if faculty ever return to the California K-14 system, they will have access to it because it can always be transferred to another California school or community college, or used if returning to FHDA.

### STRS Defined Benefit (DB)

Part-time faculty who select the STRS Defined Benefit (DB) program are opting into a pension program. Faculty pay 10.25% of their earnings into DB, and the District contributes an additional 19.1%. Faculty are vested in the pension program after earning 5 years of full-time equivalent service credit (this can take longer than 5 calendar years due to part-time status), and at retirement there is a lifetime pension. How that pension is calculated can be found at CalSTRS.com, but the important thing to know is that the calculation involves the number of years of service credit at the time of retirement.

The reporting of sick leave to STRS upon retirement and the conversion of sick leave to service credit is described above in the fulltime faculty section. It is the same process and credit for full-time and part-time faculty.

The options for part-time faculty who are in the DB system and leave the district without retiring from STRS are the same as described for full-time faculty above: sick leave can be transferred to another K-14 school if faculty go to work there, or it can be left at FHDA until retirement from STRS.

#### FICA (Social Security)

Part-time faculty who select FICA will pay into, and the District will pay into, social security at the rates determined by the federal government. Like faculty in the STRS CB program, at resignation or retirement, there is no value for unused sick leave. It stays on record at FHDA, and if faculty ever return to the California K-14 system, they will have access to it because it can always be transferred to another California K-14 school, or used if returning to FHDA.

Part-time faculty unsure of which retirement program they are in should check their paystub. Look for STRS CB, STRS DB, or FICA.

Faculty who have questions about the part-time faculty options within CalSTRS can visit CalSTRS.com for more information. It is possible to change from CB to DB for interested faculty, but there is a cost to convert past service credit due to the difference in contribution rates (4% vs 10.25% for employees and 4% vs 19.1% for employees). Contact CalSTRS for information regarding the cost of conversion.

As always, the FA staff is here to help with any questions faculty may have.

## Get Involved in FA

#### Job Description: FA Membership Coordinator – Spring 2024

Please send a letter of interest indicating your qualifications to Erika Cervantes (faerika@fafhda.org) by no later than Thursday, February 13

#### Job Summary:

The Membership Coordinator is a current Foothill-De Anza faculty member (preferably part-time faculty) selected by the Council for the remainder of the 2024-25 Academic Year, renewable, subject to review and revision of position parameters and compensation. The Communications Director is the primary liaison and outreach position to maintain and increase membership in the Faculty Association. Previous union experience is helpful but not required.



· Communicate with non-members both in-person (group and one-on-one) and remotely.

 $\cdot$  Request updated non-member lists from the Office Manager (current estimate: roughly 300 non-members across both campuses, most hired in the last three years).

- · Chair and run a membership committee composed of volunteer FA Staff or Executive Council members.
- $\cdot$  Communicate with campus HR regarding information given at time of hire; make suggestions to improve the onboarding process
- · Attend orientations for new employees and serve as a liaison with the FA Part-time Associate Secretary and FA President.
- $\cdot$  Maintain communication with the Professional Development Offices on both campuses
- $\cdot$  Create system/process for tracking communication with new faculty hires/non-members that can be used each year and be updated with new hires
- $\cdot$  Share feedback from new hires with FA staff

#### **Skills and Abilities**

- · Excellent written and oral communications skills
- · Good interpersonal relations skills
- · Technologically savvy with email, texting, zoom and other means of communication
- · Willingness to learn about the cultures of both campuses
- · Good record-keeping skills

Compensation: \$2307 for approximately 40 hours of work per month, starting March 2025. (based on step 1 column 1 of Schedule G – the same hourly rate as most FA work)

FA staff will review progress and bring recommendation for the 2025-26 year to our Executive Council in June for renewal discussion.

## **Click Here to Join FA Today!**



## **Particularly for Part-Timers**

Raymond Brennan Part-time Associate Secretary

Monthly Update: Social Security Changes and Faculty Information First, some welcome news: As one of his final acts in office, President Biden signed the "Social Security Fairness Act" (H.R. 84), ending both the Windfall Elimination Provision

(WEP) and Government Pension Offset (GPO). This means CalSTRS pension recipients and their surviving spouses will retain their



full Social Security benefits. Previously, the WEP could reduce Social Security checks by up to \$487 for those without 30 years of qualifying earnings. Anyone affected by these provisions in 2024 will receive a full refund, with the exact date pending announcement.

Part-time faculty who completed the first phase of Regular Substantive Interaction (RSI) training should contact their dean for compensation. The same applies for completion of part two. Note that deans weren't provided lists of attending faculty.

The January 23rd listening session discussing the Agreement is available for viewing here. The next session is scheduled for February 20th, 3-4:30pm, here. Please submit any questions about working conditions in advance.

Important note: The current part-time teaching faculty salary schedule (Appendix C1) is only accessible through FA's homepage under "Salary Schedules" in the Agreement tab. The version in the Agreement breakdown is outdated and will be updated along with other information soon.

As always, the FA supports you. If you have questions about working conditions, please contact me.



Following is a list of many, but not all, important contractual deadlines for the 2024-25 academic year. If any of these deadlines apply to you, be sure to mark your calendar and read the *Agreement* text referenced in parentheses (fafhda.org).

The campus conciliator can assist you if you need help:

- De Anza, Felisa Vilaubi
- Foothill, Eric Reed

Questions can also be directed to the <u>FA</u> Office Manager Erika Cervantes (650.949.7544)

Please note: if you miss a contractual deadline, even by a single day, you may lose significant benefits or have to wait a full year before becoming eligible again. This calendar is on the *FA* website under "*FA* Current Announcements."

## **The List of Important Deadlines**

#### <u>2025</u>

**Feb. 5**: Professional Development Leave Committee makes recommendations to the Board at its meeting in February (17.13.3).

**Feb. 14:** Full-time faculty submit requirements to establish additional Faculty Service Areas (FSA)s (15.9).

**Feb. 28**: Full-time faculty submit written initial request for Article 18 pre-retirement reduction in contract to college president (18.8.2, Appendix W). See 18.9 to request percentage change in subsequent years.

**Mar. 17**: *Article 19* faculty submit to District Human Resources the annual Early Retirement Service Plan for the following academic year with all required signatures for second and subsequent years of participation (*19.6.2.2, Appendix U1*). See *19.6.1* for initial year of participation.

**Apr. 1**: Full-time faculty submit written request to return to fulltime employment status from *Article 18* pre-retirement reduction in contract (*18.4*).

**Apr. 4**: Part-time faculty submit completion of requirements documentation for column change starting in Spring Quarter to campus Personnel Office (*Appendix B.1, C, E, G*).

## **Getting Started with AI**

## **Understanding AI Through the Calculator Analogy**



Back when calculators first entered the classroom, they sparked debates about mental math skills and academic rigor - much like AI today. Just as calculators became standard tools for computation while still requiring mathematical understanding, AI can become a valuable educational tool while maintaining academic integrity. Like a calculator, AI excels at routine tasks but requires human oversight and understanding to be used effectively. You'll need to learn its capabilities and limitations, just as we all learned when to trust our calculators and when to double-check their results.

### **Beginning Your AI Journey**

The best way to understand AI is to start experimenting with it in low-stakes situations. Begin with personal organization tasks - things that won't impact your students while you learn. Try

using AI to help organize your weekly schedule or draft email templates for common situations. Ask it to help create meeting agendas or organize research notes. These simple tasks will help you develop comfort with AI's capabilities and limitations.

Once you're comfortable with basic tasks, move on to course material preparation. All can be particularly helpful with administrative tasks like updating syllability or creating course calendars. Ask it to review your current syllabus for clarity or generate reading comprehension questions. This kind of work helps you understand how All can support your teaching while keeping you firmly in control of the content.

### **Practical Experiments to Try**

Start by taking your current syllabus to an AI tool like ChatGPT or Claude.AI. Ask it to suggest updates for addressing AI use in your class, identify missing policies, or recommend ways to make the document more student-friendly. Pay attention to both helpful suggestions and misunderstandings - this will give you insight into AI's strengths and limitations.

Take one of your existing assignments and ask AI to complete it. The results can be enlightening, showing you where the assignment might need modification to require more original thinking or personal experience. Ask AI to explain how it approached the task - this can help you understand how students might be tempted to use AI and how to design more effective assignments.

For content creation, pick a familiar topic from your course and ask AI to explain it in different ways. Compare its explanations with your usual teaching approach. Ask for examples and analogies. This exercise can give you fresh perspectives on familiar material while helping you understand where AI falls short.

### **Understanding AI's Limitations**

Through experimentation, you'll discover what AI can't do well. It often struggles with complex mathematical reasoning, frequently invents citations, and can't access truly current information. It's poor at evaluating nuanced student work and lacks understanding of specific local contexts. These limitations are crucial to understand as you integrate AI into your teaching.

### **Creative Applications in Teaching**

As you become more comfortable with AI, you'll find numerous ways to enhance your teaching. Use it to generate diverse practice problems or create engaging discussion scenarios. Develop case studies that bring course concepts to life, or create sample essays for editing practice. For assessment, AI can help draft quiz questions, create different versions of tests, and develop review materials.



Classroom management can also benefit from AI support. Generate creative icebreaker activities, design effective group discussion prompts, or develop project timelines. AI can help create peer review guidelines and suggest ways to structure group work effectively.

## **Getting Started Successfully**

Success with AI comes from regular practice. Set aside some "AI exploration time" - perhaps 15 minutes daily for simple tasks or an hour weekly for more involved experiments. Keep track of what works and what doesn't. Note which prompts are most effective and document the limitations you discover.

Begin with those low-stakes tasks we mentioned - personal organization, administrative work, and course planning. As your confidence grows, move on to content creation and assessment design. Share your experiences with colleagues - both successes and failures. This collaborative learning approach helps everyone improve their AI skills more quickly.

## **Moving Forward**

The key to success with AI is starting small and building gradually. Choose one simple task to try today - perhaps organizing your weekly schedule or drafting an email template. Set aside regular time for exploration and consider joining or creating a faculty discussion group about AI use. Document what you learn along the way.



Remember that AI, like any tool, requires practice to use effectively. You'll make mistakes and discover limitations - that's part of the learning process. Keep your focus on how AI can enhance student learning while maintaining academic integrity. With time and experimentation, you'll develop a natural sense of when and how to use AI effectively in your teaching practice.

The goal isn't to become an AI expert overnight, but to gradually build comfort and competence with these new tools. Start small, experiment regularly, and keep student learning as your primary focus. Like any new teaching tool, AI integration takes time and patience to master.

Shape Our

## What Do you Think?

We welcome your feedback. Use the "Share Your Voice" link below!

- · Feedback on Scheduling Negotiations
- Content Suggestions
- Formatting Suggestion
- · Private response to writer or editor (will not be published)
- Letter to editor in response to content. This may be published in a future issue of the FA News.
- Request to have your relevant article or information published in the *FA News*. Please include a detailed description of your planned article.
- · Any other constructive feedback you would like to provide.

## **Share Your Voice: Shape Our Future**

## Fhda Faculty Association

## FA Executive Council Members

Erick Aragon (DA) Rich Booher (DA) Raymond Brennan (DA) Mary Donahue (DA) Laura Gamez (FH) Jordana Griffiths (FH) Julie Jenkins (FH) Fatima Jinnah (FH) Sunghae Jung (DA) Brendan Mar (DA) Rachel Mudge (FH) James Nguyen (DA) Chai Schweikert (DA) Daniel Solomon (DA) Bob Stockwell (DA) Felisa Vilaubi (DA)

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