

Winter
2020

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Newsletter

Chabot-Las Positas

Association of Retired Employees

Editor's Note

This is a special issue highlighting how the impacts of Covid-19 have dramatically changed the work-life of active employees in our district.

Nearly all instructional and student services are being delivered online, and Chancellor Gerhard has announced that pattern will continue in Spring semester 2021. Most employees are "working from home", and the few "essential" employees working on-site face difficult challenges and special constraints. Working at home entails long hours on the phone and in front of a computer, planning, preparing, and delivering services. It also requires learning new skills and different methods, presenting fresh challenges to established professionals.



In this issue, we present one in-depth interview and several brief interviews in which active employees share how Covid-19 has changed their work program, their professional life, and their personal life. Their stories are remarkable.

CARE 2021 Reunion Postponed

We regret to announce that the annual CARE member reunion will not be held in 2021. This postponement is a disappointment but a necessary precaution for everyone. We look forward to a future opportunity to gather our membership, which now numbers more than 550.



Readers may be confident that even in the current situation, CARE remains active in the interests of our membership. We vigilantly monitor CLPCCD board actions that may bear on retiree interests. As described on page 8, we participate in hiring processes for employees who serve retirees. Finally, we keep you informed through our newsletter and connected through our web site.

Bill Threlfall, Editor

Work-life Interviews

Faculty Perspective

Bill Threlfall interviewed Scott Hildreth, Chabot College Professor of Physics & Astronomy. The lengthy interview may also be viewed on YouTube at <https://youtu.be/wFcZLy9wCmM>, where tone and nuance are in full evidence.

CARE: Let's begin by talking about how the Covid-19 changes have affected your program.

Scott: I think it is really interesting to ask how that varies by program, because my response, that I lost the planetarium, which was my most important vehicle to serve both our current students and the community, is a huge impact. For me, that was a major blow. For me the real impact is not in lecture, but in lab classes which cannot meet due to the health risks. Our Astronomy labs ask students to use a telescope, but we can't do this in a safe way, so the alternative is to do everything with computer simulations that students run at home, and the problem with that for Chabot students, at least, is that downloading, installing, running and diagnosing problems with software requires skills that a large percentage of the students just didn't have. And the amount of time spent that way, versus teaching the curriculum, meant that the smart thing to do was just cancel the lab classes. However, those were the classes that students wanted to transfer or get an AA, so huge program impact. This is just a small example that is shared by programs across campus.

CARE: Are nearly 100% of classes are online at this point?

Scott: Yes. There are only a few exceptions, for example Automotive Technology, and even these required special arrangements and limits. But for my small program, I could compensate. Yes, I lost the planetarium, so I do planetarium software. I lost the planetarium as an engagement vehicle, so I'm doing my own videos. In Physics, I lost my labs, so I do simulations for the students. But I can do these things whereas some programs can't. For example, for Auto Tech, they've had to figure out a way to get a limited number of students using multiple sections in place of one. And just imagine Clayton Thiel, trying to teach sculpture online with students using bars of soap at home. So although the impact on my program is significant, it is in no way as bad as it has been for other colleagues on campus. Now if it were a pure lecture class like my Astronomy lecture, that's something I've been doing my online class for 25 years, and any pure lecture class might adapt. But for an Art, performance,

or lab class I can't overstate the challenge it has posed for faculty. This impact has really driven a number of things: desperation and depression, and a sense that all of the skills that we've spent a lifetime to acquire all of a sudden



don't matter, and I've had colleagues tell me "I don't feel that I'm a good teacher anymore." That's an enormous statement from a highly-qualified colleague who feels all they know how to do well has suddenly been pulled out from under them.

CARE: What is your sense of how the college, as an institution, is faring in this situation? Is it threatened? Is the situation viable? How's it going?

Scott: That's a really good question because from a faculty perspective, one of the things the college did really well was to use the summer to improve our training in support of online instruction. A group of faculty with experience in online classes volunteered and organized to help train other faculty over the summer. The Faculty Association got involved and negotiated with the District to offer a small stipend for training for those who chose to participate. We ran four large cohorts. I had 30 faculty members from across the campus who spent six to eight weeks learning Canvas, the college's adopted software platform for online instruction, and this process illustrated the best of everybody rising to this unexpected challenge. Everyone – the faculty, the administration, the Faculty Association, all came together to help make the coming fall education as good as possible.

On the other hand, the college faces a big loss of revenue due to enrollment decline and the loss of COLA have resulted in a dim and uncertain budget future. For example, we had two science faculty positions approved with resumes coming in and hiring committees ready to work on them and both of them got yanked. So now I not only don't have my full-time colleague in Astronomy and Physics, I don't have the new Geology and Environmental Science program. So, to your question, what does the college do to address the situation? We do some training. What do we do with the funding shortfall? That has been really challenging for both Dale Wag-

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Work-life Interviews

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oner, Chabot VP of Administrative Services and Ron Gerhard, Chancellor. Questions remain about lottery funds for supplies and bond funds for equipment purchases, and everything is uncertain: Can we go back on campus or not? Do we have to cut the size of classes? So you have everybody working very, very hard, but in my mind the vehicle we're in that would take us to the destination has not just hit a rough patch, we've hit ice, and we're spinning our tires really fast but not necessarily making headway.

CARE: As if it is foggy and you can't see very far ahead.

Scott: Exactly. I can't understate how hard adapting to this is, though that leads me to the positives and we can talk about those too.

CARE: Well, as it is on your mind right now, name one positive.

Scott: I'll give you an example. Yesterday, I was linked in with science colleagues in Chile, talking about a new observatory. That sort of world-wide networking has jumped enormously because I'm at home and I can schedule my time to fit the opportunity, whereas normally at 8a.m. I'd be driving to school on 880. I do this sort of connection on per week now, whereas in prior years, I might have been lucky to do it once or twice per semester. So the time to make connections is an incredible benefit for me and really does drive a willingness to abide the current adverse impacts. Without that, and as disappointing as teaching is right now, I'd have a really hard time.

A second one, rather similar, is the value of the chance to engage in topical discussions across the country about Black Lives Matter and Black Minds Matter, which is a neat re-phrasing. How do we do a better job with the students who are underrepresented, especially in STEM? I've had Zooms with folks from the American Physical Society out of Maryland, including discussion with Jim Gates, notable theoretical physicist about social and racial justice issues in science and how we can promote better student outcomes across all levels of education.

These two things seem outside of Chabot in some sense, but they are either topical or professional and help drive me to do a better job for my teaching.

CARE: I'm thinking about your background and experience and how prepared you are to deal with technology, yet these changes clearly are a challenge for you and your program. So I'm wondering are there colleagues that just say: "I can't do this. This is not my job. I'm out of this."

Scott: Absolutely, and that's why I don't want to be thought of as representative off my colleagues across the board. I recognize that for me, this was not as hard a transition as it was for others, who run the gamut of reactions. In my summer Canvas training, I'd demonstrate creating a "class" with a "home page" where I put up information to click on about the things that are going on in class, about a weekly assignment module, about the test next week, about NASA special events, etc. This page is a kind of "portal" and from there you might find quizzes and assignments or whatever. That paradigm just seemed too unfamiliar to many colleagues. The idea of uploading assignments as pdfs and then linking them so they are visualized as part of a page viewed by the student is just beyond the experience of some, for whom it seems literally a different language, referring to alien concepts and terms. Some of these folks are really struggling, and if I get depressed feeling my teaching is not working, because it is nothing close to what I used to be able to do, I'm absolutely sure having talked to some of my colleagues that they feel 10 time worse.

For my online lecture today, I'll spend two hours choreographing what I want to do: summarizing related news items, working out some physics problems, etc. Then, with 20 students in the class, perhaps 10 will show up on Zoom, and I'll see nine names and maybe one face. Most of the students' cameras are off, so I'm presenting this to names, I can't see their eyes, and it is hard to be effective when you don't know if you're making any difference. That's the real challenge for all faculty, regardless of their technological comfort, is this significant "ripping away" of the sense of efficacy. In spring, I was spending 14 hours per day, seven days per week, and I don't think that was abnormal.

It would be really good for your readership to consider that college faculty have had the freedom to choose the methods and pedagogy that we, ourselves resonate with. I have colleagues that are great lecturers. I

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Work-life Interviews

have colleagues that are great lab teachers. And I have colleagues that are really good facilitators of student discussion. But one tool, like Canvas, trying to do everything, doesn't do everything well. So the amount of time that it takes for us to take a curriculum and pedagogy that we have understood very well and then spend huge amounts of time figuring out how this new model makes us do it. This understanding isn't easily attained quickly, and colleagues with no previous experience in online instruction are just dogpaddling in the pool, with not enough time to learn to swim. The virus has compressed this process almost unmanageably.

CARE: Let me follow up with a couple of specific questions. How much screen time do you spend per day? How much of that time is preparation, as opposed to delivery?

Scott: Six to eight hours per day screen time. Yesterday, I had six Zoom sessions starting at 8 a.m. and ending at 5 p.m. I met with Astronomy colleagues in Chile, then had two committee meetings, had an office hour, did my lectures, an office hour with a colleague, and then another with a faculty team. The remainder of my screen time was preparing material for class.

I would say three to five hours of preparation are needed for an hour of instructional delivery. I learned a lot about how to prepare material from past experience in online teaching. I've found that videos must be short to sustain student attention. I aim for five to ten minutes. And be sure your readers understand that under State mandate, all material must meet accessibility standards. Any web image must have an <alt> tag, text must be understood by Kurzweil text to speech screen reader, any video must be closed-captioned, and this takes a huge amount of time and requires that we think differently.

CARE: What about everyday responsibilities that retirees would be familiar with like office hours?

Scott: Yes, in Canvas, I can put in times that my currently enrolled students would be able to access me via Zoom. However, in our traditional model, office hours served a broader purpose and were open to everyone. So I offer another Zoom office hour for general access, but participation is much lower than in the past. Student communication patterns have evolved away from web pages and email toward texting and Twitter. Most students are using their phone, not a computer, and this change is

reflected in the style and reduced quality of their work.

CARE: Are faculty free to use other tools in addition to Canvas? For example, YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, texting?

Scott: Yes, although Canvas is the tool that all enrolled Chabot students automatically receive a login to a class Canvas account. Students are told that Canvas is the way we will hold grades and we will interact. But I've got faculty who are using other tools and Canvas only serves as their file repository. Others are using Canvas for everything, including online exams, discussion, etc. so there's no mandate about a single approach, which is really important because we all teach differently.

CARE: How is all this affecting your home life and family?

Scott: Well, I'm in my basement, where I'm spending too much time. It would be much healthier to be on-campus, walking about and getting exercise. And because I'm spending so much time preparing instructional material, I'm down here away from my family life, which suffers.

Wi-Fi bandwidth is an issue. When my wife and both boys are on-line, we get "hiccups". When someone uses the microwave in the kitchen located just overhead, it knocks out my WiFi session.

It also affects our students' home life and family. We really need to be empathetic about how hard this is for them as well.

CARE: I want to wrap up by asking as you look forward, what are your hopes and expectations?

Scott: I want folks to understand that this isn't all darkness and gloom. We already know that spring 2021 will be all online, and then we will benefit from the experiences of this fall and we'll be making spring a better term. And the learning of the systems will translate into more confidence, and confidence turns into success.

Looking further forward, if we have a vaccine available it may not be widely-enough accepted or effective to eliminate risk or its perception. If I'm teaching the same class then, maybe I'll have half of the students willing to be on-campus with me and half of them saying they're not comfortable attending in person. What do we say to these folks? Do we just say "sorry?" Instead, my sense is that our new paradigm will be that those who will be with us on campus will be there, and those who are not will be

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networked-in, live. The third group who cannot be with us online live at class time will watch it recorded. The recorded material will be automatically closed-captioned, there will be activities that will be available and choreographed for those students. And because we don't have any chronological or geographic "headlocks" on students, the number who can participate will be even larger. I think the investment in the technology that the faculty are learning under the current necessity will pay a dividend long into the future.

Student Services Perspective

Rachel Maldondo Aziminia interviewed Patricia Molina, the Chabot College Coordinator/Counselor of the Extended Opportunity Programs and Services (EOPS) and the Cooperative Agencies Resources for Education.

CARE: How have the Covid-19 changes affected your program?

Patricia: They have made it harder to make contact with our students especially because the students we serve are low income and may not have the technical resources to interact with our program. It is definitely much more difficult to recruit new students which in turn makes it more difficult to reach our yearly program student cap. It was difficult to move to online services in the spring because there was not a lot lead time to convert to online services. This fall semester we have worked on making Canvas user friendly, are proud of the finished product and will continue to improve it when needed.



CARE: How have the changes affected your day-to-day professional life?

Patricia: It requires that I spend a lot more time on the computer. At least three days of the week, I am on the computer from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. Many days, I am in meetings where we discuss how to help students succeed in this online environment. Chabot technology is not always up to date and many times I encounter technical issues such as accessing my email.

CARE: How have the changes affected you personally?

Patricia: Since I am at home and not in the office, it interferes with my family life, and I do not set boundaries. Many times I am drained at the end of the day.

Tutoring Services Perspective

Shirley Pejman interviewed Jane Wolford, the Chabot College Tutoring Center (Learning Connection) Coordinator and History Instructor.

CARE: How have the changes affected your program?

Jane: Since Peer tutoring appointments are only available online, the program has seen a 50% reduction in students needing tutoring, as well as student Peer tutors. Although the Learning Connection has provided a great deal of support to their students with step-by-step handouts and information on its website to assist students, I attribute the 50% drop to the students' own difficulty navigating the online tutoring applications, as technology has been a real challenge. For example, the students were able to work well with the Zoom application during the spring semester, but once Zoom discontinued the institutional free access for students, they began using the Pisces technology application that proved quite problematic with audio/visual difficulty for students working online with a tutor. These types of situations proved too frustrating for students and Peer tutors. In addition, students and student Peer tutors have experienced many personal struggles due to the pandemic that have resulted in students dropping their classes in the spring semester and not registering for fall semester classes. These students had to make difficult decisions to stay in school or try to help support their families financially during the crisis by finding full-time employment and, in some cases, caring for their own children that are doing remote learning at home.



CARE: How have the changes affected your day-to-day professional life?

Jane: I spend a great deal of time responding to students online who are having difficulty with the tutoring applica-

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tions. I sometimes feel ill-equipped to help students who are feeling stressed and depressed and going through great emotional stress during this very difficult time. I don't mind working from home and stay busy doing all my own course work for my classes.

CARE: How have the changes affected you personally?

Jane: I miss seeing my colleagues and students in person and find that spending personal time with family and traveling with my husband in our RV helps me to keep a positive attitude.

Library Services Faculty Perspective

On Nov 20, 2020, Pedro Reynoso, Chabot College Outreach & Instruction Librarian and CIN! Learning Community Faculty was interviewed by CARE board member Irene Plunkett. What follows is a shortened version of that conversation :

CARE: How have the Covid changes affected your program?

Pedro: For starters, the library building itself is closed. So that means students don't have access to physical resources, including reserved course textbooks. Many of our students have limited means, so students who can not afford to buy textbooks are without. Similarly, the library also has a laptop lending library, voice recorders, and so on that help students succeed in the classroom. The college has been proactive and in March purchased a lot of laptops to meet some of the need. Still, those are two areas that have been impacted deeply.



However, the library has always offered online resources for students, staff, and faculty. Live chat reference is still available so students can chat live with a librarian from 7:30 a.m to 8 p.m. Monday through Friday and also on Saturday. After that, the reference desk is staffed with librarians from elsewhere. All our data bases can be accessed remotely.

We've had to do a lot of outreach to faculty to remind

people of these resources, for example by creating YouTube tutoring videos that faculty can embed in their Canvas class sites. We are also still doing classroom library orientation visits via Zoom. Our Library Skills class is still available online. We are exploring curbside pick-up but so far that option does not feel safe enough.

A lot of our students have living situations where they share space with many people and lack the space for studying and personal reflection. We are mindful that they are missing that space.

CARE: How have the changes affected your day-to-day professional life?

Pedro: It's always evolving... this goes back to March where we were like everyone else and had to adjust on the fly. Where are we going to work with our two children? My spouse teaches ethnic studies at Ohlone College and she needs space as well. We were able to convert part of our garage to a studio; we had to buy a printer; we had to buy another laptop. Over the summer, we were able to get this more organized which helped us prep for fall. So we have a little separation with work and home space. Now, in fall semester, we feel we have a rhythm down somewhat and we have come to realize that, with a routine, there are advantages to working at home. The four of us, for example, can take a walk together during the day.

CARE: How have the changes affected you personally?

Pedro: Libraries are also provide a service function on campus and we usually have a lot of foot traffic and daily interactions with students. Initially, I was really, really missing that. Students feed our spirit. They make everything so meaningful in terms of what we're researching, what we're talking about... helping them with their assignments... if they have a personal problem we would go to my office and talk. I was feeling sad not having that interaction with the students.

What has helped has been reaching out to our colleagues, such as my colleagues in CIN! and Puente. We have been able to support each other in a variety of ways. Also, during this time, our library staff has been able to reflect on our service model and consider how we might be able to improve, perhaps by offering more electronic free and low-cost services and more flexible physical space. This has been a time of challenges, but also of opportunities.

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District Retirement Benefits Contacts

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Important reminder from District Benefits staff:

"Please note that you or your heirs must notify the District of any changes to your eligibility status within thirty days of the event (e.g. **marriage, divorce, death**). Any financial loss that the District incurs due to failure to notify the District will be the responsibility of you or your heirs."

Detach and return

C.A.R.E. Dues 2021

Your dues are used in direct support of our newsletter and web site.
No stipends are paid to board members, who volunteer their time and service.
Thank you for your support if you have already paid your 2021 dues!

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CARE c/o Sharon Trethan
5122 Blackhawk Dr.
Danville, CA 94506

More Benefits Staff Changes

by Tom Gerrits, CARE President

CARE would like to welcome Leticia “Lety” Macias as our new Benefits Specialist, joining Rosalyn Tucker in HR. Lety comes to the District after 10 years in Employee Relations at Abbott Laboratories, then five years at Arysza as a Human Resources Generalist.

I represented retirees’ interests as CARE’s representative in the selection process. It was a somewhat unusual one, in that the committee had two in-person planning meetings at the District office in March before the Covid-19 crisis hit and forced the colleges and District Office to close. HR’s initial reaction was to postpone the interviews until the Covid situation had resolved, but because of the importance of this position, ultimately decided to proceed remotely. All committee meetings and candidate interviews were conducted remotely via Zoom

So, if any of you have concerns about your retiree benefits, I’m sure you will find Lety to be a great addition to the District’s Human Resources staff, and happy to help!

New Retirements

Desmond Chun, Chabot College, December 2020
Veronica De Enriquez, Chabot College, June 2020
Janice Golojuch, Chabot College, August 2020
Hisako Hintz, Chabot College, August 2020
Gregory Johns, Las Positas College, January 2021
Terry Johnson, Las Positas College, December 2020
Eric Stricklen, District Services, December 2020
Barbara Yesnosky, District Services, December 2020

In Memoriam

We have lost these valued CARE members recently. Our thoughts and prayers go out to their families.

Joan Campanile
Bob Forester
John (Jack) Healey

CARE publishes life tributes and profiles in the History Project of its web site. Family or colleagues who wish to submit a tribute for publication may send it to the newsletter editor by email at www.care-news.org/contacts

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