

Summer 2014

Ventura County Community College District Retirees' Association

The Monitor

Area Assemblyman Advances Higher Education Legislation

Higher education in California has been an important focus of legislation authored by Assemblyman Das Williams of Santa Barbara, and will continue to be in the future, as he is the chair of the Assembly Higher Education Committee.

So stated Darcel Elliott and Jeannette Sanchez-Palacios, representatives of Assemblyman Williams' office, who gave the keynote presentation at the March 27, 2014 annual meeting of the VCCCD Retirees Association, held on the campus of Oxnard College.

The speakers addressed bills authored by Assemblyman Williams dealing with California's community colleges specifically. The audience was primarily interested in AB 955 (Chapter 710, Statutes of 2013).

Formally known as the Community College Intersession Extension Pilot Program, the controversial new law allows six specified community colleges to offer selected, high-demand credit courses during summer and winter intersessions. Students who enroll in these courses, including in-state residents, must pay out-of-state tuition.

Of the six community colleges invited to participate in this pilot

program (Oxnard College was one), only Long Beach City College has accepted the invitation and has implemented the program.

According to Ms. Elliott and Ms. Sanchez-Palacios, the assemblyman offered this bill after speaking with various groups about different options for offering more classes. Budgets had been shrinking since 2008, courses and programs had been cut, and hundreds of thousands of students had been turned away.

The keynote speakers said that by allowing colleges to offer the intersession classes, AB 955 was "the option that people hated the least; no one really likes this program, not even Das." The program will sunset in 2018.

Many in the audience also expressed their opposition to AB 955, asserting that it creates a two-tiered system of education in which only students with the financial ability to pay are able to enroll in the intersession courses.

Ms. Elliott and Ms. Sanchez-Palacios also briefly reviewed other community college bills carried by Assemblyman Williams including:

- AB 2442 – Establishes the California Hope Public Trust to provide additional financial support to all three segments of public higher education.

- AB 2558 – Updates the Community College Professional Development Program to provide staff development for faculty, staff, and administrators that promotes student success.

- AB 2705 – Changes the designations of "part time" and "temporary" faculty to "associate" faculty.

VCCCDRA President René Rodriguez thanked the keynote speakers for their excellent presentation, and the audience gave them an enthusiastic round of applause.

René also introduced Dr. Richard Durán, President of Oxnard College, who welcomed attendees and gave an update on important developments at the college. He also introduced Jerry Morris, vice president of the California Retired Teachers Association, who spoke briefly about CRTA's mission and advocacy on behalf of educators.

Attendees also heard reports from Harry Culotta, past president and editor of the *Monitor*, Larry Manson, (continued on next page)

chair of the Educational Issues Committee, Don Medley, chair of the Membership Committee, and Patricia Gage, treasurer and liaison to the Social Committee. Attendees also voted to approve the minutes of the March 27, 2013 annual meeting of the VCCCD Retirees Association as presented by the secretary, Marie Soo Hoo.

Susan Webster also gave a brief first-person report of her experience in trying to get American Specialty Health (ASH), an Anthem Blue Cross contractor, to

pay claims for chiropractic services dating back to May 2013. Thanks to the efforts of Susan and many others, this issue is finally being resolved.

When it came time for the election of officers, Don Medley, Nominating Committee Chair, announced that Marie Soo Hoo and Patricia Gage were willing to stand for re-election as Secretary and Treasurer, respectively, for the period July 1, 2014 through June 30, 2016.

Attendees voted unanimously to re-elect Marie and Patricia to their positions. René Rodriguez praised Marie and Patricia for their willingness to continue their service.

However, there were no nominations for President or Vice President. Candidates will continue to be sought until the positions are filled. If you are interested in serving in either capacity, please contact the VCCCD Retirees Association by e-mail at vcccdra.org

Retired Teachers Officer Addresses VCCCD Retirees at Annual Meeting

BY RENÉ G. RODRIGUEZ

Jerry Morris is the vice president of the California Retired Teachers Association (CalRTA), Area VII, Division 28 (Ventura County). At one of our regular meetings with Trustee Dianne McKay, she informed our Educational Issues Committee that Jerry wanted to contact the VCCCDRA, and would it be all right to give him Harry's and my e-mail addresses?

Jerry and I made contact soon afterwards. He informed me that he would soon be on his way to Sacramento to visit with local legislators, and asked if I had any issues that I would like to have him bring up before them. I mentioned our concern with recently passed legislation, AB955, sponsored by Assemblyman Das Williams which allows certain com-

munity colleges, during summer and winter intersessions, to offer a two-tiered system of classes, one tier offered to students who could pay a fee at or close to the actual cost of offering each class.

Our main concern was the use of limited classroom space paid for by public taxes, but now to be used only by the few who could afford to pay full freight for these classes. Many in the VCCCDRA had expressed it as a bad model to institute as part of the California community college system.

Jerry accepted my invitation to speak at the VCCCDRA Annual Meeting on March 27. He reported that while in Sacramento, he met with three Democrats and three Republicans

(mostly their staffs), but that he did meet with Das Williams personally. He said that Assemblyman Scott Wilk's office was very much opposed to this pilot program. Scott is a former member of a community college board, so he understands the issue and his staff understands the issue. The others were also against it.

Das Williams gave a pretty good explanation as to why he wanted this, very similar to what Darcel Elliott, his field representative, had said at the Annual Meeting: "Personally, I still don't think it's a good idea, even as a pilot program, but I put that point out."

According to Jerry Morris, the major focus of the CalRTA at this (continued on next page)

time is preservation of pensions. For this reason, Jerry reported on the (San Jose Mayor Chuck) Reed Initiative, which may someday appear on the California statewide ballot. Many people don't understand that if the Reed Initiative were to pass, the 2% cost of living that CalSTRS pension recipients receive annually could be gone. The 85% purchasing power provision could also be gone. It would give school and community college boards the option to get rid of retirement medical benefits.

Chuck Reed couldn't raise enough money to put this initia-

tive on the ballot this November, but plans to put it on the ballot in 2016 if he can raise enough money to get the required signatures. He needs at least \$2.5 million dollars, and currently has \$350,000, of which \$200,000 came from Texas.

At the national level, CalRTA is working to repeal the two Social Security offsets, WEP (Windfall Elimination Provision) and GPO (Government Pension Offset). In a letter to Jerry's wife, Senator Dianne Feinstein "left open the hint that she might be willing to go along

with at least survivors getting benefits...."

Jerry provided materials for retirees to consider joining CalRTA (calrta.org). Annual dues are currently \$45, for which "you get a full time lobbyist in Sacramento, a company in Washington, D.C. that we contract to lobby for us." I believe that Larry Manson and Don Medley have already joined this important organization. I just sent CalRTA my check for \$45, and I encourage those of you able to do so to do the same. It's only our pensions!

Executive Board Brings Retirement Issues Forums to All 3 Colleges

BY RENÉ G. RODRIGUEZ

Members of the Executive Board of the Ventura County Community College District Retirees' Association visited Ventura College (April 1), Oxnard College (April 15) and Moorpark College (April 16) to provide a forum on the subject of retirement issues to help prospective retirees prepare for that important day. Participants included Harry Culotta, Marie Soo Hoo, Larry Manson, Don Medley, Lynn Fauth and René Rodriguez.

The Exec Board favored an unstructured approach, focusing on a question and answer format, thereby allowing attendees to control what subjects to

cover and how much time to allow on any given subject. The questions asked at each forum inevitably covered subjects such as the district's three-tiered retirement benefits system as described in the AFT and SEIU contracts and how they relate to health benefits, and questions relating to CalPERS, CalSTRS, Medicare, and Social Security.

Exec Board members stressed that they would be answering questions based on their own personal experiences, and that it was incumbent on each prospective retiree to approach the organizations themselves to get current answers to their questions. Handouts were provided

attendees with the information on how to reach each organization cited online or by telephone. Each attending member of the Exec Board answered questions that only they could have answered from personal experience, giving substance to each answer.

Harry Culotta is to be commended for coming the most prepared with handouts to cover subjects such as VCCCD's employee benefits retirement tiers, PEPRA (Public Employees Pension Reform Act), Medicare, WEP (Windfall Elimination Provision), GPO (Government Pension Offset), and long term care. (continued on next page)

(from previous page)
 Considering how well these forums were received at each college, the Exec Board is encouraged to keep offering

these forums as a regular activity of the Retirees' Association. Efforts will be made in the future to invite District Office staff to come to one of the cam-

pus forums, and to make sure that as many faculty and classified staff get the word about these future forums.

Vision Plan Adds Out-of-Pocket Maximums Starting in 2014-15

BY HARRY R. CULOTTA

The Ventura County Community College District has announced that effective July 1, 2014, active employees, retirees, and dependents who are enrolled in the MES Vision Plan will have out-of-pocket maximum costs for certain lens options if those lenses are purchased through MES Vision participating in-network providers.

This is an important change in the benefit level from previous years as it pertains to lenses. Previously, MES Vision Plan provided allowances for lenses that did not take into consideration their total costs. Such an arrangement subjected employees, retirees, and their dependents to potentially *unlimited* out-of-pocket costs. Instead of allowances, the new maximums will make it easier to manage the cost of lenses if they are obtained from participating in-network providers.

Effective July 1, 2014, the schedule of out-of-pocket maximum costs from MES Vision in-network providers consists of the following:

	<u>Maximum out-of-pocket amount</u>
<u>Spectacle lenses</u>	
Standard progressives	Up to \$55
Premium progressives	Up to \$95
Polycarbonate lenses for children (to age 19)	None (covered in full)
Polycarbonate lenses for adults	Up to \$30
Polycarbonate progressives	Up to \$120
Photochromic lenses	Up to \$65
Photochromic progressives	Up to \$155
Polycarbonate photochromic	Up to \$95
Polycarbonate photochromic progressives	Up to \$185
<u>Lens Coatings</u>	
Factory-applied scratch – basic	None (covered in full)
Ultraviolet – basic	None (covered in full)
Tints (pink I and II)	None (covered in full)
Tints (other than pink I and II)	Up to \$40
<u>Anti-reflective</u>	
Basic	Up to \$35
Premium	Up to \$48
Ultra	Up to \$60
<u>Contact lens fitting and evaluation</u> (chosen in lieu of frames and lenses)	Up to \$60

All other vision benefits, including those provided by out-of-network (non-participating) providers, remain the same. For further details, consult the MES Vision benefit schedule at http://www.vcccd.edu/sites/default/files/imported/assets/pdf/human_resources/benefits/VCCCD_Medical_Eye_Services_Summary_of_Benefits_and_Coverage_07012013.pdf

Membership Report

BY DON MEDLEY

THERE ARE MANY NEW RETIREES, AND WE DON'T HAVE EVERYONE'S ADDRESS!! WE NEED ADDRESSES/PHONE NUMBERS/EMAIL ADDRESSES FOR THE FOLLOWING PEOPLE. Please call Don Medley at 805-482-8761 or email to don.medley@verizon.net if you can help. Thank you!

Rebecca Anderson	Robert Anderson	Janet Archibald	Denise Avila
Raul Barraza	Thomas Barth	Eddie Baugh	Carol Baughman
Margaret Boles	James Botting	Donald Brockett	Vincent Campo
Susan Carter	Linda Chapman	Katherine M Colborn	Paul Conley
Christy Corbett	James Crowley	Barrett Culmback	Ismael de la Rocha
Carolyn Dorrance	Patricia Earl	David Farris	Ruby Filar
Lisa Giammichele	Lucia Haro	Charles J. Hewson	Keith Hilmer
Marjorie E. Imbach	Wilmer Ingram	Michael Johnson	Steven Kegley
Daniel Lopez	Julie Lovejoy	Carl Mahr	Steven J. Mayer
Michael McGann	Mary Anne McNeil	Michael Munoz	Garland Orr
Lucila (Lucy) Paez	Jerry Purcell	Deborah Ritchie	John Roach
Emilie Robb	Joseph Sabedra	Shelley Savren	Joan Smith
Larry D. Smithson	Carmen S. Taylor	Mary Taylor-Parr	Al Villegas
Sue Wall	Florencia Wallace	Janice Wiley	Ernest Williams
Charles Wilson	Grethe Wygant		

Please update your directory with the following address changes:

Karen Bulger	Kathy E. Campbell	Leroy D. Haberman, PhD	Norann McDaniel
Maricarmen Ohara	Jean Morgan	Fern Pinkerton	Suzanne A. van Marion
Alice Sweetland	Emma Waits	Beverly Young	Gene Zubrinsky

Please update your directory with the following e-mail address changes:

Patricia (Patti) Dozen
Elise D. Schneider

Look for us on the Web at

<http://www.vcccdra.org>

In Memoriam

We honor the memory of our departed colleagues and extend our sincerest condolences to their families, friends, and associates.

Eleanor Hudson

Donna Johnsen

2013-2014 Executive Board

René G. Rodriguez, President

Harry R. Culotta, Past President

Lynn Fauth, Vice President

Marie Soo Hoo, Secretary

Patricia Gage, Treasurer

Gary Johnson, Benefits Committee Chair

Don Medley, Membership Committee Chair

Larry Manson, Educational Issues Comm. Chair

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