

Letters to the editor

Community college teachers have reason to be angry

To the Editor:

I'm mad, OK? I'm angry, but not crazy. I know the difference.

I've kept my public mouth shut despite teachers and staff working without a contract for three long years, despite students facing ever-increasing tuitions and fees.

I thought Massachusetts was a compassionate state in terms of social equity. I thought Massachusetts cared about its people, especially those seeking to better themselves and the lives of their families and communities.

Yet, we have a governor whose tunnel vision sees and seeks only those benefits afforded big business.

Oh, I know, he is a trickle-down economy thinker, but nothing is "trickling down" to students at community colleges who are supposed to comprise our future work force.

I wish the governor would come to my classes at North Shore Community College's Lynn campus for just one day. We teachers, as part of our contract negotiations, agreed to teach five courses. Our four-year public college counterparts teach, on average, three courses; their contract was approved by the governor.

I guess the powers that be regard what we teach and who we teach as less demanding. Besides teaching five courses, we advise students, and we take our advising duties seriously. Yes, we help students decipher program requirements, review transfer options, build feasible schedules and shape realistic goals, but we also serve as mentors and



File photo

Students at the North Shore Community College campus in Lynn participate in a teleconference on labor and funding problems at the school last fall.

counselors. We listen and encourage this population who believe in a better future for themselves.

Aren't we dedicated professionals entitled to some support and encouragement, too? Why is the governor refusing to sign our duly negotiated contract?

I want the governor to meet the population his veto affects. Meet Student X, a single mother with two children working a full-time, low-paying job as a health aide. She wants to show her children that education matters. She wants to be a nurse.

With monies being withheld on both the state and federal levels, this mother finds continuing her education impossible.

Meet Student Y, an immigrant to this country with three children and two jobs, trying to complete assignments in a language not native, in a culture not familiar but neverthe-

less admired and desired.

Our governor speaks of valuing individual achievement, of quality education for all, and a highly skilled work force, but his actions (or nonactions) effect the opposite. Why is he treating us — students, faculty, staff — like the poor forgotten stepchildren of higher education? He has clearly demonstrated that he believes we are less deserving and therefore deserving of less. Why can't he put the money where his mouth is?

Yes, I'm angry, but not bitter. I will never let what he has not done drive me away from the profession I love or abandon colleagues I respect and the students I am honored to serve.

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