

GCC students support teachers

Not-so-silent vigil focuses on pay raises

By DIANE BRONCACCIO
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GREENFIELD—For a planned "silent" vigil, the chant of students on the steps of Greenfield Community College was nearly deafening.

"Support your teachers!"

"Sit down with us!"

"Educate the governor!"

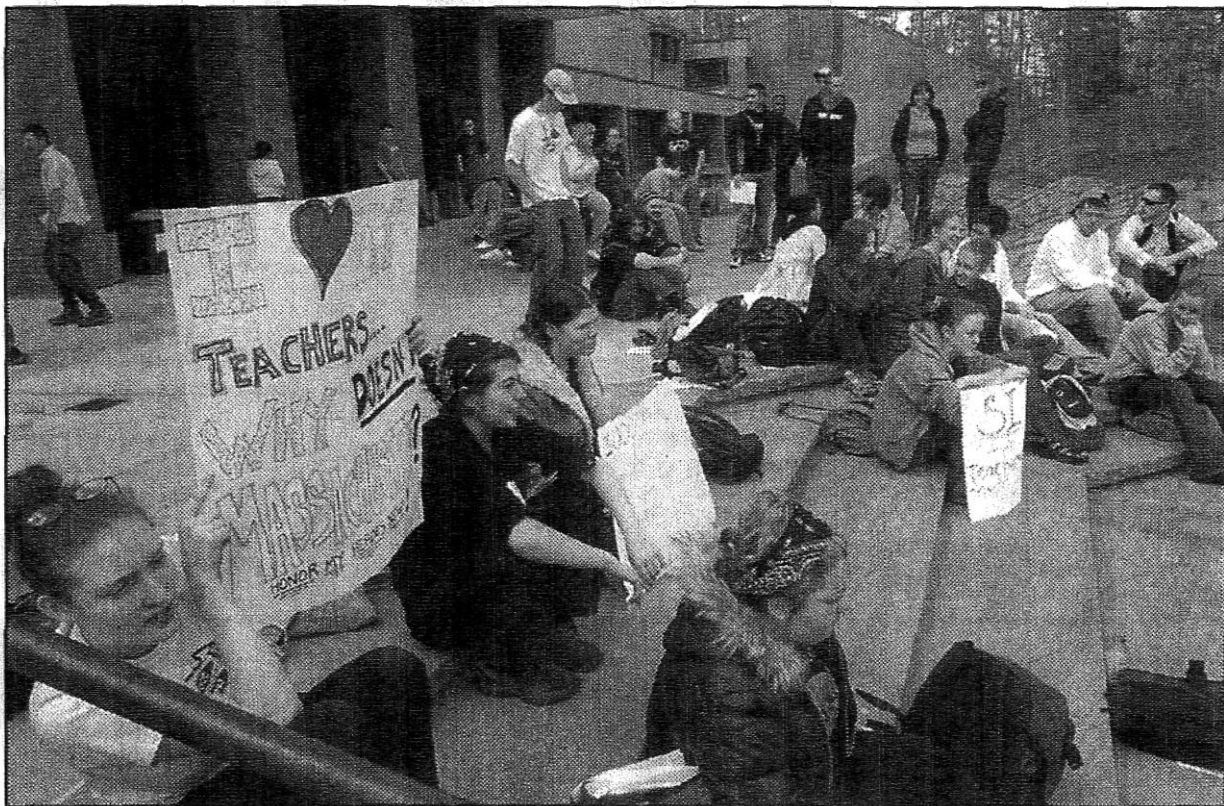
The protest of some 60 or so students Tuesday afternoon was a show of support for the community college faculty, whose pay raises in a contract extension between the fall of 2002 to the spring of 2003 weren't honored.

This was organized as a silent demonstration, but it's turned into a passionate thing — which is cool," said GCC student Megan Gessing. "Silent didn't work. We had to take other measures."

Although student Sara Kingsley just learned of the planned vigil that morning, she took enough time out of her day to whip-up an eye-catching poster that said: "I (love) my teachers. Why doesn't Massachusetts honor my heroes now."

"I do love my teachers, and I wanted to be part of this," she said.

"I think it's completely ridiculous that the teachers were promised raises and are not getting them," said Caroline Wilson, another student. "They're working really hard



Greenfield Community College student Sara Kingsley, left, and other students sit on the front steps of GCC in support of their teachers on Tuesday at the college.

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for us and not getting much in return."

Professors Cristin "Kit" Carpenter, president of the GCC Professional Association, and Abbie Jenks thanked the students for speaking out on their behalf.

"We can do better things if we have better resources," Jenks told students. "But this is also an issue of fairness. This is part of a bigger pic-

ture than what is happening at GCC -this is about how the state is being governed. We are so grateful to you for doing this on our behalf. We can't strike; we would be fired if we did."

Carpenter said GCC sent about 300 postcards last week urging Gov. Mitt Romney to approve payment for the raises due within the contract extensions. She said other community colleges across the state

have also undertaken postcard campaigns. "We're paid less (than other educators) and we work harder," Jenks said. "We teach five courses per semester, because (the fifth) course was in our negotiated contracts. This contract was negotiated in good faith and it wasn't honored."

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