First-year student success

How to help the 241,000 Dreamers on college campuses

The color of money: The HBCU faculty pay penalty

STRIKE! Washington staff walk the picket line

New calls for papers, proposals, and more
BREAKING: U.S. Supreme Court to hear anti-union case

THE QUESTION OF FAIR-SHARE FEES will be settled by the Supreme Court this year, in the case of Janus v. AFSCME, which the Court accepted this fall. Janus challenges a public sector union’s ability to collect fair-share, or “agency,” fees from employees who opt out of union membership but receive union representation. A Court ruling against the fees would strip bargaining power from workers across the U.S. “Stripping public employees of their voices in the workplace is not what our country needs,” said NEA President Lily Eskelsen García. “We won’t back down from this fight and we will always stand up to support working people, our students and the communities we serve.”

NEA decries rollback of protections for sexual assault survivors

SECRETARY OF EDUCATION BETSY DEVOS announced this fall that she will revoke an Obama-era directive that pushed colleges to combat sexual violence. It’s a terrible move, said NEA President Lily Eskelsen García. “This decision offends our collective conscience and conflicts with basic values of equality, safety, and respect,” she said. Nearly one in four college women experience sexual assault or misconduct, a survey of 150,000-plus students found. As few as 5 percent report it. The 2011 U.S. Office of Civil Rights directive made clear that Title IX protects every student’s right to an educational and educational experience free from violence. While disturbing, DeVos’ announcement wasn’t surprising, said García. “[I]t is another example of a Trump-DeVos agenda that scorns respect for survivors, including Secretary DeVos’s own recent meeting with radical anti-woman activists and the president’s own recorded sexual assault confession during the campaign.”

Wanted! Conference proposals

THE NEA HIGHER EDUCATION CONFERENCE COMMITTEE invites your proposals, especially for sessions that focus on building power in local unions. The conference will be held March 15-16, 2018 at the Hyatt Regency Chicago. Submissions are due Nov. 3, 2017. For more information, check nea.org/he.

A call for papers on RESISTANCE

PRIVATIZATION. ATTACKS ON TENURE. HATRED AND RACISM. It’s not enough to name the issues. The Thought & Action Review Panel asks: How do we resist? The deadline for this special-focus section of NEAs journal is January 1. Please see nea.org/thoughtanda for more.
“We’re sad. We’re angry. We’re mad,” said a Cal State Fullerton student. And she’s not the only one. President Trump’s cancellation of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program, which has protected from deportation more than 800,000 young people brought to the U.S. as children, has elicited tears of grief, frustration, and fury. On many campuses, it also has unleashed a new wave of activism, aimed at protecting Dreamers and their families. In California, a coalition of faculty, staff, and students delivered a bill (AB21) to the governor’s desk that would require public colleges to provide financial aid to undocumented students, and prohibit colleges from disclosing students’ status to immigration officials. Across the nation, tens of thousands of NEA members have pledged to protect Dreamer students, and have called on Congress to immediately pass a Dream Act. “These young people are our students, our friends, our peers, and they have lived in this country since they were children. They have built their lives here. They are Americans in every way except for their immigration status,” says NEA President Lily Eskelsen García.
What are we going to do?

In California, at the urging of CFA, the California Faculty Association, the state Assembly passed a bill (AB 21) that would require community colleges and the California State University protect their undocumented students, faculty and staff, and ensure DACA-students have access to financial aid, legal representation, and due process.

“AB 21 is the institutional support we need to ensure all students, faculty, and staff—regardless of immigration status—may continue to pursue education and teaching free from intimidation,” Sacramento State education professor Margarita Berta-Avila said in a CFA statement.

“History teaches us that movements in the U.S. and across the world are successful when those who have nothing to lose stand up, speak, mobilize, at whatever our capacity is to do so—and refuse to take on the role of bystanders. As members of this society and community, this is the moment to not be that bystander.”

In early October, Gov. Jerry Brown signed AB 21 into law.

Across the nation, NEA Higher Ed leaders and members are standing with their DACA students and colleagues: “To yank these protections out from under [DACA recipients] won’t benefit the country. What it will do is plunge the lives and futures of nearly one million young people into chaos,” said Frederick E. Kowal, president of the United University Professions (UUP), the nation’s largest higher education union, with members at 29 New York campuses.

“UUP will stand against any and all attempts to deport undocumented students and all who seek refuge in this great country,” Kowal promised.

Eskelsen García has said she believes it’s possible Congress will pass a Dream Act—a permanent solution for DACA students and educators. The 2017 bill, co-sponsored by a bipartisan group of Senators, would provide a road to U.S. citizenship for undocumented young people who graduate from U.S. high schools and attend college, get jobs, or enlist in the military. Thousands of NEA members have urged Congress this fall to take action on the Dream Act.

“This is still my campus, this is still my town, and this is still my country,” said SUNY Old Westbury student Josselin Paz to Newsday. “This is my country.”

Things To Do To Help:

1. **CALL CONGRESS.** Call your Senators and Representatives and urge them to swiftly pass the Dream Act of 2017. Dial 1-855-764-1010, and then tell us how it went at educationvotes.nea.org/daca.

2. **SIGN THE #PROTECTDREAMERS PLEDGE.** “As a public education ally, I will continue to work to help fulfill the potential of all students, regardless of immigration status.” See here: http://educationvotes.nea.org/daca.

3. **SHOW YOUR SUPPORT ON SOCIAL MEDIA.** Use the hashtag #ProtectDreamers.
About 800,000 young people, brought to the U.S. as children, have been able to go to college and pursue their dreams in the country that they call home, thanks to the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program, which has protected them from deportation. In September, President Trump announced an end to DACA.

**THEY DREAM OF EDUCATION...**

This chart compares the educational attainment of all 15- to 32-year-olds in the U.S. to the DACA population. Note the DACA group is much more likely to have graduated from college.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total U.S.</th>
<th>DACA-eligible</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not enrolled in high school</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enrolled in high school</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completed HS, not in college</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enrolled in college</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completed some college</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Earned at least a BA-degree</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**THEY ARE YOUR STUDENTS!**

More than half of the DACA population is currently enrolled in U.S. schools.

- **U.S. college students who are DACA-eligible**: 241,000
- **U.S. high school students who are DACA-eligible**: 365,000
- **60,000** at California community colleges
- **10,000** are enrolled on California State University campuses
- **4,000** are enrolled in University of California campuses

**THEY ARE YOUR COLLEAGUES!**

The Migration Policy Institute estimates about 20,000 educators are DACA-mented. They include Karen Reyes, a 29-year-old teacher of Deaf 3-year-olds in Austin, Texas, who was brought to the U.S. at age 2. She says: “All I want to do is teach, and help my kids.” The top states for DACA-mented educators are:

- California: 5,000
- New York: 2,000
- New Jersey: 1,000
- Pennsylvania: 2,000
- North Carolina: 2,000
- Illinois: 1,000
- Florida: 1,000
- Maryland: 1,000
- Arizona: 1,000

**THEIR DREAMS BRING THEM TO THE U.S. FROM ALL OVER THE WORLD**

While more than 600,000 of DACA recipients come from Mexico, many other countries of origin are represented among their numbers, including:

- Guatemala: 22,821
- Honduras: 1,875
- El Salvador: 9,250
- Nigeria: 1,503
- India: 4,902
- Poland: 31,963
- Korea: 21,053
- Philippines: 1,503
- California: 4,902
- California community colleges: 60,000
- University of California campuses: 4,000
- California State University campuses: 10,000
- Low-income immigrant students: California

**CALIFORNIA DREAMIN’**

In California, home to nearly a third of the nation’s DACA population, the California DREAM Act waives community college tuition for low-income immigrant students and makes them eligible for state tuition grants at 4-year colleges. According to analysis by state college officials, tens of thousands of immigrants are making progress toward degrees and careers.

Source: Charts 1-2 and 4, Migration Policy Institute; Chart 3: Hechinger Report; Chart 5: U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service.
Empowering First-Year Students

You root for your first-year students to succeed in their entry to college and return the following year, but each year some don’t make it through. You wonder why. Why is the first year such a vulnerable time for some students? How can you help?

The transition to college is an exciting time, but it also can be a difficult time for many. With more free time between classes, students cite time management as a new challenge. Some find they can’t keep up with the academic requirements, or don’t have the background knowledge or vocabulary to do the reading and participate in discussions. Among national policy makers, only a narrow set of academic skills has been part of the discussion of college readiness. However, those who work with college students know that so-called “non-cognitive” skills and issues, such as family problems, finances, employment, mental health, and social issues, also burden new students. In addition, since college work requires both personal engagement in learning and effective study habits, a student’s approach to academic work can fall short. Fortunately, there are proactive activities, including what George Kuh has called “high-impact educational practices,” (Kuh, 2008, p. 9) that faculty and staff can use to support first-year students. For example, first-year students can find support in first-year seminars, common intellectual experiences, learning communities, and service learning.
Welcome to College: Prepare to Be Interrupted

Each new semester, professors and returning students migrate back to campus and meet a fresher and less informed group: first-year students. Of course these newcomers will have been socially and academically oriented before school starts, but what do they really need to know to succeed in the first year and beyond?

When I was a college student, arriving on campus after a few sleep-deprived months as a camp counselor, I slept through almost my entire orientation. But I did make it to a college simulation exercise, which made a deep impression on me. Today I incorporate some of its elements into my own workshop for incoming first-year students.

Back then, in a large gymnasium, about 100 incoming students held blank bingo-style cards. We were instructed to visit booths around the gym to sign up for pretend classes and clubs and to complete mock homework assignments, each time marking our bingo cards. But every time we made any progress, we were interrupted by loud music and flying beach balls—at which point the booths would shut down temporarily. I've been teaching college students for 20 years, and I've seen nothing else that so effectively simulates the competing and conflicting demands faced by a first-year college student.

Meet Pamela W. Hollander

Pamela W. Hollander is an assistant professor at Worcester State University, where she teaches first-year and education students. She is the author of a book about college readiness, Readiness Realities: Struggles and Successes during the Transition to College (2017). Dr. Hollander has taught developmental reading and writing courses at public and private colleges over the past 20 years. She researches and writes about college-level literacy practices, including reading habits of college students in particular disciplines and interdisciplinary connections between college classes. She also has focused on the transition between high school and college and has taught college literacy for several high school-to-college bridge programs.

I also ask students to compare three students’ daily planners, each organized in different ways, to see what students choose to prioritize. One is organized by class, but includes lists of social and work obligations; another lists social, work and academic activities by day; while the third, also organized by day, includes homework only.

In summary, I see everyday academic artifacts as having deep cultural meaning, and believe students can benefit from spending quality time discussing them.
Newfound Freedom/Time Management

When I ask my current first-year students to name the biggest difference between high school and college, they differ on whether they think the work is harder but agree that faced with more independence, time management is their biggest problem. With that in mind, I focus on time management in my pre-college workshops, but I think it’s also a good topic for first-year seminars as well. First-year seminars certainly are high impact because of inquiry-based learning and critical thinking but also because they enable students to increase their “practical competencies” (Kuh, 2008, p. 9).

A useful tool to understanding students’ choices around time is Steven Covey’s four-quadrant 2x2 table, presented in his book, Seven Habits of Highly Successful People (Covey, 1989). The four quadrants sort tasks by urgency and importance. In the first are things that are both important and urgent, like crises or “things that come up.” The second includes the important but not urgent work that often gets you “ahead.” Quadrant 3 has urgent concerns usually more important to someone else, while Quadrant 4 includes “escape” activities like video games or social media—not important, not urgent.

Quadrant 2 (important, not urgent) is where we are most productive and in control. Drafting a paper early, socializing sensibly to invest in relationships, and exercising to stay healthy all fit in this category. Spending time in Quadrant 1 (important and urgent) is sometimes necessary. Consider the student who must rescue a roommate locked out of their room. But Quadrants 3 and 4 are time stealers and should be kept in control. One Quadrant 3 activity I agreed to, which I reluctantly admit here, was to babysit a first-year student’s orphaned squirrel. (She soon realized she needed to return this squirrel to the wild and start concentrating on college.)

When I ask my current first-year students to name the biggest difference between high school and college... they all agree that faced with more independence, time management is their biggest problem.

I found out about these quadrants after college, unfortunately, but since then I have used them to great effect. Summer is my Quadrant 2 (important and not urgent), when I plan and research and go to doctor appointments. Once students are familiar with the four quadrants, I challenge them to make decisions about activities to prioritize, what to say no to, and how to get ahead.

Getting to Know a Professor and Their Hopes for Their Class

I have had students who don’t seem to know their professors and what they value. This is why, in addition to time management, I have added an examination of “the syllabus” into my workshop for incoming students and also my regular first-year classes. I want students who are accustomed to grieving information from Instagram to begin to look carefully at a long-form syllabus, and I want them to wring out what is important to this professor. What do you have to do to get an A or a B?

Learning How to Make Sense of Professors’ Writing Assignment Guidelines

When I assigned a book review essay that asked students to tell whether they would recommend the book to a friend, I got a lot of plot summaries instead. I hadn’t made it clear that I wanted them to create an argument, to marshal details in service of a larger point. As Donald Bartholomae said, I want my students to “join the conversation” (Bartholomae, 1986) of academia by adding their own modest contribution, consistent with their status as newcomers, to conversations about a particular topic. They have to do to get an A or a B?

For detailed information about how to teach students the ins and outs of essay as argument, I recommend Gerald Graff, Cathy Birkenstein, and Russel Durst’s They Say, I Say: The Moves That Matter in Academic Writing (2006). This book takes as its premise that students are being asked to write in the ways that academics write, adding their contributions to knowledge in a field. The book explains how arguments and contributions are constructed with examples, and gives students instructions on how they can do the same thing. For example, I often use an article by Charles Mudede, “Hiphop Rupture” (2015), in my first-year courses that uses a borrowed concept to build an argument. Mudede borrows jazz theorist Ted Gioia’s idea of jazz being an imperfect art and he applies that term to hip hop music, maintaining that hip hop is a true imperfect art.

What sets the book They Say, I Say apart from others is how it deconstructs these arguments for students so that they can see how they are put together. The book includes many examples of academic readings that demonstrate academic arguments. I think students are served well by getting this kind of direct information about what is expected of them and how they can meet those expectations.

Best Practices > Teaching Essay as Argument

For detailed information about how to teach students the ins and outs of essay as argument, I recommend Gerald Graff, Cathy Birkenstein, and Russel Durst’s They Say, I Say: The Moves That Matter in Academic Writing (2006). This book takes as its premise that students are being asked to write in the ways that academics write, adding their contributions to knowledge in a field. The book explains how arguments and contributions are constructed with examples, and gives students instructions on how they can do the same thing. For example, I often use an article by Charles Mudede, “Hiphop Rupture” (2015), in my first-year courses that uses a borrowed concept to build an argument. Mudede borrows jazz theorist Ted Gioia’s idea of jazz being an imperfect art and he applies that term to hip hop music, maintaining that hip hop is a true imperfect art.

What sets the book They Say, I Say apart from others is how it deconstructs these arguments for students so that they can see how they are put together. The book includes many examples of academic readings that demonstrate academic arguments. I think students are served well by getting this kind of direct information about what is expected of them and how they can meet those expectations.
to figure out, like a person entering a cocktail party, the appropriate way to act. This is no easy task, and as Bartholomae says, new college students need to “approximate” what this looks like in subjects that they may not know much about.

As the academic year goes by, like many others who teach first-year students, I will have tried in my first-year seminar to help new students get oriented to their environments, to more productively manage the slippery thing known as time, and I hope to also have a better grasp of what professors expect from them.

I HAVE BEEN AMAZED AT HOW INVOLVEMENT WITH CERTAIN CLUBS, EVENTS AND COMMUNITY-SERVICE LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES HAVE TURNED AROUND SOME BLEAK LOOKING CASES OF FIRST-YEAR MALAISE.

REFERENCES AND RESOURCES


- **ISSUES TO CONSIDER**

**FIRST-YEAR FIXES**

**Why do so many first-year students struggle?**

First-year students surely struggle with academics, but their academic problems are broad and include their relationship to their own learning, prior learning habits, background knowledge, and motivation. Also, I have found that when my first-year students drop out during or after their first year, the causes are multiple—including any of the following: academic issues, health issues, finances, English fluency, learning disabilities, and social or family issues. For more, see Readiness Realities: Struggles and Successes during the Transition to College. Also, see George Kuh’s article, “The Other Curriculum: Out-of-class Experiences Associated with Student Learning and Personal Development” (1995).

**What can help students overcome these issues?**

I have been amazed at how involvement with certain clubs, events and service learning has turned around some bleak cases of first-year malaise. For example, a community service club at our university called CLEWS (Community Leadership and Engagement at Worchester State) has made a huge difference. This club acts as both a club and a learning community, where students study big ideas together and even live in the same dorm.

Another winning strategy is for students to attend performances and have what Kuh calls “common intellectual experiences” (Kuh, 2008, p. 9) with peers and professors that either reflect their own experience or introduce them to other experiences.

**Why Do Some Activities Work to Turn Around Students’ Experiences?**

In the CLEWS program, newer students are invited in by students who act as mentors. I think it is the student-to-student interaction that works so well. Also, because CLEWS is about service students feel good about their work. Terenzini et al. (1994) write about how students need to feel “validation” from extracurricular activities. Kuh attributes the success of high-impact educational practices to the “deepening in investment” that results from these activities, and from the opportunity to “interact with faculty and peers over extended periods of time” (2008, p. 24).

**What Can Professors Do To Help?**

We as professors have a unique opportunity: we interact with students in small groups in settings that stress authentic inquiry. We also have a chance to engage students in practical concerns like time management and analyzing a syllabus. We should encourage students to connect with clubs and activities. It’s easier when students have an existing interest or skill they can follow in college—for example, a student danced in high school and joins the college dancing club. But many could connect with a general club that focuses on less specific skills. Finding out how student organizations accomplish their outreach may give you ideas about helping first-year students in your classes.
U.S. Sen. Dick Durbin talks Dreamers, student debt, and more.

Durbin has America’s college faculty and students in mind.

Q: An estimated 241,000 young people brought to the U.S. as children, who may be protected from deportation by the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program, are college students. With President Trump ending DACA, how can our members help ensure these young people have a bright future here, in the country they call home?

A: I would encourage NEA Higher Ed members to voice their support for the Dream Act and for Dreamers across the U.S. We saw how vital public support for the Affordable Care Act has been in saving our health care system. America’s voice will be equally important as we fight to give these Dreamers their shot at the American dream.

Q: About 25 percent of grad students owe at least $100,000 in student debt, and if they’re heading into a career as an adjunct faculty member—like two-thirds of all faculty—they can expect to earn about $25,000 a year. Making them eligible for Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF), the aim of your 2017 bill, “The Adjunct Faculty Loan Fairness Act,” would help a lot. Can you tell us more about who you have in mind with this bill?

A: Adjunct and contingent faculty members have advanced degrees. They teach classes, hold office hours, grade papers, and mentor students. They have student debt like their full-time colleagues, yet because of a quirk in the PSLF program, they don’t qualify for assistance. My bill would recognize the critical contributions of adjunct faculty by fixing this. Consider someone like Alyson, an adjunct professor from Chicago, who graduated with $65,000 in student loan debt and, after 10 years of on-time payments, has more than $56,000 left. Like most adjuncts, Alyson strings together multiple teaching assignments with part-time work. She comes from a family of educators and considers teaching her dream job. I think the Public Service Loan Forgiveness program should acknowledge her commitment and sacrifices.

Q: Many NEA members were disappointed at the recent rollback of regulations on for-profit colleges. How can we help students avoid disaster at their hands?

A: For-profit colleges enroll 9 percent of all post-secondary students, but take in 17 percent of all federal student aid and account for 37 percent of all federal student loan defaults. Too often, lured by false promises, their students amass enormous amounts of debt and leave with a credential that potential employers don’t even recognize. Unfortunately, the DeVos/Trump administration is dismantling the protections put in place for students and taxpayers. While I work in Congress to maintain and expand protections in the law, I ask for your help in making sure your students have good information about their college options. Often, community colleges provide much better programs at a fraction of the cost, but can’t compete with the for-profit college advertising barrage your students face online, on television, or on local public transportation. Together, we can prevent students—who are doing the right thing by seeking higher education—from becoming prey for for-profit colleges.

Q: More than 30 years ago, you were an associate professor at Southern Illinois University College of Medicine. Is there anything you learned from working in higher education that has been valuable to you as a Senator?

A: In addition to having worked in higher education, I know what it’s like to need a hand from the government to afford a higher education. I grew up in East St. Louis, Ill. My mom was an immigrant. She came to America from Lithuania with her mother and two siblings when she was 2 years old. Neither my mom nor my dad graduated from high school. But my mother understood that education was the key to the American Dream. She was adamant that all three of her boys would go to college. And we did. Luckily, five years before I started college, Congress passed something called the National Defense Education Act to open the doors of America’s universities to working-class kids like me. With the help of NDEA loans—plus summer jobs in slaughter houses and railroad switch yards—I was able to pay my way through Georgetown University and law school. I’ve never forgotten the public investment that allowed me to get an education. Without it, I know I wouldn’t be where I am today. It’s why I believe so strongly in the federal government’s role in helping to make quality higher education accessible to all students.
The HBCU Pay Penalty

Faculty at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) continue to earn significantly less than their peers at predominantly white institutions (PWIs), a NEA Higher Education Advocate analysis shows. This is not new: In 2008, a study found an $11,000, or 17 percent, pay penalty for HBCU faculty. The gap likely reflects pernicious trends in state and federal funding, rooted in institutional racism. (A separate issue is the pay penalty experienced by HBCU grads. In August, the Triangle Business Journal found that North Carolina HBCU grads earned about $4,055 less than the national median.) For more detailed salary info, see the special salary issue at nea.org/advocate.

By the Numbers

The HBCU Faculty Pay Penalty Is Real.

Get Organized!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FLORIDA</th>
<th>LOUISIANA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>University of Florida</td>
<td>Florida A&amp;M University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Central Florida</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Florida International University</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Florida State University</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of South Florida (main campus)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Florida Gulf Coast University</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Florida Atlantic University</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of North Florida</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of West Florida</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Florida A&amp;M University</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Louisiana State University</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Louisiana at Lafayette</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of New Orleans</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Louisiana Tech University</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Louisiana at Monroe</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southeastern Louisiana University</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northwestern State University of Louisiana</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern University and A&amp;M College</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grambling State University</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

THE UNION DIFFERENCE

Pay Isn’t Everything. Respect, academic freedom, job security, the ability to pursue research interests, and other workplace conditions are meaningful, too. But pay is a critical part of recruiting and retaining faculty. What’s clear from the Advocate data is that faculty at HBCUs who belong to unions are likely to have negotiated better pay. For example:

**FAMU vs Jackson State University**

Tier 2 Carnegie institution faculty union

Average full professor earnings: $93,500

Tier 2 Carnegie institution non-unionized

Average full professor earnings: $77,100

1. CAMPUS EQUITY WEEK

October 31 is National Day of Action for this year’s Campus Equity Week, a biannual event aimed at educating communities about inequitable employment practices in higher education. Plan an event—or at least a tweet or two—around this year’s theme: mAsk4CampusEquity. “Masking allows us both to disguise and declare the complex identities of precarious academic workers,” note organizers. Use the hashtags #2017CEW and #mask4ce, and get more information, including event ideas, at campusequity2017.com. (This year’s logo is by Rebekah Tolley, a member of UUP Albany.)

2. THE DREAM ACT

More than 241,000 U.S. college students—and quite a few NEA members—are DACA eligible. They were brought to the U.S as children and have received some protection from deportation, thanks to the federal Deferred Action for Childhood Arrival (DACA) program. In September, President Trump announced he would revoke DACA—an action NEA President Lily Eskelsen García calls “immoral and un-American.” Visit NEA EdJustice at educationvotes.nea.org/daca and ask Congress to immediately pass a DREAM Act to protect our students and colleagues.

3. PUBLIC SERVICE LOAN FORGIVENESS

In 2007, the federal government made a deal with public-service workers, including many of you. If you worked full-time for 10 years in public service, and faithfully made 120 monthly payments on your student loans, the balance of your qualifying federal loans would be forgiven. It’s called Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF)—and it has been targeted for elimination in the proposed Trump/DeVos budget. Tell Congress to keep their promise to public-service workers and preserve the program, which has served as an incentive for students to pursue careers in public education, law enforcement, and other fields. Visit edadvocacy.nea.org/highered.

REQUIRED READING

Thought & Action

We decry the privatization of public higher education, we regret the lack of critical thought and debate in our classrooms, we fear the end of tenure and academic freedom at the hands of anti-intellectual state legislators, and we weep at racial injustices, sexual violence, xenophobia, and inequity among our students and colleagues. But it is not enough to name these issues. The journal’s review panel asks: How do we resist? The panel invites your submissions on the topic of resistance for a special-focus section in the next issue. Submissions are due January 1. In the meantime, don’t forget to order a copy of the summer issue—with the code NEAHIGHERED at www.subscribenea.com. More information about the call for papers is at www.nea.org/thoughtandaction.
BREAKING: CFA members win 3.5 percent pay hikes

The California Faculty Association, which represents 23,000 professors, lecturers, librarians, and others on California State University campuses, announced a tentative agreement to extend their contract for two years, and provide 3.5 percent pay raises to members on active pay status. It also protects current benefits around health care, pensions, and even parking. “This is a big win for us as a union, and for our members who are working hard to provide the best education for our students,” said CFA President Jennifer Eagan.

MTA members “All In” on campaign to build power

With another anti-union Supreme Court case looming, the Massachusetts Teachers Association has launched a membership campaign that hinges on hundreds of one-on-one conversations about the value of union membership. “It’s not necessarily ‘us against them’ all the time,” Framingham State University professor Virginia Rutter told MTA Today. “The union is my means as a worker to make sure the concerns of the employees are understand.” Consider Donna Vanasse, who was laid off from her staff job at UMass Amherst when she took leave to care for an ill family member. She turned to her union, which met with management and pursued legal options. Within three weeks, she got her job back, MTA Today reports.

Penn State grad employees press their case for a union

In September, the Coalition of Graduate Student Employees (CGE) at Pennsylvania State University participated in a seven-day hearing before the state labor board, in which they made their case that, for all their work in preparing lessons, teaching classes, grading papers, and more, they are indeed employees of the university. In 2015, about 45 percent of Penn State’s instructional employees were graduate workers. For their efforts, nearly two-thirds earn less than $18,000 a year. But CGE’s chief concern isn’t pay—it’s health benefits. “We hear absolute horror stories from graduate workers [about health care],” CGE Co-President Doug Kulchar told an AFL-CIO reporter. CGE leaders expect good news from the state board, which ruled more than a decade ago that grad workers at Temple University had the right to unionize. With that precedent already established, it’s disappointing that Penn State has chosen to pay attorneys to challenge CGE’s right to unionize, said Kulchar. That money could be better invested in academic programs, he noted.

Audit: Western Governors should pay back $731M

An audit of Western Governors University (WGU), released this fall by the Department of Education, has delivered negative findings. Most courses provided by the massive online institution do not meet federal standards for faculty-student interaction, the audit found. Accordingly, WGU should be ineligible for federal aid—and should pay back at least $713 million in federal funds, the audit said. The findings may have implications for “competency-based” education, in general, but experts say it is unlikely the DeVos administration will pursue the report’s recommendations. In 2012, in NEA’s Thought & Action journal, Western Washington University’s Johann Neem wrote about WGU. “Despite its claims to be student-centered, it is in fact management-centered,” he wrote.

STAFF STRIKE AT BELLINGHAM: NO CONFIDENCE IN BTC PRESIDENT

A four-day strike by staff at Bellingham Technical College ended Sept. 28 with the union’s narrow approval of a tentative agreement. That same day, members of the Bellingham Educational Support Team (BEST) also voted no-confidence in the college’s administration.

“BTC’s current administration is disconnected from staff and students, and its increasingly authoritarian approach to decision-making and employee relations has added to the tension and discontent [at BTC],” the motion read, in part.

The union, which represents office staff, technical workers, and other support staff, sought modest pay raises to keep up with rising healthcare expenses. BTC’s unwillingness to negotiate a fair settlement—despite millions in budget reserves and increases in state funding—showed disrespect for support staff, union leaders said. Administrators have given themselves ample pay raises.

During the strike, BTC faculty, who also are Washington Education Association (WEA) members, refused to cross the picket line, forcing the college to cancel classes. The union also has a fund to help strikers who lost out on pay. To give, visit: www.youcaring.com/BEST-BTCstrikefund.
2018 NEA National Leadership Summit
Uniting Our Members and the Nation

Save the Date

• NEA Higher Education Conference (Pre-Summit)
  March 15-16, 2018

• National Leadership Summit
  March 16-18, 2018

• NEA-Retired Conference (Post Summit)
  March 18-19, 2018

Hyatt Regency Chicago | Chicago, Illinois

*Register for one or all!
(Higher Ed and NEA-Retired members are encouraged to register for the summit in addition to their constituency conference.)
With the bang of a gavel on October 2, the Supreme Court began its new term for the year. And it is already shaping up to be one of the most significant—and worrisome—in recent memory.

As one of its first acts, the Court agreed to hear Janus v. AFSCME, which will thrust the Court once again into the question of whether the First Amendment operates as a constitutionally enshrined “right to work” law in the public sector. The case is the culmination of a decades-long campaign by the National Right to Work Committee and other anti-labor groups to prevent state and local governments from entering into the kinds of fair-share fee arrangements with public-sector unions that lead to stable and productive bargaining relationships. This issue was last before the Court two years ago, in Friedrichs v. California Teachers Association, where the justices deadlocked 4-to-4 following the death of Justice Scalia. Now, all eyes will be on his replacement—President Trump’s appointee, Neil Gorsuch—to cast the deciding vote in Janus.

The rights of private-sector workers may also be on the chopping block in a trio of cases concerning the enforceability of mandatory arbitration agreements that prevent employees from pursuing group claims against employers for violations as basic as minimum wage laws. In private employment, the right to band together for employment-related grievances has long been guaranteed by the National Labor Relations Act. So, when the cases were argued on the Court's opening day, it was no exaggeration when Justice Breyer remarked that a victory for the employer in the case would undermine the labor protections that are the “entire heart of the New Deal.”

The Court's willingness to question—and potentially dismantle—long-held legal protections also will be on display in Masterpiece Cakeshop v. Colorado Civil Rights Commission. There, the Court will decide whether anti-discrimination laws are unenforceable against businesses and employers who say that their acts of discrimination are expressions of religious viewpoints. Here, a baker argues that the First Amendment protects his refusal to serve a gay couple because it stems from his religious disapproval of same-sex marriage; therefore it'd be unconstitutional to punish him for violating Colorado’s civil rights laws. A broadly-worded ruling in his favor could cause a sea-change in the law that would leave racial, religious, and sexual minorities vulnerable to open discrimination.

Lest you think these injustices can be addressed at the ballot box, not so fast. This term, in Gill v. Whitford, the Court will decide whether there are any limits on the aggressive gerrymandering that has locked in conservative majorities in state houses everywhere. If, as many expect, the Court concludes there are no constraints on this practice, then races will become less competitive, and effectuating change through voting could become illusory.

And that is even more true if you don’t get to vote at all. On that score, it is ominous that the Court has opted to hear Husted v. A. Philip Randolph Institute, which will review a lower court decision invalidating Ohio’s practice of purging voters off the rolls in the face of a clear federal law that prohibits it. The Court’s hearing could result in a decision that reverses the lower court and opens the door to aggressive programs make voting more burdensome.

A great deal hangs in the balance between now and the end of the Court’s term. For years to come, your rights as union members, as workers, and as citizens could turn on just a single vote. For decades, conservatives have recognized the enormous significance of who sits on the Court and have dedicated their efforts to nomination and confirming justices who reflect their views. This could be a year in which that strategy pays its greatest rewards for them, and leaves many of us out in the cold.
I have had a teenage daughter in my household since December 31, 1999 (Y2K), so I am experienced with crisis. But this is a different story, about a community college faculty union in a Trump state, both a list and a lesson.

Last fall, soon after state Republicans seized every arm of government in Des Moines, like giddy teens at home alone, the Iowa Legislature fast-tracked a union-busting bill to rescind our 43-year-old collective bargaining law for public workers. For Iowans, it was a marked change from decades of cooperative labor history. Within two weeks of its passage, before the bill became law, almost 200 Iowa school districts signed contracts with their employees. Our college president did not.

With that, in September, my union at Des Moines Area Community College [DMACC] joined nine local teacher unions and three other faculty unions in a new, do-or-die, annual re-certification process mandated by the new law. Ultimately all of Iowa’s 1,203 public worker unions will have to vote for re-certification. By law, ballots are mailed from the state labor board to each union member, who must mark, sign, seal, and return them within two weeks. Ballots not received count as “no.”

So, our local created a survival list.

1. **CHECK MAIL.** Every professor needed to check kitchen tables, junk drawers, and even the garbage to find that ballot.

2. **DOUBLE CHECK.** Faculty may need polite reminders to attend to the detailed directions because miscast votes counted “no.”

3. **NO TRIPLE CHECK.** Don’t overanalyze. The law appears neither fair nor legal, and ISEA/NEA has initiated legal action.

**4. BUDDY CHECK.** Hold hands. With six campuses spread across 125 miles, DMACC could be an organizational nightmare. Faculty reminded colleagues to vote. We proposed 100 percent participation but needed 50 percent plus one for re-certification. With 361 full-time faculty, our magic number was 181.

**5. PAY CHECK.** A regular paycheck may be sufficient motivation to organize, perhaps, but for many, this struggle signified our dignity and value as community college faculty.

**6. CHECK ENGINE LIGHT.** Don’t forget! One member drove 60 miles to deliver her campus’ ballots rather than risk slow mail service. Only 43 of 361 did not return their ballots.

**7. CHECKMATE.** Many Iowa Republicans expected us to fail at their game. We said “checkmate”: of 361 members, 309 voted yes and only 6 no. (Three were voids, and 43 unreturned.)

Across Iowa, the final tally was tremendous: a whopping 1,101 of 1,209 educators voted to save their unions. Only 27 actually voted no. “Efforts to break unions usually do just the opposite,” noted English professor Lynn LaGrone. “Energy and time devoted to tearing us down might be better spent finding ways to solidify our common goal: offering the best education we can to the students who rely on us.”

---

Dr. Lisa Ossian is a history professor at Des Moines Area Community College, and a former member of the NEA Board of Directors. Among her recent books is *The Forgotten Generation: American Children and World War II.*