



Newsletter

"Democracy in Education, Education for Democracy"

Volume XXXVIII, Number 3

ricaft@ric.edu

October 21, 2004 Dan Weisman, Editor

Health Insurance Changes

On Thursday, Oct. 7, the state opened the bids that had been received in response to its request for proposals, for health insurance coverage for state employees. As has been reported, United Health won the bid and was awarded the contract for all state employees, beginning Jan. 1, 2005. Marcia Reback, President of the RIFTHP, immediately questioned the administrator of United Health Care, concerning providers in their network vis a vis Blue Cross Blue Shield providers. Within a day, the administrator assured the RIFTHP that 93% of the providers are the same, and provided the mechanism for determining whether one's providers are United Health members.

Maggie Sullivan, assistant director of Human Resources, distributed a memo to the RIC community, entitled New Medical Plan 2005. Directions for the provider search were included in the memo. Maggie's memo and its accompanying questions and answers was comprehensive and accurate. If you have received the memo or if you have questions, please call Maggie at ext. 8442 or email msullivan@ric.edu.

The Union has received many questions about the coverage and the cost. As for the coverage, the plan is identical to Blue Cross Blue Shield according to the proposal and the representations made to state employees. We are concerned, however, by Gov. Carcieri's stated aim to "refine the contract."

As for the cost, the present conditions prevail until the negotiations between Working RI and the DOA are complete. Working RI is a coalition of unions, including Council 94, AFT, NEA, AAUP, correctional officers, United Nurses, etc. In the past, our Contract stated that "(T)he health insurance benefits extended to eligible employees by the State shall be those for which the Director of Administration has contracted in accordance with RIGL 36-12." We have never negotiated directly for health insurance, however the Coalition is now an equal partner in the negotiations. Needless to say, our agenda and the governor's are not the same. I trust our side of table.

There are mixed reactions to United Health vs. Blue Cross Blue Shield. Since the coverage is identical, the areas of greatest concern are administrative support, appeals processes and conflict resolutions. Some faculty members at both RIC and URI claim that United is a good health partner. On the other hand, former subscribers and present providers at both campuses, and units of Working RI, say the opposite. So far, United's response time to our questions has been fine. As we did in the past, the RIC/AFT will monitor the process, receive complaints, and intervene when necessary for our members.

Grievances

Robert Cvornyek, RIC/AFT Vice President, has assume the chair of the Grievance Committee. The former chair, Angela Murphy, has our gratitude and appreciation for her years of dedication to the job. Here is a list of current and resolved grievances.

1. An arbitration was won for the promotion of an assistant professor, retroactive to July 1, 2001.
2. In the matter of Lisa Church, the College settled a grievance regarding free speech and academic freedom by agreeing to empanel a committee to review and recommend modification of procedures and policies in conformance with federal and local laws, as well as the Contract. For details, see the last two issues of the Newsletter, available at www.ric.edu/ricaft.
3. There is a grievance pending regarding the assignment of faculty offices. We are committed to the principle of seniority, a long-standing labor-management practice.
4. A grievance regarding class size was won. The College's practice of unilaterally adding students to classes and compensating faculty violates the Contract (10.7). The resolution is that the Union will be consulted and required to consent to extra enrollments, based on principles within the Contract and circumstances surrounding each event.
5. A grievance was won on load credit for a two-credit teaching and secondary education seminar. The faculty member initially received only one credit. The two credit load also qualifies for an additional course preparation.
6. We resolved a grave concern that students were processing student course evaluations and/or examinations. This practice has been discontinued. In conjunction with Bill Angell and Richard Prull, the Union guaranteed confidentiality of such documents.
7. A complaint is being filed that compensation in the form of release time and/or stipends was granted to one school in the College for accreditation activities, and in no other academic units that undergo periodic accreditation procedures, including the School of Social Work, the Art Department and the Nursing Department.

RIFTHP CONVENTION

At the RIFTHP Biennial Convention, Oct. 15-16, at the Westin Hotel, in Providence, Jason Blank was reelected Vice President and received an outstanding service award. A resolution was unanimously passed to support Higher Education Referenda 5, 9, 10 and 13. The RIC/AFT Cope Committee will provide financial support for these campaigns.

- #5 will provide funds for dorms at RIC and URI
- #9 will provide for construction of URI's Pell Library and Undersea Exploration Center
- #10 will provide for athletic facilities at URI
- #13 will provide for construction of the URI Biology and Life Sciences Center

Another resolution which passed unanimously placed the Federation in opposition to Question #2, the empanelling of a Constitutional Convention on the bases of cost and possible tinkering with collective bargaining agreements of state workers.

Announcements

On Nov. 6, the 7th Annual Multi Cultural Conference and Curriculum Resource Fair will be held at RIC. The Theme will be Challenging Resegregation 50 Years After Brown vs. Board of Education.

Jason Blank has become a notary public. His services are free to RIC/AFT members.

Keep the date: Dec. 16, 4:30-late, Faculty Center: the Annual Holiday Party sponsored by the RIC/AFT and the PSA @ RIC. There will be music, libations and great food.

Jason L. Blank, President

George Kellner

I have lost one of my best friends. George was more to me than a colleague and collaborator; he was a dear friend. He was someone that I trusted so much that when I first drew up a will, he was designated as the executor. We collaborated on so many projects and worked so long together that his wife Ellen joked that she and my wife Nancy established Greenville Family Counseling to occupy their time in the absence of their husbands. Ellen and Nancy were partners for seventeen years.

Despite the fact that George and I both were graduate students in History at the University of Missouri, I had not met George until he approached me at the 1969 Philadelphia convention of the Organization of American Historians, asking if there was an opening at R.I. College. He had arrived at Missouri as a lowly Master's candidate as I was departing as a Ph.D. candidate (A.B.D.), so our paths had not crossed before Philadelphia. Happily a tenure line position opened in our department that spring, and George received the appointment. It was a case of the "old boy's network" to the extent that I could vouch for the people who wrote letters of recommendation for George. We had had the same professors and had received the same academic socialization. It was one of the best encounters in my life.

In addition to all the picnics, family times, Thanksgivings and Christmas celebrations that we shared, George was a major part of my scholarly life. Beginning in the mid-1970s after George had relinquished his directorship of the Ethnic Heritage project at Rhode Island College, we began a series of collaborations that produced team-taught courses, two elaborate multi-image productions, articles in journals, appearances all over the state on radio and television, and two published versions of the history of Rhode Island – the second of which appeared in print just this August. A gap in that record of scholarly collaboration came when he served as chairman of the History Department, a time when he had to be devoted to course scheduling and development, student enrollment, accreditation issues, and handling the myriad details of being the chair of the department of 15 people. He was an outstanding chairman, open, fair, and thorough.

One can laughingly say that George was "Germanic" in his attention to detail. I never knew anyone who was better prepared for meetings; I saw him demolish opponents in committee discussions because he had the facts while they argued by assertion. That attention to detail is one thing that made our collaborative projects so good. In 1977 we created a multi-image show, using six projectors and all that sort of thing, called "The White City and Packingtown: Chicago from the Great Fire to the Great War." The American Historical Association's Robinson Prize Committee awarded us second place for that show in 1978. This was followed by an even more elaborate production, using nine projectors, called "Providence: A Century of Greatness, 1832-1932," which earned us in 1981 the Award of Merit, the highest award given by the American Association for State and Local History. This production led to our being chosen by the Rhode Island Historical Society to write a 350th

anniversary history of Rhode Island, published in 1983. In these and other endeavors, George was tireless and exacting. He was the best editor that I ever had for anything that I wrote, and we meshed so easily in our projects.

Many people can testify to George's openness and hospitality. More than anyone in the past twenty years, he was the host to our department. The Kellners' Labor Day picnic was an annual gathering of friends and faculty that we cherished. Our history department colloquium met at the "Peace and Plenty Farm" more times than anywhere else. His death has been a blow to all of those newer members of our department who found him such a welcoming presence. Again and again in the past days, one colleague after another has recalled his openness and generosity. I, especially, feel a deep debt of gratitude to George and to Ellen. When my first wife died, they "took me in." They kept an eye on me, and many a meal was shared at their table. (George was a fine cook and baker!) And, they welcomed my second wife with open arms and without reservation.

I keep saying to people that one has only a handful of really good friends in a lifetime, and I have lost one of them.

Sorrowfully,
Stanley Lemons (History Dept.)

A memorial service for George Kellner will be held on Nov. 1st, 3 PM, in Sapinsley Hall.