Faculty unions join together in pressuring ACCJC to become more transparent

Speakers bureau formed

NOTHING HAS CAUSED more turmoil, stress and anger among community college faculty than a visit to their campuses by the seemingly omnipotent Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges, led by its president, Barbara Beno. Now, faculty are joining together to combat the direct and collateral damage left in the wake of an ACCJC review.

Following a two-year debacle, the Accrediting Commission continues to threaten City College of San Francisco with a loss of accreditation. The situation has devolved into two lawsuits, legislative intervention, protests, declining faculty morale and student enrollment that has plummeted from 90,000 to 60,000.

Campus run-ins

While City College is the largest college to be threatened – some say bullied – by the Accrediting Commission, it is not alone. College of the Sequoias and Victor Valley College, both CCA affiliates, have had run-ins with the commission.

The ongoing disturbances brought CCA and its sister union, the California Federation of Teachers, together to form speakers bureau that will speak truth to power on community college campuses. So far, the speakers have made faculty-focused presentations to 30 college campuses. Several of those speakers brought their message to CCA’s Fall Conference earlier in October.

Karen Saginor, a City College librarian and former Academic Senate president emotionally related how faculty and the administration worked hard to address the commission’s charges, even as they questioned how the college could have gone from having full accreditation to receiving a “show cause” sanction. Saginor maintained that the ACCJC “doesn’t follow its own policies and is out of compliance with federal guidelines.”

CSFS still open

Currently City College remains open while the process is being appealed in court, but the board of trustees has been disempowered. At press time, a Superior Court judge was set to decide on whether the Accrediting Commission had abused its role and illegally revoked CCSF’s accreditation.

“The only reason that City College has not been shut down is that faculty have been speaking up loudly, effectively and often,” Saginor said.

Trustee Rafael Mandelman who accompanied Saginor noted that City College is vital to the large minority, immigrant and disabled students, “and what they’ve done to us is shameful.”

College of the Sequoias was removed from the Commission’s “show cause” list, but not before “the faculty spent thousands of hours while paid consultants made the money,” said Ed Sense, faculty association president.

Clarity lacking

Faculty at Victor Valley College continue to be baffled by the warning of probation it received from the commission, primarily because the process has had a lack of clarity.

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Napa college faculty shaken by quake

Seeks more input on emergency procedures

WHEN THE NAPA EARTHQUAKE struck in late August, local schools and businesses closed, but not the Napa Valley Community College – to the surprise and chagrin of the faculty.

“Our college decided to open the day after the quake,” reported Denise Rosselli, president of the Napa Valley College Faculty Association. “I called and said, ‘with all due respect, I advise ACCJC to become more transparent.’

The quake, which registered 6.3 on the Richter scale, occurred early in the morning on Aug. 24 and resulted in substantial damage to homes and businesses in downtown Napa and nearby Vallejo. The quake was followed by 120 aftershocks in the days after.

Chapter aids faculty

Rosselli said the association provided Target gift cards to help a few faculty buy some necessities in the days following the temblor, while referring one emeritus faculty to CTA’s Disaster Relief Fund after his home incurred $30,000 in damages. The fund provides financial assistance to CTA members who suffer significant losses after a disaster. (See sidebar).

Rosselli, who lives out in the country, described being jolted in the middle of the night and waking up to watch a cascade of transformers explode, one by one.

“It was breathtaking, and then, everything was silent,” she said.

Chemistry instructor Forest Quinlan recalls the earthquake sounding and feeling like a freight train tearing through his home as his bed jumped off the floor. The street outside his home buckled enough he could stick his forearm into the crevice it made.

New procedures planned

Though the college did open its doors that Monday, Rosselli reports that the administration has since agreed to put procedures in place so that faculty and staff will be consulted in the future should a disaster hit.

Still, in the days after the quake, Napa College faculty observed that many students were anxious, depressed and unable to concentrate on their work. Some didn’t come to class, and instructors say that some
By Lynette Nyaggah, CCA President

THE POWER BEHIND CCA and CTA lies in the strength of their local chapters and their members. When our chapters are strong, we are a stronger organization. That’s why CCA and CTA have each embarked on the development of a Strategic Plan that will be a roadmap for our future. There are a great many changes that are occurring in higher education and in K-12 and we must be able not just to respond to them, but to create our own vision for our public schools and colleges and our profession.

The Community College Association had several representatives, including myself, who served on the coordinating workgroup for CTAs strategic plan. I urge you to look at the CTAs Strategic Plan on the CTA website, at www.cta.org.

In the meantime, your CCA Board of Directors has put in many hours in the development of our strategic plan. Although it is a work in progress, our emphasis is on providing the tools our chapters need to have a greater voice on their campuses. We must actively participate in the decisions that take place on campus, not just react when it’s too late. To do this, we have to pay attention to each other and learn about the concerns of our colleagues. It’s not always easy, or convenient, but we must be able to have these conversations, even if they are occasionally difficult.

That’s why I appreciated an invitation that CCA Vice President Brad Reynolds and I received to travel to Moreno Valley recently to meet with the Riverside Community College District Faculty Association. The Riverside faculty association has had some issues on campus and is in the middle of a contentious board of trustees’ election. Members had some tough questions for CCA leadership. I believe, however, that it is only through meeting each other face-to-face that we can engage in a dialog to find solutions.

In addition to a productive discussion, we also had a good time during the visit. The view of the boulder-covered hills above campus was striking. We got to see the room where the Board meets with its giant TV that projects the agenda and the state-of-the-art sound system. We ate lunch in the cafeteria surrounded by students (peanut butter and jelly for me). And the chapter leadership was so hospitable. RCCD FA President Darshah Haghighat himself passed cookies to us and insisted we try them.

Visits like the one we made are particularly valuable to CCA officers and board members because we learn about concerns that come up in our locals we might not hear about otherwise. We learn how we can better serve our chapters. More than that, these visits help ground me so I can be a better advocate for our members statewide. Not only do I come away with ways I can be better at my job, I pick up useful ideas from the trenches that I can pass along to other chapters.

Here are some examples:

- I learned that RCCD Faculty Association posts the minutes of its executive board meetings in a listserv every week. The administrators read those minutes and many times, respond directly to the issues raised. It’s a way of making problems public and getting them remedied quickly.
- For bargaining, the association has set up subcommittees to advise the bargaining team on specific needs: counselors, librarians, part-time faculty. They also compare their contract provisions with those of neighboring colleges.
- They are working on ways of providing their part-time faculty pathways to the available full-time jobs.
- They are researching which part-time faculty are doing institutional service. This information is being gathered for accreditation.
- They discussed the use of a system called TrackDat for SLO Assessment without consultation or negotiation with the union. Questions raised were: Who will input the data? Will they be compensated? Why should the district be allowed to drain the General Fund in order to comply with an administrative interpretation of what the ACCJC requires?
- Can a faculty member lock the classroom door after class begins?
- Can a student’s attendance be used as part of the grade breakdown?

These issues are what our members are dealing with on the ground, and it’s critically important that we know about them. Visiting chapters allows us to do that. Brad and I thank Riverside CCD Faculty Association for welcoming us to Moreno Valley College. We would like to visit your chapter as well. All you have to do is ask. Feel free to email me at Lynnette.Nyaggah@gmail.com, with an invitation or other concerns.

“We must actively participate in the decisions that take place on campus, not just react when it’s too late.”

CCA Calendar of Events

<table>
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<th>Event</th>
<th>Details</th>
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<tr>
<td>Winter Conference</td>
<td>Feb 20-22, 2015</td>
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<tr>
<td>Spring Conference and WHO Awards</td>
<td>April 24-26, 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CTA Presidents Conference</td>
<td>July 16-18, 2015</td>
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For conference registration and/or hotel logistics, call 650-562-8165. For conference program, call 916-288-4949.

CCA OFFICERS

Lynette Nyaggah, President Rio Hondo College lnyaggah@gmail.com
Bradley Reynolds, Vice President College of the Canyons Bradley.Reynolds@live.com
Michael Butros, Secretary Victor Valley College butros@me.com
Fola Odebunmi, Treasurer Cypress College fodebunmi@gmail.com

CTA PRIMARY CONTACT STAFF

Justin Arnold, Paul Chambers, Robin Devitt, Diana Fernandes-Lisi, Alan Frey, Jim Gutman, Susan Midor-Jones, Marianne Reynolds, Cliff Schuster, Peg Tracey and George Young

CTA ASSOCIATE STAFF
Karen Boll,
Bonita Lovell

ADVOCATE STAFF

Susan Sarz
Publications Support Specialist

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The CCA Advocate is also available online at the CCA Web site: www.cca4me.org
WITH UP TO $500 MILLION in new funding for adult education expected to start flowing in 2015, CCA continues to urge chapters statewide to become involved in the planning process.

“We want to make sure we have faculty advocates involved in this process at all levels and have been fighting hard for their inclusion at the state level,” said CCA President Lynette Nyaggah.

**Summit in Sacramento**

That fight recently involved both CCA and the California Teachers Association applying relentless pressure on state officials to open a statewide summit in Sacramento to faculty union representatives. Despite that initial oversight, Nyaggah was able to attend the October summit with two other CCA representatives, Krista Warren, a special education instructor at Mira Costa College and Martha Garcia, program coordinator at Imperial Valley College.

All together, the three were among the 300 participants from K-12, the Academic Senate, the California Department of Education, the Chancellor’s Office and the Legislature to attend the summit on AB 86.

The intent of AB 86 is to expand and improve the delivery of Adult Education beginning with a $25 million planning grant to coordinate regional consortia. CCA chapters have already begun meeting with their K-12 counterparts regionally to begin the process.

**Redesigning adult ed**

“AB 86 provides a unique and wonderful opportunity for faculty to join with K-12 in developing and redesigning adult education. As an advocate for students with disabilities, I felt I needed to get involved,” Warren said.

Up to now, adult education has been divided into a hodgepodge of programs in K-12 and community colleges, with little or no coordination. The wide-ranging programs include English as a Second Language, basic skills, citizenship, career and technical education, apprenticeships, and programs for the disabled. Many of these programs will be moving into the community colleges under the legislation, though it appears the process will be anything but simple.

“There’s going to be major confusion,” Warren said. “People are going to have to wrap their heads around this.”

**Contractual changes**

The new funding to transfer programs to community colleges will mean contractual changes for faculty, which is why CCA leadership is so concerned that local chapters become involved. Meanwhile, much of the discussion around AB 86 is being led by administrators.

“Our faculty need to be involved with this and chapter presidents need to be aware,” said Garcia, whose consortia in Imperial County is further ahead in planning than many others. Despite the promise of new funding, it is still not certain how much will be available come 2015.

“The thing that’s missing from our discussions (at a regional level) is the money,” Warren said.

Both Garcia and Warren urge their colleagues to go the AB 86 website at ab86.cccco.edu to learn more.

**Scenes from CCA’s Fall Conference**

▲ David Thomas (from left), Mario Moreno and Cesar Jimenez, all members of the San Joaquin Delta College Teachers Association, participate in a table-top discussion regarding union priorities.

▲ Karen Saginor, former president of the CCSF Academic Senate, speaks to conference-goers about the accreditation debacle there.

▲ CCA’s Board members demonstrate their support for their K-12 colleagues in the San Ysidro Education Association who held a three-day strike before reaching an agreement with the school district.

▲ Ted Phillips and James Robinson, members of the San Bernardino Community College District faculty association discuss CCA’s strategic plan.

▲ Nancy Golz of Merced College Faculty Association is one of a dozen participants in CCA’s year-long Building Strong Locals Academy, which meets during the conference.

"There’s going to be major confusion. People are going to have to wrap their heads around this."
NEW FACULTY MAJORITY

Solano part-time faculty steps up activity

Recognized by NEA for membership gain

UNION SOLIDARITY

A LITTLE OVER a year ago, about 30 part-time faculty belonged to the Solano College CTA Chapter. Fast forward to today and there are some 188 part-time faculty in the association, an influx that contributed to the chapter winning an award for its increase in membership at the annual meeting of the National Education Association this summer.

Gains made
But that only begins to tell the story about the gains by part-time faculty at the Northern California college in Fairfield. Through active organizing, meetings and one-on-one conversations, part timers won rehire rights, increased paid office hours and more representation on the chapter’s executive board. And now, they have an “Adjunct Support Center” in the campus library where they can gather for meetings or just take care of business before their classes. They are also acquiring union and college-supported professional development workshops in such topics as how to do SLOs (student learning outcomes).

With these successes under their belts, the adjunct faculty hope to step up their activity. Next up for the adjuncts is obtaining health care coverage, which is included in the contract but has never been implemented. The part-time instructors’ alliance plans to work with the faculty association for that right.

Students benefit
“Since adjuncts are here for so many different reasons and we have so many different priorities and backgrounds, we wanted to find out what their concerns were. We wanted to figure out what is most important to adjuncts. All of us contribute to student success. If adjuncts are getting what they need, it will benefit the college,” said Rachel Aptekar, a biology instructor who has taught at the college for seven years.

Like other part-time faculty, Aptekar has run into difficulties trying to obtain classes from semester to semester. Full-time faculty are able to bump part-time faculty, or part-time faculty will often be called in at the last minute, which makes planning difficult.

“We’re cheap and convenient because the college can cut our class, or reassign it to full-time faculty whose class has been cut, through the first week of classes,” she said.

Others echoed those sentiments.

“I never was 100 percent confident whether I was going to have enough money to support my family each semester because getting a class was so arbitrary,” said Pam Muick, also a biology instructor. “Hopefully, adjuncts will have more stability in our lives from now on.”

For more news and information regarding part-time faculty, check out the part-time faculty issues section on the CCA website, at www.cca4me.org.

New Monterey chapter president hopes to renew faculty activism on campus

Finds guidance at CCA conference

This year, the Advocate plans to publish profiles of CCA chapter presidents. Below is a brief interview with one of those presidents.

DEPENDING ON the ebb and flow of campus politics, CCA chapters may experience a range of engagement, from extremely active to less so. Yet, there’s nothing quite like joining together with activists from around the state to get one’s union blood circulating again. This seems to be the case with the Monterey Peninsula College Teachers Association, which sent a group of faculty led by association President Paola Gilbert to the CCA Fall Conference. Here, Gilbert answers a few questions about the renewal of faculty activism on her campus.

Advocate: What made you decide to run for president of your chapter?

Gilbert: I suppose I just went ahead and jumped in. I’m hoping our union will become stronger and more active on campus. I think a lot of people may have forgotten what it’s like to be in a union.

Advocate: What will you take back with you from the CCA Conference?

Gilbert: Besides the legislative update and information on the availability of grants to local chapters joining the local labor federation, there was the discussion of accreditation and how other colleges are being affected. I also found it interesting hearing how various locals are increasing membership. I learned much from listening to the group sessions and when I spoke with other faculty one-on-one. It’s great to get locals from across the state to share “war stories,” so to speak — and to learn from each other.

Advocate: What’s the biggest challenge for faculty at Monterey Peninsula College?

Gilbert: I think the biggest challenge to our faculty is the extra work we find ourselves increasingly doing, much of which is driven by this data-focused environment we find ourselves teaching in, and, of course, all of which is uncompensated (shadow work!). This wasteful work eats up faculty time so that less time is spent on the very things we should be spending that time on, which is interacting with students through grading and one-on-one conversation.

Advocate: Any recent successes that the Monterey Peninsula College Teachers Association has achieved?

Gilbert: I think one success is that even though there is no crisis happening at the moment, we have more members come to our first meeting this year than we’ve had in a long time. I see discussions happening that I haven’t seen in a while, too. But, to be honest, we’re just beginning to move, and I hope we keep moving positively forward.
Putting you in union

CCA works to strengthen local chapters

When you join CCA, you not only become a member of the most influential association of educators in our state—the California Teachers Association—you strengthen the voice of faculty on your own campus. From experts in bargaining and upholding faculty rights, to protecting retirement benefits, to helping to elect faculty-friendly trustees, providing specialized training for your members, CCA has your back.

Helping faculty strengthen their voice on campus is the goal of CCA, which is why CCA officers make themselves available for campus visits.

“We definitely welcome invitations from our local chapters, whether it’s to discuss issues specific to your campus or to talk about the tools we can offer to strengthen our chapters,” said CCA President Lynnette Nyagah, who has met with dozens of local chapters.

Nyagah and the CCA board of directors have been working on CCA’s strategic plan over the past year to make sure the association is front and center when it comes to advocating for its members.

“One of the goals of our strategic plan is to build better communication between our statewide organization and local chapters, and within chapters themselves,” Nyagah said. “That also includes building relationships with central labor councils. This year we’ve begun offering a grant program to pay for membership dues for local chapters.”

In addition to the quarterly CCA Advocate newspaper, CCA has launched a new website at www.cca4me.org that features timely news, member benefits, conference information, and grant applications. A new addition to the website is a discussion board where faculty can exchange ideas.

Check out what membership in CCA can bring to your chapter. If you are interested in inviting the CCA President to your campus, ask our chapter president to contact the CCA office at 916-288-4921.

Welcome to the Laborhood!

Did you know that one in four workers in California don’t have health care coverage? Or that unionized workers are 60 percent more likely to have employer-provided pensions? Or that on average, union workers wages are 27 percent higher than their nonunion counterparts? Do you want to learn more about the union movement and what you can do to take part and strengthen it?

If so, you may want to check out The Laborhood at www.thelaborhood.org. CTA and CCA have joined a coalition of labor unions through the Alliance for a Better California to launch The Laborhood, where you can learn about the challenges working men and women face and what they’ve been able to accomplish by standing together.

“In The Laborhood” you can take action, sign petitions, share your story, take quizzes and stay connected with others like yourself—people interested in improving the lives of working men and women.

The Laborhood is a way to communicate that change is possible. Things like the eight-hour work day, minimum wage, child labor laws, unemployment insurance, Social Security and worker health and safety laws all were the direct result of worker advocacy. Even Labor Day was created by workers.

Together working men and women can negotiate better wages, benefits and retirement security with their employers. Workers standing together have been able to have their voices heard not only with their employer, but also with local, state and federal lawmakers.

Visit The Laborhood, and download the Laborhood app for your iPhone or Android! The Laborhood is also on Facebook at www.facebook.com/thelaborhood and on Twitter @thelaborhood.

Students aren’t coming back, psychically. Instruction slowed down to allow students to talk about their experience, and incorporate them into some writing assignments.

Quinlan said he tried to inject some comic relief into his lecture in the days following the quake by telling students it was “time to shake things up,” only to question them a minute later, “Too soon?”

The CTA Disaster Relief Fund

The CTA Disaster Relief Fund is a separate, special fund just for members of CTA. The fund is endowed to provide financial assistance to CTA members who have experienced significant losses due to disasters in California. The fund provides a variety of grants to members in need. For more information, including applications, see www.cta.org/Member-Services.aspx.

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Chief Howard Beck

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ACCJC

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ACCJC

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Napa

It’s a strategy: ‘The college is now on its third set of consultants,’” said David Gibbs, vice president of the Victor Valley College Faculty Association.

At least one CCA chapter is considering suing the Accrediting Commission for trying to impose Student Learning Outcomes on the faculty when they weren’t in the collective bargaining agreement.

“They are trying to impose something that was not bargained,” said Paul Swatzel, president of the Citrus College Faculty Association, “and we need to be proactive. There is strength in numbers.”

Delegates at CCA’s Fall Council meeting approved a “Resolution in Support of Fair Accreditation for California Community Colleges” in October. The resolution expresses CCA’s deep concern over the adversarial relationships fostered by the ACCJC; stands in support of the City College of San Francisco; urges state legislation to increase the accountability, transparency and ethics of the process; and urges the US Department of Education to carefully scrutinize ACCJC’s work.

“The only reason that City College has not been shut down is that faculty have been speaking up loudly, effectively and often.”

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Community college faculty struggle with financial legacy of student loans

Have degrees, got debt

By Linda Borla
Director, CCA District 1-1
United Faculty-North Orange County CCD

WHEN I STARTED college in 1978, armed only with a part-time job, financial aid, and working-class fragility, I was able to attend community college two years for free and then go to a university and earn my bachelor’s and master’s degrees without acquiring insurmountable student loan debt.

Today, my college experience seems like a distant, dying American Dream to the thousands shouldering $1.2 trillion in student loan debt, according to the NEA, which launched its Degrees, Not Debt campaign August 22 to increase student aid, expand loan forgiveness, and allow student loan refinancing in an effort to stop this financial nightmare.

Crippling debt

The starving student stereotype sadly remains a reality after graduation for many CCA members. Crippled by the staggering load of student loan debt, which currently averages $35,000 per person with some owing 10 times as much, both full-time and adjunct faculty struggle to make ends meet.

“Student loans almost risked me being able to refinance my house,” says Randa Wahbe, a full-time English professor at Cypress College who earned her doctorate mid-career. “Luckily, it wasn’t a factor for an auto loan.”

Wahbe’s monthly payments totaled $2500 until she consolidated her loan—a move that made her ineligible for the public service loan forgiveness program. “If you are on top of it and do the right thing, you don’t get any of the benefits,” says Wahbe.

Still others have trouble jumping into the housing market all due to onus of student debt. “I had to live the same level as I lived when I was in school,” says Brandy Young, a part-time history professor at College of the Canyons. Young’s monthly pay—today condemns my colleagues and students to a lifetime sentence of debt. Let’s rewrite a new ending to these stories. Take the Degrees, Not Debt pledge at www.NEA.org/degreesnotdebt.

Learning to cope

“I love what I do and students to a lifetime sentence of debt. Let’s rewrite a new ending to these stories. Take the Degrees, Not Debt pledge at www.NEA.org/degreesnotdebt. I find it ironic that a college education—the means to a better life that freed me and thousands in my generation to move up the social ladder—today condemns my colleagues and students to a lifetime sentence of debt.”

CCA/CTA join Degrees not Debt campaign

Did you know...• The average student owes $35,000, but some owe ten times as much. • Existing student debt now exceeds $1.2 trillion. • There are approximately 40 million people in the U.S. who have student debt. • Student debt is higher than credit card debt in this country. • More than 40 percent of 25-year-olds hold student debt.

The student debt crisis has prompted CCA and CTA to join the Degrees Not Debt campaign launched this fall by the National Education Association. NEA’s recommended solutions include: increasing need-based federal aid, like Pell Grants; refinancing loan interest rates; expanding loan forgiveness programs, especially those for people working in public service careers like education; and state-based reinvestment in higher education. NEA also proposes increased enrollment in Income Driven Repayment programs, which can have an immediate, tangible impact that can lower individuals’ current loan payments.

CTA is engaging members statewide through a number of events and branches to organize members. There you can find reports, presentations, sample letters to the editor and other resources.

Extreme measures

Some adjuncts have been forced to move home with parents or in with roommates to make ends meet. Others like Krista Elliott, an adjunct anthropology professor, have taken extreme measures to deal with their money woes.

Elliott and her husband, both doctoral candidates with a combined debt mountain of $140,000, moved from San Diego to Tijuana. They fly the freeways every day from Mexico to their jobs at Mira Costa, Palomar, and Mesa College.

“The critical issue was the high rent and the insane cost of childcare,” says Elliott, who across the border saw her housing costs drop from $2000 to $700 and childcare from $800 to $80. “Given how unstable our income is, it’s a lot easier,” she says.

Because of their part-time work, many adjuncts don’t meet the 30-hour per week requirement for loan forgiveness programs. Until this year, they were not even allowed to add up the hours from multiple jobs, says Elliott. Those who have found a way to cobble together an existence, never plan to retire. Returning for her doctorate later in her career, left Dorothy Reina, a part-time history professor at Mira Costa College, with a $130,000 student loan.

“I love what I do because I am going to have to do it until I drop dead at the podium,” says Reina.

I find it ironic that a college education—the means to a better life that freed me and thousands in my generation to move up the social ladder—today condemns my colleagues and students to a lifetime sentence of debt. Let’s rewrite a new ending to these stories. Take the Degrees, Not Debt pledge at www.NEA.org/degreesnotdebt.