

Guest Opinion

Professor: *Governor Romney is holding educators hostage*

<p>On March 26, 2005, faculty and professional staff from 15 community colleges statewide took note that a thousand days had passed since their contract had been negotiated, settled, and agreed to by all bargaining parties. Still, however, this contract has not been honored: The contract remains unfunded; its resolution bogged down in a legislative quagmire that holds many accountable, yet no-one seemingly able to straighten it out.</p> <p>The ironies are many: Most notable is the fact that our legislators, our college presidents, and the Board of Higher Education supposedly want this contract funded. The \$3.7 million funding cost has already been set aside to support these 1,950 employees who belong to a statewide union of professionals known as the Massachusetts Community College Council (MCCC).</p> <p>This contract represents not a raise, per se, but a one-year step increase to recognize the experience of each professional and preserve the integrity of a classification system put into place by the previous contract. The funded settlement would pay out from \$200 to \$718 per member per year, minimal compensation that certainly would not account for increased insurance premiums and cost-of-living increases over the last three years for these employees.</p> <p>Even more troubling is the irony of a contract not being honored by a government put in place to establish law and hold its citizenry accountable to such doctrine. In this case, it is the</p>	<p>chief executive, our own Governor Romney, who has refused to honor this contract, despite the fact that it was negotiated within the economic parameters established by his executive office. His refusal to support this contract and forward it to the legislature for funding is a direct infringement on good faith bargaining and gives no credence to his public posturing in support of Community Colleges.</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">Today, a ‘March of Shame’ will be held on the BCC campus, to protest the ‘unfunding’ of the MCCC contract.</p> <hr/> <p>Under Romney leadership, in fact, state support to public higher education has decreased by more than 20%, a decrease that flies in the face of increasing need.</p> <p>Enrollments at these institutions, especially at the Bristol Community College campus, have skyrocketed in the past three years, increasing in successive semesters by more than 5 percent. However, in an almost inversely proportional and seemingly perverse response, resources and state support have diminished. Part-timers are replacing full-time faculty at alarming rates, campus libraries have been given minimal or no support, and employees have been pressured to do more with less. And the MCCC contract remains</p>	<p>unfunded.</p> <p>With Romney’s refusal to support this college contract, the Governor holds these professionals hostage to whatever working conditions he alone deems appropriate. His punitive response is a direct assault not only on these employees, but also on the entire state’s community college system, a system so vital to this Commonwealth.</p> <p>These faculty and professional staff work directly with students and collaborate with employers to enrich local communities, strengthen the workplace, and fuel the state’s economy. Romney’s questionable leadership in this contract funding process makes a mockery of his public statement that he “supports community colleges.”</p> <p>Given the current MCCC contract funding stalemate, the campus community at Bristol Community College will mark the dishonor of these thousand days with a postcard writing campaign to Romney and a campus “March of Shame.” This campus is ashamed of a governor who would break his promise to the state and not honor the work of these professionals. BCC employees, administrators and students will unite in outrage over the “unfunding” of this contract and voice concern over a community college system that is clearly under siege.</p> <hr/> <p>Diana McGee is a professor of English and Coordinator of Liberal Arts & Sciences at Bristol Community College.</p>
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