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# The Republican.

## 'Fighting mad' faculty rallies over raises

Wednesday, April 27, 2005

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Faculty members at three community colleges in Western Massachusetts spelled out their frustrations yesterday over an unfunded raise with rallies and a postcard drive aimed at Gov. W. Mitt Romney.

The protests at Springfield Technical Community College, Holyoke Community College and Greenfield Community College were part of a broader effort organized by the Massachusetts Community College Council.

The 15 community colleges in the state have been trying unsuccessfully since 1999 for funding to back up a negotiated raise that would average \$500 per year per member. In all, the 1 percent raises would cost the state \$3.78 million.

At the STCC campus, about 100 protesters, including President Ira H. Rubenzahl, cheered as organizers blasted Romney for his ongoing vetoes of the contract signed by the state Board of Higher Education six years ago. Romney backs up his refusal to fund the raises with the argument that he never signed the contract, having followed acting Gov. Jane M. Swift, who left it on her desk unsigned.

"We are fighting mad. Although our morale is low, our spirit will not be broken. Will we remember this at the polls?" said Sandra J. Howell, a faculty member at STCC who also works for the statewide umbrella union, the Massachusetts Community College Council.

The STCC Professional Association has 180 members who earn between \$34,500 and \$77,000 per year. The average member earns \$57,000.

Rubenzahl supports his teachers, whom he said have been unfairly singled out by Romney's two vetoes for funding after approval by the state Legislature.

"This is an intolerable situation. You deserve your raises. This is a penny-wise and pound-foolish policy," he said.

The event on the campus green drew mostly teachers, but several students came out to show their support. Senior Ali M. Mourad said the ongoing work-to-rule action in effect

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since last fall is hurting everyone. Under work-to-rule action, staffers perform only tasks they are contractually obligated to and may skip extracurricular activities.

"Students want the contract to be funded," said Mourad, a Springfield resident who is president of the STCC Student Government Association.

At Holyoke Community College, hundreds of students rallied with their teachers yesterday afternoon to push for the passage of the 1 percent raise for the about 140 professors, library staff and others. About 500 students and staff also signed postcards to be sent to the governor.

The staff decided to run several rallies between classes to educate the students about the contract failures instead of taking time during courses, said Phyllis W. Barrett, an English professor and secretary of the staff union.

After hearing the plight of the staff, some students agreed to lobby for them, eagerly signing postcards. Some also wore bright green stickers showing their support.

"I've had a lot of amazing professors here, and I want to be supportive of them so they can be around," said Jill M. Cunningham of Northampton, a liberal arts student at Holyoke Community College.

At Greenfield Community College, faculty members promoted the postcard drive, skipping the rally held at their sister colleges.

Staff writers Jeanette DeForge and Betsy Calvert contributed to this report.