

# NEA Higher Education Advocate

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## Become a Better Teacher



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# Headline News

## Help NEA to help higher education. We need your voices on Capitol Hill.



**HOW ARE BUDGET CUTS** affecting your campus? Have valuable programs or majors been slashed? Are class sizes out of control? Tell us, so that we can tell Congress! The federal Fix America's Schools Today (FAST) bill would provide \$5 billion to modernize community colleges, but NEA needs your help to lobby effectively for its passage. Is your instructional technology obsolete? Do your job-training facilities date to the 1970s? At Northland Community College in Minnesota, faculty say their out-dated science laboratories can't be used to adequately prepare the next generation of scientists and health workers. "We frequently have to modify, or even reject new and interesting lab activities because we lack the facilities or equipment to run such labs," said chemistry instructor Erin Almlie. Plus, the facilities just aren't so safe anymore. (Water dripping across live electrical outlets?!) What story do you have? Visit [www.educationvotes.com](http://www.educationvotes.com) and click on "share your story: budget cuts" at the top. Also, be sure to watch Jim Rice, president of NEA's National Council for Higher Education, explain the importance of F.A.S.T. at [www.nea.org/he](http://www.nea.org/he).

## Sweet Home Chicago! Don't miss this learning opportunity.



**NEA'S 30TH HIGHER EDUCATION CONFERENCE** will be held March 2-4 at the Palmer House hotel in Chicago. The theme, "Defining our Values, Affirming Our Ideas," will provide for interactive sessions on organizing and bargaining, as well as higher education policy and professional development. Learn more about what goes into a winning campaign and how to use online organizing tools. Get the lowdown on trends in salaries and benefits. Find out how to create a truly inclusive classroom environment—and more! Sessions will be inclusive of full-time and part-time faculty, staff, and support personnel. To register, visit [www.nea.org/he](http://www.nea.org/he).

## Want to be a better leader?

**NEA'S EMERGING LEADERS ACADEMY (ELA)**, a nine-month training program for select NEA Higher Education members, is taking applications for its 2013 class. During three training sessions (in June, November, and March), ELA participants will learn skills around issue organizing, member recruitment and reorganization, communications, and other traits of leadership. For more information, visit [www.nea.org/he](http://www.nea.org/he).

## MISSED SOMETHING?

READ PREVIOUS ARTICLES ON OUR WEBSITE

### SAVE THE MIDDLE

President Obama calls for an end to "you're on your own" economics and those state and federal policies that have hurt the middle class for years.

[www.educationvotes.nea.org/2011/12/07/](http://www.educationvotes.nea.org/2011/12/07/)

### NEED HELP F.A.S.T.?

The Fix America's Schools Act includes \$5 billion for community colleges. Learn how to support it.

[www.educationvotes.nea.org/2011/12/05/](http://www.educationvotes.nea.org/2011/12/05/)

### TEACHER QUALITY

NEA has unveiled a plan for teacher quality, which includes raising the standards for

[www.educationvotes.nea.org/2011/12/08/](http://www.educationvotes.nea.org/2011/12/08/)

### EMERGING LEADERS

The 2012 Emerging Leaders Academy injects a bolt of energy into a California two year college organizing campaign.

[www.educationvotes.nea.org/2011/11/29/](http://www.educationvotes.nea.org/2011/11/29/)

### PROTECTING PELL

The proposed House budget would cut off 500,000 low-income Pell Grant recipients. Learn how to defend their access to college and career training.

[www.educationvotes.nea.org/2011/11/10/](http://www.educationvotes.nea.org/2011/11/10/)



Great Public Schools for Every Student





THE YEAR OF THE MIDDLE CLASS

# What's ahead ? IN 2012 ■

Good-bye, 2011! We won't miss your vicious attacks on the rights of the middle class in Wisconsin, Alabama, Arizona, and elsewhere. But you can bet we will continue building on the momentum of November's awesome victory in Ohio, when informed citizens struck back against the right wing's attempt to eliminate collective bargaining by faculty on public colleges and universities. Was this the year that the middle class woke up? And, if so, what will the sleeping giant do in 2012?



**T**housands of volunteers knocked on doors in Ohio—and one out of four was a member of NEA. You, the makers of the middle class, moved insistently to defend the rights of regular people to raise a unified voice. And, thanks to your efforts, the rights of faculty—as well as nurses, firefighters, police officers, and teachers—to collectively bargain were affirmed by a significant majority of Ohio voters.

**So what's next for 2012? Don't imagine that the far-right wing and its billionaire backers will give up now. They'll be back. But so will you, stronger than ever. Here are just a few issues to consider.**

#### **THE WIDENING INCOME GAP IN AMERICA.**

“This is a make or break moment for the middle class, and all those fighting to get into the middle class,” said President Obama in a speech last month. “At stake is whether this will be a country where working people can earn enough to raise a family, build a modest savings, own a home and secure their retirement.”

Taking aim at “breathtaking greed,” Obama called on Congress to extend the payroll tax cut, a measure that provides tax relief to middle-class taxpayers but expires this spring, after a last-minute stopgap extension approved in December. (You can urge your Representative or Senator to extend the cut by visiting NEA’s Legislative Action Center at [www.nea.org/lac](http://www.nea.org/lac).) In a deal offered by Democrats, the cuts would be funded by a modest tax increase to those earning more than a million dollars a year.

That’s not likely you. But it may be your college president. In 2009, at least 36 college presidents earned a million dollars, the *Chronicle of Higher Education* reported last

month. And administrators keep getting substantial raises, even during these times of belt-tightening. Between 1997 and 2007, presidential pay grew by 35 percent, compared to 5 percent for college faculty.

Certainly that’s the case in California, where members of the California Faculty Association walked the picket line for one day in November. Claiming a rightful alliance with the “99 percent,” faculty said they’d had enough with the administration’s “management first” priorities.

Earlier this year, on the same day even, California State University administrators approved a \$100,000 raise for one campus president and hiked student tuition by 12 percent. “This strike, for me, is a response to injustice,” said California State University East Bay professor Jennifer Eagan.

#### **RECORD-SETTING STUDENT LOAN DEBT.**

U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan recently suggested that Pell Grant and other federal tuition-assistance programs be linked to “reform” efforts by colleges and uni-

versities. Under his scenario, government support would depend on whether those institutions can accelerate the amount of time it takes to earn a degree or close achievement gaps.

But a better idea would be to fully fund those college affordability programs, something Congress seems unlikely to do without pressure from concerned faculty and staff. Late last year, the House Appropriations Committee put a bull’s-eye on the back of the Pell Grant program with a proposed 2012 spending bill that would slash more than 500,000 students and \$4.3 billion from the program. As of the *Advocate’s* press time, a compromise bill was taking aim at 100,000 enrollees, a still substantial cut.

But cuts to college accessibility programs are exactly what you don’t want to do during an economic recession. In 2011, Pell Grants provided a ticket to the American Dream for 9.4 million college students. At some schools, like California State University Fresno, more than 50 percent of students rely on Pell to pay their tuition and help them prepare for much-needed careers in health care, education, law enforcement, and more.

“This is America’s future,” said Sen. Ben Cardin, D-MD, at a Pell Grant press conference this past summer. “President Obama was right (when he said) we need to ‘out-educate’ to meet the challenges of the future.”

You can take action to protect Pell by visiting the Student Aid Alliance, of which NEA is a member, at [www.studentaidalliance.org](http://www.studentaidalliance.org).

**BUDGET CUTS, CUTS, CUTS, AND CUTS.** At Clatsop Community College in Oregon, fourteen of the 39 full-time faculty members are likely to get pink slips this March. That is more than one third. Already the criminal justice program, a road to jobs for many in local law-enforcement agencies, has been eliminated. The social science department is down to one instructor.

The situation is “dire,” said Clatsop faculty member Perry Callas (who shares his efforts to make a difference on page 16 of this issue.)

But it’s also familiar to thousands of faculty, both full- and part-time, as well as staff, across the country. Next year, in California alone, best-case scenarios call for 6.4 percent across-the-board cuts. (And that’s best case!) The worst outlooks call for severe cuts of 14 percent or more. Under any scenario, layoffs may be likely.

What can you do? Organize, organize, and organize. A well-organized local association will get protections from layoffs in their contract—or, at the very least, a fair and systematic approach to reductions in force.

Members also will find strength in a unified voice that keeps up the pressure on administrators and legislators. Work together with your union’s lobbyists and call your member of Congress when asked. Before voting in elections for public office, consider whether your candidate will support public education. If you have a “goalie” in elected office, who defends the interests of educators, students, and staff, work to keep him or her there.

**DOES YOUR COMMUNITY COLLEGE NEED HELP FAST?** At Rogue Community College in the southwest corner of Oregon, plenty of students are getting an excellent science education. But some aren’t—the ones who can’t register for



classes because of the old science center’s tiny laboratories.

“With a new design, we could accommodate more students,” said Jim Van Brunt, chair of the science department. “And since we’re paying the laboratory instructor anyway, regardless of whether he’s got 15 or 24 students, it would be much more cost-effective and efficient.”

At Rogue, many of these science students are future nurses, respiratory therapists, X-ray technicians, and other allied-health employees. Investing in their job-training labs and facilities means investing in America’s future workforce. And yet, Democrats are having a hard time gathering enough votes to pass the Fix America’s Schools Today Act (FAST), a measure that would invest \$5 billion in community colleges.

It’s exactly the kind of investment that

makes sense in tough economic times, experts say. Research shows that, while a college degree isn’t a guarantee of employment, it is excellent protection during an economic downturn, said Boston Federal Reserve President Eric Rosengren at a recent higher-education summit. In November, when the nation’s unemployment rate hovered around 9 percent, it was 4.4 percent for those with a college degree, he pointed out.

Since then, the unemployment rate has fallen to 8.6 percent overall—a step in the right direction—but millions of out-of-work Americans still desperately need access to high-quality, job-training programs. To help them get it at their community college, urge Congress to pass the FAST Act at [www.nea.org/lac](http://www.nea.org/lac).

**BY MARY ELLEN FLANNERY**  
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# Thriving in Academe

## REFLECTIONS ON HELPING STUDENTS LEARN

Thriving in Academe is a joint project of NEA and the Professional and Organizational Development Network in Higher Education ([www.podnetwork.org](http://www.podnetwork.org)). For more information, contact the editor, Douglas Robertson ([drobert@fiu.edu](mailto:drobert@fiu.edu)) at Florida International University or Mary Ellen Flannery ([mflannery@nea.org](mailto:mflannery@nea.org)) at NEA.

## ■ Getting Better as Teachers

How can we get better in our teaching?” It is a question that perpetually challenges us. One powerful option is to learn from the outstanding teachers around us: What do they do that makes them so effective? Can we learn from them to become better teachers?

### BY: **Improving Our Teaching: Learning from the Best**

**L. DEE FINK**  
University of  
Oklahoma, Retired

In 2004, Ken Bain published the influential book, *What the Best College Teachers Do*, which offered an in-depth study of more than 60 outstanding teachers from quite varied institutions. His book contains numerous wonderful lessons, but the central theme was that these teachers created “natural critical learning environments.” They challenged students with authentic problems and questions and then supported their efforts to grapple with related ideas, rethink their assumptions, and re-examine their mental models of reality.

In the belief that it is possible to look at exceptionally good teachers and learn more than one valuable lesson, I offer this additional analysis.



The four circled items represent the fundamental tasks of teaching. The way we do those tasks is influenced by our own views of knowledge, learning, teaching, ourselves as teachers, and our students as learners. In my essay, I identify some lessons from Bain’s book on three of these factors: perspectives, course design, and interactions with students.





## Meet L. Dee Fink



**L. Dee Fink** served as founding director of the Instructional Development Program at the University of Oklahoma from 1979

until his retirement in 2005. In 2004-2005, he served as president of the POD Network in Higher Education, the primary professional association for faculty developers in the US. He currently works as a national and international consultant in higher education, helping universities identify ways to improve their educational program. His professional website is: [www.finkconsulting.info](http://www.finkconsulting.info).

## “What the Best College Teachers Do”: An Additional Analysis

Ken Bain’s description of the best college teachers (2004) is a rich resource of information from which we can all learn. As a long-time faculty developer with my own perspective on college teaching, I offer this additional analysis of what accounts for the unusual impact of these teachers on the learning of their students. This analysis focuses on the perspectives they brought to their work, their course design decisions, and the special way they interacted with their students.

## THEIR CONVERSATIONS REVEALED A MINDSET THAT TRUSTED STUDENTS TO BE GOOD STUDENTS.

### ATTITUDES AND PERSPECTIVES

Apart from their actions in relation to specific courses, these teachers had a special set of attitudes or perspectives about teaching and learning that was foundational to

the way they taught.

*Intense Desire to Continue Learning.* Not only did these teachers do the usual work of keeping abreast of changes in their discipline, they spent substantial amounts of time continuously learning new ideas about teaching and the nature of human learning.

*Positive Attitudes Towards Students.* In their own thinking and in their communication with others, they never engaged in the all-too-common practice of blaming

## TALES FROM REAL LIFE > LEARNING ABOUT TEACHING AND LEARNING

**L**ike most of us who teach in higher education, Kristin Scott, an assistant professor of Marketing, had no preparation for teaching. At her first university, she was given some old syllabi a week before classes and told: “Just try to stay one week ahead of the students.” Result? “I had

no understanding of what to do or of how students learn. I dreaded going to class. I thought the students hated me.”

Fortunately her second university, Minnesota State—Mankato, had a Teaching Certificate Program to help junior faculty learn about teaching. Result? “It

was a complete paradigm shift for me. I learned some really fundamental concepts, like ‘active learning and metacognition; I learned how to engage students, and the importance of identifying what I want students to learn.”

An increasing proportion of college teachers are discovering there

are some “break-through” ideas about teaching and learning “out there.” Fink maintains an annotated bibliography of books with major new ideas on college teaching published in the last 20 years; it is available online at: [www.finkconsulting.info/majornewideas.doc](http://www.finkconsulting.info/majornewideas.doc)

As Professor Scott said,

“Participating in this Teaching Certificate Program made my job more enjoyable. I still have a lot to learn, but my courses already have a lot more focus to them; my students are more engaged with each other and with me. That makes my courses much more exciting—both for my students and for me.”

students. They never made comments like “Today’s students just don’t [fill in your favorite problem] like they did in my days as a student,” or “You just have to force students today to work hard.” Rather, their conversations revealed a mindset that trusted students to be good students.

*Used Teacher Evaluations to Improve.* They did not just glance at their end-of-course evaluations and ask: “How’d I do this time?” They examined the evaluations closely to see what students liked and disliked, then they used this information to get even better in their teaching. When students were not learning well, they examined the course, before automatically blaming the students.

*Viewed Their Teaching as Part of a Larger Context.* They did not view their teaching as their private domain—and no one else’s business. Rather, they saw their own teaching as an integral part of what their institution or their discipline was trying to do. That is, they saw themselves as part of a collective effort to provide students with a high-quality educational experience. This meant they tried to contribute in some way to the goals of that larger effort.

#### DECISIONS ABOUT COURSE DESIGN

Before the course even began, these teachers undertook a number of specific actions and decisions, which I would describe as course design decisions.

*Identified Big Questions and Stories.* Many of them identified big questions or

big stories that gave meaning to the whole course. One calculus teacher drew an irregular shape and then asked students: “How would you calculate the area under that curve?” A sociology professor posed the question: “How does society influence individual human behavior, and is that influence

### THESE TEACHERS HAD MOVED WELL BEYOND PRIMARY RELIANCE ON THE TRADITIONAL STAPLES OF LECTURES, HOMEWORK, AND WHOLE-CLASS DISCUSSIONS.

greater than the personal and biological forces within each person?”

*Fully Used the First Day of the Course.* They did not dismiss class early, and tell students to “go buy your textbooks.” They used the first day to get the course started in a powerful way. Many used this to get to know their students better, both individually and collectively. Others used it to pose their big question and start the process of engaging students.

*Formulated Good Learning Goals.* These teachers clearly had moved into learning-centered teaching. They recognized the need to build their course around a set of high-quality learning goals, rather than just march their students through a set of topics about the subject. Many of these goals

focused on “thinking” as well as “knowing.” But many also wanted learning that, in terms of Fink’s *Taxonomy of Significant Learning* (2003), went well beyond the categories of cognitive learning. One medical-school professor wanted her students to learn: how to handle their own emotions, how to treat a person in a hospital bed as a human being, and how to care both for healing and for helping people and their families.

*Used Good Learning Activities.* These teachers had moved well beyond primary reliance on the traditional staples of lectures, homework, and whole-class discussions. They had students engaging in authentic tasks, small group work, finding sources of information, answering those big questions themselves, and reflecting on their own learning.

*Responded to Student Characteristics.* By paying attention to several characteristics of their students over the years and currently, they were able to make adjustments in their courses to deal appropriately with: students’ prior knowledge of the subject, their dominant learning patterns, their expectations of the course, etc.

*Used Good Assessment Activities.* Their assessment activities were used to do more than grade students; they were used to enhance learning. They accomplished this by (a) periodically having students assess their own learning, (b) providing frequent feedback on student work, and (c) using well-developed rubrics to evaluate

## BEST PRACTICES > STRATEGIES FOR GETTING BETTER AS A TEACHER

Here are three pieces of advice to get anyone on a growth curve in terms of their competencies and capabilities for helping other people learn.

First, spend time learning about teaching. This might mean participating in on-campus or national workshops, reading books, gathering feedback from

students, and if your university has a faculty development program, using their consultation services.

How much time should one spend? Most sizeable organizations spend 5% of a person’s time on professional development. For faculty members, that would mean spending 8 hours a month or 8 days a year.

Second, apply what you

learn.. It is not enough to learn new ideas; you have to use them and make some kind of change in your teaching.

Third, assess your teaching carefully. When you try something new [which should be every time you teach], ask your students if they learned something valuable. Which activities helped them learn well and

which did not?

If you can regularly learn and apply new ideas to your teaching, and also assess the impact of these changes, you will see yourself getting better and better as a teacher — every year, every year!





complex projects.

*Created a High Level of Course Integration.* One level of integration was achieved by making sure their learning and assessment activities fit their learning goals. In addition, they frequently found a way to connect out-of-class learning with in-class learning. This way, the course offered a sequence of activities that built on each other, frequently leading to a culminating activity or project.

### THEIR INTERACTIONS WITH STUDENTS

Once the course was underway, these teachers communicated and interacted with students in a way that motivated and empowered students to effective learning. How did they do this?

*They Showed Students They Cared.* They didn't just "say" they cared; they did care—about many things. They were concerned about students as human beings; they deeply wanted students to learn; the whole teaching-learning process excited them; and they truly believed their subject was the most important and exciting in the world. These passions were made visible to students, not hidden or kept secret.

*They Knew How to Motivate Students.* Bain mentioned three specific actions by teachers that motivated students to work hard on learning: (a) they gave praise in a special way, e.g., using "task" praise rather than "person" praise, (b) they listened carefully to students, and (c) they figured out what motivated different students, and then responded in special ways to each student.

*They Had Dynamic Communication Skills.* Part of this involved using a sense of drama and rhythm in their dialogue. They also used the language of "promises" ["This is what you will be able to do as a result of this course..."] rather than "demands" ["This is what you must do in this course..."]. In addition, they:

- Invited students into a community of learners about the subject at hand, both past and present.
- Repeatedly expressed their belief that each and every student in the course really could learn this material.
- Celebrated the achievements of students.
- Used the "warm" language of good story telling.

## ISSUES TO CONSIDER

### GETTING BETTER AS TEACHERS: SOME A PRIORI QUESTIONS

Before we even make the effort to get better as teachers, there are some questions that we need to ask and answer. Here are three questions that many teachers have.

#### IF I WORK REALLY HARD, CAN I BECOME ONE OF THE BEST TEACHERS AT MY UNIVERSITY?

Maybe yes, maybe no. But that is not the right question to ask. The right question is: "Can I get myself on a growth curve and stay there? That is, can I continue to get better, every year, every year?" That will require spending time both learning new ideas from wherever you can, and then finding a way to use these ideas in your own teaching. We can't all be "the best" but we can all get better — and we owe it to our institution, ourselves and our students

to work hard at achieving that goal.

#### CAN I REALLY MAKE BIG CHANGES IN MY EFFECTIVENESS AS A TEACHER?

Aren't we all born with our particular level of talent as a teacher? The answer to this question is quite clear. Everyday there are people learning how to make major improvements in their effectiveness as teachers. I worked as a faculty developer for more than 25 years at a university with approximately 1,000 teachers. Over and over, I saw ordinary teachers with typical problems take an idea from a workshop, from a consulting session or a book, and apply that idea in their courses with amazing results. The teachers felt much better about their teaching and so did their students.

#### IS THERE A SINGLE, BEST WAY TO TEACH?

Is this not "one size fits all" thinking? It is correct, that there is not a single best way to teach. But



there are some universal principles that we can all apply in unique and specific ways. The teachers described in Bain's book were clearly quite varied in their specific practices. But what Bain did in his book and what I am trying to do here, is identify some common principles and patterns we see within that variation. An analogy to this is what happens with airplanes. Some planes are made in Europe, some in the U.S. Some are built to be agile fighter planes; some are designed to carry cargo or passengers. Some are big, some are small. But no matter what the size and purpose, when that plane takes off and lands, there are some universal laws of aerodynamics that must be used in the design and operation of that plane. The same is true of teaching.

*They Were Trustworthy.* They were sensitive to how they handled the power-trust issue inherent in any hierarchical relationship. They did not use the classroom to demonstrate their power or brilliance, but instead to invest in students, displaying a trust that students were ready to learn. When possible, they gave students power to make decisions about their own learning. And finally, they were fair, i.e., they equally applied the same policies for all.

## REFERENCES AND RESOURCES

Here are seven books with ideas that can help anyone make their teaching more effective.

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## WHY I'M A MEMBER

### ON THE ROAD

#### Walking the line, CFA and NEA join forces

On Nov. 17, three members of the 2011 Emerging Leaders Academy got some real-life experience as they walked the picket line of the California Faculty Association (CFA) strike on the California State University, Dominguez Hills campus, near Los Angeles. Cheryl Riley (MO), Andre Richburg (NJ), and Jason Garvon (MI) started the day in the dark, having arrived at 5:30 a.m. in order to help CFA get ready. Cheryl and I worked the sign-up table, while Bryant Warren, NEA organizational specialist, and Andre and Jason worked with picket captains to cover the eight campus gates. The other unions in the area, including the California Teachers Association and California's Community College Association, provided people for the picket lines.

The faculty union had called a strike on two campuses—the second was CSU East Bay, near San Francisco—after trustees awarded whopping pay raises to top administrators, even as they denied pay raises to faculty and forced them to take twelve furlough days. Impartial mediators twice agreed with the faculty, but administrators still refused to honor their previous agreements. The day before the strike there was a violent confrontation between students and campus police at the trustees meeting in Long Beach as they voted to increase tuition another 9 percent, on top of a 12 percent increase earlier in the year.

The strike was a great success! Lillian Taiz, CFA President and David Bradfield, DH chapter president, lead the faculty, students, and staff in a rousing day of chanting, whistles, and music.

That chant that rang in our ears all day was: "We are, we teach the 99 percent!"



**BY CHRISTINE MAITLAND**  
*Organizational specialist,  
NEA's Pacific Region*



#### Paul Neves

MAINTENANCE TECHNICIAN

LAKE TAHOE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

For too many years, employees of Lake Tahoe Community College relied on a handshake and the goodwill of administrators to get a fair deal around pay, benefits, and job security.

Now, they've got a union—and the strong, well-organized voice that comes with it, said Paul Neves, the newly elected president of the newly formed union of Lake Tahoe education support professionals (ESPs). "We needed backing," he said. "We haven't had a cost-of-living raise in four years—and the discrepancies just keep getting bigger, and bigger, and bigger."

Especially during these economically troubled times, as jobs are lost and budgets slashed on campuses across the country, a union and a collectively bargained contract can be a very good thing for employees. "We're going to have the support of professional negotiators, who know the laws and have done this kind of work for years and years. We have really high hopes," said Neves, who has been a maintenance technician at the small college for 11 years.

(And after all that time, he still earns less than less-experienced colleagues who work for the local K-12 district or city government. In fact, Lake Tahoe Community College's employees earn bottom-level wages compared to other community colleges in California, even as the average house price in their community is \$937,501!)

About 15 percent of NEA's Higher Education members are support professionals, so Neves and his colleagues will be joining a robust union that offers them support in winning professional pay and working conditions, as well as professional development and leadership training.

This particular unit at Lake Tahoe, which consists of ESPs in various roles, including maintenance workers, child development teachers, academic librarians, fiscal service and information technology workers, admissions officers and others, represents about 62 employees. They hope to sign their first contract in the spring of 2012.

"It was time!" said Neves, of the decision to join NEA.

# The Cost of Corporate Tax Loopholes

**BILLIONAIRE WARREN BUFFETT** famously announced to Congress last year that, after personally earning more than \$62 million, he paid a lower tax rate than his office secretary. He doesn't think that's right—and neither does NEA. The federal tax code has more loopholes than a ratty Christmas sweater and it costs this country billions of dollars in revenue each year. That's money that could be used to support the instructional programs at public colleges and universities, and to help millions of low-income students attain a degree.

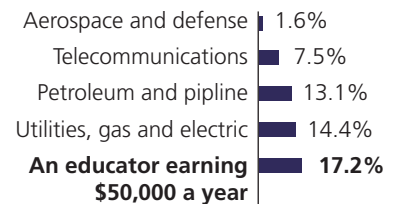
### Lost Federal Dollars for Pell Grants

LOST GRANT DOLLARS (IN MILLIONS)	STUDENTS IN NEED THAT WOULD HAVE BENEFITED	STATES		LOST GRANT DOLLARS (IN MILLIONS)	STUDENTS IN NEED THAT WOULD HAVE BENEFITED
\$194.0	143,480	AL	MO	183.8	146,567
8.4	7,267	AK	MT	24.5	18,938
566.8	477,539	AZ	NE	42.2	35,544
97.6	73,756	AR	NV	36.5	30,177
1,072.8	832,916	CA	NH	21.2	17,578
.....					
150.1	123,644	CO	NJ	191.4	148,144
67.9	58,850	CT	NM	64.5	53,686
16.4	13,880	DE	NY	655.1	447,557
48.5	38,947	DC	NC	261.5	206,998
619.9	482,251	FL	ND	18.5	14,461
.....					
312.8	259,629	GA	OH	366.2	294,765
20.1	15,952	HI	OK	107.3	84,685
52.7	39,899	ID	OR	116.4	93,766
407.0	322,646	IL	PA	309.4	250,436
210.9	175,521	IN	RI	34.6	28,008
.....					
221.5	178,700	IA	SC	132.5	103,007
76.5	61,768	KA	SD	26.3	21,540
137.2	108,297	KT	TN	190.9	148,462
134.3	100,993	LA	TX	690.9	540,761
31.1	24,937	ME	UT	105.8	83,620
.....					
116.3	98,614	MD	VT	13.0	10,707
138.1	110,887	MA	VA	193.4	151,982
342.0	279,431	MI	WA	140.5	113,977
149.4	128,070	MN	WV	67.2	50,446
135.9	93,580	MS	WI	121.2	99,902
			WY	13.0	10,385

Source: NEA calculations based on data from multiple sources, including the U.S. Department of Education, U.S. Census, and Office of Management and Budget.

**“CORPORATE TAX POLICIES** in the U.S. provide significant benefits to shareholders, at considerable cost to everyone else,” wrote UMass Amherst economics professor Nancy Folbre, an NEA member, in *The New York Times* recently. Why? Because corporations often employ fleets of well-paid, well-connected lobbyists to win those loopholes in Congress. Unless you belong to a union, the typical middle-class worker doesn't have a voice in Washington D.C.— and that's why their effective tax rate can be nearly 300 times higher than some industries.

### Effective tax rates for different industries



Source: Citizens for Tax Justice, the Internal Revenue Service

**\$227,000,**  
THE AMOUNT OF  
FEDERAL REVENUE  
LOST THROUGH  
CORPORATE TAX  
REVENUE EACH YEAR.

Source: Citizens for Tax Justice



## The University Besieged

By Jeff Lustig

**T**he American university today is a battered figure on the public domain, half-relic of the past, half-orphan of the present, celebrated on the dais while denigrated in the boardroom and starved by state legislatures. Administrators say our campuses can't survive if they are constantly challenged from within. Many students and faculty believe they won't survive if they're not.

The university is in crisis. The future hangs in the balance. This is where I came in. It's where I came in in my own college career and how things also looked from within the Free Speech Movement (FSM) and educational reform movements at the University of California, Berkeley in the early 1960s, as the nation's former land grant universities morphed into corporate grant universities, and UC President Clark Kerr celebrated the convergence of the university and industry. Those were years of conflict, of charge and counter-charge, committees and counter-committees, bulletins from above and pronouncements from below.

*"Bliss was it...to be alive,"* in William Wordsworth's lyric; *"But to be young was very heaven."*

I received my degrees from Berkeley in those years, my B.A., my M.A., and my Ph.D. And three other distinctions too: my arrests in the FSM, the Third World Strike, and People's Park. Acquiring each of those honors taught me a lot. And now looking back—having gone from being a Young Turk into being an Old Fart—I see what a special education it was, and how much it was a product of the two realms: the classroom and the plaza. I realize now how much I am indebted to both realms and to the American university itself, in all its contradictions, for what I study and care about, and who I am today...

What is a university? It's been a lot of things over the centuries. But three of its aspects or roles have struck me as particularly important over the last few years: (1) its role with the liberal arts, (2) its political role, and (3) its character as a community...

Today, we know, the university defined by these characteristics is besieged—not just from without, but by theories and organizational redesigns promoted within. These theories and models are taken over largely from the world of business, specifically the asset-stripping, CEO-enriching stage of business in

which we find ourselves. In post-War America, capital began to seek its profits by commodifying activities in worlds that had previously lain outside the marketplace: hospitals and medical care, the arts, political campaigns. And we too have become objects of its affection. While parts of the university do have to be run like a business, the university as a whole is not a business, and what is exchanged in its classes and seminar rooms are not commodities. Confusion on these scores threatens the fulfillment of all three objectives mentioned above...

We hear the sounds of the attempted shift as new economic terms displace the older educational vocabulary. But students are not customers. And claiming that they are proposes a drastic narrowing of the existing obligations between teachers and them. The new term make strangers of people who formerly required mutual trust...

We faculty have also found ourselves mislabeled by this effort, as when we receive "customer surveys" about campus services. I have filed these surveys in the circular file, and hope you will too. Because they are mis-addressed. I am not and never have been a customer on this campus. I've been a member of a community, a co-worker in a grand and difficult effort...

But who will bell the cat? Not the administrators. Hopefully the students, while they are here, and the staff. But, I want to suggest, centrally this is a job for the faculty.

### EDITOR'S NOTE:

For his contributions to expanding the democratic culture of higher education, Jeff Lustig, a professor emeritus at California State University Sacramento, has won the 2011 Democracy in Higher Education Prize from *Thought & Action's* review panel. This is an excerpt of his prize-winning article. To read the article in its entirety, visit [www.nea.org/thoughtandaction](http://www.nea.org/thoughtandaction).



## THE STATE OF HIGHER ED

### California

In a stand for the rights of faculty and their ability to teach effectively, hundreds of faculty held a one-day strike in November at two California State University campuses. Aligning themselves with the 99 percent, faculty called on trustees to readjust their priorities. Since 1998, CSU system-wide student fees have skyrocketed from \$1,890 a year to \$6,422, not including campus-specific fees that also have gone up. Meanwhile, class offerings have been slashed, faculty members have been let go, enrollment has been capped, and class sizes have exploded. For more, visit [www.calfac.org](http://www.calfac.org).

### Florida

Florida's Senate president recently urged college presidents to "sit around a table and literally start trading like baseball cards some of these majors." This follows a pronouncement by Gov. Rick Scott that "tax dollars" should not "educate more people who can't get jobs in anthropology." Is it any wonder that NEA membership at the state's largest university affiliates has recently doubled?

### Illinois

The faculty union at Southern Illinois University Carbondale walked the picket line for nine days this fall, after working without a contract for nearly 500. The strike ended successfully when administrators took seriously the faculty's concerns around tenure and academic freedom. Meanwhile, the other united unions that represent graduate students, staff, and adjunct faculty settled their own contracts within hours of the strike deadline, but still stood faithfully with their colleagues on the line.

The East-West University Adjuncts finally will have its union! In early December, the National Labor Relations Board denied an appeal by East-West administrators. Adjunct faculty have fought for years for this kind of fair representation. In 2010, the administration went so far as to fire (and then rehire, upon NLRB orders) the union's leaders.

### Michigan

A discriminatory bill, recently passed by

Michigan lawmakers, forbids all public employers from offering medical benefits for domestic partners. Earlier versions of the bill had exempted the state's 15 public universities, many of which already provide such coverage, because of the autonomy guaranteed to universities in the state Constitution. Voters are encouraged to contact Michigan's Governor at [Rick.Snyder@michigan.gov](mailto:Rick.Snyder@michigan.gov) and urge him to veto the bill, which will not create jobs or help Michigan's economy.

### Wisconsin

In mid-December, "We Are Wisconsin," a coalition leading the effort to recall Gov. Scott Walker, announced that they had collected half a million signatures in just four weeks. Volunteers, including faculty and staff from public colleges and universities, found widespread support at shopping malls, in churches, and everywhere. They need an additional 250,000 signatures by Jan. 17 to get the measure on the ballot, and to end Walker's anti-education and pro-corporation regime. For more information, visit [www.wearewisconsin.org](http://www.wearewisconsin.org).

## TWO-MINUTE INTERVIEW > HENRY GIROUX



HENRY GIROUX currently holds the Global Television Chair in English and Cultural Studies at McMaster University in Ontario, Canada. His new book, *Education and the Crisis of Public Values*, discusses the many ways that "public education as a democratic public sphere" is under siege. To read the full text of this interview, go to [www.nea.org/he](http://www.nea.org/he).

### What might faculty learn if they sat down and talked with an Occupy protester?

Faculty might both learn and be inspired about the current attempt by students to change the conversation about the meaning and purpose of higher education. They might be moved and educated by the attempt to reclaim higher education as a democratic public sphere, one that not only provides work skills, but also pre-

pares students to shape the myriad of economic, social, and political forces that govern their lives.... In many ways, students are offering faculty the possibility of becoming part of a larger conversation, one addressing the role of the university in relation to public life in the 21st century...

Young people need spaces on campuses to talk back,

talk to one another, engage in dialogue with faculty, and engage in coalition building. Faculty and administrators can begin to open up such spaces by inviting protesters to speak to their classes, by creating autonomous campus spaces where they might meet and dialogue, and even by joining in fighting those economic and political forces that are destroying higher education as a social good and as a citadel of rigorous intellectual engagement and civic debate.

### Is it fair to connect the growth of Occupy with trends in higher ed?

In the U.S. and other coun-

tries, students are protesting against rising tuition fees, the increasing financial burdens they are forced to assume, and the primacy of market models in shaping higher education while emphasizing private benefits to individuals. They view these policies and for-profit industries as part of an assault on not just the public character of the university but also an attack on civic society and their future. For many young people in the Occupy movement, higher education has defaulted on its promise of a quality education and the prospects of a dignified future.

# Meet Your Librarians: And then ask them for some help, please

Students rarely ask librarians for help. Even when they need it. That is the sobering conclusion of the recent Ethnographic Research in Illinois Academies Libraries (AERAL) project, a two-year, five-campus study that found, “The majority of students—of all levels—exhibited significant difficulties that ranged across nearly every aspect of the search process.” It seems even the “digital natives” need professional assistance. They overused Google. They misused scholarly databases. And they never asked for help! We asked two experienced librarians to discuss the results.

**ATHENA:** The study paints an all-too familiar portrait. There is certainly ongoing disconnections between faculty expectations, students’ needs, and librarian teaching and service models. And, of course, I’m Googled. You’re Googled. We are all Googled.

**PAM:** This study gives me more impetus to meet students where they are in their intellectual development of research strategies and processes. In library sessions for undergraduates I start where they are. After all when you turn on the light switch do you care how the electrons were generated? Or do you care that the lights go on? This is how students approach search: they throw the switch and Google spits something out.

**ATHENA:** We don’t grade students, and so we’re not in a position to assess student learning the way some faculty can. When we have the opportunity to work with students, librarians are often in the role of mediators and translators; we help students translate assignments into research action, and mediate their search processes.

**PAM:** Who am I to judge that the effort a student is putting into a piece of research is second-class? As a librarian, I

know a Google search is inefficient and often the students end up spending more time than if they had asked me about our databases.

**ATHENA:** Yes, we can help them complete their assignments more efficiently. But often the help we provide is curriculum centered, geared to specific assignments. Their needs are usually based on a model of academic scholarship, in which scholarly academic journals are central. Does this model teach undergraduate students applicable information literacy\* skills, appropriate to work lives outside the university? There is a tension between what we have to teach students to do to complete their assignments and the on-going skills they’ll need in their chosen professions.

**PAM:** For students, outcomes are often grades only. And while faculty members judge the quality of students’ work, librarians are interested in the best research process and resources for the problem. The quality of the work gets the grade, but does the best set of resources and extensive research process actually earn it?

**ATHENA:** In our institution, librarians are liaisons to departments, collaborating with faculty on assignments and

offering library instruction and individual research consultations. As budgets shrink, fewer librarians are hired. We’re lucky if we can hire a part-time lecturer librarian to replace a retiring full-time tenured person. I suspect we are not unique. At our University, 30,000 students are taught by 1,500 faculty and there are 19 tenure/tenure-track and five non-tenure track subject librarians available to work with faculty and students. With such limited human resources, it is essential for libraries and individual librarians to determine sustainable priorities.

**PAM:** The AERAL study suggests librarians should work with faculty to influence the relationship between grades and work quality. Through personal relationships, librarians can build the bridges that will educate faculty about the value of our skills. But the AERAL is advocating for more work at a time when many librarians are feeling the same pressures as our colleagues—do more with fewer bodies.

**ATHENA:** And while advocacy would be ideal, it most be done strategically, with personnel limitations and emerging technologies in mind. Difficult choices must be made in terms of library services offered and on-going librarian activities.



**PAM HOWARD**  
Associate Librarian,  
San Francisco State Univ.,  
California



**ATHENA NAZARIO**  
Library Education,  
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San Francisco State Univ.,  
California

\* Information literacy skills are needed to find, retrieve, analyze, and use information. To learn more about how classroom assignments can incorporate information literacy, see the Association of Colleges & Research Libraries.







*Jason Walta is an attorney in the NEA Office of General Counsel and an adjunct faculty member at American University's Washington College of Law.*

# Healthy Decisions

## The Supreme Court takes on healthcare

BY JASON WALTA

**THE BATTLE LINES** are now drawn. On November 14, the Supreme Court announced it would resolve a barrage of constitutional challenges to President Obama's health-care reform legislation, the Affordable Care Act (ACA). And the array of questions before the Court will undoubtedly make the case the most important test of the federal government's legislative authority since the New Deal.

A little background: Congress enacted the ACA in 2010 to tackle the enduring crisis in the nation's healthcare system, which arises in part because millions of Americans lack access to health insurance and thus shift the cost of their care to others. In response, the ACA reduces the amount of uncompensated medical care and makes affordable health insurance more widely available. Its most controversial piece, the so-called "individual mandate," will require virtually all Americans to obtain health insurance or pay a fine. An additional provision makes more people eligible for Medicaid, the program that provides federal funding for state medical services to low-income Americans.

Before the ink from President Obama's signature was even dry, a slew of legal challenges to the ACA were filed, led by hard-charging conservative state attorneys general like Virginia's Ken Cuccinelli. Common to all of these lawsuits is the claim that the ACA's individual mandate is unconstitutional because Congress's authority under the Constitution's "Commerce Clause"—that is, the power to "regulate Commerce . . . among the several States"—does not allow regulation of economic "inactivity" like refusing to purchase health insurance. In addition, some of the suits have charged that the ACA's Medicaid expansion unconstitutionally "coerces" states by making the expansion a condition of receiving federal Medicaid funding.

Despite some early successes before Republican trial

court judges, most of these challenges have been rejected by federal courts of appeals as either procedurally defective or lacking in merit.

One appellate court, however, has given the ACA's challengers a victory—albeit a limited one. The Atlanta-based Eleventh Circuit found that the individual mandate exceeds Congress's authority under the Commerce Clause, but it rejected the claim that this finding should also invalidate the entire ACA. The court also rejected the claim that the ACA's Medicaid expansion unconstitutionally coerced states.

The "coercion" challenge to the expansion of Medicaid ought to fizzle, as well. Similar claims have been rejected time and again in cases challenging Congress's authority to place conditions on the receipt of federal funding.

Yet, the Supreme Court is free to reject precedent and adopt the challenger's radically narrowed interpretation of the Congress's legislative authority. Such a move, however, would bring the legitimacy of many federal laws into question—including numerous civil rights laws.

Most commentators think there aren't enough votes on the current Court to take such a dramatic step. As President Reagan's Solicitor General, Charles Fried, has said, if the ACA's challengers "succeed in gaining more than one vote in the Supreme Court . . . it would be a depressing triumph of naked partisan politics over established legal principles."

But the Court will issue its decision while the 2012 presidential campaign is in full swing. As we already know from *Bush v. Gore*, the temptation of "naked partisan politics" may be too strong for the Court's conservative majority to resist.

## OPINION

### LETTERS:

*Gordon Clanton is rightly scandalized by the cost of textbooks; however, I take exception to his proposed solutions, which all cost something. Instead I propose these:*

*1) Find some good articles in your library's databases and provide students with instructions on how to access them. (Your librarian will be happy to help.)*  
*2) Develop your own "textbook," preferably open source. To find source material, try the library (databases, e-books, etc.), MERLOT, Scholar Google or other web sources. One good example of such a textbook is my colleague's at <http://alltextcsueb.wordpress.com/>*

*Aline Soules  
CSU East Bay*

# We need your help and we need it now

**THE VERY SMALL COMMUNITY COLLEGE** at which I work is in dire financial straits. We have 39 full-time faculty, and fourteen of us face layoffs on March 23, 2012. Our college president has sought help from the state and the community, but his limited success will not save our jobs.

What are the effects? The business department (four of us) has been "suspended" for spring term—we haven't been told exactly what that means—leaving teachers and students unsure whether classes will be available. Our criminal justice program has been eliminated. The social science department has been pared down to one instructor. The brilliant, enthusiastic woman who finds jobs for our students has been reduced to half-time, and the Spanish instructor has had her teaching load reduced. The head of our art department is a layoff victim. We've encouraged students to stay with us in order not to compound the school's deficit, but we owe it to students to be realistic.

I created an online petition (at [Change.org](http://Change.org)) to provide emergency funding for the college and have asked [Change.org](http://Change.org) to email our state and national representatives whenever someone signs. Can we get enough signatures to convince those people in power to avert permanently crippling the college's ability to

provide essential services? Our budget shortfall is just 1/100,000th of the annual budget for the United States's war in Afghanistan, yet we cannot seem to get our politicians to listen.

One of my brave and eloquent colleagues signed, saying: "If you wish to feel smug in thinking that others have 'struck out' during their 'turn at bat,' and you wish to feel moral while ignoring the plight of your less financially successful brethren through a belief that they have 'chosen not to play,' then you must ensure that our society offers every individual the opportunity to 'step up to the plate.' This is one of the many roles of a community college."

Please visit the link below to sign the petition, which seeks to save one small bulwark against despair in our home town of Astoria, Oregon. Your signature would mean a great deal:

<http://www.change.org/petitions/save-astorias-college>

Thank you.



**Perry Callas** teaches in the business department at Oregon's Clatsop Community College—for now.



NEA's Office of Higher Education is now on Facebook. To keep up with current news and discuss events with your colleagues find us at [www.facebook.com/neaighered](http://www.facebook.com/neaighered).