Interactive Lecturing
+

Meet the 2018 Higher Educator of the Year

The top 10 challenges facing higher educators this year

A Q&A with U.S. Rep. Bobby Scott about HEA & HBCUs

How one Florida college is silencing its faculty and staff
"Refuse to be silent," says NEA President Lily Eskelsen García

ON THE FIRST DAY of the NEA Representative Assembly this July, NEA President Lily Eskelsen García stressed the challenges facing educators. The recent Supreme Court ruling in Janus v. AFSCME dealt an undeniable blow to the ability of faculty and staff to bargain collectively, while “billionaires, like Betsy DeVos and the Koch brothers, have never been more embedded in political power. Billionaires are trampling the rights of working people to organize.” But there is a way forward, she said. “These are dark days, but Martin Luther King reminded us, “…only when it’s dark enough can you see the stars,” she said. “And we have seen true stars align. We have seen the people march and speak up and refuse to be silent and refuse pretend; we have seen the resistance rise.” Educators across the U.S. rose up this spring to demand fair funding for students, and also for an end to gun violence and inhumanity on the nation’s borders. In closing, Eskelsen García urged NEA members to stay angry and motivated but not to resort to the destructive, polarizing tactics deployed by their opponents. “I don’t want to turn into what I’m fighting,” she said. “I don’t want to use fear and hate to win. You win by saying what you love.”

This issue of the NEA Advocate is your LAST ISSUE of the Advocate!

DON’T MISS OUT! The headline news delivered in these pages of the Advocate is still available to you—but not on paper. Budget changes approved by the NEA Representative Assembly focus resources on professional supports and other priorities. To keep on top of trends in higher education and receive the Advocate’s valuable “Thriving in Academe” guide, you must sign up for the NEA eAdvocate, a monthly email newsletter.

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Every new academic year brings challenges. From the current debates over free speech on campuses to the growing number of college students with anxiety, these challenges seem to get bigger every August. Often the answers can be found or developed in your collective bargaining agreement or through the collective action of union members. In this issue, we explore ten of these top issues, and also provide some ways that you and your union colleagues can step up to take on these challenges.
Administrative Bloat

Look around...see fewer faculty and staff colleagues, and more high-paid administrators? The number of executive and managerial employees on campuses rose 15 percent between 2007 and 2014, federal data shows. Spending on administration also has increased faster than spending on instruction, according to the Delta Cost Project. What can union members do about this? Track the numbers on your campus and share them publicly.

Student Anxiety

In 2016, nearly two-thirds of college students reported “overwhelming anxiety,” up from 50 percent just five years earlier, according to the National College Health Assessment. Nearly a quarter say it affects their academic performance. At the same time, colleges have been cutting the number of mental-health counselors. In the California State University (CSU) system, a California Faculty Association (CFA) analysis found that counseling jobs have been cut by 50 percent over the past 10 years. “It’s surreal...that the CSU doesn’t want to hire and retain experienced permanent mental health counselors,” CSU Stanislaus counselor Martha Cuan said. Recently, CFA leaders proposed a solution—a state law requiring the CSU to meet a minimum number of counselors. As of press time, the bill was approved unanimously in the state Senate.

Sexual Violence

Betsy DeVos’ Education Department is expected this fall to release federal guidance on campus sexual assault. This update will replace the rules DeVos issued last year, after rescinding the Obama-era guidance. In June, women’s rights groups sued DeVos, saying the rules she issued violate federal law and discriminate against victims of sexual assaults. Moreover, the DeVos rules have led victims to be less likely to report assaults, and colleges to be less likely to investigate them. According to a 2015 study, one in four college women experience sexual assault.

Free Speech

Finding a balance between free speech and the need for all students to feel safe is difficult—but since the 2016 election the task also has grown dangerous. At Middlebury College, a professor was concussed when protesters tried to silence a speaker. At UC Berkeley, riots before a speech by an anti-woman, anti-trans, right-wing darling injured at least six people. Yet, colleges risk litigation when they deny speakers. The University of Washington (UW) in June was ordered to pay $127,000 to College Republicans, who sued after UW tried to assess a
$17,000 security fee for a far-right rally. A path forward can be found in the United Faculty of Florida (UFF)’s response to a campus speech by Richard Spencer—the man who led the deadly, white supremacist march in Charlottesville, Va. UFF organized teach-ins and helped coordinate a deafening community response to Spencer. (UFF leaders explain how they did this at nea.org/thoughtandaction.)

7 Classroom surveillance

On the one hand, you’ve got institutions under pressure by state legislatures to produce more graduates with less state money. This may lead to new evaluation metrics, such as faculty members being sanctioned for “being tough on their grading,” notes a new NEA Almanac of Higher Education report. On the other hand, you’ve got students who feel empowered to record and/or post classroom interactions on social media or to ideological websites like Professor Watchlist. It’s no wonder that faculty members—and many staff, as well—feel increasingly surveilled. This is an issue that may be handled through the collective bargaining process. Some contracts forbid faculty surveillance without the written permission of the faculty member. Others deal with the issue of students secretly recording faculty. For examples, check out the 2018 Almanac article by Dougherty, Rhoades, and Smith at nea.org/almanac.

8 Immigration

The fate of the estimated 241,000 college students eligible for DACA—the federal program that shielded from deportation the undocumented immigrants brought to the U.S. as children—is still up in the air. While these students, known as Dreamers, anxiously wait for Congress to act, many faculty and staff unions are connecting Dreamers to resources. UMass Boston professor and activist Loan Dao has several words of advice: Make sure your college is protecting students’ privacy, and is transparent about its policies if ICE comes on campus; urge your congressional representative to support a clean Dream Act; and consider starting an immigrant student task force. “It may be the only safety net your students have,” she says.

9 Attacks on Unions

The Supreme Court’s 5-4 June decision in the anti-union Janus vs AFSCME case ruled fair-share fees unconstitutional for public-sector unions. Make no mistake: this is a win for the anti-union, pro-privatization forces that aim to kill unions and silence the collective voice of workers. Don’t let this happen. Get organized. Talk to your colleagues about why unions matter—and why your union matters, on your campus.

10 Tenure, tenure (and academic freedom)

For decades, the number of adjunct or non-tenured faculty has been rising. Administrators show little interest in changing this, even as research shows students benefit from sustained relationships with instructors. Meanwhile, some legislators want to strip tenure from those who have it, effectively killing academic freedom. In 2015, Wisconsin eliminated tenure from state statute. Last year, North Dakota made it easier to dismiss tenured faculty. This year, Missouri and Iowa bills aimed to end tenure. Effective lobbying by faculty killed those efforts—but they’ll return and union members must speak up.

Meanwhile, union members in Massachusetts have gone on the offensive with bills that would create pay parity between adjunct and full-time faculty and require public institutions to hire more tenure-track faculty so that 75 percent of all courses would be taught by tenure-track or tenured faculty. Adjuncts would be given priority in filling those jobs.
Engaging Students through Interactive Lecturing

Getting students to actively engage in their learning can be a challenge. Some faculty favor active learning to promote engagement, while others stand firm in their preference for lectures. How can we capitalize on interactive lecturing as a pedagogy of engagement?

Students face many demands for their attention, so getting them to actively engage in their learning can be a challenge. The pedagogies we choose, however, can help. Each instructional method has its merits, and also its features that detract from student learning.

Lectures, for example, can help faculty accomplish several goals—from presenting information students can’t otherwise access to synthesizing information to communicating enthusiasm. However, lectures also present some challenges to student engagement: It can be challenging for students to maintain full attention during long lectures; students may not be effective active listeners, or well-developed note-takers; and students can be tempted to task switch or “multitask.”

Active learning likewise can help faculty accomplish several goals, including improving classroom climate, providing opportunities to apply content, and creating space for reflection on learning. But these activities also present challenges that can interfere with student learning. These include: students can be resistant to active learning, and they may not understand the goal of an active learning activity and thus may not know how to center their attention and efforts. The learning environment can become noisy and distracting. And, additionally, students may not fully grasp what they have learned, detracting from their ability to self-regulate and reflect.

How do we choose the best pedagogy for engaging students in their learning?
Interactive Lecturing: Where the Twain Meet

In what has become a divisive scholarly discussion about the use of lectures and active learning in higher education, we have somehow cast these two pedagogies in opposition. Educators argue for either lecture or active learning. Researchers study the effectiveness of lecture versus the effectiveness of active learning. The problem with such constructs is that they are artificial. Lecture and active learning need not oppose each other. Indeed, many, if not most, faculty use a combination of both and are not particularly bothered by the question of whether they are lecturing or using active learning. Most researchers who study these methods, rather than comparing 100 percent lecture to 100 percent active learning, typically compare learning in lecture-only courses to lecture in lecture-and-active-learning courses; most have documented that the latter approach is more effective. We need not be pedagogical purists, engaged in a zero-sum game.

Interactive lecturing is a process for combining engaging lecture segments with selected active learning methods. This form simultaneously accounts for both what the instructor does to teach and what the students do to learn. It focuses on uniting and blending lectures and active learning into a seamless whole. The approach is useful for faculty who want or need to lecture but also aim to do more than transmit information. It allows instructors to help students engage in a structured and supportive learning environment that ensures they are active participants before, during, and after the lecture. The goal of interactive lecturing is

TALES FROM REAL LIFE > THE TEACHER TURNED LEARNER

Over the years, I have attended some wonderful lectures—intellectually stimulating and engaging. However, I recently attended one that was decidedly not. I arrived on time, after lunch, and was seated in the back row. The speaker dimmed the lights, turned on a slideshow, and began reading the very tiny slide text in a low, monotone voice. I confess: I slipped out the back door.

I have also had some rich active learning experiences, working with peers to accomplish more than I ever could alone—and some the opposite. At a recent event, I visited stations to learn about a teaching method. At the “discovery learning” station, I found a needle, cork, magnet, and bowl of water. No instructions. No learning goals. I lacked sufficient prior knowledge to have any inkling of the task (to build a compass, it turns out). I was irked, particularly at the instructor who refused to offer even minimal guidance. I believe that both lectures and active learning methods have something to offer learners, and I understand that the experiences I’ve described were flawed by design. But that knowledge didn’t make those experiences any better for me as a learner. What I have come to in my own teaching is a combination of lecturing and active learning.

Meet Claire Howell Major

Claire Howell Major is professor of higher education at the University of Alabama. With nearly three decades in higher education, she has taught across institutional types, including at a large urban community college, a two-year historically Black college and university, a two-year technical institution, a public 4-year university, and a large research university. She has authored and co-authored nine books, 30 journal articles, and six book chapters. A popular keynote speaker and workshop presenter, she and her co-authors Elizabeth F. Barkley and K. Patricia Cross have written four bestselling handbooks for college faculty published by Wiley/Jossey-Bass as the College Teaching Techniques series.
to harness the dynamics of active lecturing to support learning in lectures. Doing interactive lecturing well requires crafting lecture presentations that engage students. The goal is to spark curiosity and maintain it throughout the lecture, speak with enthusiasm and expertise, respect learners, share information in a well-organized, logical format, and conclude in a way that learners feel satisfied. Following are some suggestions.

**FIND A CENTRAL FOCUS.** Lectures that have a clear central focus have been documented to improve student learning. For an engaging presentation, set two or three clear goals for learning, and generate content specifically to support those goals. Avoid excessive details that can distract students from the most important points. In addition, consider how you will know whether students have understood the central focus and the key information from the lecture.

**HAVE A CLEAR FORMAT.** Lectures that are clear and organized have been shown to help students learn. For an engaging presentation, choose a recognized structure, such as a narrative or a most-to-least important point approach. In addition, use high-impact language, such as “the first issue I will discuss,” “the second issue I will discuss,” and so forth. This will help students follow your message effectively and efficiently.

**USE AUDIO-VISUALS AND HANDOUTS.** Slide decks have become standard fare in lecture courses, both onsite and online. Research shows that although students report that they enjoy slides, slide decks are not necessary for learning, and bad slides with too many details or distracting images can detract from learning. Use audiovisuals that support the presentation and make it more impactful, whether you choose slides, props, flipcharts, white boards, or other.

**LECTURE AND ACTIVE LEARNING NEED NOT BE IN OPPOSITION TO EACH OTHER.**

**CREATE A SUPPORTIVE CLASSROOM CLIMATE.** A supportive learning environment can improve student engagement in their learning. Climate is largely determined by the psychosocial relationships between and among the instructor and the students. To ensure an engaging presentation with a supportive climate, prepare adequately, work to generate enthusiasm and interest in learning ahead of the class session, set ground rules for participation, find strategies for helping students get to know each other and ensuring mutual understanding and respect, and actively manage the class session.

**ENSURE CLEAR COMMUNICATION DURING THE PRESENTATION.** The very title “professor” implies that communication is an important responsibility for college faculty. Effective instructor communication with students is critical to their engagement and satisfaction.

Yet faculty members often are not trained in professional verbal or non-verbal communication. For an engaging presentation, draw on professional tips for speaking, such as modulating and projecting your voice. Be intentional about taking questions, such as by asking students to think or write down questions before asking them. Wrap up the session in a way that summarizes and synthesizes salient points and signals closure.

Beyond striving for engaging presentations, those who choose interactive lecturing also should strive to make intentional use of active learning activities that can best support learning in lectures. The goal is to scaffold sophisticated learning strategies, encourage learners to seek deeper meaning, help them develop conceptual understanding, encourage them to use self-regulatory and metacognitive strategies, and foster their curiosity, interest, and enthusiasm. Following are some suggestions for using active learning techniques to support learning in lectures.

**USE ACTIVE LEARNING TECHNIQUES TO HELP STUDENTS PREPARE.** Research suggests that engaging students prior to presenting new information can improve students’ learning from the lecture. Such preparation makes learning during lectures more efficient and effective, as it provides students with the necessary background to understand new information; students frequently come to their studies lacking sufficient knowledge or even with misconceptions. Use active learning techniques to ensure that students prepare for a lecture by studying ahead.

**BEST PRACTICES > WHAT DOES INTERACTIVE LECTURING LOOK LIKE?**

Following are suggestions for active learning techniques (ALTs), adapted from *Interactive Lecturing: A Handbook for College Faculty*.

**Opening Bookends** comes before a lecture segment and helps students recall prior learning. In ALT 3, Update Your Classmate, students write to a real or fictional student who missed class a day earlier to describe the missed information and explain its importance to the upcoming lecture.

**Overlays** are used during a presentation to focus students’ attention. In ALT 13, Guided Notes, the instructor distributes a set of incomplete notes that students complete during the lecture.

**Interleaves** occur between lectures and provide time to process and apply information. In ALT 19, Think-Pair-Share, students consider a question related to the lecture; pair and then share. In ALT 21, Thick and Thin Questions, students write down two types of questions about the content.

**Closing Bookends.** In ALT 31, Lecture Wrapper, students write what they think were the three most important ideas; for comparison, instructors may reveal what they thought were the most important points.
accessing what they have learned so that they can build upon it, and using that knowledge to anticipate content.

**USE ACTIVE LEARNING TECHNIQUES TO HELP STUDENTS PAY ATTENTION.** Clearly students who are attentive during a lecture will learn more. Researchers who have examined the kinds of activities that help students pay attention during a lecture have found several strategies to be effective. In particular, use shorter lecture segments of about 15 minutes each. In addition, provide guidance on note taking and ask questions frequently to help students pay attention and listen actively.

**USE ACTIVE LEARNING TECHNIQUES SO STUDENTS APPLY INFORMATION.** The time between lecture segments can be used to provide students with opportunities to apply the information they just gained. Applying content, ideas, and information from lectures in ways that give it significance through rehearsal or application improves learning in lectures. Approaches such as discussion, problem-solving, peer teaching, and other techniques help students apply what they have learned to new situations and contexts.

**USE ACTIVE LEARNING TECHNIQUES TO HAVE STUDENTS SELF-ASSESS THEIR UNDERSTANDING.** Researchers have examined the relationship between self-assessment and reflection and student learning. Research on quizzes and their influence on retrieval, retention, and transfer, as well as research on the influence of metacognitive activities such as reflection, suggests that these are useful active learning approaches to support lecture learning. Use active learning techniques to help improve meta-cognition and self-regulation. Useful approaches include learning logs, journals, and sentence stems or other prompts for self-reflection on learning.

### ISSUES TO CONSIDER

**ARE THEY ENGAGED?**

Even when using the best possible instructional designs, it’s hard to know just how engaged students are at a given moment. Moreover, it can be particularly difficult to distinguish between compliance, where students do what they believe necessary to win a good grade or avoid a bad one, and authentic engagement, where they see a learning task as valuable and meaningful and truly strive to grapple with it. I suggest keeping the following questions in mind to gauge student engagement.

- **Do student behaviors signal authentic engagement?** Consider answers to the following questions: Do they attend class and arrive on time? Do they signal attention to you and to each other? Do they ask questions? Do they participate in class activities? Is it evident that they prepare for class and study for exams?

- **Do student attitudes signal authentic engagement?** If students are engaged attitudinally, they will demonstrate positive affective or emotional reactions to learning. Consider answers to the following: Do they demonstrate interest and satisfaction that signal their willingness to engage and participate? Do they appear to be curious, enthusiastic, and confident during lectures and active learning activities?

- **Do student cognitive approaches signal authentic engagement?** To gauge this type of engagement, consider your answers to the following: Do students strive to comprehend complex information they are hearing or exchanging? Do they critique it and formulate questions about it? Do they link new information to previously learned concepts? Do they link new information to their personal lives or to current events? Do they exceed stated requirements of a task or assignment? Do they self-assess to gauge their own understanding? Do they consider not only what they are learning but also how and how well they are learning?

Monitoring student engagement and adjusting accordingly is an ongoing task. Ultimately the most important indicator of whether students have actively engaged is their learning. Meaningfully assessing student achievement of the intended learning goals can provide a good indication of how active and engaged in their learning students have been.

### REFERENCES AND RESOURCES


Q: Our faculty members who work at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) appreciate your strong support. How can they convince more of your colleagues that their classrooms and labs need more federal resources and their students more federal support?

HBCUs have excelled at providing quality higher education for more than 150 years. Seventeen percent of all bachelor’s degrees and 24 percent of STEM degrees earned by African Americans are from HBCUs. We must constantly remind local, state, and federal representatives of the pivotal role these institutions play. Both public and private HBCUs have achieved this legacy in spite of persistent underfunding and other discriminatory practices. The disparity in public and private investment, coupled with the historic nature of many HBCU buildings, leave many HBCU facilities in dire need of repair or replacement. The HBCU Capital Financing Program was established over 20 years ago to provide a low-cost source of capital for these schools, but we must make sure the program can meet the needs of HBCUs today, and eliminate any barriers to participation that exist for some HBCUs.

Q: Many teachers are counting on Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF) to help erase the student debt they took on to become teachers, and many future educators will need PSLF to afford their careers. Yet, PSLF is on Betsy DeVos’ chopping block. What do you say to that?

PSLF was established by Congress to encourage individuals to take public service jobs. We know there are many jobs, often requiring multiple, costly degrees, that pay substantially better in the private sector than in the public sector. PSLF allows individuals to take those critical public-sector jobs knowing that even if they are forgoing a higher salary, they can expect eventual relief from their student loan burden. Providing loan forgiveness to the people who serve our communities comes with a price tag, but unless we are prepared to pay the market rate for critical public-sector jobs we should acknowledge that eliminating PSLF would exacerbate shortages and reduce the quality of public services for all Americans. We currently have a nationwide teacher shortage, so a proposal to eliminate a program that teachers rely on to stay in the profession is particularly short-sighted.

Q: The re-authorization of the federal Higher Education Act is long overdue. Your GOP colleagues have one answer: the PROSPER Act, which would cut PSLF and college affordability measures and loosen regulations around for-profit colleges. What’s your answer?

The so-called PROSPER Act is clearly the wrong answer. It cuts $15 billion out of federal student aid over the next ten years. In my conversations with constituents, I have never had anyone suggest that there is too much money available for students to go to college. The Democratic alternative will simplify the student aid system for students, while increasing the amount of available aid. House Democrats propose increasing the Pell Grant, allowing for student-loan refinancing, making two years of tuition-free community college available nationwide, and improving quality standards for higher education. Our alternative also addresses issues in higher education that the PROSPER Act ignored, including the needs of students with disabilities on campus, the expansion of support for foster and homeless youth in college, improving our higher education data systems to help students make informed choices, and much more.

U.S. Rep. Bobby Scott talks higher ed

As ranking member of the Committee on Education and the Workforce, Virginia’s Scott is leading the fight for access to high-quality higher education.
When you give your faculty and students the flexibility to move more and sit less, you can attract the best talent and build a positive culture.* It's easy to create an active workspace on your campus with contract-grade standing-desk solutions that work with your existing furniture and require little to no assembly.

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YOU CAN, AND SHOULD, look a gift horse in the mouth—especially when it comes to the millions of dollars that right-wing donors are infusing in public colleges and universities, said former NEA Executive Committee member Len Paolillo of Massachusetts’ Bridgewater State University.

With the support of the Representative Assembly, Paolillo directed NEA to publicize the need for disclosure of donor agreements at colleges and universities. He was motivated, he said, by the dangerous, “insidious” effects on classrooms and students by ideological, billionaire donors like the Koch brothers.

When donors get a say in who gets hired to teach and what gets taught, as Koch Foundation officials allegedly received at institutions including Florida State, George Mason University, and the College of Charleston, “it has implications long into the future,” said Paolillo.

YES, public colleges are hungry for money, especially since state funds have been cut. “But money at what cost? What are they selling?” asked Paolillo. “To take it to an extreme, they’re selling their souls.”

For more about these efforts, see unkochmycampus.org.

In other items relating to higher education, RA delegates also voted to:

- designate October as Higher Education Month;
- pilot a pipeline for male educators through higher education;
- continue to protect immigrant students on campuses, by helping state affiliates contend with harmful legislation and by providing resources and information directly to students.

Kristie Iwamoto, an English teacher at Napa Valley College and a board member of the California Community College Association, reminded delegates to the 2018 NEA Representative Assembly to focus on issues of racial and social justice.

“Conversations around equity issues can be tough, challenging, even hurtful. But they are necessary if we are serious about every child getting a quality education,” she said.
Union power! CFA opens doors for more students

A $364 million increase in state funding to the California State University system will open the doors of opportunity to an additional 4,000 students next year, thanks to the persistent efforts of California Faculty Association (CFA) members. Thousands of CFA members rallied at the Capitol this year, thousands more phoned and wrote letters to state lawmakers. CFA members even mounted a pop-up art installation at the Capitol to illustrate the thousands of California students who were turned away from CSU campuses because of state funding cuts. “While we are pleased at this outcome, we also know that the CSU has been turning away tens of thousands of eligible students for too many years. We know that the huge number of faculty forced to work on contingent contracts weakens the faculty’s ability to support and mentor students toward successful completion of their degrees. And, we know that state funding for the CSU is still not back to the pre-recession level,” said CFA President Jennifer Eagan. “That is why we will continue to advocate for increased funding for the CSU next year.”

Stunning layoffs & toxic workplace at Florida Poly

In late June, in a move that stunned faculty and staff, Florida Polytechnic University eliminated the positions of librarian and wellness counselor, thereby laying off the only Poly employee with knowledge of its digital library’s operations and the sole licensed mental health counselor on a remote campus. These were the seventh and eighth layoffs since the end of the spring semester that appear aimed at staff who have spoken up about safety problems, legal and ethical issues, and other problems plaguing the university. The layoffs have left faculty and academic support staff feeling demoralized and unsafe. In a recent survey conducted by the local faculty union, the United Faculty of Florida-Florida Polytechnic, before the current terminations, only 16 percent of faculty agreed with the statement: “I am able to openly express a dissenting opinion about the administration’s policies without fear of reprisal.” Students also have raised concerns about administrative pay raises and other issues. Instead of addressing those concerns, the Poly president called them immature.

Persistent Mizzou grad workers win court victory

The Coalition of Graduate Workers (CGW) moved closer to a collectively bargained contract this June, when a Missouri circuit court judge ordered the University of Missouri to recognize the union and bargain a contract. It has been three years since 84 percent of the university’s graduate students voted in favor of representation by CGW, an affiliate of Missouri-NEA, but the university has refused to recognize the union. CGW filed suit in 2016. In his decision, which he based on the state constitution and the common definition of the word “employee,” Judge Jeff Harris ruled that the Missouri grad students are employees—and that they have a union. Almost immediately, the university said it would appeal the judge’s decision. It’s “a hostile response,” union leader Eric Scott told the Columbia Daily Tribune. For three years, university officials have said they need legal clarification before sitting down with the union, said Scott. Now that they have that clarification—and still want to ignore it—their real goal is revealed. “You are trying to bust our union,” he said.

GETTING ORGANIZED: WHAT’S NEXT FOR UNIONS?

The Supreme Court’s anti-union decision in Janus v. AFSCME, eliminating fair-share or “agency” fees for non-members protected by union contracts, will make it more difficult for workers to come together and bargain collectively. But it certainly doesn’t mean the end of NEA or other public-sector unions, say union leaders from across the U.S.

“Regardless of the Supreme Court decision, we must remain united and make it clear that no court decision can stop our union,” says Denise Specht, president of Education Minnesota. “Neither this ruling nor the right-wing groups that will weaponize it, will silence the voices of Minnesota’s professional educators.”

The Janus case was bankrolled by right-wing, big-money groups who seek to silence workers, privatize public services, and weaken union power at the poles. In higher education, their goals include an end to tenure and academic freedom, and a corporate model of higher education that devalues critical thinking.

We will not make it easy for them. Already, NEA Higher Ed faculty and staff are organizing for strength on their campuses. For example, in June, United Faculty of Florida (UFF) members from 14 UFF chapters gathered to practice and learn skills to build membership and strengthen their unions.

Vadim Mahmoodian (above), a leader in the United Faculty of Florida (UFF)—Graduate Assistants United chapter at the University of South Florida, practices effective one-on-one conversations during UFF’s Summer Organizing Academy.
LORETTA RAGSDELL calls herself a “guerrilla educator.”

The first-ever NCHE Higher Educator of the Year said she educates at every opportunity — “the grocery store, the laundromat, Macy’s! I like to think I was born with a textbook in one hand and a lesson plan in the other.”

Ragsdell’s passion for education has taken her career from preschool classrooms to college, where she currently teaches English and writing in the City Colleges of Chicago (CCC).

“Loretta exemplifies what we want higher education in America to be,” said NEA President Lily Eskelsen García. “She has worked with thousands of students of color, many from low socio-economic backgrounds who often are the first in their families to go to college, helping them to reach their fullest potential. In her classrooms, she serves the American dream.”

At CCC, where Ragsdell is president of the part-time faculty union, Ragsdell has championed respect and fair wages for her colleagues. This spring, thanks to her persistence, the union won a contract that provides yearly retroactive bonuses ranging from 2 percent in 2012-13 to 10.4 percent in 2016-17, and also for more professional development.

In a speech to the NEA Representative Assembly, Ragsdell pointed to a number of “formidable challenges” that face public higher education today. “Someone has always had to be there to say, ‘Wait a minute, the university is a very special place. It’s not WalMart U…and students are not consumers—they are students. Someone had to be there to say: The pursuit of knowledge is a fundamentally different human activity than buying patio furniture.”

When CECIL CANTON was a child, “my mother taught my brothers and me that we should always stand up for justice whenever and wherever we encountered injustice in our lives,” said the Sacramento State professor and chair of the California Faculty Association (CFA)’s affirmative action caucus. “She taught us to stand up for justice, even if it meant we were the only ones standing.

“You can imagine my surprise at being recognized for doing what my mother told me to do!” said Canton, who was honored in July with NEA’s H. Council Trenholm Memorial Award for his decades of work to advance racial and social justice.

Canton, who was one of 12 recipients of a 2018 NEA Human and Civil Rights Award, was the engineer of the CFA’s affirmative action caucus, which has led efforts to transform the union into a powerful engine of anti-racism in the California State University system, where state funding has decreased as the student body has grown more diverse.

“If the CFA can be the tip of the spear in introducing anti-racism principles, then we can change the system so that everybody feels welcome in coming here and advancing as far as they can go…” he said. “If we’re not as inclusive as we want to be, we’re not as strong as we want to be.”

These days, as unions increasingly are under attack, “it’s all the more important to stand up for justice,” said Canton. “Let us remember that justice is everybody’s right and everybody’s fight.”
5 Graphs that Explain Why Students Pay So Much

**HINT:** It’s not faculty or staff salaries. NEA research consultant Suzanne Clery recently took a hard look at revenues and expenditures by public colleges and universities. And what she found is a clear shift by colleges and universities away from instruction and toward administration. Today’s students are paying more. But they’re not getting more instruction for their money.

**Yes TUITION HAS GONE THROUGH THE ROOF**

In 1995, the **AVERAGE COST OF ATTENDANCE** at a public 4-year institution was 20 percent of the median family income. In 2005, it was 35 percent. In 1995, the cost of attending a public 2-year college was 13 percent of the median family income. In 2005, it was 18 percent.

**Public Funds No Longer Pay FOR PUBLIC COLLEGES**

In 1995, **GOVERNMENT FUNDING** accounted for 36 percent of institutional revenues. In 2005, they covered 25 percent.

**COLLEGES ALSO ARE HIRING MORE Executives and Managers**

Between 1993 and 2015, the number of instructional staff on campuses grew 51 percent. The number of executive, administrative and managerial employees grew by 86 percent.

Put another way: The **RATIO BETWEEN EXECUTIVES/MANAGERS AND OTHER EMPLOYEES** has changed dramatically. In 1994, there were 8.2 instructional employees, 3.6 clerical employees and 1.9 service or maintenance employees per every administrator. In 2015, there were just 6 instructional employees, 2 clerical employees and 1.5 service or maintenance employees per administrator.

**Colleges Pay THOSE ADMINISTRATORS A LOT**

**AT COMMUNITY COLLEGES,** instructional staff was paid an average $66,355 a year in 2015, while administrative staff was paid $88,137.

**AT DOCTORAL-GRANTING UNIVERSITIES,** instructional staff was paid an average $89,550 annually compared to $106,559 for administrators.
FOR TWO YEARS I’ve been an organizer and now the president of a new faculty union in Illinois. The ongoing political and fiscal chaos in a state with a rabidly anti-labor governor, plus the challenges of forging a new union’s identity depleted me. Unions always have been an uphill battle and always will be. I know that, but it was my first time up the hill. Recently I wanted to reconnect with my roots as a union organizer and officer. I needed a visceral reminder of why we do this, as well as a reality check about how much others sacrificed to get us this far.

I loaded the dog into my car and set out.

First stop: Mt. Olive, Ill., where Mother Jones is buried. I opened a bottle of Bushmill’s and poured the ceremonial first shot on Mother’s grave, reciting, “Pray for the dead and fight like hell for the living.” I had a shot, too, and the dog sniffed the glass.

Next stop: Harlan County, Ky., the site of “Bloody Harlan” of the 1930s and the 1973-74 Brookside coal miners’ strike. I had mixed feelings about visiting Harlan County. Yes, miners here won their famous battles—twice—but management’s response was ruthless. I wondered if the place would feel evil. Ultimately, I had to go, out of respect for the women of Brookside, whose bedrock resolve carried the fight. As auxiliary members of the United Mine Workers, wives and daughters lay down in front of scabs’ cars, were shot at and jailed, and yet kept going. These women knew what my local also discovered on the way to our first contract: public opinion can assert as much pressure on management as jackrocks and explosives.

The Brookside strike happened the year I was born. The injustice and struggles in Harlan County are not academic history; they are the world I was born into. I wanted to stand in those places, breathe that air, and draw resolve of my own from it.

We think the abuses of the early 20th century are “history” but they aren’t. Look at the difference between CEO and worker pay today. Look at workers who hold multiple jobs because none pay well enough to live on. Look at jobs shipped overseas to exploit foreign workers and increase profits. The world hasn’t changed; we simply see it or understand it less.

Further, faculty aren’t so different from miners. We all want to be paid for our expertise and effort, to have health and retirement benefits, to hold management to its promises. Sure, we have things a Harlan miner could only dream about: Worker’s Compensation, paid vacation, no threat of physical injury or death—all won for us by unions. On the other hand, where I work salary is the second lowest in the state, we carry uncompensated overloads while positions sit unfilled, our nearly defunct healthcare recently forced us to pay both premiums and cost of care, and our pension is under threat. We saw unionized faculty doing better so we organized. We faced resistance from management and stewards. All of this was familiar to a miner. Times have changed but in some ways they haven’t.

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