

THE UNION FORWARD

HCCC PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

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Letter From the PA President's Desk

Michael Ferlise

Dear Fellow Professional Association Union Members,

I write to you from our new PA newsletter, *The Union Forward*, with no shortage of pride or joy. We have accomplished so much *together* in the last three and a half years! The *Forward* represents an important continuation in that development and in our communication with each other as a burgeoning professional organization and independent faculty voice.

Even more, this newsletter represents your union's leadership willingness to hold ourselves accountable to you – to provide updates and accounts of our activities and their progress, to share our vision of our union and the noble place of our faculty and their work at *our* college. It is also a valuable platform for hearing from our faculty writing on labor, union, education, or any other issues that matter deeply to them... and therefore to us.

As your elected officials and representatives, we hold our own feet to the fire, as we expect our members will and should. Raising our demands and expectations on ourselves is a further step in our maturity as an active and effective professional organization and unified body.

We can all be proud that although small, we are a dynamic, highly organized and effective union on the move. Still growing in our ability to address whatever labor-related issues remain problematic and unresolved at our college, we are ready to meet whatever new ones come our way. Most importantly, we have only been as effective a force as we have through the extraordinary volunteer work, contributions, and devotion of you, our members – that is, through the solidarity and mobilization of the majority of our dues-paying members acting as productive representatives on committees and task forces, as chairpersons, negotiators, event promoters and more.

The large number of PA representatives on other college-wide committees aside, I recently tallied a total of 17 active PA committees - including ad hoc, subcommittees, and task forces. Not counting our executive officers committee, we have seven active *standing* committees with chairpersons and members providing services and events throughout each semester while preparing and scheduling new ones for the fall. Our Negotiation Prep Team alone included a total of eight subcommittees that worked on and completed a large number of contractual proposals for our current collective bargaining negotiations.

As a growing organization that has taken on ever greater tasks and responsibilities, we now have a number of important accomplishments behind us and welcomed challenges ahead.

Your leadership remains absolutely committed to negotiating and ratifying a new three-year collective bargaining agreement that will once again provide dramatic increases to our members' base salary and overall career earnings. Strengthening our union as a professional organization by providing release time for all executive officers now and in the future – which will be a first in the history of our union – is also an absolute priority. We have an unwavering moral commitment to the goals of both external parity with other similar two-year institutions and internal equity among our members by providing adjustments for rank and years of service.

We will soon have a spacious new union office on the lower level of the Journal Square library in room L003, in which all future PA business and meetings will take place. It is equipped with a conference table that seats 10, an ITV screen, and enough space for a small lounge area and corner desk.

Remaining responsive to our members' needs and protecting their rights, safeguarding the academic integrity of the classroom for us and our students, working productively and collaboratively with our college administration to continuously improve the cultural life of our college and its mission constitutes who and what we are as a collective professional body.

As much as we have already accomplished and are prepared to accomplish, I sincerely hope that years from now members old and new will look back on our accomplishments during these rich and promising times and see this *not* as the height of our union's development, but only its earliest *beginnings*. Only we, unified and together, will make it so!

In solidarity,

Michael Ferlise

HCCC Professional Association President

Chicken Salad on Rye

The Story of the First HCCC Union

Harvey Rubinstein

In September 1979, the Hudson County Community College Commission (HCCCC) hired its first full-time faculty. HCCCC had been established a few years earlier as a “contract college,” whose mission was to place students at other local colleges, Stevens Tech, St. Peter’s College, and Jersey City State (now NJCU), for study toward Associate’s Degree Programs, all at the discounted HCCCC tuition rate. Then, as now, many students needed developmental education and ESL, and this had been handled by contractual arrangements with either St. Peter’s or Essex County College. During the previous summer, the contract talks fell through, and HCCCC scrambled in mid-August to assemble its own developmental-ESL faculty for the approaching Academic Year. I was teaching as an

adjunct that summer and was taken on, along with about a dozen others, on a temporary one year contract. I couldn’t have known then that most of this core group would become decades-long colleagues and some of my best friends.

We all worked together at HCCCC’s one Jersey City building at 2737 Kennedy Blvd., half a block down from the VIP Diner. We had 5 classrooms, a group office with a ditto machine, and shared desks. We were often reminded that we were on a one-year contract, and that we would be wise to be “seen but not heard.” We were also informed that because of Hudson’s Commission status (the 4th C), we were not covered by N.J. Statutory Code—tenure, state-sponsored benefits, pension plan—all these applied to faculty at the state and



2737 Kennedy Blvd

1980

county Colleges, but not us. Still, it was a good teaching job and we enjoyed a merry camaraderie.

Our little office brimmed over with jokes, puns, stories and laughs. Our contract was extended, and we received generous annual raises, comparable to the faculties at the other county colleges—most of them



Dinneen Hall
1980

unionized and represented by the NJEA. About 3 years in, after HCCC was recognized by the state as a bona fide college, we were all surprised to receive a promotion from Instructor to Assistant Professor and a corresponding increase. It wasn't something we had asked for—but was given as a token of appreciation from the college president.

Our president in those first years was a courtly man with sufficient academic credentials to sit with his peers on statewide presidential committees. He owned race

horses, and his initiative to develop the Culinary Arts Institute was founded to supply chefs and other professionally trained staff to the Pegasus restaurant at the Meadowlands Racetrack and to nearby hotels.

We didn't see much of him because the administrative offices were far north of 2737, on Tonelle Avenue and 86th Street in North Bergen. But he would visit us every Spring for a pep talk. Apart from handshakes and hellos, we were reminded to keep quiet. I remember at the end of one such session, the President

looked the room over and asked, "Any questions?" Slowly, very slowly, one of us raised a hand. Time stood still. The President stiffened his jaw and with a stern half-nod, bid him speak. "So, who do you like in the Derby?" to relief all around.

When the President retired, a new administrative team swept in, led by county political insiders. Their leadership was heavy-handed, and seemed to us little concerned with the educational mission of the college. Thus began a three-year battle with the NJ Department of Higher Education over the college's charter and accreditation. As a united faculty of about 15, we reached out to the NJ Chancellor of Higher Education in a successful effort to demonstrate that, despite the dubious character of HCCC's administrative leadership, the faculty was legit and our students fully deserving of the education we worked to provide. We also spoke out on college policy—though we had



HCCC Students Attend Classes
1980

no recognized role in governance—and unsurprisingly became the target of harassment and threats. When the administration announced major cutbacks in ESL classes and the planned termination of the full-time ESL instructors, we protested, resulting in an announcement of impending across-the-board firings, with all faculty, counselors, and others receiving pink slips.

Now what was especially interesting was that many of us had worked as full-time faculty for five years or more, long enough to be tenured by NJ statute. It was time to find out—were we protected by the state code, even when the college had always insisted otherwise? I offered to call the NJEA, which eagerly agreed to research the matter for us. I arranged for a clandestine meeting with a Union rep at an “undisclosed location,” picking Jersey City’s classic Miss America Diner on West Side Avenue below the Jersey City State campus. Walking into the Miss America, I felt like I had stepped into a John LeCarre novel, but instead of caviar, blini, and vodka, we were soon sitting over chicken salad sandwiches and rice pudding, as I recall. The NJEA Rep assured me that legal research had turned up no “commission” exception—that by statute those of us with 5 years of full-time service were already tenured in the eyes of the state,

and that the NJEA would go to bat for all of us if we faced retaliatory actions.

From this point, the decision to organize the faculty as an NJEA unit was an easy one and went smoothly. The college didn’t fight our organizing effort—no surprise there, since county politics was accustomed to working hand-in-hand with union rank and file. Within months, the HCCC Professional Association was negotiating our first collective bargaining agreement.

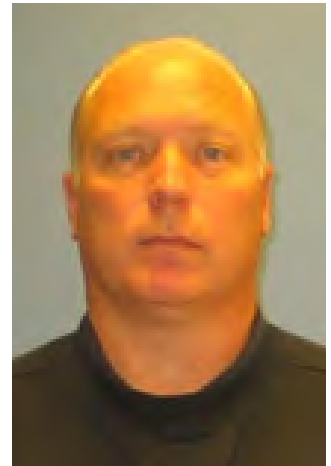
Professional Association Presidents from Present-1988



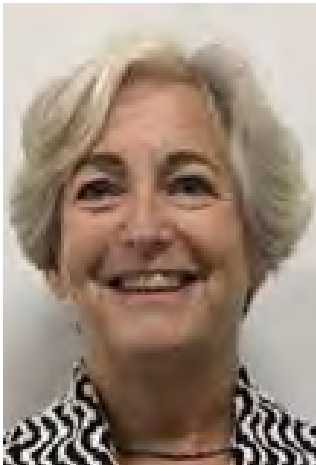
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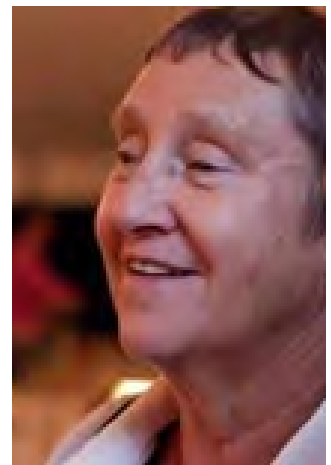
Chris
Drew



Cathie
Seidman



Lloyd
Khan



Elaine
Foster



Judith
Butler



Arlene
Weiss



Theodore
Kharpertian

New Tenure Announcements

Bernard Adamitey



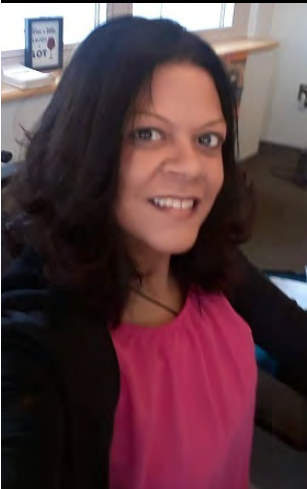
Bernard Adamitey is an Instructor of Academic Foundations Mathematics. He started his career with Hudson County Community College as a full-time tenure-track instructor in 2018. He holds a master's degree in applied mathematics from CUNY College of Staten Island and a bachelor of science degree in computer science and mathematics from CUNY Hunter College. Bernard is known for engaging his students and making them feel comfortable in the learning process. He is an active member of many HCCC committees, has attended numerous professional development activities, and is a member of the Mathematics Association of Two-year Colleges in New Jersey.

Mohammad Qasem



Mohammed Qasem is an Instructor of Physics. Mohammed came to Hudson County Community College as an adjunct instructor of mathematics and computer science in 2012. In 2017, he was hired as a full-time, tenure-track instructor in the STEM division. He teaches physics, chemistry, and mathematics courses. Mohammed holds a master of science degree in physics from the University of Alabama, and his bachelor's in physics and economics from the University of Jordan. He plays an active role in the modification and continuous improvement of our physics program. He is an active member of the All College Council, General Education Committee, and the student success action plan for Achieving the Dream.

Gilda Reyes



Gilda Reyes began her career at Hudson County Community College as an adjunct Instructor of Speech in 2002. After serving several semesters as a temporary full-time instructor, she was hired as a tenure track instructor in 2018. She also coordinates speech in modern languages and communication studies. Gilda is passionate about the Hudson County community as she was born and raised in Jersey City, and she is the daughter of immigrant parents from the Dominican Republic. Gilda holds a master of arts and TESOL from Teachers College, Columbia University, and a bachelor's degree in psychology in Latin American Studies from Fordham University. She is an active member of College committees and is currently a member of the National Communication Association.

Suggested Reading

Skim, Dive, Surface:

Teaching Digital Reading

by *Janae Cohn*

Karen Hom-Galli



Smartphones and tablets are becoming the most accessible and portable way for students to

access readings. Over 60% of college students use a smart device to complete their academic work at least once a week.

Janae Cohn makes a case for higher education to review and implement new techniques for reading that would align with generations of students who read "on-screen" all the time. Whether we like it or not, students need to learn how to navigate critical thought and inquiry in these digital mediums.

Cohn discusses how instructors can scaffold and teach effective digital assignments, helping students expand reading techniques for hard copy materials to engaging deeply with digital texts.

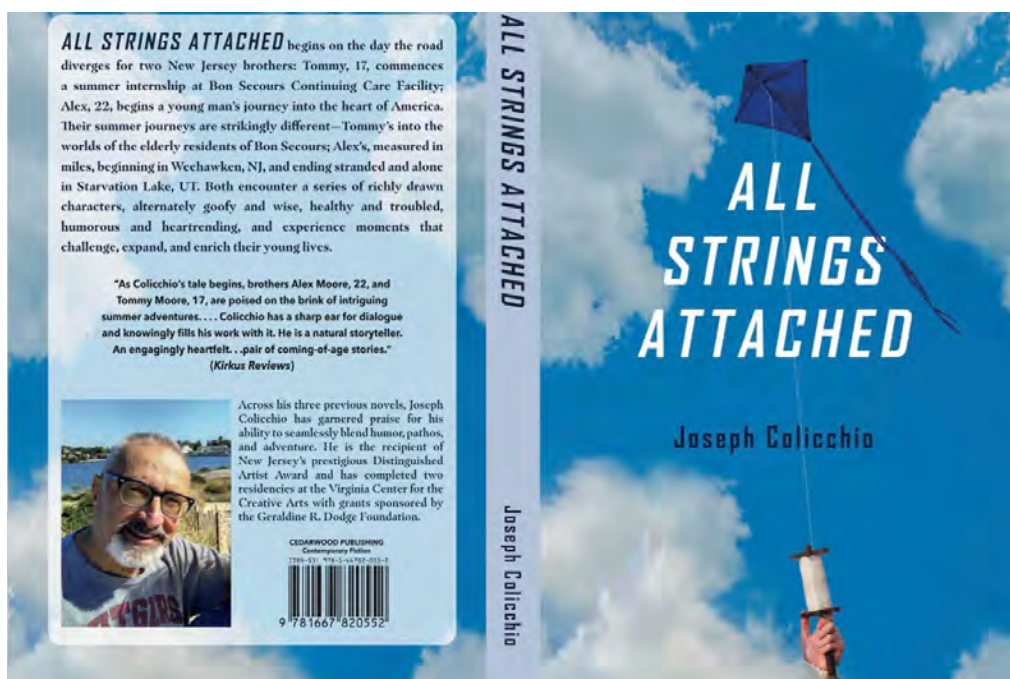
Book Announcement

All Strings Attached - Joe Colicchio

Joe Colicchio, former HCCC Associate Professor of English, has a new novel ALL STRINGS ATTACHED, coming out with an official release date of June 7th.

"As Colicchio's tale begins, brothers Alex Moore, 22, and Tommy Moore, 17, are poised on the brink of intriguing summer adventures [Colicchio] is a natural storyteller . . . An engagingly heartfelt pair of coming of age stories"

-Kirkus Reviews



"I was so worried much of the time and when I wasn't worried, I was laughing. . . . Really a super book!"

-Mary Jane Nelson, *Breadloaf Bakeless Prize Winner*

"Regardless of which of his luminous characters takes center stage . . . and regardless of whether the action is comedic, tragic, uplifting, or foreboding, the reader always feels they are in an entirely familiar world, one tied by love and our shared human condition."

-Mary Ann McGuigan, *National Book Award Finalist*

The book (print and e-book versions) will be available on Amazon and other online book vendors.

Through the months of June and July, he will be doing a number on on-line, remote readings. Dates and times for readings to be announced.

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Feedback, Questions, or Want to submit for The Union Forward?

Contact the editorial team at eadamson@hccc.edu

Pictures given courtesy of Michael Ferlise, HCCC Libraries, and HCCC Communications