

January 4, 2005

Rhonda Cohen, Esquire
President, Board of Trustees
Community College of Philadelphia
7 West Sunset Avenue
Philadelphia, PA 19118

Dear President Cohen:

We are writing to you because we believe that recent actions taken by the current Administration at CCP jeopardize the quality of education that lies at the core of our mission to our students. These actions also have seriously shaken the atmosphere of trust that is necessary for the smooth functioning of our College. Therefore, for what may well be the first time in the 35-year history of the union here at CCP, the Faculty and Staff Federation is writing directly to the Board of Trustees. We hope that the Board can help set the College back on a proper course that will benefit the entire College community.

Over the past two and a half years this Administration has acted in bad faith on several issues. In this letter we bring to your attention two of the most recent and serious of these actions which display a failure by this Administration to deal honestly with the Faculty and Staff Federation and the more than 1400 College employees we represent. These two interrelated issues are the violations of the Full-time/Part-time Ratio, and the attempt to use compulsory unpaid Curriculum Advising to make it appear that the Administration has remedied the violations of the ratio.

Administration Failure to Meet Full-time/Part-time Ratio Obligations

Beginning with the Spring 2002 semester, the Administration has failed to meet its contractual obligation that 60% of the credit sections be taught by full-time faculty. Maintaining the Full-time/Part-time ratio is critical to quality education at CCP, because part-time teachers, though well-qualified for the courses that they teach, are not paid to meet with students outside of class, and often do not have time to do so. The Full-time/Part-time ratio ensures that the main core of the faculty at CCP have the time to devote themselves to meeting with students, developing curricula, and participating in committees so that students are well-served. For at least the past five semesters, this Administration has fallen behind the Ratio requirements, to the point that the total deficit in Ratio compliance now totals 109 sections.

Never before has any administration at CCP violated the Ratio requirements for so long and to such a degree. On the only previous occasion when a CCP administration fell behind the Ratio requirements for as many as four semesters (1994-1996), most of the

violation was rectified after two semesters. Currently, the Administration has been in violation for five consecutive semesters, with no end in sight. Never before has any administration fallen behind the ratio by more than 53 sections. Currently, the Administration is 109 sections behind. Never before has an administration failed to remedy a ratio violation for such a long period of time. When we raise these points with the current Administration, they complain that it is too hard to comply with the ratio and that compliance is complicated by unexpected faculty retirements or illnesses. Every other administration has had to deal with these same problems and has done so effectively. The current Administration's excuses in no way begin to explain the length and depth of the current Ratio violations.

Recognizing that the Administration's Ratio violations would not be easy to correct quickly, the Federation, in March, 2004, offered the Administration an extended period of time to remedy the accumulated violations. We pointed out that past administrations had remedied Ratio violations by increasing the number of Visiting Lecturer positions when it was difficult to create a sufficient number of permanent Full-time Faculty positions quickly enough. However, this Administration rejected the Federation's offer, and did not increase the number of Visiting Lecturer positions or Full-time Faculty positions to the extent needed to move towards compliance.

Administration Attempt to Use Unpaid Curriculum Advising to Feign a Remedy for Ratio Violations

Instead of solving the Ratio problem in the manner used by every other CCP administration, Vice President for Academic Affairs Judith_Gay, and President Stephen Curtis decided, in May, 2004, to use a sleight-of-hand approach to feign a solution. Relying on a long unused requirement that faculty do six hours per semester of unpaid Drop and Add (a much simpler procedure employed in the 1960's and 1970's), the Administration is now requiring that Full-time Faculty perform unpaid Curriculum Advising (a much more complex process). The Administration then created from thin air a new definition of the Full-time/Part-time Ratio that includes each six-hour block of unpaid Curriculum Advising as a Full-time section in calculating the Ratio. Never before in the history of the Ratio had unpaid Curriculum Advising been counted in calculating the Ratio. The Administration is attempting to implement this change unilaterally without consultation with or agreement of the Federation.

The effects of this sleight-of-hand are two-fold:

1. The Administration is claiming compliance with the Ratio in the Fall 2004 semester without increasing the number of full-time faculty teaching classes, thus subverting the whole purpose of the Ratio: having more full-time faculty on campus. This increase in the percentage of part-time faculty in the classroom is harmful to students, for the reasons we outlined above;

2. Full-time faculty are now being required to advise students regardless of whether or not these faculty have been trained in the complex intricacies of advising. At CCP, most students do not have a major that corresponds with a particular faculty Department. These students need to know what courses they must take in order to graduate from CCP, but faculty who are untrained in advising outside of their department cannot accurately answer these questions. In addition, these students often need to know which courses they should take in order to fulfill requirements at any of several different colleges in the Philadelphia area. For these reasons, Curriculum Advising at CCP has been performed for over thirty years by faculty who are trained in the details of advising -- analysis of placement scores, knowledge of course sequences and prerequisites for specific curricula, knowledge of transfer requirements of colleges.

The abandonment of this practice – using faculty selected for, and trained to do, advising -- by this Administration is not only a contractual violation; it risks doing serious harm to students who may be incorrectly advised to take certain courses and then find themselves unable to graduate or transfer. Student dissatisfaction with CCP, as well as student legal action against CCP, can be expected to result as a consequence of the inevitable errors made by faculty who are not trained in advising outside of their area of expertise. To see examples of these problems, please read the attached memo (especially points # 4, #6, #14, and #16) from Deborah Rossi, Allied Health Department Head.

Action by CCP Board of Trustees is Needed

We started this letter by saying that the Federation has rarely written directly to the Board. We do not take this action lightly. However, we note that the Federation and the CCP Administration will sit down one year from now to negotiate new contracts with the three bargaining units. The Administration actions outlined in this letter are doing serious harm to the educational quality that we can offer students. These bad-faith actions by the Administration also do serious harm to the atmosphere of mutual respect that makes productive negotiations possible. We therefore urge the Board of Trustees to require that this Administration take two actions:

1. stop maintaining the fiction that unpaid Curriculum Advising by under-trained faculty can be used to fulfill the Ratio requirements;
2. remedy the violations of the Ratio using the same methods that other administrations have always used: increased numbers of Visiting Lecturer and Full-time faculty.

We would be very interested in meeting with the Board or with a committee of the Board to further discuss these issues.

Sincerely,

John W. Braxton

Karen R. Schermerhorn

Co-President

Co-President

c: Dr. Stephen Curtis (with enclosure)
Dr. Judith Gay (with enclosure)