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panorama

UNITED FOR EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATION



PA seeks input for contract negotiations

With our current Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) set to expire on August 31, 2027, the MVCC Professional Association's Negotiations Team is preparing for our next round of contract negotiations.

Our CBA establishes the terms and conditions of our employment, including salaries, benefits, workload, leave policies, and many other provisions that affect our professional lives. Negotiating a new agreement is one of the most important responsibilities of our association, and member input plays a critical role in shaping our priorities.

As the Negotiations Team prepares for bargaining, **we encourage all members to share any suggestions, concerns, or ideas for changes or additions to our contract.** Perhaps there is language in the current agreement that needs clarification, a provision that could be improved, or something missing altogether. No suggestion is too small, and all ideas are welcome!

The negotiations process begins well before the PA and College representatives sit down at the bargaining table. Our team will review the existing agreement, gather member feedback, research relevant issues, and develop proposals that reflect the needs and priorities of our membership. Once negotiations begin, the team will work to reach an agreement with the College, with the ultimate goal of securing a fair contract that supports our members and the important work we do.

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panorama
EDITORIAL POLICY

Panorama is the voice of our local. In addition to the PA website (www.mvccpa.org), email, and bulletin boards, Panorama is a principal vehicle for bringing you, on a regular basis, information on the views and activities of our members.

We welcome articles by, for, and about PA members of union-related issues and concerns as reflected in NYSUT and AFT activities as well as in the purpose and functions of the PA's standing committees: Community Outreach, Education & Training, Grievance, Internal Communications, Political Action, and Research & Records.

All submissions are subject to the review and acceptance of the Editor and/or Internal Communications Committee. We do not accept articles that make personal attacks and we reserve the right to edit articles for length. We look forward to hearing from you.

PUBLISHER
MVCC Professional Association

PRESIDENT
Erica Brindisi

INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS CHAIR
Robin Saxe

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WEBSITE
www.mvccpa.org

PREZ DESK:

Your voice. Your vote. Your future.



Erica Brindisi

Election Day is Tuesday, November 3, 2026.

As Election Day approaches, it's an opportunity to reflect on the importance of participating in our democracy and the impact elected officials have on our professional and personal lives.

For those of us working in higher education, decisions made in Albany and Washington can have a direct impact on our institutions, our students, and our livelihoods. State investment in community colleges, academic freedom, collective bargaining rights, retirement benefits, and workplace protections are all issues influenced by our elected representatives. These decisions help shape not only our working conditions, but also the educational opportunities we provide to our students.

As union members, we understand the importance of having a voice in decisions that affect us. Voting is another opportunity to exercise that voice.

Both New York State United Teachers (NYSUT) and the New York State AFL-CIO have announced endorsements for the 2026 elections. These endorsements reflect each organization's assessment of candidates on issues affecting educators, public employees, and working people.

Members interested in reviewing these endorsements, particularly for Congressional, State Senate, and Assembly races in Oneida and Herkimer counties, can find the organizations' endorsement information online.

- NYSUT Endorsements
- New York State AFL-CIO Endorsements

Continued on next page

Your vote (continued)

Regardless of political affiliation or the candidates you support, I encourage everyone to take the time to learn about the candidates and issues on the ballot and make a plan to vote.

Check your registration

You can check your voter registration and find your polling location through the New York State Board of Elections:

voterlookup.elections.ny.gov

Our collective voice is one of our greatest strengths as an association. Participating in elections is one way we can remain engaged in the decisions that shape our communities, our workplaces, and the future of public higher education.

Make your voice heard on November 3.

Important Election Dates

- **Oct. 24-Nov. 1, 2026:** Early voting
- **Tuesday, Nov. 3, 2026:**
  General Election Day.
  Polls open from 6 a.m. to 9 p.m.

PA seeks input for contract negotiations (continued)

Our Negotiations Team includes:

- Aaron Fried, Chair
- Yue Riesbeck, Vice Chair
- Patti Antanavige
- Norma Chrisman
- Michael Grider
- Sam McManus

Ross Wittenberg will also support the negotiations process as Financial Advisor, providing assistance and expertise on financial matters.

Members are encouraged to reach out to anyone on the Negotiations Team or PA President Erica Brindisi with suggestions or questions.

A strong contract starts with an engaged membership. While not every proposal will ultimately become part of the final agreement, every suggestion helps us better understand the issues that matter to our members.

This is your contract, and your voice matters. We look forward to hearing from you!

Holiday ajar information for full-time employees

Please be advised that most College offices will be closed for the ajar period beginning Thursday, Dec. 24, 2026, and will re-open on Monday, Jan. 4, 2027.

For PA and AMVA members, Columbus Day, Election Day, Veterans Day, and Lincoln's, and Washington's birthdays have been designated as in-lieu-of days for the 2026-2027 academic year and will be observed during the ajar period. Excluded Administrative Staff and UPSEU members who wish to take time off during the ajar period may use accrued and unused vacation, compensatory, and personal time.

Celebrating community, encouraging civic participation



This semester, the Social Justice Committee has been busy participating in events that highlight the importance of community engagement and civic participation.

On Sept. 23, 2026, a group of PA members participated in "'A Walk in Their Words," an event celebrating International Peace Day organized in collaboration with The Center and MVCC's International Initiatives Council. Participants walked a path around campus while listening to stories from the local refugee and immigrant community. It was a beautiful day with local vendors lining the path. The walk offered a meaningful opportunity for participants to gain a greater understanding and appreciation for the diversity of our community.

Building on this spirit of community connection, the Social Justice Committee returned for its second year of collaborating with Olmsted City for a tree-planting event at FT Proctor Park on Oct. 17. Despite the chilly morning, volunteers worked hard planting multiple pine, maple, and crabapple trees across the bridge at the back of the park. People warmed up quickly once the work began, and our group made meaningful progress in contributing to the park's landscape. The tree-planting provided an excellent opportunity to invest in the future of our community by helping create and maintain green spaces that residents can enjoy.

The committee also continued its focus on community engagement through civic participation. On Oct. 21, members from the Social Justice Committee and Political Outreach Committee partnered with the League of Women Voters to host a voter registration drive on campus. Volunteers staffed a table in the Academic Building lobby, helping interested faculty, staff, and students register to vote. This collaboration provided an accessible opportunity for members of the campus community to increase their civic engagement.

Looking ahead, the committee is excited to build on this semester's momentum. We have begun exploring a collaboration with the chair of the Rome Public School District's Social Justice Committee, with the hope of organizing future volunteer opportunities in the Rome area. We look forward to developing these connections, expanding our community partnerships, and finding new ways for PA members to get involved.

In Solidarity,
Mike Kuczynski
Chair, Social Justice Committee

PA Finances

Ross Wittenberg, Treasurer

The following is a brief overview of the current member dues structure and a report as to the actual financial results for the prior academic year.

Dues Structure for 2026-27

Dues are paid by our members, which contribute towards our annual budget, consisting of expenditures for community outreach, member engagement, training, and negotiations and grievances with the college. A portion of dues collected are paid to our affiliates, New York State United Teachers (NYSUT) and American Federation of Teachers (AFT). Our affiliations date back to 1970 and we receive numerous benefits resulting from these affiliations, such as training for Executive Board members, legal advice related to grievances and negotiations, and guidance for our local PA leaders. During arbitration and legal matters, NYSUT's labor relations specialists and legal staff are available to assist the PA. In addition, we have the support of a multitude of professionals within the NYSUT office that welcome questions as they arise.

Member dues are set at the national, state, and local levels. National dues are set by AFT, state dues are set by NYSUT delegates from across New York, and local dues are proposed by the PA Executive Board and approved by you, our members. The approved dues structure is then submitted to payroll. The dues structure for the 2026-27 academic year was approved at our membership meeting in May. NYSUT increased their dues this year, which accounted for the change in your member dues ($0.62 more per paycheck). After decreasing annual local dues by over $50 in 2022, we will continue to monitor our fund balance in the coming years to determine if any additional changes should be made to the dues structure.

Financial Results for 2025-26

In 2025, the membership approved a PA budget of $218,801.20 (mostly passthrough national and state dues to AFT and NYSUT). During the 2025-26 academic year, we underspent the budget by $14,843.39, which resulted in a net increase to our fund balance of $12,579.30. The variance in expenditures was primarily caused by fewer grievances against the college resulting in less spent on arbitration. An increase in revenues was due to receiving one extra pay period of dues from the college during the fiscal year, a one-time occurrence from a shift in payment from paper checks to electronic payment -- without that payment, the fund balance would have decreased by about $3,000.

Financial records for the 2025-26 fiscal year were examined by the PA Audit Committee in September. The Audit Committee found proper financial documentation and reporting had occurred throughout the year and had no recommendations.

If you have any questions related to the budget or the dues structure, please feel free to contact me or plan to attend our next membership meeting. Thank you for your continued support and I look forward to continuing in my role as Treasurer this year. I wish you all the best this semester.

In Solidarity,
Ross

Jen Fanelli honored with Gompers Award

On Friday, Oct. 23, 2026, the Professional Association proudly recognized Jennifer Fanelli as its recipient of the Samuel Gompers Distinguished Service Award at the Central New York Labor Council's Annual Samuel Gompers Dinner.



The award recognizes individuals whose dedication and service have made meaningful contributions to their unions and the broader labor community. Jen is a wonderful example of the many ways union members can use their talents to strengthen their associations and support their colleagues.

A Marketing Communications Strategist and MVCC alumna, Jen has been a dedicated member of the PA's Member Communications Committee for many years. Perhaps her most visible contribution is her work as the sole editor and designer of PAnorama, our association's newsletter. For many years, Jen has transformed articles, updates, and photographs into a polished, professional publication that keeps our membership informed and connected.

Her work helps ensure that members are aware of contract negotiations, political action, union activities, and issues affecting higher education and working people. She also lends her talents to union elections, our annual student scholarship, and other association initiatives.

But Jen's contributions extend well beyond her communications work. She is a familiar face at PA events, often behind the camera capturing moments that reflect the friendships, connections, and solidarity that make our union strong. Her commitment to creating a welcoming and inclusive campus community is also evident through her involvement with MVCC's LGBTQ+ Workgroup and her efforts to help coordinate the College's display of the AIDS Memorial Quilt.

What makes Jen especially deserving of this recognition is that she does so much without seeking attention or credit. She simply recognizes where she can make a difference and willingly gives her time and talents to make it happen.

When we think about union activism, we often picture members at the bargaining table, speaking at rallies, or advocating publicly for their colleagues. While those roles are essential, strong unions also depend on the individuals working behind the scenes to keep members informed, engaged, and connected. Jen reminds us that there is no single way to be a strong union member or leader. We all bring different strengths to our association, and our collective strength comes from members who are willing to share them.

The PA is incredibly fortunate to have Jen as a colleague, union sister, and friend. Her contributions have made our association stronger, and this recognition is very well-deserved.

Applications open for annual PA Scholarship



The Internal Communications Committee will present two $1,000 scholarships this year; please spread the word and encourage students you work with to apply by Dec. 1.

Application process

Scholarship forms are available at the Office of Institutional Advancement, Payne Hall 220, Mohawk Valley Community College, 1101 Sherman Drive, Utica, NY 13501-5349.

Eligibility

To be eligible for the scholarship, applicants must:

- Have completed at least 30 credit hours at MVCC at the time of application,
- Submit a current MVCC transcript reflecting a minimum 3.00 GPA,
- Include two letters of recommendation, and
- Write a 500-word essay on either The Importance of Labor Unions in American Society or The Value of a Community College Education.

The PA Internal Communications Committee will review all applications, select the recipients, and forward the students' names to the PA Executive Board for approval.

The essays of the scholarship winners will be published in an upcoming issue of PAnorama, and scholarships will be awarded during the PA's annual January luncheon.

Community Outreach Committee

The Kernan Elementary School Business and Leadership Club expressed gratitude to the MVCC PA by presenting their "MVCC Friends" with this Making a Difference Certificate.


MAKING A DIFFERENCE

THANK YOU FOR YOUR UNWAIVERING COMMITMENT, AND TRULY MAKING A DIFFERENCE FOR OUR KERNAN STUDENTS.

PROUDLY PRESENTED TO:

MVCC Friends

KERNAN BUISNESS/ LEADERSHIP CLUB
Awarded By

OCTOBER 2026
Date

New Member Profile

Jesse Zavaro

Coordinator of Experiential & Justice-Involved Learning



Jesse Zavaro joined the PA in March 2026 as Coordinator of Experiential & Justice-Involved Learning, having previously worked at the College for two years as a College Services Associate in the School of Humanities.

Jesse is enjoying the opportunity to learn more about different areas of the College and says that his favorite part about MVCC is working with colleagues who are kind and collaborative.

To Jesse, being unionized means a fairer distribution of labor and resources. He has seen how the union makes a difference for both members and our community through professional development opportunities and volunteer work. He also recognizes the importance of having a union that will negotiate on your behalf, and a membership that will provide input into what should be negotiated.

Fun facts about Jesse:

Hobbies: Playing basketball and reading (fiction, fantasy, horror)

Favorite food: Ramen (shin black)

Favorite spots on campus: The free library outside of the School of Humanities Office (third floor of Payne Hall) and the garden next to the Alumni College Center

If you see Jesse on campus, give him a warm welcome!

In solidarity,
Brad Dixon
New Member Committee Chair