

## **Three Days in October: A Wide-Angle View**

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Think about those three days in October: none of us wanted to go on strike, but we all walked those picket lines not just to fight for better salaries and benefits. We stood up because we cared about both quality and equality in public higher education for all citizens in this state.

And so it happened, beginning at 7 am on October 19: the remarkable and totally unexpected turn of events, an absolute reversal of the student/faculty relationship: students, where taking care of us, faculty. Students brought us donuts and coffee and sandwiches and wraps and pizza and candy and drinks. They brought music, drums, banners, and read poetry (who will forget grad student Wes McMasters reading Alan Ginsburg's "Howl" with a hand-held megaphone on Oakland Ave.). We have always known that this is why we do what we do, but rarely do we get the chance to hear them tell us how much they appreciated all that we do. Despite the obvious risk and worry, it was this weird sense of great pleasure in being there and great anguish in *having* to be there.

The motives for the job action were simple: we were caring more about the quality of our educational and social communities, and refusing to accept, among many other things, any effort to divide the faculty so that the most vulnerable of

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our colleagues, temporary faculty, might then get only 50% of the raises granted to tenure-track faculty. We would not let it happen. Because of the long-standing work of APSCUF, we were able to preserve a very distinctive feature of public higher education in Pennsylvania. As a reminder of our uniqueness, let me begin to stretch the context by recalling the early stages of the Presidential election last year when many people laughed at Bernie Sanders' wild suggestion that we should return to a 75% tenured faculty in higher education, like it was in 1975? Well, no joke, that is exactly what we have here in the state of Pennsylvania through the protection of collective bargaining: our APSCUF contract specifies that no university within the system can employ more than 25% contingent faculty. We are, indeed, an historical anomaly: despite all the funding cuts, Pennsylvania is still the only state in the nation that has preserved a 75% tenure-track faculty for its public universities. And how about this: there are now 335 doctoral granting universities in the U.S.; and only 1 of those 335 can say that their university has a 75% tenure-track faculty. That 1 university, IUP, happens to be the one where some of us teach.

In what follows, I want to stretch our local situation into a wider context, but I will do so by beginning with a glance back at my graduate school years, 1975-79, when something happened to my cohort that seemed so out of our control: the job market collapsed, especially for those of us in English and the humanities. Many of us expecting careers in university teaching and research were naively dumbfounded. Everyone (or so it seemed) who completed their Ph.D.s in the generation immediately preceding ours seemed to have gotten tenure-track jobs in R1 universities, and my cohort had, perhaps naively, shared those expectations. But by 1979, when I went on the "job market," it was depressing, to say the least. Looking back, it is embarrassing to admit how clueless I was about what had happened, as if my entire cohort had been betrayed. We were fraught with sour grapes and

anxiety. When I went off to one of my first job interviews at an elite private college, I later found out that I was competing with 900 other applicants. Needless to say, I did not get that job. But in the end I was one of the lucky 50% of my graduating class who did get a tenure-track job in a small, regional state university in Illinois (where the state system there was also fortunately governed by collective bargaining). Right around 1988, the job market improved somewhat for a brief couple of years, and I was especially lucky to be able to move to IUP.

Now, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, all my younger colleagues know very well how difficult it is to get an academic teaching position—that's the new normal given what has happened over the course of my career. In any case, as with some members of my cohort, we ended up not becoming what we thought we would be: instead of literary critics, we ended up becoming much more what you might call cultural historians. But almost by necessity. For me, it meant I struggled to overcome my stunning ignorance of the disciplinary, professional, and institutional life we had sought so naively to join. So we turned our attention from strictly literary analysis towards a reflective study of the institutions of higher education as it had been re-structured by the global political economy in which we lived our professional lives. We formed scholarly groups to investigate this history, and discovered all too soon that to question the status quo meant that we couldn't help "but make trouble. We "GRIPED, as some of our senior colleagues charged us, instead of just pitching in to do our disciplinary jobs: indeed, one of the organizations we formed was the GRIP (Group for Research into the Institutionalization and Professionalization of Literary Studies) Project so we certainly opened the door for that complaint. But some of my colleagues really struck a raw nerve by exposing the consequences of recognizing the mis-recognition of power in higher education, and so they drew a great deal of attention. It wasn't just natural market fluctuations that created the ups and downs of academic life (so hold tight and wait out the

bust years), but a political history of dramatic policy decisions from which we were all reeling. Some of my peers became highly productive at producing this new kind of institutional critique: they ended up producing a huge body of texts now referred to as critical university studies (*Works and Days* includes several volumes devoted to that project), and most of that research situated the changes in higher education within the much broader scope of the international geopolitical economy. Obviously, this latter field was not part of our disciplinary training. We had to re-train ourselves. In any case, I'm going to draw on some of the recent work in that emerging field (mainly books by Christopher Newfield and Walter McMahon) as I try to stretch the background frames for understanding why we went out on strike last October.

I will, therefore, frame our rationales for the strike within a longer historical trajectory and a wider geographical frame of higher education in the United States since World War II. My basic argument is that we have to see our local situation within this wider context primarily so that our job action can function in solidarity with nation-wide (and global) movements to preserve high quality public higher education.

Basically, in the roughly seventy years since the end of the War, we experienced a significant thirty-year period of expansion with the rise of the modern welfare state followed by a forty-year period of contraction. Beginning with the first GI Bill (1944; called "Servicemen's Readjustment Act"), followed soon by the Truman Commission on Higher Education (1946; called "Higher Education for American Democracy"), the National Defense Education Act (1958), and the Higher Education Act (1965), this nation invested deeply in higher education—these investments represent one of the great social experiments of modern times. It produced the most dynamic system of higher education on the face of the earth. Some real care was provided for young adults (at least for me and my generation), because anyone from a middle class background could dream of attending a university. And we

did. Higher education grew exponentially from 4 million students in 1945 to 12 million in 1980. By 1970, the higher education system in the United States was the envy of the world. It had the highest graduation rates of any nation on the planet.

Then the post-welfare state period of contraction settled in, and here's what happened: Forty years later, the U.S. now ranks 38th out of 43 developed nations in terms of progress in academic attainment (Newfield, *Great* 19). Higher education costs in the United States are now greater on average than any other nation on earth, "with the partial exception of Japan" (133). Most states have cut public funding for higher education by more than 50% in constant dollars. Tuition in the U.S. has gone up by nearly 300% between 1990 and 2012, "twice the increase seen in health care costs" (24). Student debt in the U.S. now exceeds \$1.3 trillion dollars, greater than any other single source of debt; student loans cannot be liquidated with bankruptcy; there are no statutes of limitations on this form of debt; and students have no other form of consumer protection such as are available for credit card and home mortgage debt. And in terms of supply and demand, demand has been off the charts: the funding cuts have all happened at the same time that overall U.S. college enrollment rose from 12 million in 1980 to over 20 million students today.

Indeed, the backlash against the regulations necessary for the welfare state dismantled the accommodations for human resources of all kinds, and these changes have had devastating effects on higher education. First, the limitations of state-managed capitalism faced the ideological critiques emerging out of the social movements of the 1960s and 70s that challenged the hierarchies of gender, race, and class. Second, the ideological critique was followed by the widespread decline in global productivity after the 1973 Arab oil embargo. Beginning in the 1970s, the welfare state regulations rapidly (if not entirely) came undone under the even more extreme version of free market fundamentalism called "neoliberalism."

But the deregulations for the wealthy were accompanied by severe regulations for vulnerable populations. President Nixon's 1972 proclamation of the "War on Drugs" and the regime of "Law and Order" led to the rapidly increasing practice of mass incarceration: in 1970 the U.S. prison population was about 370,000; by 2017, it is more than 2.3 million. Criminalization was racialized and, in many instances, privatized: although African American's represent only 13% of the U.S. population, the prison population is 38% black; and the Corrections Corporation of America (CCA, founded in 1983; now called CoreCivic) privatized a significant portion of the incarceration system to make profit off increasing rates of imprisonment. Indeed, the rush to privatization shrank the public domain on all fronts. Even the powerful North Atlantic nations now have little ability to mitigate the economic and political will of the most powerful corporations whose operating budgets exceed the GDP of most nations on earth.

In the last 40 years, liberal democracies around the world have been rushing to divest themselves of any answerability to basic human needs such as health care, child care, elderly care, community care, immigrant care, racial care, gender care, debt care, housing care, prison care, environmental care, and education care. Governments withdraw from these public functions for social reproduction under the private market rationales for more austerity, reduced taxes for the wealthiest, and more sacrifices for increased military protection from terror. As Nancy Fraser explains, "The result, amid rising inequality," is the regime of "financialized capitalism" based on "a dualized organization of social reproduction, commodified for those who can pay for it, privatized for those who cannot—all glossed by the even more modern ideal of the 'two-earner family'" ("Contradictions" 104). Very little is being offered to replace those resources for individuals and families. Somehow this unsustainable cycle of desperation calls for more sacrifice by those citizens with the least resources. This is not the version of the good life any of us really wants.

Within this broad framework of socio-economic changes, the general public (including many of us in higher education) have been sold an illusory bill of goods: the most pernicious myth is that you can make higher education more efficient without damaging the educational core. In short, we have hitched our wagon to the horses of the privatized market economy so as to destroy public educational quality under the misleading auspices of educational efficiency. And with devastating effects. When for the first time in the history of APSCUF and PASSHE, faculty walked the pick lines, we were all protesting these attacks on higher education not just in Pennsylvania, but around the nation.

Before we get to the details, let me review two underlying premises of the educational core that we can all basically agree upon: first, to maintain quality education so students can learn well, they have to (surprise, surprise!) “read, write, and study—all with a professor!” (Newfield, *Great* 267). Second, we also know what it takes to have this kind of educational quality: you need small classes where there is considerable peer interaction as well as plenty of time for feedback, discussion, and individualized engagement with the teacher. Ask anyone from our Reflective Teaching Practices group, and they will confirm these basic points, and I know that I work with remarkably dedicated faculty working to preserve these qualities at IUP. We actually have numerous overlapping names for this kind of quality education, depending on the specific discipline: interactive learning, depth learning, informed learning, reflective learning, transformational learning, mastery learning, creativity learning, problem-posing education, critical thinking, critical pedagogy, etc. We also know that these prized educational qualities have been developed primarily in the liberal arts curriculum (broadly speaking, the arts, humanities, social sciences, natural sciences, and mathematics) in contrast to the more strictly vocational and job-training fields. And without question, we provide this quality education, but to an ever-shrinking percentage of our population. If you are lucky enough to

come from the 1%, we provide all the positive advantages your affluence can afford when you attend a small, elite liberal arts college (where student faculty ratios average 10:1), or one of the “extended Ivies” (the Ivies plus the other elite private universities such as Stanford, Johns Hopkins, etc.). In those private colleges and universities, you enjoy exactly those small classes, lots of reading and writing, lots of peer and teacher interaction (for example, the student teacher ratio in the Stanford “entrepreneurial program” that gets rave reviews is 2:1). As all the evidence demonstrates, your level of attainment, academically and post-baccalaureate, is significantly improved. In short, we provide superb educational quality to a small percentage of the wealthiest families in the U.S. (the family income of 50% of those students attending an elite private college or university is greater than \$300,000).

But at the national level, we have completely abandoned any hope of trying to provide such quality for the 80% of students in the U.S. who attend public universities. The erosion of support for public education has taken place relatively slowly, over, say, the last forty years, so to some extent it is easy to miss the long-term effects that year by year belt-tightening have had on what we do. But the result of this forty-year defunding has all the signs of low quality, cheap teaching: large classes, restricted access via increasing tuition, more reliance on student loans than income-based grants, less need-based financial aid, underpaid and overworked faculty, and the erosion of academic freedom by converting university faculty into a majority of non-tenure-track, adjunct instructors. Only in Pennsylvania have we resisted this latter measure of deterioration, so on that score at least we have much to be thankful for. But to varying degrees, all of us in PASSHE have certainly experienced the other kinds of educational deterioration (see Martin and Mash, in this volume). All over the country, we have developed the perfect model for producing more social inequality and less educational quality. But, to the surprise of many, the reality is that the defunding policy has little or nothing to do with produc-

ing efficiency despite all the management and legislative claims that turning sloppy educational arenas into tidy business enterprises is the noble goal. We have abandoned higher education as a public good with wide-ranging, direct and indirect, social (as well as private) benefits, including economic ones. APSCUF and the strike represent a major statement about our need to reinvigorate the vision of higher education as a public good. But we also need the best evidence and the most accurate analysis of our institutional situation to carry out that mission.

The usual explanation for how and why the national race to defund higher education has (or could have) happened is that we didn't really have a choice: it's the economy, stupid. The problem is that we spend too much on public higher education, and the solution is to reduce funding and enforce more efficiency. But this commonly shared perspective is simply wrong, even in the economic terms in which it is expressed. Contrary to that common administrative and legislative refrain, Christopher Newfield demonstrates that the situation is exactly the reverse: privatization is the problem, not the solution. "The fundamental driver of college costs is the market competition that typifies private industry. Turning universities into private businesses is not the cure for college costs problems, but rather its cause" (*Great* 26). As Newfield elaborates, "public universities are routinely derided as intrinsically extravagant and inefficient without the logic or evidence to support such an accusation" (144). And, in fact, "Public cuts have not only reduced revenues; they have increased costs and specifically hiked the costs of entrepreneurial competition" (147). Not only has privatization increased costs, it has also dramatically "impaired students' learning" (4). Newfield offers a fine description of what he sees as the eight stages in this "devolutionary cycle." I will draw on his work considerably in what follows, partly because at the end of this dark tunnel we are in, he offers hope to reverse these dangerous trends.

Before we turn to the more strictly economic arguments, we should begin with the ethical and ideological groundwork.

Even liberal democrats have mostly jumped on the austerity bandwagon by viewing higher education as a private good based on individual competition for scarce rewards rather than primarily as a public good for improving both private and social life for all. The modus operandi of the neoliberal era, the fundamental shift from public to private funding, did not actually reflect the will of the general public. It is a transformation orchestrated by elite private funding, control of the media, and right-wing control of legislative bodies (see Jane Mayer). The shift began in the late 1970s, accelerated under Ronald Reagan, Bill Clinton, and George W. Bush; was adopted by Barack Obama; and now serves as the privatization sine qua non of Donald Trump. But here's the bottom line: "The voting public didn't anticipate these changes. Nor did they go through a philosophical conversion to define higher education as a private good. Privatization came from senior politicians and their business allies, not from the general public" (Newfield, *Great* 56). The reality is that, as Toby Miller points out, we have a much broader segment of the public willing to endorse some key features of a more progressive education. He cites a 2011 poll indicating "that while Congress favors cutting public expenditure on higher education by 26 percent and the White House seeks to increase it by 9 percent, the general public wants to double it, along with massive cuts to the Pentagon budget" (Miller 121). Those figures suggest much more support for a public commons than we might otherwise imagine. Paul Pierson and Jacob S. Hacker provide further evidence that even back in 2001, in an internal (and thus private) Treasury Department memo during the first year of George W. Bush's administration, the officials writing the memo understood these realities quite well, and the blunt warning was clear: "the public prefers spending on things like health care and education over cutting taxes" (Quoted in Newfield, *Great* 57). The point of the memo was to conceal this reality from the public by making sure that no such question was posed in the national media where, instead, the question always to be posed was: "Do you

want a tax cut?” (57). Of course, most everyone said yes to that simple question. “All this meant that the GOP needed to keep control of the conversation, making sure that tax cuts were not put in competition with other possible courses of action” (57).

The tax cuts were, therefore, supposed to benefit all, at least in the media-generated version of the trickle-down economy. But the reality was otherwise: by concealing the social impact of the tax cuts, it became easier “to redistribute wealth and income to the top of the economic food chain” (57). Under the auspices of this “wealthy and successful illusion machine” (58), numerous institutional and policy mechanisms were put in place to facilitate this process of converting public goods and resources into private economic gain. For instance, by privatizing Sallie Mae and ending their federal charter in 2004, banks, rather than the government (or the tax-payers), could profit from the rush for student loans. Now operated under the private Corporation, Navient, this business now owns and manages more than \$13 billion dollars of student loan from which they have made huge profits. Or, to use another example, when the government facilitated the process by which private for-profit universities with “the nation’s highest dropout rates and the lowest graduation rates” (60) could access guaranteed loan money as well as Pell Grant funding from the federal government, it was easy to transfer such public resources to private educational corporations even though such for-profits put only 10% of their gross revenues into per-student academic costs (the rate is at least three times greater in public universities).

Given this powerful project of converting higher education’s public good into a private market commodity, we now have to examine some of the key economic rationales justifying these changes. The goal will be to contrast the myths with the realities. Everything APSCUF stands for rests on the latter, so I want to begin by exposing the most common myth sustaining the privatization movement: the private market benefit of increased life-time earnings is the best and most

accurate measure of educational value. Nothing could be further from the truth, although in its own narrow terms, it is certainly a well-documented fact that a college degree dramatically increases one's lifetime earnings. As Walter McMahon explains, all the evidence confirms that while "the real income of college graduates has risen 57% since 1980" (ix), for the 64% of Americans who have not gone to college, actual income has not risen at all in the same period (elite CEO and administrative salaries have increased by a factor of about 4000%). Over a lifetime, college graduates can expect to earn 84% more than someone with only a high school diploma. So it is indeed true that in terms of simple, private market benefits, college pays. And everyone knows this because it is broadcast everywhere all the time: about 80% of Americans think "a college education is essential in today's world" (McGee 42) even if they can't afford it. No argument there.

Here's the problem: we have reduced our calculations of educational value exclusively to the direct private market value of the degree as experienced by the college graduate. Consequently, this monovalent focus on private market value (to the exclusion of indirect and social benefits) forecloses, among many things, the ability to document the remarkable levels of market failure that have affected higher education. The most dramatic and thorough critique of this reductive private market rationale has been carried out by Walter W. McMahon in his 2009 book, *Higher learning, Greater Good: The Private and Social Benefits of Higher Education*. To cut to the chase, McMahon identifies not *one* marker of education value (direct, private market profit), but *six* categories. Besides the identified market gains, he also includes in his economic analysis the non-market but nevertheless clearly economic benefits; the public/social as well as private/individual benefits; and the direct (short-term) vs. the indirect (mostly long-term) financial gains. The result of his analysis is a much more complete accounting for the full range of educational value.

McMahon's basic approach is to adapt Gary Becker's widely circulated notion of "human capital" to the analysis of higher education, but McMahon opens a much broader analysis of some very real but non-market and indirect economic factors. The most striking thing about McMahon's statistical evidence is that he devised ingenious ways of tabulating both market (direct and indirect) and nonmarket (direct and indirect) monetary values for social as well as private economic benefits. Now I am very wary of the reductive econometric measures that have so dominated the standardization, outcomes assessment, and cost-efficiency movements, so I tend to share Stefan Collini's wise admonition that "Not everything that counts can be counted" (120), a good way of encapsulating the reservations many of us humanists have about bean counting. But we humanists cannot avoid getting dirty with data anymore. Because of the conceptual difficulties of measurement, McMahon himself admits that "complete precision is impossible," but he is not deterred to make the effort because of his belief that "a reasonable judgment can be made" (243). Accepting these statistical limitations, McMahon's results are quite astonishing: the social benefits and private non-market values far exceed the more easily tabulated direct private market values. He begins by confirming what everyone knows: there are considerable private market benefits to a college education, and he calculates that, in 2007 dollars, they amount to an average per year benefit for the graduates of \$31,174. He then calculates the private *nonmarket* benefits, and he arrives at a value of \$38,080 per year—greater than the typical private *market* values. Indeed, there are economic benefits for individuals even though they are not directly related to the market. Finally, the direct and indirect *social* benefits amount to \$31,180 per year (244). In short, this means that the combined private non-market and social benefits (totaling \$69,260) are more than twice the economic value associated with direct, private market gain. Many of the social benefits are what McMahon calls externalities, "the benefits to others in the society and in future

generations” (52). If this data is even reasonably accurate, it should alter any funding and policy decisions affecting higher education, and, plain and simple, we should not be making decisions based on poor and inaccurate information.

How could these figures be true? Well, to begin with, McMahon counts a huge range of benefits that are not often counted, and he is certainly correct that if we truly consider the value of “human capital” it will inevitably mean accounting for more than just what shows up in the weekly paycheck. For example, under private non-market benefits he considers such things as better health, “greater longevity, better-educated and healthier children, smaller families with less poverty, increased probability of having a college-educated spouse, and greater happiness” (119). The list goes on and includes more commitment to life-long learning, less smoking and drug abuse, less obesity, better working conditions, lower fertility rates and lower family size, improved efficiency in household management, non-monetary labor market benefits, better informed consumption and investment choices, higher rates of women working, lower unemployment, lower divorce rates, and reduced inequality. These are among the *private* non-market benefits (again, calculated at \$38,080 per year) that we have generally not even considered in our cost-effectiveness ratios for funding higher education.

But McMahon’s Chapter 5, “Social Benefits of Higher Education” is even longer than the previous chapter on private non-market values. These are the truly social benefits that we either take for granted or ignore when calculating economic consequences. Higher education contributes in vital and wide-ranging ways to everything from national income growth; to civic participation in democracy (including increased voter participation); to greater racial, ethnic, and gender tolerance of differences; to increased support for free speech; to greater concern for human rights; to the necessity for “free, effective, and independent media symbolized by freedom of the press” (208); to greater political stability and security; to reduced income inequality; to lower welfare,

medical, and prison costs for states, including lower crime rates; to increased dissemination of research and development knowledge; to increased concern for the environment, specifically less water and air pollution, improved sanitary systems, renewable energy, wildlife protection, and awareness of global warming; to increased donations to both public and private organizations; to decreased authoritarianism, totalitarianism, and militarism. As McMahon documents, “All of the over one hundred countries with per capita incomes below \$600 have authoritarian regimes made possible by illiteracy” (204). All in all, “these social benefits and their value are poorly understood by the public” (255) who have been led to believe that higher education is an inefficient and wasteful indulgence in the way it operates.

In contrast, these wide-ranging, but often indirect and long-term social benefits “reveal that higher education investment contributes to per capita growth in a highly significant way” (226), far beyond the narrowly defined private market value. Clearly, the social benefits overlap with private benefits (say, greater democratic participation benefits both the society and the individual), and McMahon accounts for these overlaps in his calculations. But his main point is clear: if we are to truly assess the educational function of creating “human capital,” all of these benefits of social capital that lower crime rates, increase opportunity, and decrease inequality must be taken into account. Yet virtually all the privatization rationales for defunding higher education in the last forty years have simply ignored these benefits. As Newfield argues, higher education is a “dual good or a double good....It has obvious private good features like increasing a graduate’s personal income, and it has an equally obvious public good status that means market governance will be inefficient” (65). Unfortunately, this “obvious public good” seems all too often to be unobvious, or at least the price of privatization was concealed from the education debates. When the public is informed about these many values, there is wide-spread support for funding public of higher education, including the humanities, not just the STEM fields.

Besides this broad-ranging econometric analysis of the private and social benefits, there are also several related myths that have contributed to the decline of public higher education in the United States, and they too pertain directly to our situation in Pennsylvania. Newfield provides detailed accounts contrasting the myths with the realities, and I just want to highlight four of them in what follows: myths about tuition increases; myths about the inability to fund high quality higher education; myths about the economic revenues from sponsored research in the STEM fields versus the human sciences; and myths about how technology will serve to lower costs.

First, everyone knows that college tuitions have been increasing exponentially, and the common explanation is that state budget cuts inevitably lead to those increases. But the reality is that cause and effect are exactly the reverse: legislators institute budget cuts for higher education because they know that universities can make up the short-falls by increasing tuition. In times of austerity, higher education is a weak link in the budget battles at the state level simply because of the ease of shifting the funding to private sources, the students and their families, who must directly pay more even as they get less. Other domains, such as, for example, highway funds, have no such handy private resource to bear the burden of decreased state revenues—the pot holes just get worse and the public gets angrier. Consequently, legislators justify budget cuts *because* universities can increase tuition to cover costs. Very inefficient forms of inequality follow directly from the tuition increases: low-income students now find it difficult or even impossible to attend a university. As Newfield documents, “Nationally, state funding per student has declined about 25 percent in real dollars over twenty-five years—while Gross Domestic Product per capita was increasing by two-thirds. This is a disgraceful disinvestment” (137). The only solution is to reverse the rush to privatization and re-fund our public domains—for the public good and benefit of all. In the long term, that is the most cost-effective plan of action.

But that raises the next objection: as the “realists” de-claim, increasing funding is great in an ideal world, but in the real world, high quality education is simply too costly. The only real problem is that the claim is unreal: it is a myth based on a very narrow definition of cost-benefits. As we have seen, there are multiple values of high quality education, and as Newfield argues (following McMahon), “Total educational value is a function of direct, indirect, market, nonmarket, private, and social benefits, all overlapping and working together” (71). When all of these domains that affect the total “return on investment” (ROI, to use the economists’ moniker) are accounted for, public spending on higher education more than repays itself. The notion that states are broke and have no alternative is simply wrong. While it is true that in Pennsylvania we are undergoing a decline in the number of high school graduates, the National Center for Educational Statistics indicates that this, too, will reverse itself in the next few years, even if not dramatically. The important point about gathering public funding at both the federal and the state levels is that the actual effect on most taxpayers of an annual tax increase would be in most instances negligible. For instance, Newfield reports that “the additional cost to the median taxpayer for a free UC would be twenty-two dollars per year” (321). Now that calculation is based on “free” tuition, and so graduated tuition plans and progressive tax programs would reduce the tuition costs for low-income students to zero and reduce the loan and private burden for middle class students dramatically. This is, albeit, one example, but the calculations are relatively similar for different states, even though we have been hoodwinked to think that if those making over \$300,000 had to pay an additional \$1,500 per year in taxes it would be an outrage. The outrage is that those in the 1% cry wolf when these (for them) trivial increases are broached.

Another illusory rationale is that sponsored research in the STEM fields brings in huge revenues for universities, whereas the lack of such sponsorships from both private and public sources in the humanities means the latter are cost-in-effective and therefore can, and should, be defunded. This

may be different in PASSHE because we don't have any R1 universities, and I don't have access to the local data in any case. But at the national level, to most everyone's surprise, Newfield's research has conclusively revealed that the reality is exactly the reverse. In his earlier book, *Unmaking the Public University*, he clearly documented that in the California university system, the indirect research costs (IRC) of sponsored research in the sciences and engineering were much greater than acknowledged, to the extent that the California universities actually lost money even though they received millions of dollars in corporate and federal research funding—a fact that they routinely bragged about in the public media. In *The Great Mistake*, Newfield further documents the fact that across the nation, the average loss for universities due to sponsored research is on the order of 20% of the total revenue received. In short, the university must make up this loss through taxpayer funding or tuition revenue from the other fields. To use one of Newfield's dramatic examples, in one year, the University of California's "gross research income of \$3.5 billion translated into a net research loss of \$720 million" (89). So who subsidizes these losses? Primarily taxpayer funding and student tuition. "What this means is that university research is subsidized by state taxpayers and by undergraduate students. Does student tuition subsidize research? The answer is yes, it does" (94). And what fields does that revenue come from? Primarily from the high-FTE fields in the humanities and social sciences. In one remarkable graph (99), Newfield charts the balance of revenues and expenses by college and division, showing that the arts and sciences, public programs, teachers colleges, social sciences, and humanities—all these fields balance out the losses from the STEM fields. Using Arizona SU as an example: "social sciences, business, the teachers college, and the humanities, added together, run a profit of about the same \$40 million that engineering and the sciences lose. The normal process of balancing the campus books involves moving money from education, humanities, business, and the social sciences,

which earn ‘profits,’ to science and engineering, which run losses” (98). In short, concealment of these stark economic realities “has damaged university budget policy, confused policy makers about expenses, hurt the human sciences (arts, humanities, and social sciences), and weakened public support. These are privatization’s material costs” (100).

For those of us wallowing in English departments or other de-funded branches of the humanities now consisting primarily of adjunct faculty, struggling to justify our FTE quotas, the following example is the killer: Jane Wellman founded the Delta Cost Project, and in 2009 she published an important report: *Trends in College Spending*. She confirmed Newfield’s research by also documenting that less expensive programs subsidize expensive ones. Wellman was subsequently quoted in the *New York Times*:

She flatly contradicted the image of the English department that runs deficits: “An English student... is generally a profit center. ‘They’re paying for the chemistry major and the music major and faculty research,’ Ms. Wellman said. ‘They don’t want to talk about it in institutions because the English department gets mad. The little ugly facts about cross subsidies are inflammatory, so they get papered over.’” (Newfield, *Great* 101).

The point is that “a large humanities department like English produces a substantial net profit, whereas units such as engineering and agriculture run at a loss” (quoted in Newfield, *Great* 103). Even though the humanities fields “address all the major questions of human society and culture,” and they still “grant 10 percent of bachelor’s degrees,” they receive only “about 1 percent of national research funding” (104). Again, it is hard to say exactly what the situation in PASSHE is (for example, our English department has a low FTE ratio for faculty teaching assignments), but it is important to note the situation in the nation.

Finally, the techno-dreamers have too often sold us a false bill of goods: technology will improve education and lower costs. The latter part of that statement is completely false:

technology costs a lot of money. Even so, we can all agree that it certainly can improve education in innumerable ways from the speed of information transfer, to online interactive networks, to incredibly rich multi-media experiences, to endless searchable archives and instant access, and a host of other wonderful benefits. All these are worthy investments because they improve the quality of instruction and research—but of course these techno wonders cost more. Those increased costs should be rightfully seen as a sign of our devotion to a “*rising standard of care*” (Newfield, Great 176) for students, teachers, and researchers—in short, an investment in improved educational quality at the core of both teaching and research.

On the other hand, when technology is primarily viewed as an information processing system for technology transfer, such reductive uses of electronic data and teaching platforms may produce profit for the corporations that sell them but they can dramatically reduce the quality of instruction. This is a huge issue, often provoking a hornet’s nest of competing arguments and evidence about the virtues of “digital humanities,” all of which are far beyond the scope of this essay. But the economic and educational dangers of the trust too often extended to private, for-profit, online universities and the collapse of the brief 2-3 year euphoria over the transformative power of MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses) has come home to roost. The online, for-profit universities have deeply taken and exploited tax-payer money to offer lower-quality education to vulnerable populations. And by all accounts, the MOOC dream (alive for a brief two years between 2011-13) turned into a complete flop. As Newfield admits: the “dream is easy to state: the huge majority of society getting the best university education, and getting it for free. Since I believe that only mass creativity can save the planet, I embrace any and all tools that will liberate humanity’s brilliance on a universal scale” (225). But the worthy dream was only a dream, at best. Newfield summarizes the evidence for the MOOC failure in his Chapter 6, “Private Vendors Leverage Public

Funds: The Case of the MOOCs,” and the basic claim is that the MOOC invention “was the most pretentious corporate intervention into higher education in recent history” (*Great* 227). The corporate dream of “open innovation” turned out to be a nightmare for the opposite: “enclosing the commons” (238).<sup>1</sup>

Even though it has been deeply damaged by the privatization movement, higher education remains one of the few remaining institutions for protecting some version of a public commons. And that *is* the main point we all stood up for during those three days in October. Our actions reflect our devotion to the educational core of high quality teaching and research, rigorous academic standards and critical thinking, and cooperative investigations of our most urgent social and political problems. These are public goods “whose benefit continues to increase as it approaches universal access” (Newfield, *Great* 312). There are just too many far-ranging consequences if we were to abandon these struggles for justice. The absence of these public benefits leads to tyranny and authoritarianism because the latter suppress the freedoms required for all human beings to enjoy the resources of health, longevity, education, and the possibilities for human flourishing. When “the citizens of 94 countries suffer under non-democratic regimes” (Kasparov and Halvorssen D-1), this means that nearly four billion people, more than half the world’s population, have virtually no rights to alter their own terrible living standards. In our supposedly “post-truth” era of fake news and misinformation, we should remind ourselves of Hannah Arendt’s insistence in her 1951 classic, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, that “The ideal subject of totalitarian rule is not the convinced Nazi or the dedicated communist, but people for whom the distinction between fact and fiction, true and false, no longer exists” (474). To combat these obviously unjust circumstances we need a strong and vibrant public sphere, yet those spaces are going extinct about as fast as the earth’s flora and fauna. As Klein puts it, “we are all in the sacrifice zone now” (315). Defund higher edu-

cation and you defund the truth about climate change, inequality, and global authoritarianism. That's a cultural, political, and economic situation we all have to confront with the most persuasive rhetoric we can muster, and in October it meant we had to take a stand on the picket lines to demonstrate these commitments. The familiar refrain that because we are in perpetual economic crisis there is no money for these things is simply false, and it is a logic that has never affected the funding for any bank bailout plan nor any global military venture we have deemed necessary.

The privatization movement defunding the educational core has materialized through myriads of uninformed and unwise policy decisions, which means that these policies can be reversed—that is, in my mind, one of the great virtues and missions appropriate to APSCUF. Who would have thought that our efforts to circle the campus with care for three days in October carried such sweeping ambitions? I, for one, am glad they did.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> The extended evidence for the failure of the MOOC intervention cited by Newfield certainly makes books like the *Chronicle of Higher Education* editor-at-large, Jeffrey J. Selingo's *College (Un)Bound* and New America Foundation's Kevin Carey's *The End of College* appear only slightly less than ludicrous. At least Selingo was writing before 2013 when the MOOC dream was at its height and the evidence of its failure was still to come in the next few years.

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## **To Transformation: Reflections on a Strike**

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### **Confidence?**

I believed that “no news was good news” and held on to my beliefs on the early autumn morning of October 19. After all, if we were on strike, I would surely know by 5:00 a.m., right? I had not yet received a text message about the job action but when I turned on the local news, I knew right away. I saw my colleagues and friends, signs held high and voices to match as they made history in front of our historical, iconic administration building at West Chester University. I started to cry.

### **Commitment**

June 2016 marked my 30<sup>th</sup> year at West Chester University and the end of my fourth year as a tenure-track faculty member. I arrived at WCU as a young Student Affairs professional, eager to make a difference in the lives of students outside of the classroom. I was told I was in a union, not a foreign concept to me as I come from a family of public school educators. I was in the SCUPA union. Sometime in the mid-2000’s I was reclassified from a SUA position to management. In 2012, I left my administrative position for a full-time, tenure-track faculty position. I am now a proud

member of APSCUF. At my first APSCUF meeting in Fall 2012, I was greeted to applause when the union president, Dr. Lisa Milhous announced how rare it was that administrators move to APSCUF!

Over the years, at each contract negotiation, I worried along with my faculty colleagues, that we would experience a strike. I breathed a sigh of relief when at the “11<sup>th</sup> hour” the process worked and a contract or an agreement was in place. I had faith that no one would let the conversation get to a place of no return; there was too much at stake—our colleagues’ well-being and rights, our students and their continued education, their families and their faith in public higher education. And my faith was rewarded each time, until this year. How did those who had the power to change the outcome allow this action to occur?

### **Community**

In disbelief and grief, I prepared myself to join my colleagues in solidarity on the picket line. Over the next three days, I, like many others, experienced the synergy of solidarity. The outpouring of support from students, staff and community members was remarkable. As I walked the picket line and the perimeter of campus, I connected with colleagues I had not seen in months and met new faculty who recently joined the university.

But I worried. I worried that the strike would not be resolved quickly. I worried that once the strike was resolved that relationships with administrative colleagues would be damaged. I worried that we would all be changed, and not for the better.

Yet, over those three days I watched leadership in action and the proliferation of benevolence among colleagues. I learned in the days following the strike of the care and compassion our university leaders displayed for faculty who had immediate needs that were unable to be met due to the consequences of the job action. I saw the abundance of food and drinks given to faculty by students and community members. I heard the horns of cars of supporters as they passed the line.

I witnessed grace, not in the religious sense but as defined by *Merriam-Webster* as “the quality or state of being considerate or thoughtful” (grace, n.d.).

### **Change**

When I learned the news that there was a contract for consideration I was overjoyed. I breathed the awaiting sigh of relief. Yet, I was changed. I am a social justice advocate but in this action my understanding of advocacy and of the importance of solidarity was transformed. I can take what I learned this Fall into my classroom as I work with graduate students preparing for positions in Student Affairs and higher education administration. Over the past months I have reflected on this quote, “Sometimes the things we can’t change, end up changing us instead.” (author, unknown). Many of us, the faculty, the staff, and the students, have been transformed by this experience. And in this transformation, we can continue to work in solidarity to ensure that Pennsylvania public higher education continues to grow and serve the students and families who depend on it...and on us.

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## **An Impressionistic Take From Elsewhere: A Transnational Hyphenated Perspective on the APSCUF Strike**

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Indiana University of Pennsylvania

For three days in October, 2016 at IUP in Indiana, PA, as a person of hyphenated identity, I connected not only politically but also psychically with the city of my birth—Calcutta, now Kolkata, the capital of the state of West Bengal—noted for its vibrant revolutionary history, ranging from the Indian struggle for independence to the leftist Naxalite and trade-union movements. Labeled the “Cultural Capital of India,” “The City of Processions,” “The City of Palaces,” and the “City of Joy,” the city has also been home to the film maker and Oscar winning director, Satyajit Ray, the subject of my dissertation book. The city lived up to its reputation as the city of labor movements when I visited it decades later as an adult (now working and residing in the United States of America), and the double-paned windows of my hotel room on Park Street could not keep out the sound of speechifying and sloganeering from the protests against the student tuition hike taking place next door at Chowringhee (the favorite location for launching protests in the city). The experience of the city of protests was even more visceral when out on the street I was accosted by women students for support and do-

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nations. Sometimes I think that the denizens of Kolkata keep their protest paraphernalia always at hand in order to be ready to march at a moment's notice!

I honor this spirit of activism and believe that it contributes fully to the status of Kolkata as the cultural capital of India. The hope and affirmation that this spirit provides is heartbreakingly always in contrast to the endemic poverty and decay of this city that was once the colonial seat of power in British India. The indomitable spirit of the people is in stark contrast to the burden of history that the city stands witness to from its colonial, postcolonial Marxist (CPM), and its present center-left Trinamool Congress governments. This is the same city that has historically been a strong base of Indian communism: West Bengal was ruled by the Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPI(M)) and dominated by the Left Front for nearly three decades—the world's longest-running democratically elected communist government.

So what does this flashback have to do with the three days in October 2016 and the APSCUF strike? The answer is simple. I come from a country which in its modern avatar would not have come into existence were it not for mass mobilization of nonviolent protests and non-cooperation movements against the British rule. The *longue durée* history of protest and rebellion against the colonial administration begins, as Ranajit Guha, the preeminent founding member of the Subaltern Studies collective has put it in the opening lines of his *Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India*, “The historiography of peasant insurgency in colonial India is as old as colonialism itself” (1). On a side note, I am often struck by, and consequently am often at pains to remind my students that the United States was also once a British colony and became a nation through the War of Independence, also called the Revolutionary War (April 19, 1775 – September 3, 1783). Guha writes, “insurgency was thus the necessary antithesis of colonialism during the entire phase between its incipience and coming of age” (ibid., 2). Putting my Foucaultian hat on, I extrapolate from this that the institution of power

in any entity is also simultaneously the moment of birth of resistance to that instituted power. This seems like such a simple insight and yet we have to be re-educated in this and revisit this insight and perform this insight over and over again within the corporate-capitalist economy where the owners' demand for labor and creation of a management class to mediate between themselves and the labor force is accompanied by an equally strong opposition to unionization as the democratic representation of labor. In the popular anti-union sentiment that has been on the rise the world over, the basic question of who represents and speaks for labor is never posed. The willful erasure of this central question reaches its (il)logical apotheosis in states that criminalize unions and call themselves, "right to work" states.

APSCUF is uniquely placed in this moment of history. Given the Presidency of Donald Trump in the U.S. and the Prime Ministership of Teresa May in the United Kingdom, it is instructive to remember that the union-busting process was inaugurated on the global stage back in 1981, by then president Ronald Reagan when he fired more than 11,000 striking air traffic controllers two days after their union declared a strike for a pay raise, a shorter workweek, and better working conditions. It was a move that, some historians, say laid the groundwork for today's assault on labor. Across the pond in the United Kingdom, then Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher broke-up the coal miners' strike of 1984–85 to prevent colliery closures that at its height, involved 142,000 mineworkers. The strike was ruled illegal in September 1984, and ended on 3 March 1985. It was a defining moment in British industrial relations, significantly weakening the trade union movement; it was a major victory for Thatcher and the Conservative Party; and the Thatcher government was able to consolidate its neo liberal economic program.

In India the industrial proletariat emerged in the middle of 1800s when the British established the railways, for a short while by the British East India Company and subsequently by the Colonial British Government. Bengal can pride herself

in attaining the landmark in the history of labor movements of India. Much ahead of their European brethren, Indian railway men joined a first ever strike in the month of April and May 1862 demanding an 8-hour work-day. The historic May Day in Chicago would take place around quarter of a century later. Not unsurprisingly historically, Calcutta was the center of activity in the early stages of the national movement of independence. Exactly a hundred years after the fall of Bengal to the British in the Battle of Plassey, Calcutta saw the beginning of what is often called the First Independence Movement of India: in the suburbs of Calcutta, at the Barrackpore military barracks, Sepoy Mangal Pande sparked off a revolt that shook the foundations of the British Empire and the colony of British India passed from the hands of the trading company, the East India Company, to the British Crown.

India witnessed an unprecedented upsurge in mass movements during the seventies. Halfway through the second term of Prime Minister, Mrs. Indira Gandhi, in March–April 1974, a student agitation in Bihar, the state neighboring the state of Bengal, received the support of Gandhian socialist Jayaprakash Narayan, referred to as *JP*, against corruption and mis-governance of the Bihar government. In April 1974, in Patna, JP called for “total revolution,” asking students, peasants, and labor organizations to non-violently transform Indian society. A month later, the railway-employees union, the largest union in the country, went on a nationwide railways strike. This strike was brutally suppressed by the Indira Gandhi government, which arrested thousands of employees and drove their families out of their living quarters. By now, the ‘Bihar Movement’ had been renamed the ‘JP Movement’. To its banner flocked students of all stripes, and also the major Opposition parties. No longer did it merely want a change of regime in Bihar; it demanded that Indira Gandhi herself vacate her Prime Ministership and seek a fresh mandate from the people. In the second week of June 1975, the JP Movement got a huge boost when a court in Allahabad ruled that Mrs. Gandhi was guilty of electoral malpractice.

As the call for her resignation grew louder; afraid of the tide of movements, the Prime Minister imposed a state of Emergency on the nation: all democratic rights of the people were suspended by the declaration of an “Internal Emergency” from the mid-night of June 25, 1975. It continued for about 21 months. During those months, the repression perpetrated by the ruling class knew no bounds: opposition leaders were jailed, and the press censored; peasant leaders were hanged for the first time since 1947 for initiating political struggle against the government. Several other human rights violations were reported from the time, including a forced mass-sterilization campaign spearheaded by Sanjay Gandhi, the Prime Minister’s son. On 18 January 1977, Mrs. Gandhi called for fresh elections and released all political prisoners, though the Emergency officially ended on 23 March 1977. The opposition Janata movement’s campaign warned Indians that the elections might be their last chance to choose between “democracy and dictatorship.” In the elections, held in March, Mrs. Gandhi and her son both lost their seats, as did many of the Congress candidates. Although the period of resistance and labor movements resulted in one of the darkest events in independent India’s history—the Emergency—the event itself was formative for an entire generation of scholars, historians, artists, and literatures.

Today, once again, we are living through a vibrant period of protest in the United States: starting with the anti-war anti-Bush marches, immigrant rallies, Occupy Wall Street to the Black Lives Matter movement and the post-election Women’s March: this aspect of American polity is vital and important and needs to be nurtured and kept alive. True direct participative democracy may be a hope, a desire, an ideal, but it is seldom experienced directly. The odds against it are too high. But for a brief period of time in those three days in October 2016, at the Indiana University of Pennsylvania, we did beat the odds.

As any professor/teacher will tell you, they would rather be in the familiar territory of the classroom—in front of the

class, in the middle, or on the side—teaching, listening, sharing their passion with their students rather than outside, holding placards, and marching on the peripheries of the university. There was an element of the Lacanian Real as our feet pounded the pavement in (un)familiar rhythms, on (un)familiar streets, our voices unskilled to shouting yelled slogans, and our arms held up the unaccustomed weight of placards those three days of October. The experience had a touch of the uncanny: I had been here before; I had bumped up against the Real in Kolkata when the voices over the loudspeaker took on a demonic character; they blared from morning to night, only to start afresh the next day, day after day. There was an element of terror that accompanied my steps those three days in October: as an immigrant my relationship to all institutions is/has always been defined in legal terms; I worried at the consequences I would have to face as a result of marching during the strike. At a time when journalists are body-slammed for asking relevant questions, face threats of violence from some members of the public, protestors face down heavily armed police with water and sound cannons, tear gas, and other military style equipment it is a very precious privilege and right to be able to march in protest with the protection of the union behind us.

Yet we all did it: the tenured, the non-tenured, supported and encouraged by our wonderful students. And we did it bravely and cheerfully in the hope of participating in our community, in our version of direct democratic action. I realized at the end of those three days in October that in confronting the terror of the Real through direct democratic action, whether we won or lost, we all who had participated had been politicized and our consciousness transformed forever. In the brave new world we now inhabit, the cheer and hope of those moments of direct action are what live on. The exemplary support displayed by the students of IUP for their faculty during the strike is an essential part of those moments. As a relatively new member of the Honors College, I was delighted and humbled to see honors college students (as well

as many, many others) reverse the teacher student power relations by going out of their way to sustain us with offers of water, cookies (some baked by the students themselves), singing songs of encouragement right across the street from where the faculty were demonstrating. Having them beside us sometimes felt like a wonderful party, but more importantly their support and presence demonstrated their solidarity and understanding of the larger issues at stake in higher education not only for themselves but for their younger siblings and for future students. To quote Guha quoting Gramsci from the essay titled, “Spontaneity and Conscious Leadership” in *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, true participative democratic collective action during those three days of October, when colleagues involved in the organization, motivation, negotiations and in the demonstrations as well as the students who came and supported and sustained us, were “multiple elements of “conscious leadership” but no one of them . . . pre-dominant” (ibid., 10).

Against the prevailing trend of surrender to corporatist and bureaucratic functioning of institutions of higher learning, this struggle, this direct democratic action by APSCUF and its membership of intellectual workers is holding high the banner of internal democracy, honesty and fighting for the just causes of labor. This is the only bulwark against the real threat of de-unionization of the workers and the clutches of corporatism of capital, to usher in a more equitable and egalitarian society. I understand that with the invasion and proliferation of social media, marching is not enough. The war of representation has to be fought in all the forums available: Facebook, Twitter, etc. Yet it was in the marching and the demonstrating that I experienced a sense of solidarity with colleagues, which was unlike any I had felt before.

I cannot end my musings as a hyphenated person without recalling yet another debt of gratitude owed by the Indian labor movement to the city of my birth, Kolkata, from where, in 1878, for the first time a journal was published exclusively devoted to labor and the issues confronting labor—*Bharat*

*Sramajibi* (Indian Labourers). In the same spirit I offer my salute to the editor and the editorial staff of this journal—*Works and Days*—for being the journal of record of the AP-SCUF strike those three momentous days in October 2016.

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## **APSCUF President, State System Leaders Sign Contracts**

Dec. 20, 2016

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Faculty and coach contracts are nearly ready for the printer after Pennsylvania's State System of Higher Education ratified the documents in today's Board of Governors meeting. State System Chancellor Frank Brogan, Board of Governors Chairwoman Cynthia Shapira, and Dr. Kenneth M. Mash, president of the Association of Pennsylvania State College and University Faculties, signed the agreements this morning at Dixon University Center in Harrisburg.

"We are glad this process is complete so our faculty and coaches can begin the new year focused on their students and doing what they do best," Mash said. "Our next step is to determine how our future negotiations can be more constructive and efficient."

APSCUF will post the full contracts on its website in the coming days.

Faculty and coach APSCUF members ratified their respective agreements in on-campus votes early this month.

The faculty negotiations team reached its three-year tentative agreement Oct. 21. To preserve quality education, APSCUF accepted concessions to benefits in exchange for eliminating most of the 249 changes the State System proposed in June. Also for the sake of students, APSCUF agreed to a salary package that was lower than that of other unions.

Coaches, who bargain separately, reached their tentative agreement Oct. 27. The four-year deal provides reasonable salary increases for coach members while keeping the costs of their healthcare plan affordable, APSCUF Coach Executive Leader John Gump said that day.

Negotiations for the next faculty contract will begin in August 2017. Both previous contracts expired June 30, 2015, and negotiations had been ongoing since late 2014.

APSCUF represents about 5,500 faculty and coaches at the State System universities: Bloomsburg, California, Cheyney, Clarion, East Stroudsburg, Edinboro, Indiana, Kutztown, Lock Haven, Mansfield, Millersville, Shippensburg, Slippery Rock, and West Chester Universities of Pennsylvania.



# **Three Days in October: Photographically Speaking**

*Graphic Design by  
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