

# Newsletter

Professional Staff Association at Rhode Island College

WINTER 2009

## MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

As we begin the new year, the economic challenges seem daunting. Yet with our contract in place for another 18 months, we have a pay raise to look forward to and the hope that at least some of the Federal bailout money will find its way to Rhode Island to help jump start the local economy and avoid further downward pressure on our wages and benefits.

Looking back, it was a watershed year for Rhode Island College. There was a dramatic shift in leadership of the College. President Carriuolo took over the reins from President Nazarian on July 1, 2008, and a new leadership style has fostered a culture change at the College that has been positive and has helped to mitigate the formidable budgetary challenges we face. President Carriuolo has gone out of her way to ensure that union leadership is included in seeking solutions to these challenges, and the practice of keeping the lines of communication open between the administration and the unions has been productive.

I continue to serve on the AFT

Public Employees Program and Policy Council (PPC), which means trips to various cities around the country three times a year. The PPC is focusing on tax issues that can encourage the states to look at enhancing revenue streams without hampering efforts to restart the local economic engines.

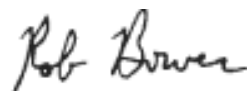
In this newsletter we will share the results of the years-long grievance that was finally settled with a final arbitration hearing in December. And we will examine some of the new provisions in the 2007-2010 Agreement that didn't get much attention as we focused on the economic package. Also, some of our members share the impact of the health insurance plan design changes that were just announced.

We had 14 new members join us in 2008, even as 16 left. (See the names on page 7.) So we are holding pretty steady with a membership count of 147.

We hope all of you feel welcome and know that there are resources in your union to help when you need it. See the full membership list and

divisional representatives on page 3.

All the best for the new year,



Rob Bower, President

### IN THIS ISSUE

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## ANNUAL AWARD WINNERS

Professional Staff Association awards are presented annually to PSA@RIC members for professional and personal accomplishments which merit recognition by the Rhode Island College community. Award winners are selected by a committee of their colleagues in PSA@RIC. PSA donates \$500 to the charity of the recipient's choice.

This year's recognition was presented at the end of the PSA@RIC annual meeting on Thursday, October 30 at 12:00 noon in the Faculty Center.

The citation texts are as follows:

### **Distinguished Service Award Dolores Passarelli**



“When we think of service, there are a few individuals whose names come to mind as being synonymous with the word. Dolores Passarelli's is at the top of that short list! Dolores has worked selflessly and tirelessly on behalf of countless students in her years at Rhode Island College. She has greeted them upon their arrival as bewildered freshmen and, for many years, has overseen their orientation. She has supervised the services that will be of help to those most in need of academic support, squeezed them into classes and talked them through crises both real and imagined. A tireless advocate for students, she places their needs above her own, working late into the day to be sure that those who need her time are not disappointed. She has

seen them through the ups and downs of their College careers and then has overseen their graduation rites, giving again of her time by serving as Grand Marshal for the Commencement ceremonies...a voluntary task that she has undertaken for decades. Dolores also has a long history of service to the Rhode Island College Staff Association / Professional Staff Association at Rhode Island College. For many years, she was a member of the Executive Board--including long service as Secretary and Vice President and a brief term as President. She served for ten years as chair of the Grievance Committee and has also served as our representative on the Personnel Appeals Committee. Dolores, as friends and colleagues, we are thrilled to recognize you today as the recipient of this eighth annual Distinguished Service Award. Congratulations!

Dolores donated her award donation to the Gloria Gemma Breast Cancer Resource Foundation .

### **Staff Member of the Year George Aguiar**



“A stalwart in the trenches” this year...and for many years... George is always ready to respond to what needs to be done, be it routine or emergency. As support staff positions within his area have decreased over time and the campus

has continued to expand, George has fought the good fight to maintain the quality of Housekeeping Services. This year, in particular, it has been challenging. Wounded in the line of duty (he sustained an injury during the opening of the new residence hall in the fall of 2007) George barely missed a beat, continuing in the role demanded by his position. At the same time, he fulfilled his commitment to serve as an active member of the PSA Negotiating Team and continued his service on the Executive Board. In an unofficial capacity, his ear to the ground, George makes it a point to keep pertinent information flowing to those who need to know what's happening on campus. As in many institutions, the lines of communication do not always operate as they should. Many times, it is George's knowledge of what is happening in one department and his common sense about how that will affect another, that has averted an array of problems. For your dedicated service, your friends and colleagues in the Professional Staff Association at Rhode Island College are proud to honor you as a most worthy recipient of this eighth annual Staff Member of the Year Award. Congratulations!

George donated his award donation to the Rhode Island Community Food Bank

## PSA@RIC Divisional Representatives and Members (as of January 2009)

Note: Executive Board members are in italics

### Academic Affairs

#### Corrine Kilpeck

Brian Baker  
Emerson Brown  
Jennifer Durand  
Sharon Giacobbi  
Sharon Hellman  
David Maine  
Elizabeth Maine  
Susan McAllister  
Linda McEnery  
Kathy Moorman  
Jayne Nightingale  
Dolores Passarelli  
Gemma Riccio  
Haven Starr  
*Debra Thomson (Secretary)*  
Chhann Ya

#### Janet O'Connor

James Dorian  
Maribeth Garofalo  
Victoria Hittinger  
Patrick Keenan  
Dennis McGovern  
Louis McGowan  
Mary McLaughlin  
Kevin Middleton  
Terry Riley-Wilcox  
Robert Shein  
Janet Shumate  
Charles Simpson  
Elaine Sollecito  
Erika Tuttle

#### Jason Anthony

Princess Bomba  
Mario Carreno  
Kenneth Ferus  
James Hanbury  
Deborah Johnson

Kristen Marcantonio  
Sarah McBride  
Lucille Rios-Saunders  
Holly Shadoian  
Brian Stevens

### Administration/Finance

#### George Aguiar

Bill Angell  
Scott Badger  
Tim Bergeron  
Rulon Brower  
Patrick Canole  
Joseph Carchia, Jr.  
Stephen Cooke  
Samantha DelBonis  
Charles Gentile  
Al Gonzalez  
Jennifer Hidalgo  
Loni Hooper  
Michael Macaulay  
Jack Mello  
Jimena Resto  
Ludmila Shalapyonok  
Amy Sousa  
David Toms  
Elaine Wilczek

#### Kimberly Machado

*Rob Bower (President)*  
Kevin Brennan  
Robert Conrad  
Ken Coulbourn  
Jennifer Cruz  
Kathleen Gonsalves  
Thomas Mattos  
Maureen Roy  
Jessica Silva  
Melissa Souza  
Charlene Szczepanek  
Susan Turcotte

Donna Vessella  
Sheri Vincent

#### Dana Stark

James Bucci  
*Anthony Carlino (At-Large)*  
Nick Budano  
Julio Contreras  
Jennifer Ellis  
Gregory Gammell  
Daniel Gannon  
Kenneth Gilbert  
Mark Lawrence  
Frank Montanaro  
Phillip Tow  
Mauricio Valencia  
Dorene Ziroli

### Development /College Relations/President's Office

#### Nancy Hoogasian

Gita Brown  
Catherine Hanrahan  
Rob Martin  
Julie Matthews  
Ellie O'Neill  
Ray Ragosta  
Paul Silva  
Gene St. Pierre  
Jennifer Twining

#### Shana Murrell

Katherine Bacon  
Charlotte Burgess  
Paul Cotter  
Robert Ferland  
Kimberly Fiore  
*Kathy Sasso (Vice President)*  
Adam Stanley  
Brian White

### Student Affairs

#### Joie Steele

Vanda Barros  
Mariam Boyajian  
Teresa Brown  
Michelle Calverly  
Joseph Costa  
Erica Cousins  
William DelGaudio  
Claudia Erazo-Conrad  
Thomas Kelley  
Linda Kent-Davis  
Thomas Lavin  
Dominik Licygiewicz  
Amy Mello  
Julia Nesbitt  
Jan Park  
*Anne Roccio (At-Large)*

#### Brian Lalli

Louis Arruda  
Carlo Cantarella  
Andrew Coughlin  
Jo-Ann D'Alessandro  
Andrea Dunn-Nemirow  
Scott Gibbons  
Scott Roy  
Alan Salemi  
Gerald Shellard

#### Marissa Weiss

Vincent Flemming  
Walter Jasionowski  
Justin Ketner  
Mark Paolucci  
Arthur Patrie  
Steve Platt  
Kristen Salemi  
*Dennis Sousa (Treasurer)*

## UPCOMING EVENT

### Third Annual PSA@RIC Valentine's Day Get-Together

Friday, February 13<sup>th</sup>, 2009

Faculty Center – South Dining Room

12 Noon to 2 PM

Bring your lunch - PSA will provide drinks and desserts

## THE NOT SO NEW CONTRACT

We were so focused on the economic issues when we finally settled the 2007-2010 Agreement last year that you may not have noticed some of the language changes that benefited our members. Here is a summary.

- **Article 17, Maternity Leave:** The maternity leave benefit is changed to include six consecutive weeks of paid parental leave for staff members upon the birth of a child or the placement of an adopted child under the age of twelve (12) years. An employee must have one or more years of service to be eligible for this benefit.
- **Article 17, Leave Without Pay:** New language is added to ensure that “staff members on leave without pay due to personal illness, disability, parental leave, or family leave are eligible for State paid health benefits for the duration of their leave, not to exceed one (1) year, and when applicable must pay the employee’s share of the optional health plans.”
- **Article 23, Personnel Appeals Process:** Wording is changed so that the request for review goes to the Director of Human Resources rather than to “the President or his/her designee.” New wording ensures that the employee shall have the right to present evidence in support of his/her claim” at both the PAC and PRC. A key change is that pay grade increases shall be “between six percent (6%) and ten percent (10%) of the employee’s present base salary, but no less than the minimum of the new pay grade and no more than the maximum.”
- **Article 24, Committees:** New language ensures that search committees for Vice President, Assistant Vice President, and Director of Library positions will include at least one PSA member.
- **Memorandum of Agreement:** Wording is added in a Memorandum of Agreement which provides for in-grade salary increases of up to six percent (6%) when a member “has been assigned significant and permanent responsibilities for an increased workload beyond his/her current job description, or that the appropriate vice president has determined that a salary inequity exists....”

Your negotiating team is already at work preparing for the next round of negotiations in 2010. If you have suggestions for improving the contract, please contact a member of the Negotiations Committee (see page 5).

## TUITION WAIVER GRIEVANCE FINALLY SETTLED

After initiating a grievance in October of 2006 and pursuing it through three arbitration hearings, the PSA@RIC was able to preserve a key benefit of the tuition waiver policy which grants the waiver to our dependents who take courses at RIC, URI, or CCRI, but are enrolled in another institution for their regular study program.

In the spring and summer of 2006 we began investigating complaints of members being denied the waiver for dependents who were not attending one of the Board of Governors institutions for their regular study program. And some members were being denied the benefit when their dependent turned 24. In the past the waiver had been allowed for students to finish their program of study even after they were no longer dependents under IRS guidelines. Another provision that was tested in the grievance was the denial of the waiver for courses deemed to be “personal enrichment courses,” even if those courses offered college credit.

The College claimed these questions were clarified in a policy disseminated in June of 2004. When we saw the policy, we believed our contract governed our members based on the contract language rather than the newly published policy. A cover memo to that document stated that: “Our goal was to pull together policies and practices that had existed for many years and incorporate them into a single document. This document does not represent any new policies.”

By 2006 we realized that some members were being treated differently than in the past with regard to the tuition waiver, so we initiated the grievance that fall.

The arbitrator’s decision finally came in May of 2008 and stated that “The Employer violated Article 14.6 of the contract with respect to its promulgation and implementation of the 2004 tuition waiver policy (1) when it denied the tuition waiver benefit to dependents enrolled in a non-BOG baccalaureate program who were seeking to receive tuition waivers for course work to be taken at a BOG institution and (2) when it denied the tuition waiver benefit to dependents, who were enrolled and close to finishing their degree work at a BOG institution, because they had reached the age of 24.” Unfortunately, because we waited until 2006 to file the grievance, reimbursement was limited to those dependents whose requests “arose in 2006.”

## COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS FOR 2009\*

### Standing Committees

#### Audit Committee

Cathy Hanrahan, Chair  
Jim Hanbury  
Nancy Hoogasian  
Walter Jasionowski  
Linda McEnery  
Kathy Sasso, *ex officio*

#### Awards Committee

Anthony Carlino, Chair  
Greg Gammell  
Joie Steele  
Kathy Sasso, *ex officio*

#### Elections Committee

Sharon Giacobbi, Chair  
Jason Anthony  
Mike Macaulay  
Kenneth Gilbert

#### Finance Committee

Shana Murrell, Chair  
Vincent Flemming  
Jessica Goncalves Silva  
Julie Heylin- Matthews  
Cathy Hanrahan  
Dennis Sousa, *ex officio*  
Kathy Sasso, *ex officio*

#### Grievance Committee

Mark Paolucci, Chair  
George Aguiar  
Charles Allsworth  
Deborah Johnson  
Jan Shumate  
Kathy Sasso, *ex officio*

### Special Committees

#### Committee on Committees

Debra Thomson, Chair  
Princess Sirleaf Bomba  
Victoria Hittinger  
Brian Lalli  
Alan Salemi  
Kathy Sasso, *ex officio*

#### Identity Committee

Arthur Patrie, Chair  
Marissa Weiss  
Kathy Sasso, *ex officio*

#### Negotiations Committee

Rob Bower, Chair  
George Aguiar  
Mark Paolucci  
Arthur Patrie  
Kathy Sasso

Mike Mullane

#### Committee on Political Action

George Aguiar  
Kathy Sasso, *ex officio*

#### Internal Networking Committee

Debra Thomson, Chair  
Corinne Kilpeck  
Julie Matthews  
Shana Murrell  
Janet O'Connor  
Kathy Sasso, *ex officio*

#### Sunshine

Ellie O'Neill

#### Newsletter

Kristen Salemi

#### Web Site

Dennis Sousa

\*Current committee members looking to change committees or other members interested in serving, — please contact appropriate chairperson.



### FROM THE TREASURER

For those of you who had dues taken out of all 26 pay periods during 2008, you can record \$472.42 as union dues paid on your tax return. If you joined us during the year or had a period of leave without pay and would like to know the amount you paid, please send me an email and I'll get that information to you.

Dennis Sousa  
Treasurer



### SUNSHINE REPORT

Congratulations were sent for newborns to Aaron Bruce, Claudia Erazo-Conrad and Brian White. Our sympathies were sent to Haven Starr on the passing of his mother and get well wishes were sent to Susan Schenck, Doreen Ziroli Kathy Sasso, Janet O'Connor and Vincent Flemming.

Ellie O'Neill  
Sunshine Committee

**ECONOMIC ANALYSIS AND RESEARCH NETWORK CONFERENCE REPORT**

Dennis Sousa, Campus Card Manager

I recently attended a conference, sent by our parent union, [American Federation of Teachers \(AFT\)](#) as a part of its budget crisis task force. I was one of 22 members in attendance. This task force meets annually and in conjunction with a larger conference. This year was the first time it attended the [Economic Analysis and Research Network \(EARN\)](#) conference.

It was the opinion of those who have attended other conferences as a part of the budget crisis task force that this was more beneficial because of the various groups in attendance including many state legislators. In attendance from RI were Representatives Amy Rice and Arthur Handy.

Let me begin by stating that the AFT has some very talented people working for the well being of our membership and many others just like us. In addition to the AFT, there are many organizations trying to do good things. Some of the organizations of which I was made aware include; [Economic Policy Institute \(EPI\)](#), [Progressive States Network \(PSN\)](#), [Good Jobs First](#), [American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees \(AFSCME\)](#), [American Rights at Work](#), [Center on Budget and Policy Priorities \(CBPP\)](#), and [Citizens for Tax Justice \(CTJ\)](#). Though I learned quite a bit, I will note a few of the highlights.

The tax gap. The tax gap is the difference between the amount of taxes that is supposed to be collected and what actually is collected. There are many reasons for the tax gap but highlighted were: individuals and companies not paying what they are legally obligated to pay and internet sales not taxed appropriately.

Lowering/eliminating sales tax in the name of economic development. This practice takes on several forms and all create an increased tax burden on those who do pay. One form is to lure companies to your state by significantly lowering or waiving altogether property taxes. Another is to allow retailers to keep a portion of the sales tax to help them recover initial start up costs OR to assist them with the costs involved with keeping track of sales taxes collected.

The calling for more progressivity in the income tax structure. This basically means taxing higher incomes at a higher rate. There were many alarming charts and graphs depicting how the lowest income families are paying a higher percentage of their income toward taxes. Equally disturbing were some that showed that most of the wealth is made by a very small percentage of people and that their tax burden is actually less than those who can least afford it.

Privatization. This is done in a variety of ways but basically boils down to the outsourcing of something that has been done with public employees to a privately owned company. Examples range from selling a toll road to using a private company to perform housekeeping or food services. It is very difficult to get information from states showing how much of the budget is spent on privatized services. It is also difficult to determine how much money is being saved and since there are rarely oversights built in, a gauge if the service is any better or less costly to the taxpayers. Private firms are profit driven. In an economic downturn one of 2 things will happen, cuts to services or increased prices. Both will show better bottom lines for investors but hurt the public.

Slashing the budget during an economic downturn. Reports indicate that cutting back to balance budgets actually creates a downward spiral making the situation worse. Experts agree that expanding the revenue pie is a better way to go. Some ideas that are being discussed include closing loopholes in the tax code, reducing tax gaps, increasing gas tax(.01 increase = 1 billion annually), increasing tax enforcement, promoting use tax payments, expanding legalized gambling, and instituting a millionaires tax.

If you would like more information on anything in this report, please call Dennis Sousa at x8844.

## PSA@RIC STAFF UPDATES

### New Hires in 2008

Erica Cousins	12/15/2008
Louis Arruda	09/29/2008
Mario Carreno	09/22/2008
Kathy Moorman	08/25/2008
Sheri Vincent	08/25/2008
Jennifer Cruz	08/12/2008
Vanda Barros	08/04/2008
Thomas Kelley	08/04/2008
Amy Melo	08/04/2008
Rulon Brower	06/09/2008
Thomas Mattos	05/12/2008
Jennifer Durand-Sousa	02/11/2008
Adam Stanley	01/21/2008
Justin Ketner	1/14/2008

### Resignations/Retirements in 2008

Andrea Babiana	04/26/2008
Tobias Houseshell	05/30/2008
Charles Allsworth	06/22/2008
Tricia Camara	06/22/2008
Elizabeth DiPippo	06/22/2008
Janice Fifer	06/22/2008
Dana Henning	06/22/2008
Jayne Kopic	06/22/2008
Gerry Russo	06/22/2008
Susan Schneck	06/22/2008
Dianne Huling	06/30/2008
Aaron Bruce	07/06/2008
Jason Moniz	08/02/2008
Michael Gorman	08/04/2008
Dossie Kahn	08/17/2008
Maria Casale	08/17/2008

## PSA MEMBER SPOTLIGHT— Jennifer Hidalgo, Sr. Information Technologist

One of PSA's members is Jennifer Hidalgo, who began her Sr. Information Technologist position in RI College's User Support Services in January 2<sup>nd</sup> 2007. Jennifer's main job responsibilities includes using scripting tools to support automated desktop management, as well as administratively supporting the academic tools on campus such as WebCT, SharePoint, TrueOutcomes, and network accounts.

Daughter of a US Air Force captain; John Dirkmaat, she was born in Brussels, Belgium and moved to the US when she was two years old. Jennifer received her BA in business management from Gettysburg College and her MS in Computer Science from University of Rhode Island. She began state Rhode Island service in the fall of 2004 and prior to her position at RI College, Jennifer worked as an Information Technologist for URI's Health Services.

Jennifer lives nearby campus, in the LaSalle neighborhood of Providence, with her husband, Efren, and two daughters, Ella (4 years) and Abbey (15 months) and she just returned from maternity leave this past June. When she's not working she enjoys walking, bike riding, and spending time with her family. Jennifer was accepted into the Joint RIC/URI PhD in Education program in 2005, and although currently on academic leave she's been "chipping away" at the requirements in the hopes of completing her terminal degree in Education to someday pursue a position as an educational technology professor.



## Impact of Health Insurance Changes—Rob Bower for the Negotiating Team

It was recently announced that the following changes in our health insurance plan design took effect February 1, 2009:

- Emergency room co-pay is \$100
- Urgent Care co-pay is \$35
- Specialist office visit co-pay is \$20 (includes all physicians other than primary care physicians) Note: Primary Care office visit co-pay is \$10 (includes internal medicine, family practice, pediatrics and geriatrics)
- The drug co-pay for a 31-day supply shall be as follows:

Tier 1	Tier 2	Tier 3
\$5.00	\$20.00	\$40.00

There is no separate co-pay arrangement for 60-day supplies or 100 units.

Mail order network pharmacies: 3 month supply of a prescription drug for 2 co-payments.

Maximum fill is 3 month supply.

We asked our members for some specific examples of what these changes mean to them. Here are a few examples of the feedback:

- This would mean an extra \$40 per month (\$480 annual) for me on co-pays/prescriptions and \$120 for the year in dental with the reduction for caps (100% to 80%).
- [Spouse:] The plan changes effect me in two ways. The co-pay for specialists affects me as I have five specialists I see on a regular basis: Orthopedist, urologist, ENT, Neurologist and a pulmonary doctor. My co-pay triples. The other issue is the prescription co-pay. I take five maintenance drugs per day and one once per week. Four have been raised to level 3. My cost has gone from \$12.00 to \$40.00 for each. The substitute recommended I have tried and side effects or effectiveness of the drug required a change, for example the replacement drug for celebrex was naproxin. Naproxin is why I see a urologist. It is apples and oranges. The same with accolate and singular. Singular gave me ear infections that is why I take accolate. My weekly chemo and a generic drug has not changed, but this is a major bite out of my social security. [Cover note says monthly medication costs have increased from \$48 to \$160.]
- I know for me, right now, I will have to postpone the ongoing work I have been doing with dental. I was in the process of crown work and now that I will have to pay towards it I cannot afford to have it done.
- I think the \$100.00 co-pay for emergency room visits is abominable, particularly for families with small children who, as you may remember, always seem to get really sick in the middle of the night and on weekends when the doctor's office is closed. Even as an empty-nester, I still would hesitate to go to the hospital myself if it meant a \$100.00 co-pay, and that might result in making an economic decision when what I should be making is a medical decision. I really think that for our members who are at the lower pay scales who have young families, this is really a bad change which could turn out to be disastrous when someone decides to stay at home when they should be going to the emergency room.

We anticipate negotiating the impact of these changes, so this type of feedback is important. Also, we would love to hear any positive suggestions or ideas that could help reduce health care costs for our members (such as wellness programs and fitness/recreation opportunities).

## TUITION WAIVER GRIEVANCE FINALLY SETTLED

*(Continued from page 4)*

We had differences with the Administration in the interpretation of what the cutoff date for eligibility was (fall of 2005, spring of 2006?), how old a student could be and still get the benefit (what does “close to finishing their degree” mean?), and what constituted a “personal enrichment” course. So a final hearing was held with the arbitrator on December 2, 2008 to resolve these issues.

In the end, four of our members (Deborah Dunphy, Victoria Hittinger, Jayne Nightingale, and Mark Paolucci) won either reimbursement of tuition for their dependents or release of transcripts in cases where tuition had not been paid. Tom Bradley was denied the waiver for his daughter for courses taken in 2005 and spring semester of 2006. Rob Bower was denied the waiver for his son, who took a for-credit lifeguard training class required for a work study job at his college.