

With that said, I would like to take a moment to focus on the positive . . . For the past two years approximately two-thirds of PSA members received a salary adjustment to their base salary through the merit process. This opportunity presents itself again when other collective bargaining units will be receiving no adjustment in salary in July. This is not a provision in any of the other staff association contracts at URI or CCRI. Though we have lived through several iterations of merit and we all admit that the process is not perfect, we have learned from these experiences. This gives us concrete information from past experience should the issue arise in future negotiations.

Another positive outcome of the new agreement is the opportunity for a PSA member to initiate the ingrade/upgrade process with the Administration, an alternative to the PAC (Personnel Appeals Committee) route. The language also makes a provision for the Administration to initiate the process based on

recognition of increased duties and responsibilities or that one is clearly working beyond the current job description. Over the years, situations such as these arose with no clear definition of how they could be handled. Now the process is defined and I consider this an important addition to our contract.

Lastly, the 6 percent increase to the minimum is another important gain. Although a small number of PSA members are affected, it has positive future ramifications for PSA as a whole by narrowing the gap in our pay grade ranges.

All in all, we did well considering there was not much flexibility this year. Very soon the negotiating team will reconvene and start what will prove to be a very challenging negotiating session. As always, your feedback is important to us. Do not hesitate to contact me, Rob, or any member of the negotiations team with



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## THE PSA@RIC REPORT

The Professional Staff Association at Rhode Island College

### EQUAL PARTNERS IN EDUCATION



# Letters

## From the President . . .

Finally we have a new Agreement in place. Yet there is no time for rest, since the contract is for just one year (July 1, 2003 through July 31, 2004). Year in and year out, feedback from our members tells us the most important negotiating issue for our members is health care benefits. And this promises to be the biggest challenge in negotiating the next contract.

Governor Carcieri has clearly established where he is headed on this issue by announcing that as of July 1 nonunionized state employees will begin paying a share of their health insurance premiums (initially 7 percent of the premium cost, and increasing to 15 percent in three years). The tradeoff is an initial 2 percent across-the-board salary increase.

There is no question that rising health insurance costs are having a significant negative impact on state government. We at the College are feeling the budget squeeze in very real ways. We are upset to receive no across-the-board salary increase when we are all doing more for the College as we approach the end of extraordinary Sesquicentennial year. Yet the bitter truth is that if we had received one or two percent more in salary, reducing the operating budget that much more or failing to fill more positions would hurt in other ways.

My view is that the Governor has been too

quick to look toward the easy solution—make the employees pay more. Strangely lacking from this fiscally prudent CEO is seeking ways to reduce costs of providing the coverage, which in Rhode Island are among the highest in the country.

We should be proud that Rhode Island is among the top states when it comes to providing affordable health care coverage to its citizens. Instead of starting down the road of premiums shares (which unfairly causes lower paid workers to share more of the burden), we should be looking at ways to extend that affordable coverage to the private sector and to those in need.



The recently negotiated Agreement gives

## From the Vice President . . .

Before writing this issue's letter, I took a look at the letter I wrote a year ago. It spoke of the negotiations beginning, hoping for an expedient and productive process. At that time, I admitted knowing very little about the whole procedure. A year later and a year wiser, I have a taste for the process and the things that can happen. It's good news that we finally have a contract in place—although late. This past year's session had some unusual challenges—it resulted in a one-year rollover of the current contract.

At the general membership meeting, there was concern from the membership about the merit process defined in this new agreement. As Rob explained, the negotiating team felt obliged to present this package to you with the merit provision. From the survey taken, many of our members expressed to us that a form of merit would be acceptable with refinement.

(Continued on back page)

## The PSA@RIC Report – March 2004 Issue

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

## MY FATHER, MY COACH

BY JOHN TAYLOR

I grew up in Hartford, Connecticut, where my father taught physical education for thirty years in a predominately black neighborhood in the Northend of Hartford. During World War II, my family spent some of my childhood in Ridgewood Park, which is in Waterford, Connecticut. There my father served as director of physical fitness at the Coast Guard Academy. After the War, we moved back to Hartford. One of my father's passions was boxing, so to supplement his teacher's salary, he taught boxing classes every Saturday morning, and both my brother and I were required to help him with these young boys, like ourselves, who wanted to build confidence and to stand up to bullies at school.

My father taught us many lessons in an effort to prepare us for life. For example, he wanted us to appreciate the rewards of work and how to be self-reliant, so he got us involved in heavy manual work, like roofing a steel house, building a garage, and digging a cellar. He also taught us perseverance. Every summer the whole family packed up and followed my father to summer camp where he was waterfront director. I remember running a race in the camp's Olympic Day activities. I had run some distance and was deciding to drop out of the race until he yelled, "You started it, you finish it!" There was also the time I got caught smoking. I was pretty hooked on cigarettes at an early age, maybe by three years old. One day in Waterford—I was older then—I had come home from playing after school. My father asked me what I had done that day and I told him I played with a friend. He asked me if I had been smoking and I said, "No." And he says, "That's not what I heard. I heard you were smoking." That day I got three spankings (whacks on the butt) in one session: one for telling a lie, one for smoking, and one because I'm supposed to be an athlete and athletes don't smoke.

I consider myself a very lucky person because of the many people who have helped me along the way. One such person was a country veterinarian I used to work for in the summer, Dr. Orval Burr, who lived in Chester, Connecticut. His practice consisted of caring for small domestic animals and farm animals. I remember when Dr. Burr was performing an autopsy on a steer. As I dug the hole to bury the animal, Dr. Burr explained various functions of the cow's anatomy to me. From that experience I became fascinated with the physiology of exercise, especially the areas of strength and conditioning.

Mr. Seaverns also greatly influenced my life. I had graduated from grammar school and was hoeing corn on a farm in West Hartford, Connecticut, when the farmer stopped his tractor to ask me if I would like to attend a private high school. He said he and his brother had once attended Suffield Academy, and it was going to reopen. He said he was going to recommend me because of my work ethic and because I was the type of person that the school needed. I received a call from the headmaster, Mr. Seaverns. He offered me the opportunity to attend the academy for four years. I worked many odd jobs, like washing and waxing floors, but I remained fully involved in my studies and sports. At Suffield I was president of my class, I played three sports (football, basketball, and baseball) and was captain of all three, I was president of the Torch Society, and I received the Outstanding Athlete award in my senior year.

After graduating from high school I enrolled at Springfield College. My entire life's earnings was spent on my first semester's tuition. With my grandmother in a nursing home, money from my father wasn't there. Not only that, my father had worked his way through college with two young children, and so it was expected that my brother and I would do the same. Again, I was fortunate. Mr. Seaverns funded the rest of my freshman year at Springfield. I found out later, at a testimonial in Mr. Seaverns' honor, that Mr. Seaverns had done this for other students in similar situations. Upon my second year of college, he offered me a room on the third floor of the Alumni House. I made enough money during the summer to pay for my tuition and

books. I was also able to hitch a ride to school every day and to hitch hike home after class.

I completed my graduate work at the University of Bridgeport, where I was a graduate assistant in intramurals and taught an undergraduate health class. I had also developed a gymnastic club. At that time, Ed Bodga was a professor at RIC in charge of a Homecoming event in which my gymnastic club performed. He was impressed by our performance and encouraged me to apply to RIC's faculty. I was hired in the fall of 1966. RIC was a new campus and the Walsh Gymnasium had just opened. Thirty years later, while walking back from a function honoring faculty and staff for their years of service, Vice President Gary Penfield asked me what my first recollections of the College were. I thought it was a great teaching environment because of the size of the student body and the newness of the campus. I had an opportunity to work with students in physical education, to coach intramurals, and to give back what I had received while pursuing my education.

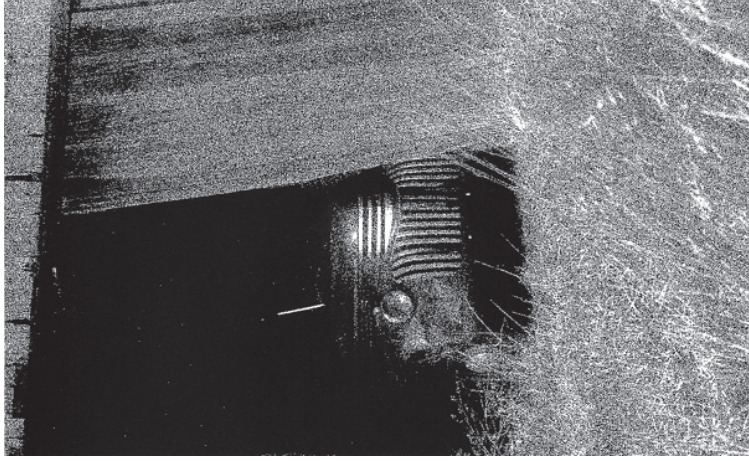
My office at that time was in Walsh Gymnasium, and my office partner was Professor Donald Averil. He asked me if I would help form an AFT Local at RIC. It was a challenging task that presented many obstacles. Getting faculty involved was difficult because the word "union" for most faculty brought images of truck drivers and menial employment. But the AFT at RIC became a strong union because of Dr. Averil's leadership. We dealt with issues such as discrimination by the administration against individuals who had gone against the administration. There were promotions and raises

for some, while others were passed over. I think this still holds true today. I think one thing that will cause the demise of a union is apathy, the feeling that the issues being addressed are not theirs. This brings on complacency and the status quo is maintained.

My father provided me with many lessons that have proven helpful to me. He passed away at 95. I am hopeful that I can touch as many students as he did through his fifty plus years of teaching and coaching. He received a Christmas card years after his retirement from a former student and basketball player on his junior high school team. He asked if my father remembered him and he thanked my father for giving him the right start in life. I'm also grateful for the individuals who mentored me and who made me who I am. ■

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*It's been said you get the best effort from others not by lighting a fire beneath them, but by building a fire within. John's fire is inside him and it ignites everyone who comes in contact with him. Before you enter his office you are challenged by a sign that reads: Champions are made. He is known to stop students and staff en route to encourage them to care enough about their lives to make a personal commitment to improve it. He also checks on their progress. Even as assistant director, John will always be "coach" to many.*



## PROFILES

OF OUR PROFESSIONALS