

Monday, December 07, 2009

Colleagues,

One of the lessons we had to learn last week at the SVFT office is that we have to manage our time more efficiently if we are to get everything we need to get done accomplished. We have decided to split the responsibilities between the three officers. President Rick Tanasi will make the contacts with the legislators, the people in the Department of Education, the members of AFT-CT, and the press. Vice-President Jan Hochadel will lead the investigation into financial aid sources for students so they will be able to pay the higher fees necessary to offset the Governor's planned savings through elimination of the program. I will handle all the communication between the members and the SVFT. Thus, if you call or email the office, I will be the one to respond. I will send a recap of the communications to the other officers. We have so little time to get so much done, we cannot afford to duplicate work.

We met tonight with representative from each of the ten programs. Jennifer Berrigan, the AFT-CT lobbyist, discussed strategies for saving the LPN program. She recommended that we not concentrate on a specific tuition that students should pay, but to acknowledge that we recognize tuition costs may have to increase. We will use that tactic going forward. She also discouraged any large rallies, and instead work on lobbying legislators direct lobbying. The meeting lasted well over two hours, and a strategy has been developed. We are encouraging everyone to write to the governor, Speaker of the House Chris Donovan, Senate President Don Williams, and his or her own senator and representative. People not sure who their legislators are should go to the member's only section of www.SVFT.org, where they can type in their home address and find who to contact. We ask anyone who has contacted a legislator or any other prominent figure about saving the program to email us at eleavy@svft.org, along with a description of the type of response the person may have given. We are building a data base of contacts we have made to help guide us through this process.

Tomorrow is another busy day; we have a morning meeting with lead SEBAC negotiator Dan Livingston, and then we are off to an 11:30 press conference where Karen Ivers and Anne Simko will represent our LPN teachers. On Wednesday, Rick Tanasi and representatives from the Kaynor and Windham programs will give testimony at a public hearing. Thursday night is the meeting from the Political Action Committee; we will be asking several of the LPN teachers to lend their time and expertise. The enthusiasm from the LPN instructors remains remarkable. These efforts go well beyond the desire to save a job; they come from a belief in the LPN program and its power to change people's lives. As officers, it has been an honor to be a part of this cause.

In Solidarity,

Rick, Jan, and Ed