AFT 2121 pushes back against HSS rate hikes

By Chris Hanzo,
AFT 2121 Executive Director

A few weeks ago, we reported that the new Health Service System rates set to go into effect on July 1, 2012, were subject to change depending upon the outcome of negotiations between AFT 2121 and the District. Moreover, HSS had failed to take into account the City Charter-mandated increase in employer premiums when it published the new rates in the employee Open Enrollment packets. Below, you will see the employee rates slated to go into effect on July 1, 2012, and their percentage increase compared to current rates.

AFT continues to negotiate for a greater contribution by the college for faculty health coverage. The employer rates are going up by 3 percent compared with an average employee increase of 11 percent. AFT has proposed an increased contribution from the District in 2012/13 to offset these disproportionate increases. We estimate that it would cost the District an additional $271,000 to keep these rates flat, i.e. no increase in employee rates beginning July 1, 2012. More than this amount has, in fact, already been budgeted for health care costs next year.

Larger context for health care negotiations

The District is attempting to close an estimated $14.5 million deficit for next year, 2012/13. While increased health costs constitute a small portion of this, the District is insisting that any agreement on additional District contributions to faculty health care costs be coupled with a plan to close next year's deficit.

In reality, both employers and unions face unrelenting increases in health care costs while real wages decline and revenues to public employers shrink. This untenable situation can only be resolved through the reform of the U.S. health care system. Economic recovery will fail as long as both the private and public employers and employees are burdened with these ever-rising costs.

City College of San Francisco employees cannot bear these inordinate increases in health care premiums. We call on the District to share this burden while supporting efforts to reform the health care system in San Francisco and beyond. *(chanzo@aft2121.org)*

Proposed HSS rates for 2012/13 prior to AFT negotiations

	EE Rate	EE + 1	EE + 2
Blue Shield	$20.66 no change	$124.86 8% increase	$301.00 6% increase
Kaiser	$2.88 Currently $0.00	$95.27 19% increase	$262.22 11% increase
City Plan	$355.17 19% increase	$732.49 19% increase	$1,150.54 18% increase

Thank you to Don Griffin

Many nice things, all well-deserved, have been said about retiring Chancellor Don Griffin. We want to add a few things to the list that represent valuable contributions to the faculty and to City College of San Francisco. Chancellor Griffin promoted consolidation of part-time hours to full-time faculty jobs, creating many new full-time jobs at CCSF, even at a time when other colleges were heading in the other direction. He fought to hold the line on faculty layoffs by cutting extra-pay assignments first. And unlike CEOs in other sectors and even college chancellors and presidents elsewhere, he didn't just pay lip service to the concept of "shared sacrifice" in hard times. As the highest paid CCSF employee, he twice took the lead by cutting his own salary. Don Griffin showed real leadership, and we will miss him.

Budget watch: Complicated ambiguity

By Alisa Messer,
AFT 2121 President

The dismal state budget drives AFT 2121 negotiations as well as an increasing number of District choices that ought to be based on educational, not financial, values. The ambiguous and elusive state budget process, coupled with November elections, will eventually determine the District's resources—by which we mean, the size of the budget deficit—for next year, 2012-13.

Mid-May will bring more, but not final, information. That is when Governor Brown releases the "May Revise," his reconfigured budget proposal based, in part, on updated tax revenues coming into the state. Given the clues he provided in his January budget proposal, we'll need to get busy. Though he said if statewide revenue measures passed this fall, he would not make further cuts to community colleges and EC/K-12, he does not seek to use those new revenues to restore cuts; instead he wants to accelerate payments on state debt. In short, he's looking to put Wall Street before education.

We think Wall Street can wait. Our message must be distinct from the governor's: California must reinvest in public education and its Master Plan for Higher Education, reinvest in students and the future of the state.

The May Revise isn't final. The state Legislature will weigh in, and we are already working with the California Federation of Teachers and other labor, education, and community partners to build better priorities into the budget and to ensure that we are restoring cuts rather than servicing debt. Additionally, it's unclear what the budget will bring to vital social services or to the University of California and California State University systems, which are not covered by the funding guarantee in Proposition 98 that automatically puts a portion of the state's general fund money aside for EC/K-12 and community colleges.

Hopefully by the end of June, when the Legislature is scheduled to approve a budget, our call for restoration will have been answered. Even if then, there's now talk of an even larger-than-expected state deficit. And everything hinges on what we persuade California's voting public to do in November.

The "merged" Brown/CFT progressive tax initiative, for which we've collected more than a million signatures in record time and which will continue to be an AFT 2121 priority for November's ballot, will bring in substantially more revenue than the governor's initial measure would have (and most of it from California's top 2 percent). We estimate that additional funding toward Prop 98 educational funds would result in at least $2.5 million extra for City College of San Francisco.

Even so, without a change to the state's budget priorities along the way, Brown's plans will leave CCSF with another gaping budget gap next year, just a bit smaller than the one we marginally "closed" this year with our own hides. This year's cuts were largely addressed with one-time fixes and funding that will not be available next year, including the District's reserves and substantial employee concessions throughout the college. So even if additional state revenues pass in November, our budget gap for 2012-13 could remain at about $14.5 m.

And that gap is why the revenue answer is not just a statewide question: CCSF is asking San Francisco voters to step up and protect public education with a parcel tax dedicated to restoring City College. With a unified effort, that's something we can make happen for our larger San Francisco community and for all of City College. *(amesser@aft2121.org)*