

(Continued from page 7)

staff. There is not a common thread running through this campus that should be there. And there is no easy answer or fix to any of this. But for me it's been worth it, working with the students. ■

Sharon recently performed in the College talent show and BLEW the audience away. Remember to listen out for her jingle on the RIC radio station and, if enough of us rally together, perhaps we can convince her to record her music on tape for distribution.

### PSA@RIC Committees for 2001-2003

**Finance Committee**  
Robert Conrad, *Chair*  
Nancy Hoogasian  
Mark Paolucci  
Jessica Silva  
Dennis Sousa

George Aguiar, *Chair*  
Deborah Johnson  
Arthur Patrie  
Karen Rubino  
Wayne Turner

#### Audit Committee

Walter Jasionowski, *Chair*  
Jim Hanbury  
Linda McEnery

**Sunshine Person**  
Gail Davis

#### Newsletter Editor

Gita Brown

#### Elections Committee

Gray Guenther, *Chair*  
Ken Coulbourn  
Brian Dougher  
Diane Huling  
Haven Starr

#### Grievance Committee

## The PSA@RIC Report

Professional Staff Association at Rhode Island College  
600 Mt. Pleasant Avenue  
Providence, RI 02908-1991

## THE PSA@RIC REPORT

The Professional Staff Association at Rhode Island College

March 2001 Issue

## Profiles of Our Professionals

EQUAL PARTNERS IN EDUCATION

### CAREER DEVELOPMENT IN GENERATION X

#### An Interview with Sharon Crum Mazyck by Gita Brown

When I met with Sharon she was working on a jingle for the RIC radio station. It's part of a publicity blitz to draw more students into the Career Development Office. Sharon wrote the lyrics and her keyboarder wrote the music. At the start of our interview she asked if I'd like to hear it. There is one thing you should never ever do and that is pass up an opportunity to hear Sharon sing.

The intro of the demo tape had a definite hip hop beat. Both Sharon and I nodded our heads in time. It was catchy. Then Sharon's voice took over, overlapping the rhythm. Not a fast-paced hip hop type of singing, but a sultry, mellow, and deeply soulful kind of sound. I think the jingle was a great publicity tool, especially for our short-attention-span generation. I also told her how I could hear two generations in the jingle—Sharon's be-bop, jazz, and Motown generation and the present hip hop generation. Sharon is a baby boomer, who grew up in the 60s. Today the peace sounds of the 60s and 70s have given way to intense, fast-paced tracks, long on angst. I was to discover by the end of our interview that the demo well represented Sharon's unique ability to stand with two feet in two different worlds—the world of her own generation, with all the knowledge gleaned from a decade of activism, Civil Rights, Viet Nam, and the world of our young people, our present generation, with a deep understanding of their unique perspective.

Sharon is an extremely gifted singer. Another Sarah Vaughn. Her grandmother was a professional jazz singer and her father a jazz enthusiast; however, Sharon has never had an interest in singing professionally. When she does perform, she does it for enjoyment or in response to requests made by friends. Recent performances have included a gig at Jazz Masters on North Main Street in Providence and a solo performance at the funeral of policeman Cornell Young,

(Continued on page 5)

GENERATION



WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO BE  
WHEN YOU GROW UP?

Dear PSA member,

Interesting times, interesting circumstances. We get to experience many “isms” in our life. We often are made aware of them when things get out of whack. Nazism and racism became important to me in the 50s. About the same time, conservatism and liberalism were being talked about and of course, existentialism. Feminism and naturalism, sexism, and dogmatism filled the 60s. Capitalism, communism, and socialism—all complex and controversial. However, some decline after a normal life, thank goodness, cannibalism, fascism, and elitism. But wait, I think I see elitism making a comeback.

Just when we thought the individual was the entity of the future, we find that is not so at Rhode Island College. As a group we join together to be known as professionals and expect to be treated as such. PSA members are not looked at in that light. We are thought inferior to our colleagues, not by them but by the real elitists, the administration and some members of the Board of Governors. “We are not faculty” is a phrase I have heard too many times during our contract negotiations. We know that, we are equal partners in education with our faculty. The faculty is the first to sing our praises. We have always had a close relationship with them and enjoy that relationship. As an organization, since the early 70s, we have helped the College grow and establish itself. We have proudly taken our position, quietly, as professionals in support of our colleagues.

Why would one think it is time to change the parity between PSA and RIC/AFT? In the 21<sup>st</sup> century when

technology is in everyone's life whether they like it or not our professional staff contributions are at an all-time high and will only become more important. Because this is new to the world and not just R.I. College, we are going through growing pains. The number of professional staff, for instance, servicing the hundreds of new computers on campus has not changed proportionately. What we have been able to do with PeopleSoft is well documented. We didn't want it but when it was thrust upon us we managed to somehow save the administration's bacon again and again. PSA even agreed to suspend the work rules so that the College could get grades to students and graduate the seniors. It has been extremely difficult to sit by and listen to the administration's and the Board's negotiation committee play that elitist card week after week, month after month, and expect that “We are not faculty” will turn us away from the “BARGAINING table.” We have not asked for anything that the rest of the College employees will not be expecting. I don't get it! Am I wrong? Is elitism acceptable?

Fraternally,

Brian R. Allen



(Continued from page 5)

nursing, education, or communications. It shouldn't matter if your major is English, psychology, or history, you should have a semester or year that you do practical on-site training. We've gotten too cerebral, too

textbook and theory oriented. And when you find out what employers are looking for, you'll find that they're not only looking at the degree. There are many people out there with degrees. What else have you got? Did you do an internship, volunteer work, paid employment? These are the things they look for.

For example, you're Italian, earning a degree in psychology, but you decide you're going to learn

to speak Spanish as well because it's marketable. You also get a minor in women's studies. You decide that for one semester you're going to design your own internship at Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston. During another semester you decide you'll

get a paid job at the Women's Center. You also take a course in CPR. You've got a psychology degree, but look at all the goodies you have along with it.

Employers are looking for practical experience in the world of work as well as additional skills, languages, computer skills, and so forth; they're looking for all of that.

met with students—seniors about to graduate—who didn't know why they chose their major nor what to do with it.

Sharon: They lack information. I've also had students come to see me in their junior year and say, 'Sharon, I'm majoring in early childhood and just

**You'll find students so afraid of the real world that they academically fix it so that they can't graduate. . . They actually don't take that last course.**

I think as long as our academic institutions fail to see the value of practicum experience, it will continue to be an issue for the students and their being ready for the world of work. I think there would be a big difference in the product that walked across that stage every May at Commencement.

Gita: You also mentioned that you've

**As long as our academic institutions fail to see the value of practicum experience, it will continue to be an issue for the students and their being ready for the world of work.**

found out that it doesn't pay any money. I wait on tables on the weekends, and if I waited on tables full time with tips, I'd make more money.'

Gita: How is it that they reach junior/senior year with so little information about their career? I know you've said that the guidance counseling they're receiving at the high school level is lacking, but what about once they get here?

Sharon: When they come in as freshmen they're faced with information overload. They're given information on our office and every other office on campus. They need to touch base with this office as freshmen. But in addition, they haven't been *programmed* to seek out career guidance information. They don't seek out information until they're in some type of dilemma.

Gita: Is this office up to the challenge of getting to these students before they graduate?

Sharon: The fact is we would like to see more students utilize this office. When we talk about the four-year preparation time needed to be ready for the world of work, it's just not there. We have no problem with alumni. A large number of alumni use our services. But the ideal situation is to have a job when you graduate.

Gita: Which is perhaps why you'll find students who are afraid of graduating.

Sharon: There's a lot of fear, a lot of uncertainty, at graduation. You'll find students so afraid of the real world that they academically fix it so that they can't graduate.

Gita: Perpetual students.

Sharon: Yes. They actually don't take that last course.

Gita: Then I would think it is extremely important that the theoretical knowledge students are getting in the classroom, be coupled with real knowledge of the world of work. You know, PSA@RIC members consider themselves equal partners in education. What's your take on that in relation to the work you do in career development?

Sharon: We're all in this together. When you talk about campus community, it encompasses many elements, students, faculty, and

(Continued on back page)

## Generation X Neologisms

- **Black Holes** = An X generation subgroup best known for their possession of almost entirely black wardrobes.
- **Down Nesting** = The tendency of parents to move to a smaller, guest-room-free house after their children have moved away so as to avoid children aged 20 to 30 who have boomeranged home.
- **Ethnomagnetism** = The tendency of young people to live in emotionally demonstrative, more unrestrained ethnic neighborhoods: "You wouldn't understand it there, mother—they hug where I live now."
- **Historical Overdosing** = To live in a period of time when too much seems to happen. Major symptoms include addiction to newspapers, magazines, and TV news broadcasts.
- **Lessness** = A philosophy whereby one reconciles oneself with diminishing expectations of material wealth: "I've given up wanting to make a killing or be a bigshot. I just want to find happiness and maybe open up a little roadside café in Idaho."
- **Mclob** = A low-pay, low-prestige, low-dignity, low-benefit, no-future job in the service sector. Frequently considered a satisfying career choice by people who have never held one.
- **Option Paralysis** = The tendency, when given unlimited choices, to make none.
- **Tele-Parablizing** = Morals used in everyday life that derive from TV sitcom plots: "That's just like the episode where Jan lost her glasses."
- **Ultra Short-Term Nostalgia** = Homesickness for the extremely recent past: "God, things seemed so much better in the world last week."

Douglas Coupland, *Generation X*

## The Word is "Outrageous"

Through these last few months, we have been extremely patient. We have refrained from diatribes. We have not engaged in job actions. We have not disrupted College events. Instead, we have acted like the professionals that we are.

But what do we get in response? An unwillingness to budge from the 3.5 percent figure. A posture which says to us, we are second-class citizens. A message that clearly says, we are less valued than others on this campus.

Many of us have been around the College for a long time. Many of us have given the best years of our lives to this College. Many of us are proud of the work we do for a fine institution of higher education that offers the opportunity for an excellent education to the citizens of Rhode Island and to many others who choose to come here.

But we feel extremely deflated, as if having received a blow to the gut that leaves us gasping for breath, when we realize what the wage offer means and how we are being unfairly singled out among the members of this College community. It is outrageous.

On February 15, our executive board presented a petition, signed by 105 of our members, to President Nazarian which said in part, we resolve "to create an awareness of our concerns in as many ways as possible and for as long as it takes."

We hope that both the depth of our outrage and the strength of our resolve are not underestimated.

Sincerely,

Rob Bower



As I write, the Professional Staff Association at Rhode Island College has been attempting to reach an agreement on a new labor contract since last summer—275 days and counting. We bargained hard through the summer and fall, and both sides seemed close to agreement except when it came to the all-important issue of wage increases.

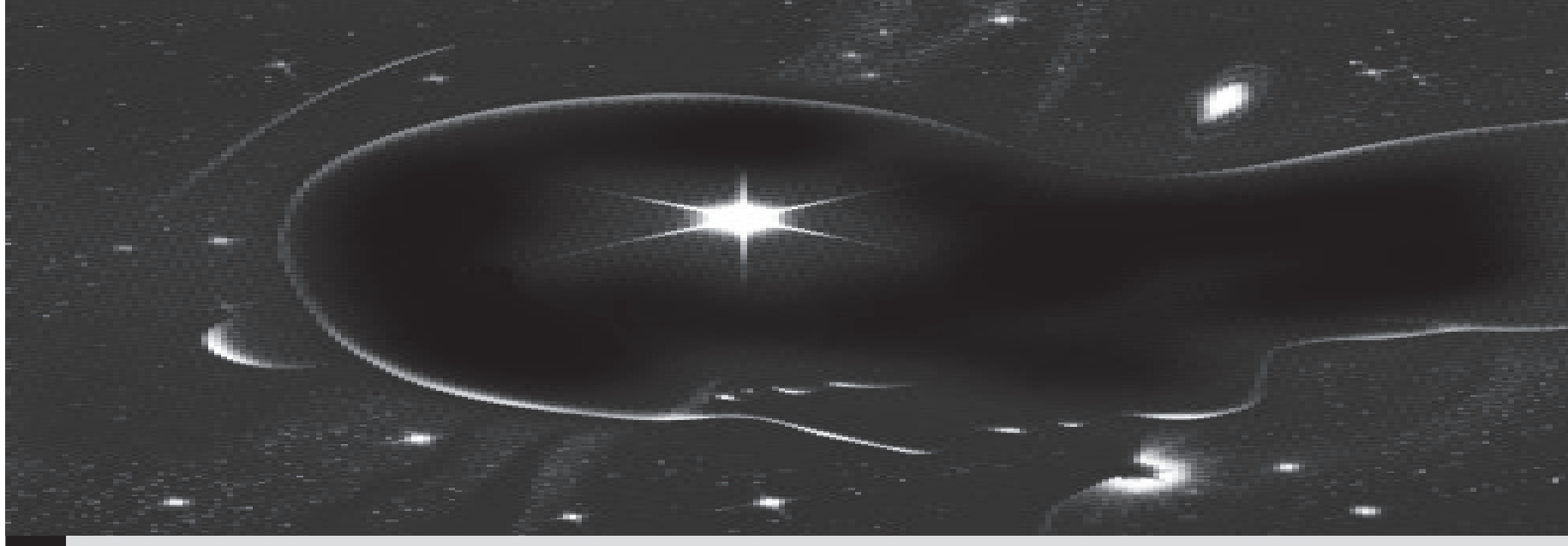
Though some of the early negotiated settlements (including those affecting the other two professional staff unions bargaining with the Board of Governors for Higher Education) were for 3.5 percent increases each year for three years in across-the-board salary adjustments, today more than 90 percent of the unionized state workers have reached agreements which allow for higher percentage increases (at least in years two and three).

When we in the PSA@RIC look around us and see our faculty colleagues getting 4.1 percent come July 1 and 4.5 percent in 2002-2003, and similarly see that our Council 94 support staff are set to receive 4 and 4.5 percent, and also see that some of the non-unionized professional staff on this campus can receive even more than our faculty colleagues in across-the-board wage increases, all while we continue to be offered less for the coming years, we grope for words to express our feelings. The one that comes readily to mind is simply "outrageous."

We have been told that we need to document the reasons why we should receive as much as our faculty colleagues. We know that the other two faculty unions at CCRI and URI did expensive studies to show the need for higher salaries. But we also know that our own faculty were not required to do such a study. And we are sure that no such study was done on behalf of the Council 94 members. So why must we?

Instead, we feel that the Board of Governors for Higher Education ought to document why we should receive less. We feel we have given more during extremely difficult times (i.e. PeopleSoft implementation) brought on by decisions and/or lack of planning beyond our control. Yet we are being offered less. It's outrageous.

# LETTER



## RESOLUTION AND PETITION

### Professional Staff Association at Rhode Island College

#### *Whereas*

the Professional Staff Association at Rhode Island College (PSA@RIC) has negotiated in good faith with representatives of the College administration and the Board of Governors for Higher Education in a series of meetings since the PSA@RIC labor contract expired June 30, 2000, and

#### *Whereas*

the faculty unions at all three Board of Governors higher education institutions are receiving 3.5 percent the first year, 4.1 percent the second year, and 4.5 percent the third year in across the board increases to their base salaries while the PSA@RIC has been offered less in across the board salary increases, and

#### *Whereas*

members of the PSA@RIC are part of the very fabric of the Rhode Island College Community. We recruit our students, we help our students obtain financial aid, we house and feed our students, we advise our students, we counsel our students, we provide a host of other services for our students—in some cases we even teach our students. Yet we are being asked to sign a contract in which come this July the rest of the College community will see across the board wage increases of at least a half a percent more than us and the next year a full percentage more.

#### *Whereas*

members of the PSA@RIC have worked and continue to work “above and beyond” the call of duty to implement a major administrative information system (PeopleSoft) which has been fraught with serious difficulties and cost overruns, and

#### *Whereas*

members of the PSA@RIC work shoulder to shoulder with the administration and the faculty (serving on Council, the Academic Leaders group, and many other key College committees) as equal partners in education, and

#### *Whereas*

the members of the PSA@RIC have traditionally received equal treatment with their faculty colleagues in regard to annual across the board pay increases,

Therefore be it resolved that we the undersigned members of the Professional Staff Association at Rhode Island College do hereby:

#### **Appeal**

to President John Nazarian to intervene on our behalf with the Board of Governors for Higher Education for fair and equitable salary adjustments comparable to those of our faculty colleagues, and

#### **Resolve**

to create an awareness of our concerns in as many ways as possible and for as long as it takes, without violating the law or the terms of the contract under which we continue to serve, and

#### **Declare**

that we are proud professionals and that we will work diligently for just recognition as “Equal Partners in Education.”

Presented this fifteenth day of February, in the year two thousand one.

[Signed by 105 members of the Professional Staff Association at Rhode Island College and presented to President Nazarian by the PSA@RIC Executive Board. A similarly worded petition in support of this resolution was signed by the Executive Board of RIC/AFT

(Continued from page 1)

which was televised nationally and ran on “Good Morning America.” As much as I try to linger on the musical aspect of Sharon’s life, it’s only when our interview moves toward the work she does at Rhode Island College that she truly becomes expansive.

**Gita:** I was browsing through the internet and hit on an interesting perspective of today’s generation. Generation X is a descriptive term to define the generation born between 1961 and 1981, that would be those aged 15 to 35. This is a generation that has come of age in a totally different environment than the one we grew up in.

When we were growing up, premarital sex was forbidden because it was immoral or could lead to an unwanted pregnancy, but never did we equate an act of love with an act of death. AIDS changed all that. When we were growing up, we were scared of getting beaten up by the class bully, but never by a nine-year-old with an assault rifle; we were never witness to literal massacres, literal blood baths in the school yard. And though we knew of kids whose parents were divorced, it was a rare occurrence; but 40% of Generation X’ers were raised by divorced or separated parents. *Forty percent*. I wonder if young people today have lower expectations of the future than the generation that preceded them.

**Today’s students lack a sense of empowerment. I grew up in an era where if we didn’t like something on campus, we took over the dorms, we picketed, we marched to the president’s office.**

or they were treated rudely, or they didn’t get the answer they thought they should have gotten and just settled for that; or the staff person explained to the student what the student needed to know, but the student really didn’t get it and was too afraid to say they didn’t get it, I have to say to that student—the bottom line is *you* suffer. When you didn’t get your questions answered from your faculty advisor who has missed four appointments and didn’t call you, you have a right to speak up

about that and to take some action that will give you what you want.

I think this issue of empowerment relates to the workplace as well. When any individual feels that they are not operating from a power base, it affects everything you do.

When I started working at Rhode Island College—and I’m going into my 23rd year—most of the students I was seeing in my office were 18 to

23. Today SOS (Slightly Older Students) make up 31 percent of our enrollment. These are students over 25. The face of the student who sits before me may be someone who came straight from high school to Rhode Island College or it could be someone

who’s been a computer programmer for 15 years and decided they hated the work and is now getting a degree in nursing. So, I’ve really had to keep an open mind. Unfortunately, many of our faculty and staff treat all our students as if they were 18 to 23. It could be a real turn off to someone who’s 35 years old or my age and I’m talking to them like they’re 17.

**Gita:** How well are our students prepared for the world of work when they leave here?

**Sharon:** I work at a college so obviously I value classroom instruction, but one of the things many colleges in this country fall short on is practicum experience. Every program at a college should have built in internships. Not only internships in

(Continued on page 7)