



Keeping the promise of free community college Support staff in higher education rise to the new challenge

President Barack Obama started a movement when he announced America's College Promise in his 2015 State of the Union address.

In the nearly two years since Obama called on Congress to make the first two years of higher education free, six states have enacted Promise programs and another 10 legislatures are moving in that direction.

No state has moved as aggressively as California. At least 20 programs throwing open community college doors were introduced in 2016, raising the state's total to about 30.

In February, the **San Diego Community College District** announced it would waive course fees for 200 students as part of a pilot program at Mesa, City, and Miramar Colleges this fall. The program covers unit fees and provides up to \$1,000 for books and supplies.

The San Diego students must carry at least 12 units in both semesters, maintain a 2.0 grade point average, and contribute eight hours of community service. To help students succeed, they are assigned to "First Year Experience" counselors.

Student Services Assistant Tavaris Ray Franklin, said, "The process of 'onboarding' to a college is hard for anyone, but the one-on-one relationship helps smooth the path."

The district hopes to triple the number of Promise students by spring semester. At the City College Outreach Office,

Tavaris and other student services staff are busy organizing workshops at local high schools to help seniors fill out Promise applications and find answers to questions about financial aid and other enrollment issues.

In September, Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti announced

the 30,000 graduates from Los Angeles Unified in 2015 went on to attend one of the nine campuses in the college district.

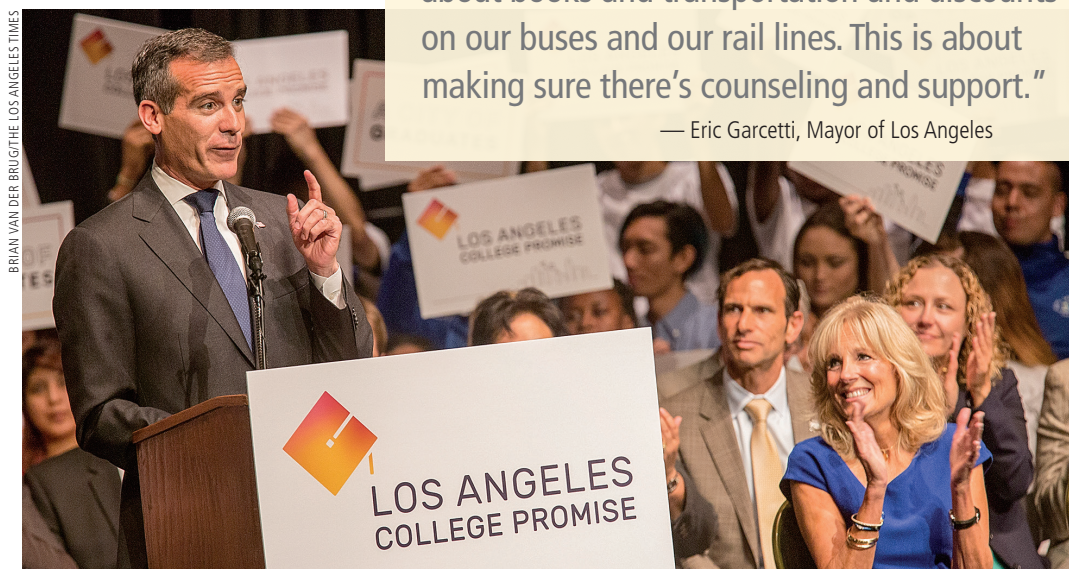
To date, the only stated eligibility requirements are that the

Based on the launch of other Promise programs, her concerns may be realistic.

When the **State of Oregon** budgeted \$10 million to cover 10,000 students at its 17 com-

"This is about more than just tuition. This is about books and transportation and discounts on our buses and our rail lines. This is about making sure there's counseling and support."

— Eric Garcetti, Mayor of Los Angeles



Mayor Eric Garcetti speaks as Jill Biden, right, herself a community college instructor, looks on at Los Angeles City College, where the mayor introduced the "Los Angeles College Promise" on September 14.

that the **Los Angeles Community College District**, the state's largest college district, was making the same "promise" to local high school graduates.

"This is about more than just tuition," Garcetti said. "This is about books and transportation and discounts on our buses and our rail lines. This is about making sure there's counseling and support."

The L.A. College Promise is expected to cost \$3 million the first year. More than 11,000 of

student be a graduate of a city high school or designated charter school, and carry at least 12 units at a city college.

L.A.'s Promise is scheduled to start next fall, but the head of the College Staff Guild, Velma J. Butler, says there has been no discussion about changes in staffing or training to meet an expected surge in enrollment.

Butler wants the college district to study lessons other districts have learned about hiring, training, and budgeting.

munity colleges this academic year, more than 12,000 students applied. Although the state still charges \$50 a term, officials predict the Oregon Promise will boost enrollment by 25 percent.

"I feel like we've been playing catch-up from the beginning," said Roberto Suarez, the Promise coordinator at Portland City College. He said part of the problem was inevitable, learning the regulations

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Black Lives Matter conversation engages, unites

“WHEN WE SAY Black Lives Matter, we’re saying that we need an agenda that puts our lives right up there with everyone else’s,” said Christopher Wilson, from Alliance San Diego, a group mobilizing for change in low-income communities and communities of color.

Wilson spoke at the Classified Conference on



San Francisco’s Janet Eberhardt, top, and Christopher Wilson from the San Diego Alliance, who led the discussion.

October 8, before attending the funeral for Alfredo Olango, a black man killed by police in nearby El Cajon.

“Don’t be offended by Black Lives Matter — what we’re say-



ing is that we are important too. It’s not an exclusive statement,” he explained.



JANE HUNDERMARK

“It does not say care about us and not anyone else. It says care about me like you care about others.”

Many classified employees spoke in support of Black

Lives Matter. A Lawndale

San Francisco para named Member of the Year

TOM HARRIMAN has been a special education paraprofessional for 30 years at Lowell High School, escorting students into the community to help them develop independence and effective work habits.

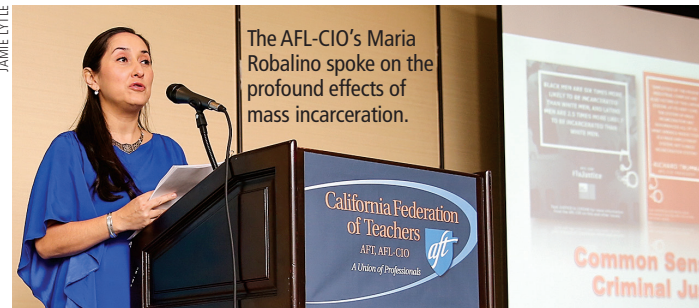
Harriman has represented paras on the executive board of United Educators of San Francisco for 15 years, and serves on the CFT Special Education Committee. He stays abreast of local union resolutions, city and state politics.

“Whenever we need someone to lobby, Tom is ready, and he is one of our go-to paras when we need phone bankers,” said Carolyn Samoa, UESF vice president for paraprofessionals. “The only time he will say no is when it interferes with his students.”



Tom Harriman

RUSS CURTIS



The AFL-CIO’s Maria Robalino spoke on the profound effects of mass incarceration.

member in a family with both interracial marriages and police officers praised the movement, but asked for protection of the police too.

“How are we going to make it that police officers are not all bad? How is your organization

going to work with police?”

Wilson responded, “Your question assumes I have to do something different than be myself. When I get pulled over, I just pray that I have the demeanor to not get killed. There is nothing I can do to live through that situation if that cop is having a bad day.”

Velma Butler, president of the Los Angeles College Staff Guild said, “I have African American police in my family. They are going through the same hell as everyone.”

Butler summed up the discussion: “Thank you for saying what so many of us have a hard time saying. This is a white problem, a black problem, an Asian problem, a Latino problem.”

Classified win family sick leave and grants to become teachers



CLASSIFIED EMPLOYEES took two giant steps forward in Sacramento during 2016 after the CFT shepherded four

bills through the state Legislature that address staff priorities. Gov. Jerry Brown signed two of the bills.

AB 2122 appropriates \$20 million over five years to encourage classified employees to return to school and become teachers. Grants from

the **California Classified School Employee Teacher Credentialing Program** to districts and county offices of education will provide up to \$4,000 annually to staff seeking a bachelor’s degree and credential.

Already, Ventura County reports that about 140 classified employees have signed up for teacher grants through their county office of education. Staff will be allowed do their student teaching during work time, and some universities are offering a 15 percent reduction in tuition.

AB 2393 provides paid family leave for staff and community college faculty. Assemblywoman Nora Campos (D-San Jose) championed the bill that provides a balance between family and work for all employees. Campos’ bill provides full- and part-time staff in K-12 and community college up to 12 weeks of **paid parental leave for both new mothers and fathers.**

“Gov. Brown agrees that school employees should not have to choose between bonding with their new-

borns and having enough money to pay their bills,” Campos said.

Brown wasn’t as generous, however, with two bills that have remained out of classified employees’ reach for years. The governor vetoed AB 2197, which would have extended unemployment insurance to staff during summer and other extended periods when school is not in session, and AB 1878, which would have helped staff cope with rising funeral costs by tying the CalPERS death benefit to inflation.

Pasadena College staff contribute to Top Ten ranking

INSTRUCTIONAL SUPPORT staff members of AFT Local 6525 were proud to learn that The Aspen Institute had named their school, Pasadena City College, one of the 10 best community colleges in the country. The institute bases its assessments on a rigorous analysis of student performance and achievement data.

The prize jury said, "The college has made incredible strides in closing the achievement gap for minority students, especially in science, technology, engineering and mathematics fields. Not only are the STEM programs dominated by Latino students, but women and first-generation students are also highly represented."

AFT steps up support for Native American educators

ROBERT CHACANACA and about 20 other AFT members from Hawaii, Alaska, the Midwest and Southwest attended the recent National Indian Education Association convention and trade show in Reno, Nevada.

The convention included scores of professional development workshops, as well as a timely presentation on the Standing Rock Sioux tribe's historic fight to stop construction of an oil pipeline across North Dakota.

Chacanaca — a member of the Kupa tribe who heads the Santa Cruz Council of Classified Employees, AFT Local 6084 —



COURTESY NIEA

said the AFT stepped up its support for the NIEA last year, when President Randi Weingarten was the keynote speaker at the annual convention.

The result, Chacanaca said, has been "more Native awareness within the AFT."

Classified employees play a key role, he said, in "schools where there are Native teaching aides, food service staff and office personnel, but not necessarily Native teachers."

The AFT also represents school employees on large reservations run by the federal Bureau of Indian Education, a part of the overarching Bureau of Indian Affairs. Union members run the gamut from staff to instructors.

Chacanaca said the majority of Native students in California attend local public schools, with rising percentages in the far southern and northern reaches of the state.

Local Contract Wins

■ **Tuolumne County Special Educators Federation** and the **Tuolumne Council of Classified Employees** won 4 percent pay raises at the negotiating table.

■ **Cuesta College Classified United Employees** negotiated a 3 percent on-schedule raise for everyone and 1.8 percent off schedule.

■ **Ventura County Federation of School Employees** won back-to-back annual 3 percent raises.

■ **Gilroy Federation of Paraprofessionals** won a 3 percent pay raise retroactive to the beginning of the school year; improved monthly stipends for paraprofessionals in special day classes and severely handicapped classrooms; and reimbursed licensing fees for paras assigned to the state preschool.

Staff take lead in disaster preparedness

EVERY FALL, the College Staff Guild meets to address on-the-job and political issues in the Los Angeles community colleges. This year, more than 200 members of AFT Local 1521A took on another challenge: disaster preparedness.

Fifty survival packs were raffled, members heard from preparedness experts at the Red Cross and they committed to work with their campus emergency response committees as part of shared governance.

And what do the experts say? Being prepared when trouble hits greatly raises the odds of survival. Here are three easy steps to take now:

- Keep a pair of shoes by



COURTESY LOCAL 1521A

Local 1521A raffled 50 survival packs.

your bed. Cut feet were the second-most common injury in the Northridge earthquake.

- Store one gallon of water per person per day. A family of four, for example, will need 28 gallons for seven days.

- Memorize the phone number of a trusted person in another state to report your location and condition during an emergency.

Classified Calendar

January 10 is the deadline for high school seniors to apply for **CFT Raoul Teilhet Scholarships**.

Leadership Conference: Politics & Policy will be **February 1-2** at the Holiday Inn Sacramento Capitol Plaza.

Council of Classified Employees meets on **February 10** at the Sheraton Gateway Los Angeles.

Committees meet on **February 11**.

CFT Convention will be held **March 31-April 2** at the Sheraton Grand Sacramento. Ask your union when delegate elections will be held.

AFT Paraprofessional and School-Related Personnel Conference is slated for **April 27-30** in Detroit. Learn more at aft.org.

Council of Classified Employees will meet on Friday, **May 5** at the Hyatt Regency LAX. **State Council** convenes on **May 6**.



Props 55 and 58 sail to victory

IN LAST MONTH'S General Election, the CFT's top priority – **Proposition 55** – passed with a 24-point margin. Prop 55 will ensure continued funding to public education at the rate of roughly \$8 billion a year by maintaining an existing income tax on the wealthiest Californians through 2030. A Prop 55 victory was critical to avert layoffs, program cuts or elimination, and increased student fees at community colleges.



SANDRA WEESE

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Proposition 58 sailed to an even larger victory margin: 45 percentage points. This measure repeals 1998's Proposition 227,

which mandated English-only language education for most California students. With Prop 58's overwhelming passage, parents and dis-

tricts can work together to choose how to best teach English learners, whether in English-bilingual, or other types of programs.

INSIDE!

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Classified Insider

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The Oregon Promise provides lessons for California

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as they were being rewritten.

Suarez's AFT Local 2277 negotiates two contracts for college employees; one covers faculty and the other covers two groups of staff — advisors and financial aid personnel.

Financial aid staff have been coping with new rules and requirements for reporting and awarding aid that are continually evolving.

Academic advisors are going through the biggest shift in daily work methods. Suarez said the college has adopted an "intentional advising" model of counseling. Instead of the "drop in" model, every Promise student meets regularly with a designated advisor, who reviews their progress.

The Promise program has

SNAPSHOT

Free community college in AFT-represented districts

San Diego: In February, the community college district announced it would waive the course fees of 200 high school students for fall semester as part of a pilot project at City College, Mesa College and Miramar College.

Long Beach: High school graduates are guaranteed a tuition-free year at Long Beach City College, and if they meet minimum academic requirements, they're assured admission to Long Beach State.

Los Angeles: In September, the mayor announces L.A. Promise for the state's largest district, the nine-campus Los Angeles community colleges.

Central Valley: Coalition of education leaders crafts program to provide high school students a free semester at Reedley College or Fresno City College, with the guarantee of a spot at Fresno State if they meet requirements.

San Francisco: In November, city voters approve Prop W to raise transfer taxes on the sale of luxury properties over \$5 million and use the revenue to make City College free to residents for the first time since 1983.

increased funding to cover the need for more skilled advisors, although, Suarez added, "Because of our size, it has been difficult to

implement the program across the system. However, the new opportunities for students make it worth the extra effort."

California Federation
of Teachers 
AFT, AFL-CIO
A Union of Professionals

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