

ADVOCATE



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CCA FALL CONFERENCE RECOGNIZES California Leadership Academy Graduating Class

By **Gabriella Landeros**

At the CCA Fall Conference, we were proud to award certificates to our fifth California Leadership Academy (CLA) graduating class:

Janice Timm, Mendocino Part-Time FA
Jacqueline Penhos, Southwestern College EA
Kristen Dennis, Southwestern College EA
Joshua Christ, Mt. San Antonio College FA
Cindy Carney, Calbright FA
Justin Bell, Kern CCD CCA
Wonderful Nancy Allah, South Orange County CCD FA
David Rentz, Chaffey College FA
Megan Igo, Merced College FA
Adam Fong, Merced College FA
Karen Beck, Rio Hondo College FA



Top row left to right: Janice Timm, Jacqueline Penhos, Kristen Dennis, Joshua Christ, Cindy Carney, Justin Bell, Wonderful Nancy Allah and Adam Fong
Bottom row left to right: David Rentz, Ed Gomez, Kristie Iwamoto and Megan Igo

C**LA trains faculty** interested in leadership positions beyond their local chapters to address threats and opportunities facing community colleges. The overall goal of CLA is to focus on the principles and history of unionism as a foundation of leadership. CLA members learn everything from speaking publicly on union issues, running effective meetings, debunking negative stereotypes of unions and networking with various leadership groups in California.

Throughout the academy, these leaders were provided with tools to sharpen their skills—everything from strategic planning to crisis management to advocating for policy change at the state and national levels. But it wasn't all about classroom learning. Real-world exposure was woven into the experience. Coordinated by Ed Gomez and Kristie Iwamoto and supported by CTA staff Frank Oppedisano, the class had fantastic speakers, such as CTA Board Member DeWayne Sheaffer, NEA Director for California Barbara Jackson, CTA staff and CCA officers, who shared real-life experiences to understand how different campuses were tackling similar challenges in their communities. CLA participants also got to experience CCA Councils and attend

CCA Board of Directors meetings. Over the course of the academy, participants formed bonds, and built a sense of camaraderie, understanding that they were part of something bigger than themselves that has the potential to shape the future of education in California. They became a community of leaders who weren't just focused on the immediate future of their campuses but on the long-term vision of creating opportunities for all students, regardless of their background or circumstances.

"The biggest lesson I learned from CLA was to remember my power as a union representative and leader," said CLA graduate Jacqueline Penhos. "Oftentimes, we get caught up in the day-to-day activities of our passion for teaching and forget we have the force with us, behind us and beside us! I was reminded of the importance of building strong relationships, advocacy and the power of collective bargaining. Along with one of my favorite things: Paying it forward to new members. Five colleagues from my college are interested in joining CLA after attending our graduation ceremony."

"I've learned how vital it is that individuals within locals understand and engage with the various layers of our regional, statewide,

and national unions, and the various entities, governmental and otherwise, with which they work to ensure that the promise of public education is fulfilled. We are much stronger and more effective when we look outward as well as inward," said CLA graduate David Rentz.

As they left the academy, each participant carried with them the lessons they had learned, the relationships they had forged and the knowledge that they were now part of a larger movement—one that would challenge the status quo, inspire change and build a stronger union and future for California's community colleges. CLA did more than equip them with the tools they needed to lead—it inspired them to be the change-makers that our community college system needs.

"I hope to inspire change in many ways; The passion shared by Ed Gomez and Kristie was inspiring, and I plan to be a champion for collective bargaining, workers' rights, parity and foster strong communication and engagement," Penhos said. "I plan to strengthen professional development and engagement, address equity and social justice, and most importantly share my positive and influential experience in CLA with others while building unity and a positive culture."

Whatever This Is, We're In It Together

SINCE I SPEND MOST OF MY TIME with union leaders, college faculty and management, and California politicians and political appointees, I am well aware that my political senses are biased. Still, I find myself surprised that those supported by the Republican Party have won the presidency, the Senate, and the House of Representatives. These next few years could see much change, even if international concerns settle down, which they probably won't.

On the campaign trail, President Trump called for an end to tenure, merit pay for teachers and professors, and the immediate firing of all accreditors with these services to then be provided by a group appointed by the president. He also called for all migrants, including those with asylum claims, to be deported immediately, as would all persons born in the US to migrant parents since their birthright citizenship will be revoked.

I doubt that all these things will happen, but some might, at least to some degree. Clearly, the political landscape has changed and we're in for a rocky ride. Fortunately, we have our union. By staying united we can face these uncertainties, minimize undesired impacts and fight back against proposed injustice. Together, we can prevail.

Trump's pick of historically labor-friendly Rep. Lori Chavez-DeRemer (R-Oregon) as his Labor Secretary provides some hope that he meant it when he said at a rally "American workers should be able to negotiate for better wages." Still, there's much reason for concern. The AFL-CIO opined in late 2023 that "Donald Trump told us in 2016 he would stand with workers. He lied. ... Former President Trump spent four years in office weakening unions and working people while pushing tax giveaways to the wealthiest among us. He stacked the courts with judges who want to roll back our rights on the job. He made us less safe at work. He gave big corporations free rein to lower wages and made it harder for workers to stand together in a union."

On the plus side, the Economic Policy Institute reported this past July that "[b]y some measures, support for labor unions among the U.S. public is at its highest level in over half a century. ... [W]e find that U.S. workers today are much less likely to oppose union representation in their workplaces. Although there is evidence of greater support for unionization among workers, the most remarkable change is the much larger share of workers who report being unsure about whether they would vote for union representation ... The ranks of the 'union curious'—workers who are open to, but uncertain about, the possibility that unionization can improve their lives—are large and growing."

Americans originally banded together into unions to stop a repeat of disasters like the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire, to create improved working conditions such as an eight-hour day, sick leave, and understandable evaluation processes, and to pressure managers and owners for improved salaries in a way that few could accomplish as individuals. Going forward, remaining together and keeping a sense of solidarity is how we can continue to make progress, how we can continue to keep the support of the American public and how we can turn those "union curious" into union supporters.

Although the president, our governor and each seat of Congress and state Legislature matter, CCA's work is the same no matter who holds these offices.



As our mission statement indicates, we advocate for California's public community college faculty, staff, and students; empower locals; build strong and effective coalitions; promote equity, inclusion, anti-racism, social justice, and part-time faculty equality, and strive to preserve universal access to quality public education.

In 2025, you're likely to hear from CCA a little more often than in the past. When you receive an email that asks you to contact someone, please do. When we or your local leaders report that people are needed to rally at a location, please go. When we stand together, we are much more likely to succeed, and even if the decision of your local leaders or the CCA Council isn't exactly what you'd do if you were in charge, I hope that we will stand together as we seek the best path for ourselves and our students. While our federal political situation is unclear, whatever this is, we're in it together.

Eric Kaljumägi
CCA President
president@cca4us.org

ADVOCATE

The Community College Association, with CTA and NEA as our partners, advocates for California's public community college faculty, staff, and students; empowers locals; builds strong and effective coalitions; promotes equity, inclusion, anti-racism, social justice, and part-time faculty equality, and strives to preserve universal access to quality public education.

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One of my main goals is to advocate for mental health and well-being, focusing on resources and work-life balance for our members, as well as support programs within our union for those who are struggling, whether through wellness programs, peer support groups or access to mental health services.”

“I hope to empower my colleagues to engage with the broader union communities, and to feel that they can and should be informed about and active in the legislative sphere, whether it is by talking to their representatives, participating in formal lobbying days or even running for office themselves!” said Rentz.

If you’re interested in learning more about the program or have questions, email Kristie Iwamoto at kiwamoto@cca4us.org or visit cca4us.org/academies.

EDUCATORS CLAIM VICTORIES IN THEIR COMMUNITIES

By Gabriella Landeros



THIS NOVEMBER, CCA and CTA members made a powerful impact on local government and school board races, with many securing victories that promise to reshape the future of education in their communities. Educators ran for office with a focus on issues such as improving school funding, enhancing educator support and ensuring that policies prioritize student well-being. These wins at the school board and local government levels mark a significant step toward giving educators a direct voice in decision-making, fostering a more collaborative and responsive approach to education at the grassroots level. It’s clear that voters trust educators in these spaces, and thanks to the support of members and allies across the state, we helped make these wins happen!

“As a longtime educator, I understand public education. As a union leader, I’ve been in rooms where decisions on education are made and was able to share my experience and knowledge to help inform the outcome. We need educators in these rooms because we are the experts who know what our students and educators need and deserve,” said CCA Vice

President Randa Wahbe who won a seat on the Citrus College Board of Trustees. “The greatest help was the faculty support. The Citrus College Faculty Association (CCFA) endorsed me early on, and the Citrus College Adjunct Faculty Federation (CFT) followed soon after. Being able to say during my campaign that I was the only candidate supported by all Citrus faculty went a long way in gaining the support of other organizations and community members.”

Chapters played a crucial role in supporting their endorsed candidates by organizing precinct walks, dropping off campaign literature and yard signs, writing postcards and more. CTA grants and funds were especially useful in allowing time and resources to be dedicated to these campaigns.

“CTA’s President Release Time Grant was instrumental in assisting the Wahbe campaign. At my college, presidents are given partial release which is necessary for regular activities such as attendance at every constituent and leadership group meeting, bargaining planning, member engagement, local association meeting planning, managing grievances, etc. District provided release time should not be used for electoral

activities in the same way district resources such as email and facilities should not be used,” said CCFA President Gerhard Peters. “Randa’s election was a top priority for CCFA members because she is committed to integrating the voices of all constituent groups in her decision-making. Randa understands that information should not be filtered by the administration and that a balanced approach requires offering an ear to all constituent groups (faculty, staff, students and administration).”

“College of the Canyons Faculty Association (COCFA) members donated money, walked neighborhoods delivering 30,000 pieces of campaign literature, held sign rallies on busy corners every weekend, put signs and banners up, wrote letters to the editor and contacted fellow CTA members from other chapters who live in the voting areas. CTA ABC funds enabled us to do mailers and media ad buys for our slate of four endorsed candidates. Edel Alonso’s win means the board has a former educator’s voice on it,” said COCFA President Jason Burgdorfer.



Members were able to harness their skills in other ways too towards the election. “COCFA PAC Treasurer and Photography faculty Wendy Brill-Wynkoop spearheaded the digital and print campaign designs, working with a graphic designer. Leaning into her experience in the visual arts and building upon the 2020 election successes, Wendy was able to coordinate the work of various faculty and designers to create memorable messaging,” said Burgdorfer.

“ABC funds and PAC donations from our members played a vital role in helping Carolyn Inmon’s campaign. These funds allowed her to effectively reach voters through targeted advertisements, creation and printing of walking pieces and the creation of campaign signs. Victories such as Trustee Inmon’s bring a sense of hope and encouragement to educators. I believe it signifies that voters care about candidates who prioritize education, improving faculty working conditions, advocate for fair compensation, and support educator’s voices. I hope this win creates momentum for us to continue to work with and find trustee candidates that value the voice of the faculty,” said Robert Melendez, president of the South Orange County Community College Faculty Association.

“The CTA Sierra Service Center, California Community College Association and Bakersfield Elementary Teachers have been my allies, critics and trusted advisors. Providing both accountability and financial backing. In the summer of 2024, before the start of the election season, I launched a Youth Leadership Academy. The program empowered young people between 14 to 18 years of age to learn about the civil rights history of Kern County and assigned mentors to help youngsters design and practice

community activism. The mentors, guest lecturers and advisory panel for this program were almost all CTA volunteers, who shared my vision to engage youth in our democracy. Before the summer was over, our youth leaders knocked on almost 250 doors and wrote over 350 postcards as well as addressing issues they cared about including food insecurity, trans visibility and public art,” said Kern CCD CCA member Dr. Chris Cruz-Boone, who ran unopposed for reelection to the Bakersfield City School District Board of Education.

“As a classroom teacher who is well versed in policy, I am aware of how policies made in board rooms by folks in suits affect the learning conditions of students as well as the working conditions of our educators. Having educators on school boards lends a very necessary dose of reality when it comes to financial and policy decisions. In addition, educators who serve on school boards can counter destructive extremist groups and candidates and ensure that democracy prevails,” said CTA Board Member Angela Der Ramos who ran unopposed for a Hartnell College Board of Trustees seat.

“Having Angela Der Ramos win a Hartnell Board of Trustee seat is exciting for the Hartnell College Faculty Association (HCFA). We have not had a teacher or faculty member on the board for years. To have someone who has been on the front lines, in the classroom, who understands the challenges that today’s educators face is valuable. I love that she has the background to challenge budget report assumptions and has experience as a trustee at another school board in Salinas,” said HCFA President Nancy Beymer.

“After over 35 years in the classroom, I’ve seen

just about everything. I know the impact on students who need to spend extra semesters at a community college due to ‘necessary budget cuts’ impacting getting the courses they need to transfer. I’ve also seen excellent part-time instructors lose their jobs from those same cuts. All colleges have something about being student-centered in their mission statements; we faculty have spent our whole careers living that. It’s in our bones. This knowledge and passion are especially important in times of budget cutting or minimal budget increases,” said Gavilan College Faculty Association member Ken Wagman, who ran unopposed and serves on the Cabrillo College Board of Trustees.

As these educators step into the political arena, their commitment to shaping the future of education promises to bring a unique, insightful perspective to school boards, advocating for policies that prioritize student success and keep our communities at the forefront of decision-making.

Solidarity Is a Verb

By **Nancy Beymer**, President of the Hartnell College Faculty Association

Solidarity is standing together. It means your fight is my fight. It is knowing we are stronger together and no one stands alone.

My motivation for joining the [Las Lomitas Education Association](#) picket line is my solid belief in the principles of union solidarity. My inspiration came from the teachers at Soledad elementary and the faculty from other community colleges that came to support the Hartnell College Faculty Association in October 2023 to join our information picketing at a Board of Trustee meeting. I remember feeling buoyed by the show of support from fellow teachers and educators across teaching levels and county lines. It meant so much to me and to our organization team to feel their support and know we weren't alone.

So, when I learned a K-12 system in driving distance had been out there on strike for three days - I knew I could make time to show my support - I just had to show them that they too are not alone. All educators at all levels struggle to reach such a dire situation as a strike. Frankly, it is easy for our dedication and commitment to our students and communities to be exploited. I

know when an educator is on a picket line, they are already feeling devalued at an extreme level. We are teaching because we care. So perhaps my other motivation was to make sure that the K-12 educators know that those of us in higher education care about their needs and their struggles and that we respect and admire the work they do!

Solidarity increases our strength, and we surely must support one another. Each win helps to move the needle for the next win. Our arguments become strengthened when we have successful contract language and competitive pay comparisons to use in our own campaign. The work we do is meaningful, essential work for the growth of communities, individuals and our union.

Teachers/faculty/professors should not be taken for granted or exploited for their care. Instead, we must be united, to fight for safety, recognition, resources, health care, class size - your local need.



Beymer on the picket line

Each local win raises the bar and shows what can be done. It inspires others to continue the fight. There is always a song about "saving for the rainy day," and some savings make sense. But it is time to call boards out when they treat teachers and other school workers as liabilities, not assets. The school is only as good as the people working at the school make it. So, school boards need to recognize the people!

My uncle is a proud Teamster. I grew up knowing the importance of unionism and solidarity. If you are ever on the fence about getting involved, I would say to hop on over and get involved! You will find that our union work is enriching. You will see that you are not only associated with your local, but you are part of a large community of support. You will also find that support means the world to you when the fight is yours.



APPLY TODAY FOR THE BUILDING STRONG LOCALS ACADEMY!

You're encouraged to apply to the Academy for Building Strong Locals (BSL), which focuses on strengthening local chapters with the primary goal of educating members to effectively serve at the local chapter level.

- ▶ There are approximately 20 members from local CCA/CTA chapters in the program.
- ▶ BSL members learn:
 - The history of unionism and its value in today's work environments.
 - The importance of developing chapter members.
 - The rights and responsibilities of chapters and leadership.
- ▶ Initially funded by a grant from NEA, BSL is now self-funded by CCA.

To learn more about the program and apply, visit cca4us.org/academies.

The deadline to submit your application is **Jan. 10, 2025**.

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Chapter/Member-in-Politics Awards

Nominations are now open! Deadline January 31, 2025

CTA CHAPTER/MEMBER-IN-POLITICS AWARDS

Nominations are now open for the annual Chapter-In-Politics Award Program in Honor of Joyce Fadem and the Member-In-Politics Award Program in Honor of Ted Bass. The awards are designed to honor CTA chapters and members for their outstanding contributions up and down the state through effective use of the political process. The award period extends from Jan. 1, 2024, through Dec. 31, 2024.

Four Chapter-in-Politics Awards will be presented to a Small, Medium, Large and Rookie chapter.



Find the 2024 online nomination form by visiting cta.org/for-educators/scholarships-awards/cta-member-in-politics-award-program-nomination-form or scanning the QR code.

Six Member-in-Politics Awards will be presented to the selected nominee from the following categories: Getting Others Involved, State Priorities, Local Priorities, Partisan/Non-Partisan Activities, Coalition Building and an overall Member-in-Politics Award.



Find the 2024 online nomination form by visiting cta.org/for-educators/scholarships-awards/cta-member-in-politics-award-program-nomination-form or scanning the QR code.

CCA leaders can complete the online nomination form by **Jan. 31, 2025**. The awards will be presented to the winners at the spring CTA State Council of Education during the Political Involvement Committee meeting.

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** Automatic or electronic payments using your checking account and routing number are not considered purchases. By providing your payee with your debit or credit card number, your posted automatic payments will be counted as eligible purchases. Some bill payments will meet the monthly requirement for an ACH debit or credit transaction. Debit card cash-back amounts, cash advances on credit cards, and checks do not count towards qualifications.

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Workshops and Conferences



GENERATION DEBT: Student Loan Forgiveness

Recently, the U.S. Department of Education made changes to how the student loan forgiveness programs are administered. This session will explain the two loan forgiveness programs, the requirements, pitfalls to be cautious of and ways to potentially lower monthly payments. Members will learn about the “NEA Student Debt Navigator” powered by Savi, which is a tool to help association members analyze their personal student loans. Members will leave with a better understanding of what steps they should take.

Scan the QR code to register for an upcoming session.

HAPPY (FINANCIALLY FIT) New You!



Happy (Financially Fit) New You!

If you are like most people, you are probably making New Year’s Resolutions...things like, “Get into shape,” “Live a healthy life,” “Eat better,” “Spend more time with family and friends,” or financial goals like, “Get out of debt,” “Start saving for...a fabulous trip, retirement, kids’ education,” etc. As a new year begins, CTA Member Benefits wants to help you turn your goals into a reality. They are hosting various webinars during January and February.

Scan the QR code to register for an upcoming session.



REGISTER FOR THE 2025 CCA Winter Conference!

Register today for the CCA Winter Conference, which will take place from Feb. 7-9, 2025, at the Sheraton Universal Hotel in Universal City. The Winter Conference sessions will highlight advocacy in addition to lobbying and contract enforcement issues. We will also offer the Bargaining Academy and the CCA Building Strong Locals Academy this year. The CCA Council session will be held on Sunday. For questions about the conference, please email the conference staff at ccaconference@cta.org.

To learn more and register, visit cta.org/event/2025-ccawinter-02-07-25 or scan the QR code.

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