



Coast Federation of Classified Employees

AFT Local 4794

A Union of Professionals



To the Coast District Community:

From the Merriam-Webster Dictionary a definition of equity:

“a) justice according to natural law or right; specifically: freedom from bias or favoritism and b) something that is equitable”. Example: “In making these decisions we should be governed by the principle of equity.”

I have worked in higher education since 1995 in various roles: management, expert, trainer, quality auditor, teacher, professional staff, innovator. My work has always involved a high degree of collaboration in order to achieve the best possible outcome for the organization. Inherent in collaboration is productive communication, which requires a culture of mutual respect for what each person brings to the table and a common belief all are present to serve students in the best possible way.

Sadly, these tenets are not evident in the culture of the Coast District community today, but they certainly were when I hired in at Coast, and it was for me a wonderful surprise and great fit for my work. The hierarchical structure that is in place at present is due to contractual obligations. What is also present but not a contractual obligation is a pervasive condescending attitude towards the Classified Staff which has created a state of inequity in the awarding of pay and benefit increases to all groups except the Classified Staff.

The lack of equity and respect is evident most frequently by how Classified Staff are referred to: classified staff. Research reveals many, many other higher education institutions instead refer to this group as Classified Professionals. The implied being that there is respect for this classification of employees. There are very few jobs for Classified in this district that don't require specified training or degree(s). Coast District job postings Required Qualifications list many expected skills for potential candidates – doesn't this also mean the District expects to be hiring professionals?

That is just the most common indication of the level of respect for the work done by Classified. Some of the less common but well-noted are where Classified are not asked to be present for or to contribute to. (Read: inequitable) At District Board meetings the President of Academic Senates for all three colleges sit at the Board table, but not the Classified Senate Presidents. Not invited. For the upcoming Accreditation process all administrative and management-level Steering Committee Members were funded to be trained in the process and audit procedures, visiting other colleges to ensure their college Self Evaluation is created properly. The only members of the Steering Committee not involved in the training were Classified staff. For the Compensation Study, the vendor spoke with Administration and Management groups to secure input. Classified Senates were not among the groups they interviewed.

The pervasive disrespect, intentional or not, is disheartening and reduces morale in a tangible way – especially for those who have worked at Coast District long enough to have known a very different and inclusive culture. As an optimist, I remain hopeful that the integrity of the Coast District decision-makers carves a path towards equity among all employees.

Respectfully,





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May 12, 2017

Dear Board Member,

My name is Colleen Hime and I've worked for the District for 11 years. I work in the Regional Testing Center on the Golden West College campus and do all the Live Scans for the entire District. I have fingerprinted nearly all the new hires from Chancellor Andy Dunn to the RN students, Criminal Justice Police Academy cadets, and summer time swim instructors for GWC and OCC not to mention for the Orange County Community as well. And that is just part of my job, on the side, so to speak. The main part of my job is registering students for their State Nurse Assistant Certification exams and we test thousands of Nurse Assistants every month. When I first came to this District and to Golden West College I was thrilled to be working on such a beautiful campus. The atmosphere was so positive and peaceful. Everyone that I encountered both at Golden West and at the District was extremely nice and helpful and there was a definite sense of unity and belonging. Everyone was working together towards a common goal. It was a refreshing change and I actually looked forward to coming to work every day. It stayed that way for a while and even when the budget crisis hit and we lost some positions and everyone had to take on extra work and take furlough days, we were still all connected and shared the burden as a group and as a college family. I never felt as if there were sides or divisions. The managers, faculty, classified and District employees were all on the same team.

Fast forward to now. With a theme of "Equity" surrounding everything we do now, there is suddenly a huge rift and separation between classified staff, faculty, managers and the District. As everyone has received a raise, including the board of trustees, we are still receiving basically the same pay that we did back in 2010 and maybe earlier. We are asked to attend workshops (mandatory) so that we can learn what equity means and how to apply it in our everyday work to help the students feel welcome and safe and not discriminated against. Yet we (classified) are not treated with anything close to equity. In order to implement a study that the District wanted to conduct, we are now asked to give things up from our contract. In order for us to be paid a fair and competitive wage, we have to pay more for our benefits and have our retirement affected as well. No other group in the District has had to give anything up or choose between the quality and cost of Healthcare and a fair wage. They are all already receiving their rightful wages and have not given up anything nor have they been asked to. According to the definition of "equity" this treatment is nowhere near equitable. The cost of living in Orange County has increased each consecutive year and yet our rate of pay is still the same as it was back in 2010. So we struggle to pay our bills, put food on the table and care for our families while devoting our lives to the Coast District and the students who attend here. An article I just read in the OC Weekly raved about the Coast Community College District and all three of its campuses. We are in the top in the Nation and we wouldn't be there without the dedication and perseverance of the classified staff. There are people who may not have been able to start their work here in the District had I not fingerprinted them at a discounted rate only available to District employees and students. We deserve to be treated with respect and appreciated. We need to live by example and the example I see from the District is one of disrespect, inequality and just plain bad manners. I do not feel equity towards myself, my job or my future here with Coast District.



I am now reminded of the Book and Movie “The Hunger Games.” The great “District” is playing a game with our lives. Will we now have to fight and battle for our mere existence? Will we be pitted against each other in the end? All we are asking for is fair and equal treatment and we deserve that and so much more. We are worth it. How can we continue to support our students and campuses when we ourselves are being held back, pushed down and thrown to the wayside? We are people just like you, educated, skilled and compassionate people. Treat us as you would like to be treated. That is all we ask. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely and respectfully,

Colleen Hime



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Dear Board member:

My name is Dave Sams and I've worked for the District for 28 years. Never have I seen such a lack of regard for classified employees. I work daily helping students get the information they need to move from Coast Colleges to the next step of their education. I make sure all the media equipment necessary to deliver a high quality education is at Coast Colleges, working properly, and available to instruct all students to reach their Goals at Coast.

I have been a direct benefit of the Coast Health Care provisions. I survived Cancer in 2011 to return and continue my service to students through my assigned duties. I have been beat down by District changes that seem to indicate that my work is either unnecessary or misunderstood as they continue to lower my grade but increase my work scope and load with building projects. I'm just as invested in the success of our students as those who work in other groups and feel that I should have the same health benefits for the same cost as everyone else. The tactics of suppression by District negotiations team seem to be moving us toward a strike or other labor action to hopefully restore equity and balance to this structure.

Respectfully,

Dave Sams





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Dear Board Members,

I've been at Coastline since 2006. I currently serve on the executive board for the Coastline Classified Senate.

Last September, Crystal Crane from District Human Resources led us in a one day retreat to start off our year. Crystal encouraged us to take pride in our new roles and to put out positive energy so others could see that serving on the Classified Senate board is a worthy venture and want to join us. One activity that day was to define successful leadership.

“What are the qualities of success?” Crystal asked us.

We came up with, “Inclusiveness, cooperation, building those around us up without pulling others down, overcoming challenges, pulling together, building on strengths, engaging, approachable, understanding of our culture and what others do, working to achieve goals to better the institution.”

We tried to embody these values for ourselves and our colleagues throughout the year. Our board called upon our fellow classified professionals to join college committees, attend meetings, support fundraisers, and get involved. We are contributing to the accreditation self-study. We took our places at the shared governance table.

The struggle to have the District's compensation study implemented and give us raises without more takeaways to our contract is discouraging. The District wants Classified to agree to changes to our healthcare benefits that will separate us from Faculty. This is a change in our institutional culture and belies the message we are partners - we have always been aligned with faculty on benefits.

The District emailed all employees a statement that the PPO health plan for current and retired employees is causing financial concern. Why is it right to address this concern using our constituency group's contract negotiations? Employees from all the groups, including Management, Faculty and Classified, are enrolled in the PPO health plan and Classified has the smallest percentage. It is not fair or right for District to try and connect the PPO health care cost to our raises.

The District Health Advisory committee could look into ways the PPO could become more sustainable. Employees should have a PPO choice in their health care options. Tacking on a \$400 monthly charge to a classified retiree in the PPO is not the solution.

We are tired of wondering if we are truly partners with this District. No one wants to be at impasse. Trustees, please be leaders and encourage the administration to implement the compensation study for classified. Then they can start talking to all employees about benefit changes needed for the future. Please encourage the administration to show good will and faith to classified so we can join you and them in helping to move the institution forward.

Laura Hayes
Classified Professional

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Dear Board Member,

My name is Melissa Fix and I've been working as a classified member for 7 years and have yet to understand why everyone gets raises and bonuses and we are just cast aside as not part of the big picture or "Mission".

Also, very troubling is that we have to make ends meet with part time work after 8 hours of work to keep up on all the increasing expenditures (rent is thru the roof) ... this hectic schedule isn't conducive of happy, healthy, well rested employee, and for us to have to beg for a raise on top of this urgent unresolved matter is rather humiliating, especially when everyone else's raises and bonuses are on a regular basis and if I may add some enormous amounts (could feed a village of classified).

Thanks for listening and hoping for expedient resolution!

Melissa Fix
Dispensary Tech.
(714) 895-8115
Cosmetology
Golden West College





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Dear Board member:

I am a classified employee that has worked for the District for over 20 years. I started as a student and loved being at OCC because of the great services that OCC offers to their students. Also because I met a wonderful High School recruiter that really cared in inspiring High School students into attending College and making a better future for ourselves at OCC.

As an Employee I enjoy working at OCC because I get to work with students, Faculty and other staff members. I think we all make a big difference in each other's lives especially when we help each other the best we can.

I am glad the Board has included Goal #6 for the 2015-2017 Board Goals and Plans which states that The Board will work with the Chancellor to improve District Employee morale and trust by reducing internal disputes that are costly to the colleges and District. The way this can be done is by treating all employees equitably.

Every time that the District needs to do budget cuts or improve the budget it seems that the major group that you look in cutting benefits from is the Classified staff. Maybe we are more members than the Faculty, Administrators or Managers but we get paid much less and the benefits seems to differ for us.

There is no equity in the District when it comes to wages or benefits. It seems that we always need to agree in losing or changing something so that we can get a fair share of anything.

It is very sad to see that even though many of us have spoken at the Board meetings and raised our voices about the situation that is going on and how we all have a very, very low morale we are still unheard. None of you care about how we feel nor what we are losing.

You have the decision to make things right for all Employees by being Equitable to all of us not to just some groups. Please show that you do value us!!!

All we are asking is for Equity which you state that we have but we don't.

Sincerely,

Martha Muñoz-Sánchez
OCC Classified Staff
Member





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Dear President Grant and Board Members,

The following information is on the District website under Employees – Equity, Inclusion and Compliance.

Coast Community College District's Commitment to Equity and Inclusion

Coast Community College District and its three colleges - Coastline Community College, Golden West College, and Orange Coast College - recognize that an equity-minded culture enhances respect, fosters learning, and promotes inclusion for our students, employees, and community members. We are deeply committed to providing equal employment opportunities and to helping all of our students reach their personal and professional goals through individualized tools and options for long-term growth.

Each student, instructor, staff member, and administrator plays a critical role in maintaining and strengthening a welcoming environment in which we all feel valued for our individual experiences and contributions. Coast Community College District acknowledges and celebrates the ways in which our differences help us achieve greater success together.

I believed these statements were true until this past negotiation period. I am sorry but I do not feel there is an equity-minded culture in regards to faculty, administrators and staff. I do not feel valued anymore and feel that these statements should be taken off of your website due to the fact that classified staff are not treated equitable at all.

On October 31st of this year I will have worked for Orange Coast College for 29 years. The past 9 years I have not received a raise. Mind you, we have received some minimal COLA raises but not nearly enough to catch up to the cost of living. The classified staff had to fight for these minimal COLA raises. I feel that the classified staff is very undervalued yet we are the ones who admit students, feed students, make sure the rooms and fields are prepared so students can have a good experience, graduate students, set up counseling appointments for students, issue scholarships to students, keep students up to date on their class grades, issue financial aid to students etc. As you can see, the classified staff is very involved with the student.

We are all here for the same purpose which is to help students succeed. Mr. Grant you used to have a sign in your office that read "How does it affect the student?" I come to OCC every day with a smile, a good attitude and want to help students, faculty and staff in any way I can. This same attitude is seen around the entire campus by classified staff. I love OCC and have dedicated a lot of my life to this school however it doesn't seem like I am of value to the district with the proposals they are making. All I ask for is a fair and just raise, just like the faculty members received. We are all here for one purpose and that is to help students succeed. So please ask yourself "how does this affect the student." The District is sending a loud and clear message that our jobs are not important and this could directly and indirectly affect students.

It is hard to hear that the faculty received a 7% raise over 3 years but what we are being offered is a 1.5% raise with takeaways. The District wants to reduce the percentage of longevity we receive and have us pay more for a PPO plan, which the deductible for the PPO plan was just increased from \$350 to \$500. With this plan I will pay .4% more for my PPO and my longevity will be reduced by about \$1200.00 per year. So with a 1.5% raise and these takeaways in place, plus paying an additional \$150.00 for the PPO plan, I will not be receiving a pay raise but instead a pay cut which is really disheartening and frustrating.



I see that the District wants to increase students by 2% next year. We can't even get a 2% raise to help with the 2% increase in students. I was told by the Chancellor that the District has tried to negotiate, however my question to him and to you is "how can you negotiate anything with a raise of 1.5%?"

The morale on campus is really low which is justifiable because none of us feel that we matter to you!

I hope that you can bring yourselves to do the right thing which is to give the classified staff an equitable raise just like the faculty, administrators and Board members received.

Thank you,

Patti McDonald
OCC Classified Member



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Dear Board members:

My name is Stephanie Phonsiri and I've worked for the District for over 25 years. In the past 25 years, I have witnessed and been through at least three recessions with the District. With each recession, I have seen classified ALWAYS rolled up their sleeve and pitch in and do more with less to keep the district running and the classroom filled. For the past 25 years, I have always been loyal, dedicated and hard working for the Coast colleges. I worked in the Student Services department for all three campuses since 1990. Working in the Student Services, we are the first to greet students and the last to hugs and congrats them when they move on to bigger and better things. I work daily with students helping them with their applications, registration, listen to their problems, and provide them with information and resources they need to move from Coast colleges to the next step of their education. YES, WE CLASSIFIES HELP THEM GET THERE.

These past nine (9) years, I never have seen such a lack of regard for classified employees. No raise. No appreciation but only demands for takes back. As classified employee, I'm just as invested in the success of our students as the instructors that teaches the courses, the counselor that guide them or other groups on campus that care about students' success. I feel that our requests to be recognized and to have the same benefits for the same cost as everyone else are reasonable.

Sincerely,

Stephanie Phonsiri
Classified Professional





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Dear Members of the Board:

I am truly perplexed that we are having this issue of equity at an institute of Higher Education in the United States of America, 2017.

In the 1960's when I was little, I lived with my grandparents. My Grandfather was a Professor at the University of Wisconsin. They had hired Ida May Morten as a house keeper. I saw how she (a black woman) was treated as lower class by my upper class white grandparents. That was the society viewpoint left over from my grandparent's time.

In the 1970's I was able to move back in with my mother who once taught for the University of Pittsburgh. At that time, she was a Corporate Executive for Rockwell International. She wore an ERA (Equal Rights Amendment) button while she trained the young men who were promoted over her. She worked her whole career never achieving the same status or salary as her male co-workers.

In the 1980's, I went off to college. Being young and idealistic, I thought that my generation would overcome those issues.

Yet, here we are with just the latest form of segregation: Job Classification. After nearly 50 years around the Higher Education environment (19 years at GWC), and over 50 years living in the United States (Land of the Free?) I and my Classified Staff co-workers have fallen victim to inequality. The fact that our school board chooses to give raises to everyone except Classified Staff is a clear message that we are considered less important than Managers or Faculty. This is creating a segregation between Managers, Faculty and Staff. We are moving backwards in social evolution. It's embarrassing as well as harmful both socially and economically.

I chose to work as Classified Staff at Golden West College and the Coast Community College District because I thought it would be a great opportunity for me to create a better future for myself and those around me. Because of this on-going struggle, I now question if I made the right choice by joining the CCCD.

Thank you for reading.

Sincerely,

Sigrid Hammer Wolf
Theater Operations Facilitator
Planning and Budget Committee Member
Gala and Chef's for Scholarships
Golden West College
(714) 895-8396





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Dear Members of the Board,

I think it's only fair that everyone working at a public college should be treated equitably, because we all play an important role in students' success. I don't think one group of employees should be treated better than another. We're all here for common reasons.

I've been at OCC for 10-1/2 years, the entire time in Student Services. I worked in secondary education for 23 years, and decided to give community college a try, and because of the great things I'd heard about the campus, I chose Orange Coast College.

I feel insulted when I hear the District is asking us to give up benefits, on top of us not having had a raise in almost a decade. I see the difference in the way classified staff are treated here than at my previous District. Here there is such a divide between management and classified staff, and a huge lack of respect for classified workers.

The morale among my classified peers is at an all-time low. I think a lot of my coworkers feel the same way I do.

Sincerely,

Virginia Regnier

