

Birth Announcement

PSA member Claudia Erazo-Conrad and her husband Brian Conrad gave birth to a little boy, Jacob Matthew, on March 13 at 12:34 a.m. Jacob emerged at a fighting weight of 7lbs, 11oz. Claudia also has a 10-year-old son Michael Andres.



AFT-AFRICA AIDS CAMPAIGN PINS

Suggested Minimum Contribution

\$10.00

The AFT-AFRICA AIDS Campaign pin is a powerful symbol of our efforts to assist the teachers of Africa in their ongoing efforts to combat the HIV/AIDS epidemic.

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AFT-AFRICA AIDS CAMPAIGN

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THE PSA@RIC REPORT

The Professional Staff Association at Rhode Island College



July 2002 Issue

Profiles of Our Professionals EQUAL PARTNERS IN EDUCATION

Gita: We live in a representative democracy, not a true democracy. We don't run things. We vote for someone to run things for us. As former president of the PSA union, do you think it is possible for any president to fully represent his constituents?

Brian: Yes. I found it difficult at times because there were those who didn't look at me as representing a unit. I felt it at the administrative level and even from some of our members. Quite often they thought I was doing what was in my own interests. But that couldn't be further from the truth. I'm a team player.

Gita: I think anyone holding a political office is going to be watched closely.

Brian: Absolutely. Union presidents are typically very liberal people. I'm politically conservative. One of the toughest things about the job for me was to negotiate on behalf of a

member concerning issues that I wasn't convinced were right. Yet, as president, I had to represent them.

Going way back to my first term as president, I had a standoff with one of the members I was representing. This was under President Carol Guardo's term. She fired a member of our union, but she did it incorrectly. I never felt more confident about that case. I was going to see to it that he kept his job. But he wanted something more out of it. He wanted to make her pay. And I said to him, "I'm not going to do that for you. I'll get your job back. I'll get your status back. But I am not going to go after her." He and I got toe to toe. He raised his voice, stood up, grabbed his coat. As it happened, he left the College on his own, which was fine. But I'm not going to take care of you because you're a union guy. I'm going to do what is fair.

Gita: How are you made aware, or kept aware,



Brian Allen

Former PSA president takes us behind the scenes of union politics and speaks with unusual candor and honesty.

THE INTERVIEW

by Gita Brown



In politics, strangely enough, the best way to play your cards is to lay them face upwards on the table.

—H. G. Wells



Don't lose sight of who you are fighting for. Don't lose sight of who you represent.

—Brian Allen

of the memberships' needs?
Gita: Could you give me a brief chronological history of your tenure as president of this union.

Brian: I can read people well—body language, expressions, comments they make—and I can very quickly find out where they're coming from. I have members come in to see me and I'm not only listening to what they say, I'm also looking at how they say it. Eighty percent of the time, the problems presented to me are personality conflicts with a supervisor and have nothing to do with the contract. But I don't say that to them; not initially, anyway. I sit down and listen to them. I become more of a counselor than a president. People want to vent. There were a couple of members who would come by my office on an annual basis. One of them, who has since left the College because she couldn't resolve her issues with her supervisor, came to me and said, "Just bear with me. It's my annual time to vent." She was at that point in the year, before evaluations, where she was reflecting on what the past year had been like for her, her inability to function as she wanted to function. We had a good relationship.

Gita: And you're a good listener. At union meetings I found that, even when listening to opposition, you never took a defensive posture.
Brian: I try.

Gita: What was it about unions that you didn't like?

Brian: I thought the rank-and-file were goof-offs, people who really weren't carrying their weight. Their union, I felt, protected the weak. That was the image I had of them. I come from a hardworking family. I was probably the only one in my family who went to college. My uncles, my father, everybody, got out there and worked. You worked fifteen hours a day and was proud of that.

Gita: What's your ethnic background?

Brian: Irish. I was one of seven. I have a huge family. My mother is the oldest of eleven. So I have fifty-eight cousins, almost all living in Rhode Island.

Gita: And there's this strong work ethic.

Brian: Absolutely. Be proud of yourself for the fact that you went out there and worked hard. So when I became director of College Dining Services, I didn't go to union meetings. But there came a time when I was into another battle with the rank-and-file. I was mad as hell. I went to the president of my union. He didn't know what to do because I was an administrator. He went to John Nazarian and sat in on some of the rank-and-file grievance proceedings. John would

background is management/business. The union is a business. As union president I was able to use my business prowess.

Gita: Your staff laud you highly. They think you're a great administrator. And that's not a common thing—good administrators. What do you think makes for a good administrator?

Brian: They've got to be good listeners and they've got to find out what motivates a person to work. For the most part, good administrators are people who know how to listen, who know how to show compassion.

Gita: You are also a very forthright, honest person.

Brian: To a fault. It gets me in trouble. If someone asks me a question and I know the answer, I tell them. All administrators don't take that position, they don't believe that if you know something you should share it with people. I'm not saying I come back from a meeting and say, "Hey, guess what I heard." But if a student comes in and says, "I understand tuition is going to go up twenty dollars. Is that true?" And I say, "Yes." And the student says, "Why?" And I explain it to her. And then she goes charging up to President Nazarian's office. I get a phone call from the president. So, honesty has gotten me in trouble at times, but I won't change

THE SABBATICAL

Brian Allen's sabbatical consists of the establishment of a service learning program in the Campus Center. Service learning involves combining volunteerism with academic study.

Brian says that there are already many successful service learning programs in Rhode Island, such as the Feinstein Institute for Public Service at Providence College. However, Rhode Island College could do a lot more in that area. "What I am proposing is that our faculty change their curriculum to the point where part of the curriculum involves students taking what they've learned into the community. In other words, a student is not only going to learn about iambic pentameter in his English class, he's going to go down and talk to people in a nursing home about poetry and he's going to try to teach them as part of the credit he earns in that course. The best way to learn is to teach—trying to formulate in your own mind what it is you're learning and teach it to someone else."

Brian expects that much of his research will be done through direct interviews with agency directors, finding out if it is possible to address some of the agency's needs through a service-learning effort. The second phase of his research would be to match the agency's needs with the academic offerings at Rhode Island College. The result would be that the Campus Center would investigate and procure for the faculty placements for their students.

"RIC students train to be teachers, nurses, social workers," Brian says. "Integrating this training with involvement in the community gives them the opportunity to see how their course training can enhance their ability to positively affect society." —G.B. ■

that. Years ago I was asked if I had any desire to be a vice president, and I said no because I know they don't have the freedom. There are times when I know that they know the answer to a question but they'll walk all around it in order not to answer.

Gita: What's it like for you now that you no longer sit in the presidential seat?

Brian: I used to come in in the morning and have four or five voice messages and two or three e-mail messages waiting for me. It all stopped. I actually pick up the phone to make sure there's a dial tone.

Gita: You're going to be leaving for sabbatical this month. I'd like to share the results of your sabbatical with the rest of our membership in the next issue. But until then, don't venture too far away, we may need you again.—G.B. ■



I desire so to conduct the affairs of this administration that if at the end, when I come to lay down the reins of power, I have lost every other friend on earth, I shall at least have one friend left, and that friend shall be down inside me.

—Abraham Lincoln



Cowardice asks, is it safe? Expediency asks, is it politic? Vanity asks, is it popular? But conscience asks, is it right? There comes a time when one must take the position that is neither safe nor politic nor popular, but he must do it because conscience tells him, it is right.

—Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

never do anything like that, it's beyond them. And he said the clerical union, forget about them. They don't have any clout. The staff union, he said, would never harm us. They're not organized enough to do that. I wasn't in leadership of the staff union at the time, but I will never forget his words.

Gita: Do you miss being president?

Brian: I miss being out of the loop.

Gita: What was your proudest achievement as president?

Brian: I think the fact that there are at least four people on this campus who would absolutely not have their jobs if I hadn't been there for them. I can say that with full confidence.

Gita: What did being president of PSA teach you, and how would you pass along this experience to other potential presidents?

Brian: It taught me what unions are all about. PSA does have a place in the College. We are equal partners in education. I think the best thing that came out of my presidency is that we raised our membership in status to that of equals. We know we are equal to the faculty. We know that without us, the College wouldn't run. There are many people who work more than fifty hours a week, who work hard. Last year we

instituted the Distinguished Service Award. Again, a way to show that we have professionals who are doing some great things.

Gita: What are your impressions of Rob Bower our current president?

Brian: I trained him well. I think he's going to be more attentive to the Rhode Island Federation of Teachers and what they can do for us.

Gita: What is Rob up against? What is he facing?

Brian: He's going to be the first one to see if, in fact, our paranoia over this benefits package was warranted. How is the state going to be able to afford education? Every year they seem to pull a rabbit out of a hat.

Last night at a Student Government meeting, President Nazarian said that in the state of Illinois the budget for higher education was 3.6 billion dollars. The legislature gave them only 2.4 billion. How do you work with that? How do you function? What is the biggest line item in education—it's personnel. I think Rob's biggest challenge will be to deal effectively with what the state and the Board of Governors are going to come down with in the next negotiations. My crystal ball says that they're going to come

after our benefits. I think Rob is up to that. But he is going to need support. He can't do it alone. He's going to need backing from the PSA membership.

Gita: What do you see as Rob's strengths?

Brian: I think he's very intelligent. I think he is committed to the structure of the executive board and he's going to work through them. I think he'll get the executive board responding from their constituents. He communicates better than I did. He notifies members of what's going on.

Gita: And his weaknesses?

Brian: He's not street smart. The way to get that is to get mugged a few times. Once he gets mugged a few times, he'll be okay.

Gita: What words of advice have you, or would you, give him?

Brian: Don't forget who you represent. When you have meeting, after meeting, after meeting with the administration, you begin to see their point and lose sight of what you're fighting for. Don't forget who you represent.

Gita: Any last thoughts?

Brian: This has been one of the more positive things that have happened to me. My

tell him, "You can't sit in on this." But he refused to leave, and he told me, "I'll help you. I'll do what I can. But I need someone like you involved in the union."

Gita: What was the result of this battle with the rank-and-file?

Brian: The rank-and-file would refuse to meet and hear the grievance as long as the president of my union was sitting there. They'd walk out. And this went on for a while. We'd show up to a grievance, I'd show up, and the other guys would walk out. This went on for about a year. Finally John realized that he had to look at both sides, that they couldn't just steam roll over us. We have union rights, too. That was the outcome.

About 1988 or '89 I became vice president of RICSA. I went on sabbatical and came back and ran for president. It was a two-year term. At the end of the two-year term I didn't run again.

In 1991 Clare Eckert became president. But there were people who came to me and asked me to come back and run against Clare because, for whatever reason, they were not happy with her. I capitulated. In 1994 I became president again. I looked for ways to get the union solidified again. RICSA had suffered some problems with the Rhode Island Federation of Teachers because Clare

to introduce a new name to our union. A lot of people didn't really know the difference between our staff union and the rank-and-file union. Often when I went to national conventions people would ask, "What do you do?" And I'd say, "I'm president of the Rhode Island College Staff Association."

At the same time, it still wasn't my life ambition to be union president. I wanted to train someone, to get someone oriented into the union. And then Rob Bower came along. He was basically the guy who showed interest. One of the big problems was that if we had fifteen people in a room and I told them I needed a volunteer to help me with something, everyone would put their head down.

I brought Rob on board as vice president. I brought him to a lot of meetings and showed him what was going on and asked him, "Rob, will you be ready to run as president next term?" Rob wasn't ready.

So I finished my two-year term and took on another two-year term and continued along that vein. At the end of that term, Rob was looking at leaving the College and going elsewhere. I said, "Rob, you've either got to run or not run." He said, "I'd better not."

Gita: How many terms did you serve?

Brian: That second time? I ran a total of three two-year terms. But it gave me time

to know who I am, and I want you to know who we are and what we do." After

(Continued on page 6)

Multiply last year's base salary (remember that longevity boosts are not included in the base) by 1.035. Add the performance-based increase if you are a successful candidate (to be announced soon). Add any longevity increase (additional 5 percent for ten to nineteen years and 10 percent for twenty years or more of service).

Another positive result from last year's negotiations is that the minimum pay in each grade was raised. Four of our people at the lower end of their pay grades benefited from this with raises ranging from \$603 to \$1,156 above the across-the-board and merit increases. This was a modest step in rectifying a long-standing problem with the inappropriate spread between minima and maxima in our pay grade scale. We will continue to work at rectifying this problem during the next negotiations. The new contract year (beginning July 1, 2003) will be here before we know it.

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT . . .

Friends and colleagues outside the campus community often ask me if I'm enjoying my summer, assuming that—like the faculty—we have a reprieve from the hectic pace during the academic year. I have to tell them that this time of year is one of the busiest times for many of us on the staff as we prepare for all that will happen in the new academic year.

As I write, we await the decisions on the performance-based fund allocation. The first year of this program was pretty rocky. It is becoming clear that it is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to administer such a program in a way that is fair to all concerned. However, it is also clear that there were some positive results: updated job descriptions, better communication between employees and supervisors, creative projects that benefit both the College and the employee, and—of course—increases to the base for many deserving employees beyond the standard across-the-board adjustment.

At this moment, it looks like the 3.5 percent across-the-board increases will appear on schedule in July. The merit adjustments will no doubt be delayed a pay period or two, but the appropriate retroactive amount will be included. Here's how to figure your new salary:

Majority rule only works if you're also considering individual rights. Because you can't have five wolves and one sheep voting on what to have for supper.

—Larry Flynt



comparison between Student Affairs and Academic Affairs or between Administration and Finance and Development. There's no set rules.

And then there's the issue of "You are on this list and you are not on that list." A couple of years ago I said to the people on the negotiating committee, "I will write you a list, and I'm willing to bet. I will make a list of about twenty-five names of people who will absolutely not get merit pay from the president." And I was right.

Gita: Why wasn't the PSA membership allowed to vote on this issue?

Brian: Well, you mentioned that we live in a representative democracy. I didn't support merit pay but I also didn't support going back to the membership and saying, "Let's have a vote on this." I told the negotiating committee, "You were elected to represent them. They have spoken and said if you're going to do this, do it fairly and equitably."

You and the rest of the membership will get a chance to vote later this year by survey. You'll be asked what you thought of the merit procedure. If there are a clear number of people who say, "No. I don't like it in any way, shape, or form . . ."

Gita: You once said that we are a very quiet union, that we don't speak out much. Is it a good thing or a bad thing that we are such a quiet union?

Brian: It's good, at times, that we are quiet, and it's also bad. Trying to wake someone from sleep is difficult at best. During the lengthy negotiations, we tried to awaken members, but we also didn't want them to pick up bricks and picket. And I have to say that I warned the negotiating committee: "Don't go to the membership and think you're going to get solidarity by going out and picketing. You're not going to get it. You'll be there by yourselves. PSA isn't that kind of group. They're a quiet group. They have feelings, sure, but they're not mistreated, generally. So, don't even try it."

Gita: I understand that during negotiations there was to be a critical meeting between President Nazarian, the PSA executive board, and the PSA divisional representatives, but only a handful of our PSA representatives showed up for this meeting.

Brian: This bears out what I've just said. We had written a resolution, and it was documented as a real resolution: We, the association, believe this, this, and this. We talked about it and said this is what we are going to do. We're going to march up together to the president's office and we're going to sit down and read the resolution.

But there were only six or seven members out of eighteen who showed up.

Gita: Don't you think the president interpreted that as a lack of commitment?

Brian: Of course. This is a perfect example of what I said before. Don't tell the membership we're going to picket. When we voted to march to the president's office with the resolution, I said, "This is important. If you do it, you've got to show solidarity. You've got to be there." The next day I get a call from a board member who says, "Well, I've got a meeting or I can't be there because my daughter's got to go here or there." Rob and I both kind of shrugged our shoulders.

Gita: John Nazarian is an intelligent man. What do you think was going through his mind?

Brian: He was probably thinking, "I can handle these people." When Carol Guardo was still president of the College, I heard John explain to Guardo how there were four basic unions on campus, and he went through them. He said the rank-and-file union can be very very troublesome. He said they will, and have, shut the campus down. (They didn't shut it down but they have picketed.) He said the faculty union would

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rob Bower".



The art of politics consists in knowing precisely when it is necessary to hit an opponent slightly below the belt.

—Konrad Adenauer

tative. I quoted her and I presented that quote to the commissioner. I presented it to the chair of the Board of Governors. And I wrote letters to our legislators quoting her. This legal representative said, "If I took PSA's settlement back, if I gave PSA a different settlement than I did the other professional staff unions, I'd get hung when I got back to the University of Rhode Island." She is in residence at the University of Rhode Island. She said, "They'd hang me." I used that quote frequently. I said, "This is not negotiating in good faith." I said that in front of her, I said that to her. She doesn't talk to me to this day, but that's okay. Anyway, that was the issue. They were separating us from the faculty.

I believe they were testing the waters. The biggest issue that we, as an association, face is the benefits package, which is still very very strong. Our peers at other colleges are paying a 20 percent co-pay. If you have a family plan at Rhode Island College, you have benefits of eight or nine thousand dollars a year that the College pays for. Our peers in Connecticut pay 20 percent of that. Do the math. That's a lot more than a ten dollar co-pay. So, we know our benefits package is a big issue. With the last negotiations, they weren't going after the benefits package, but they were trying to separate us financially from the faculty.

Maybe I'm paranoid, but I say if they're successful in separating us financially from the faculty, the next time negotiations come up they could try and decrease our benefits package. Three years go by in a hurry. Faculty are the Number One guys on campus. We've always known that. But the Board of Governors could decide that they want our union to start paying a percentage of the faculty's benefits. I don't want that to happen. If I were the commissioner or on the Board of Governors or the president of the College, I'd say, "Wow, look at the cost of benefits." So, the association has got to stay strong. The association has got to understand that if they can separate us from the faculty, they will.

Gita: I have to bring up this issue because it remains a controversial one among our membership. Part of our new contract calls for merit-based pay. Thousands of dollars have been set aside and will be added to certain members' base salary if they successfully achieve three goals laid out by the member and his or her supervisor.

Brian: If only fifty people successfully achieve their goals, fifty would be divided into that money set aside. That accrual of money is to be distributed evenly and added to each person's base salary.

But let me say this about merit pay. As

president, I have been absolutely opposed to it. In the last contract, prior to this one, I wouldn't even entertain it. We had people on the negotiating committee who were very pro merit pay. But I told them that it could not be done fairly/equitably on this campus with the powers that be. It cannot be done. So, I let it go. This time it came up again and I made it very clear that I did not want to have anything to do with it. But the whole committee basically said, "We want it." I said, "Okay, but if you do this, the only way I will let you do this, is if it is done in a fair and equitable manner."

Gita: Who decides if a member successfully achieves their goals?

Brian: First your supervisor, then the vice president of your division, and ultimately the president. President Nazarian ultimately decides. That was the sticking point. We tried and tried and tried . . .

Gita: On what basis will the president make his decision?

Brian: I don't know. He trusts his vice presidents. This is what he said. He said, "I'll have to put some trust"—and this is the first time I've ever heard John say this—he said, "I'll have to put some trust in my vice presidents." But we have four divisions at the College, and there is absolutely no

LETTER

FROM THE VICE PRESIDENT . . .

As vice president, I got a sneak peek at Gita's interview with Brian Allen. Gita's writing is excellent and I always enjoy and learn so much about the people she highlights. But as I read this issue's interview, I found out how much I identify with Brian's way of thinking and the philosophy of the PSA. We in PSA are vocationally very different, however the underlying issues that we all face are very much the same. The most recent example of this is the budget crisis. This year proves to be another challenging one. More cuts, less help, and I'm sure more work! Seems like we are always asked to go the "extra mile" or "pull the rabbit out of the hat." The amazing thing is that we generally do. Our members always "rise to the occasion," particularly in the worst of times. Our recent response to the Y2K crisis prompting the Peoplesoft implementation is a perfect example of this. As an association, we have much in common. We are dedicated and proud of what we do and what we contribute to this institution. Although I was a member

of RICSA and PSA for many years, my awareness of just how important we are and what we represent prompted my recent involvement as a division representative and as vice president. I hate what is unfair and feel it is my responsibility to stand up for what is right when I can. In my long experience at the College, I have been witness to many instances where one person was treated differently than another. Favoritism is unavoidable and also very difficult to thwart. I invite you to use me as a resource if a problem should arise. If it is just to spend time talking to identify the issue or if you feel that a course of action is necessary, I am happy and willing to help.

On a different note . . . summer is finally here! It is generally the time that we tend to wind down from the hectic pace we keep throughout the academic year and rejuvenate our energy levels. I know that I anticipate spending some quality time with my family during the summer months. August rolls around very quickly and before we know it we are in full throttle preparing for the impending semester. I hope that you can put aside the problems that we will inevitably face and enjoy the quiescence of this short season.

Karen Rubino, Vice President



The only thing for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing.

—Attributed to Ed Burke



Find out just what any people will quietly submit to and you have the exact measure of the injustice and wrong which will be imposed on them.

—Frederick Douglass

I did that a few times I realized that some of these politicians do care. And because they're politicians they also want to know who the faces in the crowd are. Then I'd go to the board meetings and I would go up to a board member and talk about the weather or something. I never thought it was productive to talk issues in the lobby before going into a hearing.

During the last prolonged contract, I had to use political clout. We have some people on campus who are politically connected. I went through them and made contact with some of the big heavy hitters in the state. Again, I'm down in the State House walking around saying, "This is not me." But I did it. I came out of my shell. I went to luncheons with some of the big heavy hitters and I'd drag Rob along with me and say, "Rob, meet these people because they're important."

When we were RICSA I don't think there were ten legislators who knew what a RICSA was. Once we changed our name to PSA@RIC, all of that changed. I went to a lot of meetings. Blue Cross would send out blanket invitations to union presidents, and I'd go to see how I could effect some change. I got more involved with the AFL-CIO, which is one of our parent groups. The AFL-CIO didn't know who we were either or what we were. I listened to them. They'd

say, "We went to see the governor the other day" or "We went to see Bob Carl." And I would think, "Wow, these people have some clout. People are listening to them. These are people we need to learn from."

One of the things I found out about union presidents in the American Federation of Teachers, is that some of them have been presidents for thirty, thirty-five years. Some of them have retired from teaching and still are president of their union. And they make tremendous amounts of money. The first two-year term I held as president I was on a personnel committee for the Rhode Island Federation of Teachers and we needed to hire some people. I was astounded that a teacher, say, in the city of Cranston might make \$75,000 as the president of the union and make that much because they were senior teacher—because they had been teaching for twenty-some-odd years. They made that much as a teacher and didn't teach.

Gita: Our president's salary is \$1,800 a year.

Brian: And we don't get off-loaded. The president of the faculty's union, Jason Blank, makes \$10,000 a year and he's off-loaded two courses.

One of the reasons why PSA presidents have normally been a director or an assistant

director is because it is almost impossible to do the job and not be. As president, you don't have control of your time. By contract, you don't get off-loaded. As a director, I can say to my staff, "I'm off for three days in Washington" or "I'm out in Seattle." But my office had to run. I had to have all my work done, all my budgets done, and everything else that comes with the territory. There are not a whole lot of people who could stop what they're doing when a member comes to their door emotionally disheveled, saying, "I need to talk to you." So the presidency normally falls on a director—and a director who has a staff.

Gita: Why would anyone want this job?

Brian: I think there are people who really want the power or "perceived" power. But in my case, and I also think in Rob's, we felt there was a void and that somebody's got to do it. We believe in the institution. We believe in the association. The association needs to be strong, to be able to negotiate, and not to be tread upon. You look around. You look to your left and you look to your right, and you say, "Who's going to stand up and do this?" So, it's not a matter of wanting the job as much as feeling a responsibility for the association.

That's another thing I've tried to instill in people—that this is an "association." I used

to react strongly to the word "union." If it's a union I don't want any damned part of it. I prefer the word "association." If we were all teachers, if we were all bus drivers, if we were all food service workers, we'd have camaraderie, but with 140 people in PSA with sixty different vocations, it's very very difficult to meld that group together. I try to push the fact that we are an association of professionals.

Gita: Our last contract took over a year to negotiate. Briefly, what were they offering that we wouldn't accept and what did we want that they wouldn't accept?

Brian: Rob was the chair of the negotiating committee. When Gail Davis was president of the union and I was vice president, she asked me to chair the negotiating committee because she had never done it before. So that was the first time there was a negotiation without a natural president being there. I liked it that way. When I became president I instituted it.

Gita: Why did you prefer that the president not be a part of the negotiating team?

Brian: We'd negotiate with a group of people from the Board of Governors. When they were at a decision point they would say to us, "Well, we're a caucus. We want to talk to President Nazarian and see if he'll buy

into this." We didn't have that. We didn't have a caucus. So it worked very very well this time when Rob did take over as chair of the negotiating committee and there were a couple of points that were sticking points. Rob would say, "I don't know if Brian is going to buy this." It was a stalling tactic. He'd say, "We're a caucus and we've got to go meet with Brian, our president." And that gave us time to breathe and talk more. I would be at all of the meetings except those that were held face to face. Any time the negotiating team had a planning meeting, I was there. But when they met face to face with the Board of Governors, I would not be there. There was one issue, a small issue, on sick leave accrual. President Nazarian actually said to them, "Okay, I now understand it and I will agree to it. Come into my office." But Rob was smart enough to say, "Mr. President, I'm going to have to call Brian and get him up here." And he did. So John Nazarian and I were on equal terms. I've even joked with John a couple of times. He would say to someone, "The president . . ." and I'd say, "Which president?" John wouldn't even answer, he'd just look at me.

Gita: What were the main issues that the Board of Governors didn't want to give in on?

Brian: They had offered the faculty more money on an annual basis than they had offered the professional staff at the University of Rhode Island, at the Community College of Rhode Island, and at Rhode Island College. Unfortunately, the University of Rhode Island accepted less money right away and the Community College of Rhode Island followed suit. Well, we were here to say that we have never been separate from our faculty. We've always received approximately the same financial settlement as our faculty. Our faculty is a part of the American Federation of Teachers and so are we. At the University of Rhode Island, their faculty are in the AAUP (the Association of University Professors), and their staff people are part of the NEA (the National Educational Association). They're different unions. On the other hand, we're affiliated with the same union as our faculty. We're separate locals, but we both share the Rhode Island Federation of Teachers. I saw that as a big difference. We met with our faculty and they even said, "This is nonsense. Whatever we get, you should get." And so it started.

A couple of months passed and the Board of Governors kept saying, "No way." Then I bagged the woman who represents the Board of Governors, their legal represen-