

# AN OVERVIEW

by Con Lehane

**T**hought & Action comes you this fall, after a short hiatus, in a new, more readable, and we hope, more visually pleasurable design: a new layout, modernized typeface, and black and white line drawings throughout. Some things in the journal don't change, though, among them the concern our authors demonstrate for the quality of the teaching that occurs on our nation's campuses and the responsibility they feel for ensuring that the mission of the academic enterprise is fulfilled.

It amazes me that higher education faculty continue to be criticized for not paying enough attention to teaching. In the press, on the campaign trail, and in far too many state houses and governor's mansions, critics continue the old refrain despite the abundance of evidence that faculty care deeply about reaching students and communicating their own love of learning.

In this issue of *Thought & Action* alone, professors of chemistry, math, philosophy, art, literature, and writing share their thoughts and proposals for creating more dynamic classrooms and doing a better job of inspiring students with a love of learning. Mathematician Robert Case of Northeastern University seeks to bring passion to the teaching of math and foster student autonomy. NYU philosophy instructor Kathleen Hull, winner of the NEA Excellence in the Academy New Scholar Award, recognizes that passion is inherent in a true love of learning and revisits the Platonic discussion of *eros* and its meaning for those who teach with passion and hope to arouse a passion for learning in their students.

For another Excellence in the Academy winner, Lisa Rosowsky, a graphic design instructor at Massachusetts College of Art, the aim is to convey “the teacher’s view of the importance of finding—or making—work that fulfills.” The phrase, “*Niente senza gioia*,” invokes the spirit Rosowsky hopes to convey: “Nothing without joy.”

In the second section of *Thought & Action*, our authors take on a number of pressing issues confronting the profession. Henry Lee Allen, a regular contributor to *The NEA Higher Education Almanac* and a sociologist at Wheaton College who studies colleges and universities, complex organizations, and academic labor, looks to the future of American higher education, “the nation’s greatest intangible legacy,” and warns there are ominous signs on the horizon.

Jeff Lustig, a California Faculty Association activist and political scientist at California State University Sacramento, writes of “the coming conflict over academic workload” and the loss of faculty autonomy in the workplace to an overzealous management model embraced by a growing number of university administrations across the nation.

In his article, “National Implications of Local Union Activity,” Gary Rhoades, the director of Arizona State University’s Center for the Study of Higher Education, proposes better national coordination to both expand and enhance the collective bargaining process in higher education. Also in this issue, the “Confessions of a Mad Dog Grievance Representative” from Texas, a reflection on what can be gained from distance learning done correctly, a warning about a too-restrictive approach to protecting our shores from foreign students, and a look at a tenure-free university in Florida.

As always, the *Thought & Action* Review Panel has chosen articles it hopes will be of interest—and, more importantly, of use—to our members. The panel and I welcome your comments on the issues raised in this set of articles and urge you to consider continuing the discussions raised here, as well as beginning discussions around topics of your choosing, by submitting articles to us.

—*Con Lehane*