Semester filled with turmoil and uncertainty comes to an end

By Lisa Conley
Local 212 President

Over my 20-plus years as an educator – including after the apocalypse that was Act 10 - I’ve never experienced a semester filled with so much turmoil and uncertainty. Whether struggling to understand and navigate through the many moving parts of Guided Pathways where more questions have been raised than answered, or enduring Wisconsin’s midterm election cycle only to face post-election turmoil that has threatened the power of the incoming governor, we have all been on an emotional roller coaster. It feels as if the rules of the game keep changing, as if we are sometimes trying to remain upright on a foundation of moving sand. It has been exhausting.

But, all that is involved in working with and educating students is exhausting and we are collectively among the most seasoned, best prepared, highly dedicated and resilient educational professionals that I know of. Plus, we are not isolated and alone in this experience. Each of us has made a personal decision to remain joined in solidarity and strengthened by our numbers as part of a professional organization that unites us in our mission to serve students. Together we stand up and speak out for what we believe in - the importance of public education, the place of our profession in it, and most importantly, the potential of our students.

That resolve was reinforced on the November 21st Non-Student Contact Day (NSCD) when approximately 170 frontline educational professionals came together and participated in a facilitated discussion of current concerns and issues related to Guided Pathways. The honest and open discussions between those present revealed the human impact of change and uncertainty, our shared values, and common Guided Pathways-related experiences and concerns.

Your previous feedback was used to formulate the updated Local 212 Guided Pathways Position Statement found elsewhere in this issue. Data such as that collected on the NSCD will continue to inform and direct our organization’s choices, actions and positions moving forward. In addition to that Wednesday event, forums such as 212 Tuesdays, recent surveys and reactivated Local 212 Membership Committee also support our organization’s dedication to implementing practices whereby our union can stay better connected with and more responsive to its members. You can expect more of such outreach in the future. Your thoughts, experiences, professional expertise and voice matter.

While colleagues in Student Services and those involved in Developmental Education have been the target of Guided Pathways reform efforts to date, rest assured that no area of the College will be immune from the experience. That is why it is imperative that each of us is informed on the issues, that we communicate with each other, and that we remain vigilant over and engaged in change processes. This can involve volunteering for design or rapid response teams or other such groups. But, it can also involve fostering collaborative problem solving or strategy sessions between your area and others in the College, or contacting your union advocates, Local 212 Executive Board representatives or leadership team members with suggestions, observations, questions, issues or concerns. Other options include taking advantage of forums offered by the college such as listening sessions with Provost Dakwar or President Martin or submitting comments to the Guided Pathways Steering Committee via a link found on MyMATC.

It is most important that we stay supportive of each other and that we are united in our resolve. The former is important as, whether student or employee, change affects people’s lives. Supporting our colleagues makes it much easier for those individuals to in turn be there for their students. Remaining united, even though it may be the goal of some to divide-and-conquer, is important because unity allows our organization to better advocate for what our members want and need, such as:

- Fair, equitable, respectful and professional treatment
- Implementation and application of sensible processes, rules, procedures and policies
- A workplace that is safe, adequately staffed and fully resourced
- True collaboration and full transparency so that effective development and implementation of sensible, student-centered reforms can occur, and

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Local 212 Guided Pathways

Position Statement

Guided Pathways has potential to bring positive change to our school and for the students that we serve. However, the recent deluge of Guided Pathways-related concerns received by Local 212 from multiple areas of the college over a short period of time suggests rising fear and skepticism, and reaffirms that the “devil is in the detail” of how needed changes are identified, designed, implemented and assessed.

Our members, who are most familiar with MATC students and who are the true experts in empowering them to reach their goals, are key to MATC’s success with this initiative. Change processes must be fair, equitable, transparent and truly collaborative, with front-line people allowed real involvement at each process step from identification of need through assessment of impact.

Our membership must and will remain united, vigilant and engaged to ensure that we are treated as professionals, valued as key to successful implementation of this initiative and recognized as the driving force behind success of our students and school.

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- Change grounded in educational best practices and fueled by use of sound data in decision-making

In short, we are in this together, and we will get through this together.

So, on behalf of your elected Local 212 leadership team and Executive Board, thank you for standing up for students, for supporting each other and for sticking with your union during these tumultuous times. While we may not win every fight, united we are better able to achieve the best outcomes possible, both for ourselves as professionals and for our students.

Take some time to recharge your batteries over the break. We’ll see you when you get back.

What have Local 212 Advocates been up to?

By MarQulyn McKinney
Local 212 Advocate Committee

The fall semester is coming to a close, so the Local 212 Advocate Committee would like you to know about our activities and accomplishments this semester.

Your advocates have continued to act as representatives of Local 212 and its members by volunteering on several Guided Pathway’s Rapid Response and Design Teams such as Intake Barriers and Accuplacer. Others participated on MATC committees that include the Handbook and Faculty Appendix and the Compensation committees.

Your advocates have also been collaborating throughout the semester with departments such as Student Services, Basic Skills, English, and Math to address handbook violations and Guided Pathways issues. Local 212 and your advocates remain resolute in having questions, concerns, and issues addressed by MATC.

As the core of our mission, your advocates meet monthly to stay well-versed on MATC’s Employee Handbook and keep abreast of updates. We have been especially focused on several handbook areas that have recently become prevalent inquiries from members: e.g., absences, sick leaves, vacation, employee performance, complaints and discipline procedures, and faculty preference forms and assignments.

While your advocates have been working diligently to represent and support members, we need more help. Please consider becoming an advocate. It is a rewarding and fulfilling role. Contact MarQulyn McKinney at mmckinney.local212@gmail.com for more information about becoming a Local 212 Advocate.

Retiree Corner

Some Retirees Never Stop Working

By Barbara Toles
Retiree Chapter President

Dr. George Stone retired May 22, 2015, from the faculty of Milwaukee Area Technical College, where he taught a range of courses in the earth sciences, including Earth Science, General Geology, Weather Fundamentals, Climate Change Fundamentals and Energy in Nature, Technology and Society. He was a Co-Founder of and served for many years as Chair of Wisconsin’s annual Sustainability Summit and as Faculty Co-Chair of MATC’s Sustainability Core Committee.

For more than three decades, George has been an outspoken advocate of action to mitigate global warming. He has presented many papers at meetings of national and international professional organizations and has spoken widely on various aspects of this challenging topic.

Each year, Dr. Stone attends the annual meeting of the Geological Society of America (GSA), for which he usually organizes and co-chairs a technical session and presents a paper. George also attends and presents papers at the quadrennial meetings of the International Geological Congress (for example, Externalities of Fossil Fuel Combustion: An Ethical Reassessment of Liability in August, 2016 at the 35th IGC in Cape Town) and the International Quaternary Association (INQUA). George has been invited to present a paper at the 2019 INQUA conference in Dublin.

Dr. Stone attended the historic COP21 climate meetings in Paris (2015), where he served as a delegate from Wisconsin Clean Cities to the Sustainable Innovation Forum 2015. In mid-September this year, George was an invited delegate to the Global Climate Action Summit in San Francisco, and during the first week of November, Dr. Stone co-chaired with Michael Mann of Penn State a technical session titled Global Warning: Accelerating Rates of Change Forewarn of Catastrophic Impacts at the GSA 2018 Annual Meeting in Indianapolis.

George often jokes, “Stone’s the name; rocks are my game.” But global warming is his focus!
By Alexandra Topping
ESL and Citizenship Instructor

A leader of AFT Local 212, Luz Sosa has worked for immigrant rights in Milwaukee for many years. She teaches economics at MATC and comes from Paraguay. She single-handedly organized a forum held in M605 on Saturday, October 20, that addressed all the critical local issues for immigration/refugees today. It was called “Immigrants and Their Families.” Luz is especially interested in “the emotional and psychological impact on people during these difficult times.”

Forum panelists were: immigration attorneys, including Kevin Layde from Layde & Parra Law Firm who assists immigrants/refugees in deportation issues in the Milwaukee area and speaks fluent Spanish, psychologists who treat immigrants who suffer from stress and anxiety, Emilio de Toro from the ACLU, MATC counselor, Lia Maxwell, State legislator JoCasta Zamarripa, Luz Sosa representing AFT Local 212, and others.

The speakers emphasized what a family should do if ICE/FBI/Police show up at their door. Don’t open the door; you don’t have to legally. Some local ICE agents are posing as police and knocking on doors! We were shocked to hear that some Uber drivers have been found to be ICE agents. (!!!) Some of these Uber drivers offer free rides to people who want to go to the polls to vote early. It was emphasized that these days everyone is being targeted, even legal residents and U.S. citizens! A couple weekends ago, 80 people were arrested by heavily armed ICE agents in one weekend in Wisconsin. Some who were arrested and placed in Milwaukee County jail were given an “ICE retainer” and were picked up by ICE agents.

The MATC counselor from West Allis Campus, Lia Maxwell, said that counselors are available to help students with immigration issues so that they can stay in school. She announced that there are interpreters at each campus who have resources for students, and that students can feel it is safe for them to consult a counselor. She said, “If you have ongoing stress, don’t feel alone. Counselors’ offices are a safe place for students to come and there is help for you.”

One of the psychologists on the panel, Dr. Benjamin Rader, who is also head of the “Society of Psychologists of Wisconsin,” stated, “Stress can be poisonous.” Children can feel their parents’ anxiety and stress,” but, “education is power, and everyone should stay informed about their rights, like the right to not say a word if detained by ICE.” You should say you want to talk to your lawyer, even before giving your name, which you don’t have to do either. And don’t sign anything. There is help for immigrants/refugees at the “Bread of Healing” organization on 17th and McKinley, and also at the Sixteenth Street Health Center on the near south side. He also said that the first consultation with him is free.

Virginia Miranda from “Citizens Action of Wisconsin” gave a presentation on the importance of voting in the upcoming elections. “Marching and protesting are not enough if we don’t vote. We should educate U.S. citizens about what is at stake when you vote or don’t vote. Also, we need to elect more Hispanics who will address our issues.”

Handouts available on the literature table included a list of MATC counselors at all 4 campuses who are prepared to advise students who are “in crisis,” and other information to aid immigrants/refugees in English, Spanish and Arabic.

Tame the Cost of College via Member Benefits. Union Plus Free College Benefit. AFT members and their family can earn associate degrees online in a number of programs through this new free college program. In addition, Student Debt Support Programming is offered through AFT. Local 212’s two workshops that were offered on-site over the last year were supported by this program. Up-to-date information and resources can be found using the link provided above (click on “Student Debt Support”).

It’s Scholarship Season! Over the years, our member’s children have received thousands of dollars in college support - another benefit of membership - from the following union-sponsored programs:

- AFT Robert G. Porter Program. Watch for application posting.
- AFT WI College & Technical School Scholarships. Watch for application posting.
Full House for November 21 Information Session

By Lisa Conley
Local 212 President

Local 212 continues to join with those affected by the current wave of Guided Pathways-related changes to advocate for sensible processes, timely information sharing, employee voice, and a true seat at the table.

Approximately 170 people attended Local 212’s Information session held on the November 21 Non-Student Contact Day (NSCD). This was a prime example of how members and union leadership are together taking steps to stand up for ourselves and to advocate for our students. Data collected through the NSCD and other forums are used to direct and inform our organizations positions, strategies and actions. For example, your representatives on the Guided Pathways Steering Committee used information provided on the NSCD to bring process flaws to the attention of the administration and to call for reforms to the implementation of spring Developmental Education. While we were not in full agreement with the timing and construct, this advocacy spurred movement by the administration so that those involved in related reforms are better informed and have a greater voice in what Developmental Education will look like for Spring 2019.

Your union representatives continue to monitor the situation and will keep you updated, and trust that you will do the same.
Fast Fund Update

Fast Fund recipient, Kristine Tereuzo

By Michael Rosen, Ph.D.  
Local 212 Retiree

Kristine, a MATC early childhood education student, lost everything in a fire. The widowed mother of a nine-month-old girl secured temporary housing from the Red Cross, but lost everything—all her books, school supplies, clothing, her laptop, and more.

The FAST Fund immediately came to her aid buying her baby diapers, and replacing notebooks, pens, and her laptop. The Fund also contacted her instructors who were able to secure replacement text books from the publisher at no cost to Kristine or the FAST Fund. And a FAST Fund supporter with an older child provided Kristine’s daughter with quality clothing.

Kristine wrote “Upon leaving the 212 office I was over come with joy. My eyes welled up in tears. I was so excited and thankful to be able to continue my homework again and get control over my education. I could never thank the union, Mr. Rosen, and the FAST Fund enough. They will never understand how much the joy, relief, gratitude and pure love they gave me and Ella or what that meant to us.”

The Local 212/MATC FAST Fund has been extremely active this year in part because the college’s emergency fund, Dream Keepers, did not even open until a month into the academic year and because Dream Keepers only helps students receiving Pell grants. As a result, the FAST Fund has provided emergency funding to 42 students and assisted a total of 70 students since July 1, 2018.

Housing insecurity remains the single biggest problem facing our students. 18 of the 42 students the Fund assisted were either homeless or facing an eviction. While studies indicate that 15% of college students experience homelessness annually, the percentage appears to be much higher among MATC’s students.

The Fund also helped 6 students get their lights turned on or avoid disconnection; bought six students books or access codes; provided 5 students with food cards; paid for 5 car repairs, and gave 4 students gas cards. We also helped an additional 28 students access eviction funding, books and eye glasses at no cost to the FAST Fund.

The FAST Fund is an independent nonprofit organization that depends on voluntary contributions from faculty, staff and the community. All donations are tax deductible.

*If you are interested in supporting MATC students through the FAST Fund, write a check out to the Local 212/MATC FAST Fund and send it through interoffice mail to Local 212 or mail it or drop it off at the 212 office, 739 West Juneau 53233.*
Local 212 members packed the house at Voces de la Fronterra for the 2018 MATC Day of community service.

Submitted by Lisa Conley

Ashante Reed, Nyia Sallee, MarQulyn McKinney, Felton Benton and Lisa Conley were among the Local 212 attendees of the 2018 NAACP Freedom Fund Banquet held on October 26, 2018 at Milwaukee’s Wisconsin Center. Submitted by Lisa Conley