



# The Redwing

Skagit Valley College Federation of Teachers

## Winter 2026 Roundup

Here are some highlights from the general membership meetings held last quarter:

- 5 faculty members were approved for tenure in March of 2026. Congratulations to Dr. Kai Dupe, Mr. Michael Greiner, Dr. Edgar Rosas Alquicira, Dr. Mariko Thomas, and Ms. Michelle Walters!
- New associate faculty hires are now allowed to be hired on as Step A+ if they meet the qualifications in the job description.
- Associate faculty promotions are solicited in Spring quarter.
- SVCFT received 68 survey responses on the unexpected leadership transition that took place in January of 2026.
- The Presidential search is underway. Employee and faculty forums were held in April 2026. The new president is expected to start on January 1, 2027.

All general membership meeting notes are available on our Canvas shell.

### Mark your calendars

#### Spring 2026 SVCFT Meetings

- Monday, May 4 from 2:30-4:00 P.M.
- Monday, June 8 from 2:30-4:00 P.M.
- Check your calendar for meeting links.

#### SVCFT Officers

- President- Kip Zwolenski
- Vice President (Associate Faculty Liaison)- Nancy Bixler
- Vice President (Whidbey Island Campus)- Brian Manning
- Treasurer- Claudia Avendano-Ibarra
- Secretary- Amanda Wells

#### Contact us

- skagitaft@gmail.com

#### Comments & Contributions

- awellsdepaz@gmail.com

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Skagit Valley College Federation of Teachers

## Spring 2026 Event information

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Event	Information	Contact
<a href="#">Powwow</a>	Saturday, May 16 and Sunday, May 17 ( <a href="#">see page 13 for Grand Entry times</a> )	AllMyRelations@skagit.edu
<a href="#">Car Show</a>	Saturday, June 6 9:00-1:00 in parking lot C1 on the Mount Vernon Campus.	Edwin.Gless@skagit.edu
<a href="#">WIC Commencement</a>	Wednesday, June 17	See your dean for details
<a href="#">MV Commencement</a>	Thursday, June 18	See your dean for details
Spring Celebration	Thursday, June 18 following MV Commencement on the third floor balcony of Lewis Hall (MV Campus).	Kip.Zwolenski@skagit.edu

# President's Update

By Kip Zwolenski

## Associate Faculty Step Promotions

Human Resources will be sending out an email Friday, May 15, regarding the 2026 Associate Promotional Period. Below is a quick overview of the eligibility requirements for each step. Join us on Tuesday, May 19, for an associate workshop where we will give a more detailed overview of the promotional process. Also, Nancy Bixler and I will be sending many reminders to associate faculty encouraging them to apply. Please note that there are no Senior Associate opportunities this year.

<b>Step</b>	<b>Eligibility</b>
Step A	New Hire Placement
Step B	60 FCU's Taught at SVC
Step C	150 FCU's Taught & 10 Years of Teaching at SVC
Senior	90 FCU's, Step B, & Posted Opportunity in Department
(+) Status	Terminal Degree or Higher Degree than Required

## 2026-2027 Faculty Compensation

All faculty contracts (quarterly and annual) will see a 2.6% COLA (i.e. cost of living adjustment). Reminder, this COLA is based on the previous calendar year's IPD (i.e. implicit price deflator), rather than the current inflation we have been experiencing since the end of February.

## Nominations Open for Faculty Leadership

I shared at our last general membership meeting that nominations are now open for union officer positions and executive council members. All of our leadership positions are elected annually. Please email nominations to [skagitafte@gmail.com](mailto:skagitafte@gmail.com).

# Associate Faculty Update

By Nancy Bixler, SVCFT Vice President for Associate Faculty

## Important things to know:

- Two-year averaging. Briefly, two-year averaging is a provision that can help keep contingent faculty on insurance if they drop below the qualification line. Per the recent email: Whether or not you know you will need this, email HR back to say Yes, you believe you qualify for two-year averaging. If you don't do it by the deadline, you can't do it later if the need unexpectedly arises. Come to the Paystub Zoom for more information (below).
- Vector training. Per the recent email, you need to do this and will be paid at the negotiated meeting rate of \$33/hour for the time stated to take it. You don't need to send your certificate to anyone to prove you've done it, and you don't have to take the trainings again if you took them recently elsewhere. Other answers to FAQs are coming soon, but if you have questions, you can also ask your Dean's office.
- College Community Day May 8: If you attend the professional development sessions, you will be paid for up to four hours at the meeting rate of \$33/hour (email your attendance to your dean's office afterward). Your presence is welcome: Breakfast snacks and lunch are free, and there are a variety of topics on offer. Do look me up and say Hi! A more complete agenda will be emailed but see the session topics here: [Cardinal Community Day](#).

## Zoom information sessions especially for you, no reservations required. The Zoom links, dates, and titles are also listed on our Outlook calendars.

- Drop-in: PDP & Step Promotions. It's a new professional development process, and we're all still learning it. Come figure out where you are in the cycle and what needs to happen this year. Plus, ask any questions about pay steps and step promotions. Tue 2026-05-19 3:00 PM - 4:00 PM. <https://skagitvalleycollege.zoom.us/j/84756121208?pwd=BaK5lhpGaC5ef2M1dmzhcGHb86kmaX.1&from=addon>
- Associate Faculty Gains: Locally & State-wide. What are possibilities for improving pay, security, and working conditions for associate faculty, at the state and local levels? What have we already gained? Come get the big and local pictures, and feel free to ask questions. Tue 2026-06-02 3:00 PM - 4:00 PM. <https://skagitvalleycollege.zoom.us/j/83168965031?pwd=UoVr7fysh86mafOafbgyfwP5qTA9Hi.1&from=addon>

# Legacy, Solidarity, and Success: The Faculty Voice of AFT Local 4985

By Claudia Avendaño-Ibarra

## The Foundation: Why History Matters

The history of labor unions is a narrative of collective resilience. Originally emerging during the Industrial Revolution, unions shifted the power dynamic from individual vulnerability to collective strength. As documented in the [AFL-CIO Labor History Timeline](#), this movement secured the standards we often take for granted today:

- The 40-hour workweek
- Child labor laws
- Employer-sponsored healthcare

This legacy continues through the [American Federation of Teachers](#), which applies these foundational principles of solidarity to professional and academic environments. When we sit down at the bargaining table at SVC, we stand on the shoulders of these previous generations. Our processes, from Robert's Rules to our grievance procedures, are the refined results of over a century of advocacy.

Explore our documents:

- [Collective Bargaining Agreement \(CBA\)](#)
- [Local Constitution and Bylaws.](#)

## Identity: The Value of AFT Local 4985

Our ability to provide high-quality education depends on professional stability and the protection of academic freedom.

- **The Union Premium:** According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (2024), union members' median weekly earnings are approximately 15% higher than those of non-union workers.
- **Social Justice:** Research by Ng, Khan, and Stanford (2024) demonstrates that unions are essential in reducing racial inequality, providing a measurable "union advantage" for racialized workers.
- **Academic Freedom:** Collective bargaining structures have a positive impact on the preservation of academic freedom (Fernandez et al., 2024).

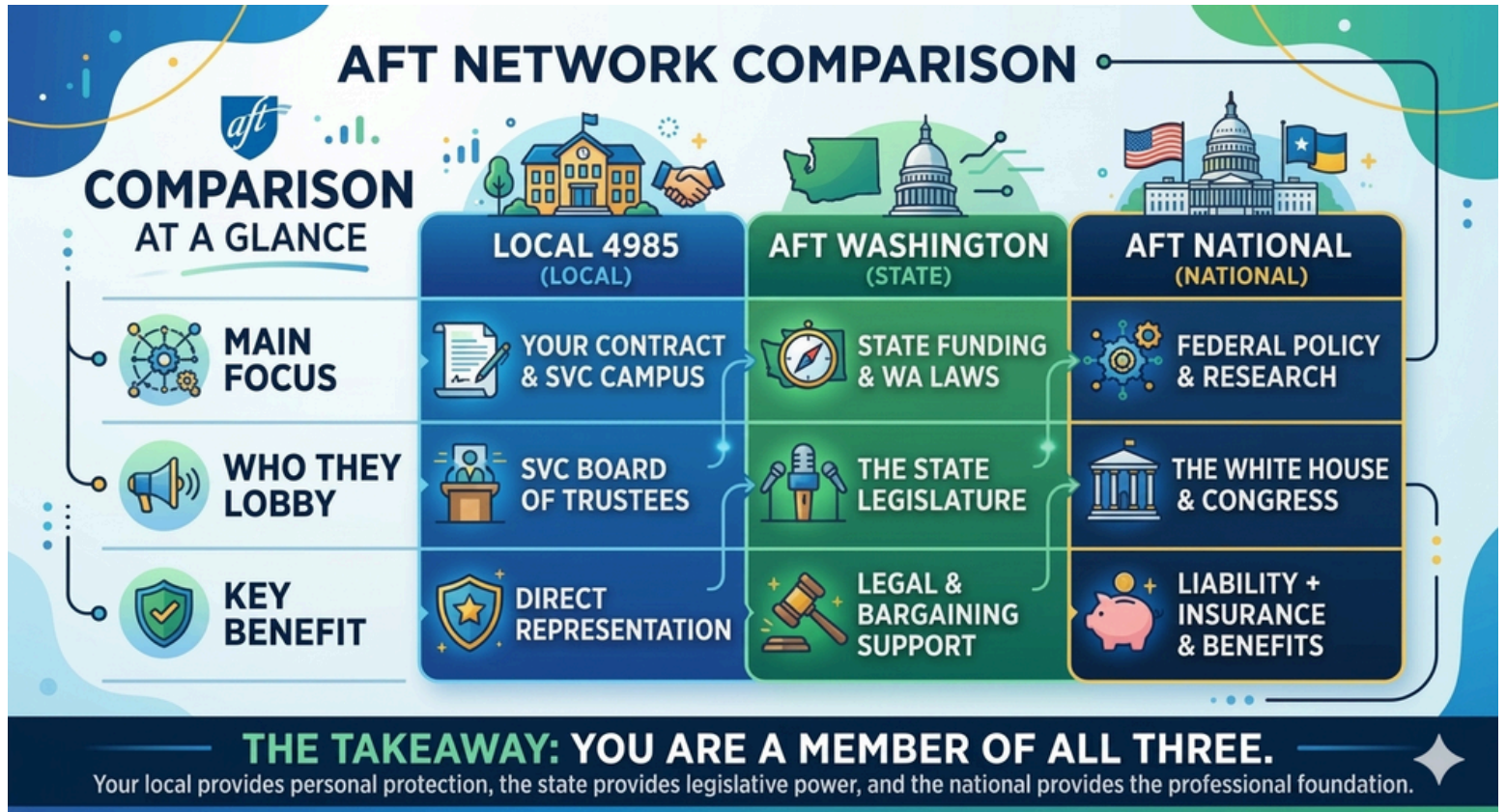
# Legacy, Solidarity, and Success

By Claudia Avendaño-Ibarra

## From Local Roots to National Reach

Our local 4985 functions as an autonomous representative while benefiting from a powerful three-tiered structure:

- **Local 4985 (SVC):** Self-governing; manages campus relations, local CBA negotiations, and grievances.
- **AFT Washington:** Our legislative "muscle" in Olympia, lobbying for state funding, COLA adjustments, and retirement security.
- **AFT National:** Connects 1.8 million members to federal policy and provides massive-scale benefits, including \$1 million in professional liability insurance.



# Legacy, Solidarity, and Success

By Claudia Avendaño-Ibarra

## Governance, Collaboration, and Ethics: Our Shared Process

To ensure fairness, our meetings are governed by Robert's Rules of Order. This ensures that the majority can make decisions while the rights of the minority are strictly protected.

In alignment with our commitment to transparency and ethical advocacy, any voting member, whether on the Executive Board or within the general membership, who finds themselves in a position where they cannot vote in the best interest of the faculty union membership is expected to abstain from voting. This ensures our decisions are always made in the best interest of the faculty membership.





## WHY THIS MATTERS

The Impact of Ethical Governance

FOR THE ADMINISTRATION	FOR THE MEMBERSHIP	FOR THE PROCESS
 It shows we are a professional, self-regulating body that operates with high integrity.	 It guarantees that every decision made is purely for the benefit of faculty.	 It keeps our meetings efficient and focused on long-term goals.

**Integrity. Transparency. Collective Strength**

# Legacy, Solidarity, and Success (continued)




By Claudia Avendaño-Ibarra

## A Call to Action: Your Seat at the Table

A union is only as strong as its members. Your participation ensures that the diversity of faculty experiences across the Mount Vernon and Whidbey campuses is reflected in our decisions.

[Join AFT Local 4985 today](#) to shape and protect your career.

**AFT Local 4985: United For Faculty**  
Additional AFT Member Benefits & Participation

 <p style="text-align: center;"><b>1. A Voice in Governance</b></p> <p>Your vote counts. Only members can vote on critical contract ratifications and elect the leaders who define the union's direction and representation.</p>	 <p style="text-align: center;"><b>2. Student Debt Clinics</b></p> <p>Access expert guidance and personalized sessions to help navigate and apply for Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF). Get the path to financial freedom.</p>	 <p style="text-align: center;"><b>3. Exclusive Discounts</b></p> <p>Save money through AFT and other union partners. Receive members-only discounts on home insurance, travel, entertainment, and legal services.</p>
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**Your Engagement. Your Benefits. Our Strength.**

## Further Reading and Resources

- National Labor Trends: [Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2024](#)
- Racial Equity Research: [The Union Advantage for Racialized Workers](#)
- AFT History: Explore the [AFT Washington](#) and [National AFT](#) archives.
- Fernandez, F., Chykina, V., & Lin, Y. C. (2024). Science at risk? Considering the importance of academic freedom for STEM research production across 17 OECD countries. PLOS ONE, 19(2), e0298370. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0298370>
- Khan, S., & Stanford, J. (2024, August). The importance of unions in reducing racial inequality: The union advantage for racialized workers. Centre for Future Work. <https://centreforfuturework.ca/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/Union-Advantage-for-the-Newsletter-4Racialized-Workers.pdf>

*Curated and authored by Claudia Avendaño-Ibarra, MSW, AFT Local 4985 Treasurer. AI technology was utilized for organizational structure and clarity.*

# ***Bog Myrtle*** Book Review

By Libby Sullivan, SVC Librarian



## ***Bog Myrtle***

By Sid Sharp

Published by Annick Press, 142 pages

### **A description from the publisher:**

“Two sisters, one stubbornly cheerful (Beatrice) and one relentlessly grumpy (Magnolia), live in a drafty old house with a family of helpful spiders. When Beatrice is gifted magic yarn from a giant forest spider obsessed with sustainability, named Bog Myrtle, she and the spiders set to work knitting up a perfectly warm sweater.

But greedy Magnolia sees only the opportunity for profit and quickly converts the old house into a magic sweater factory. The exhausted spiders are driven to strike, and Bog Myrtle is not pleased . . .

*Bog Myrtle* is a witty modern folktale that touches on themes of capitalism, environmentalism, labor rights, and being a nice person.”

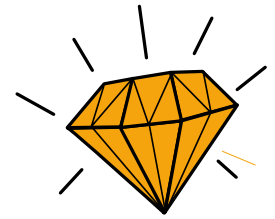
### **Libby’s review:**

A graphic novel published in 2024, *Bog Myrtle* is a must read for anyone who wants to learn (or teach) about the basic reasons for unions to exist. You can find it in the graphic novel section in SVC’s Mount Vernon Library, under the last name of the author. If you need a little levity, truth, and whimsical art in your life, I highly recommend this title.



# Archival Gems

By Elena Bianco,  
Systems and Technical Services Librarian



As the Library's Systems & Technical Services Librarian, one of the favorite parts of my job is maintaining and organizing the SVC Archives. As the second-oldest college in the state (Centralia was founded in 1925, beating us by one year), we have a lot of history. Since my sabbatical project in 2022-23 on archival best practices for community colleges, I've been working with students at the University of Washington Information School to sort through what we have, organize and digitize some of these items. You can find many of these digitized materials at the Library's SVC Online [Archival Collection](#), and in honor of the 100th Anniversary of the college, I'll be sharing them here, as "Archival Gems."

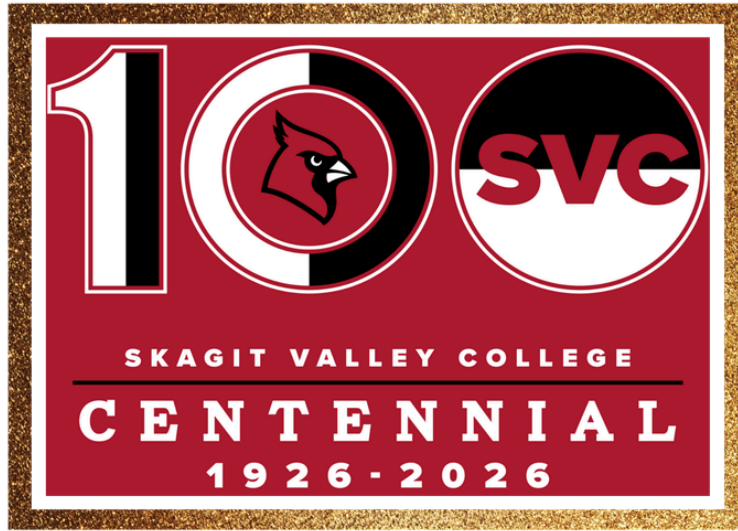
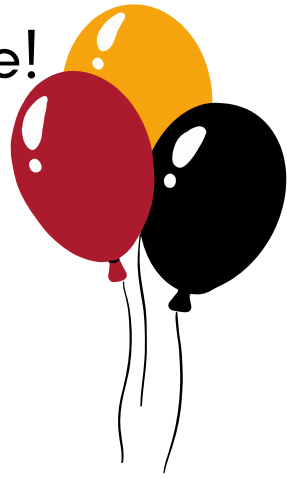
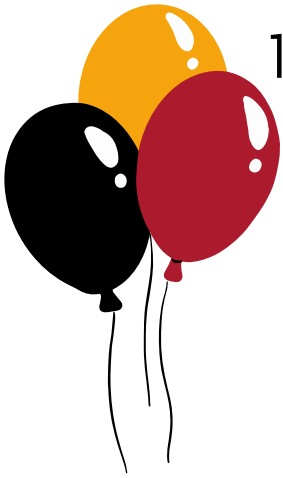
The first one in the series is this photograph of former First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt, with SVC Dean George Hodson in 1956. The intern who uncovered the photo and I were floored to discover her connection to the college. After a quick bit of online research, we discovered that Mrs. Roosevelt had a niece in Bellingham, whom she often visited. On one such visit, she came and spoke at what was then still known as Mount Vernon Junior College. At the time, the college had a lecture series called The Symposium. You can read her account of the visit, [which mentions the college](#), at the online Eleanor Roosevelt Papers. She was one of many prominent figures who spoke at the college. Other famous speakers included Olympic track gold medalist Jesse Owens, and actor DeForest Kelley, who most famously portrayed Dr. Leonard "Bones" McCoy in the original Star Trek series.



If you would like to see what's in the archives or use these materials with your classes, please contact me at [elena.bianco@skagit.edu](mailto:elena.bianco@skagit.edu).

# Skagit Valley College Centennial

## 1926-2026: 100 Years of Cardinal Pride!



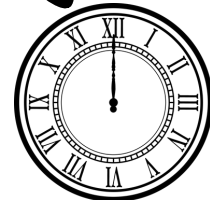
### Mark you calendars for these centennial events:

- **Tuesday, May 19, 2026, all day, at MVC and WIC:**
  - [Cardinal Centennial "Through the Decades" Day](#)
- **Wednesday, May 20, 2026, all day, at MVC and WIC:**
  - [Cardinal Centennial "Carnival" Day](#)
- **Saturday, September 26, 2026, time and location TBD:**
  - [Centennial Gala](#)

[Click here to view a short video introduction of the centennial.](#)



[Click here to view a comprehensive timeline of SVC's history!](#)



# Classified Staff Happenings: Faculty & Staff Unions Stronger Together

## WPEA Union Representatives for SVC

- Shirley Confer
  - SVC Fiscal – Business Office
  - WPEA Shop Steward
  - Office: 360.416.7746
  
- Lance Levesen
  - SVC Security
  - WPEA Shop Steward
  - Office: 360.416.7934
  
- Amy Williams
  - SVC Arts & Science Assistant
  - WPEA Shop Steward
  - Office: 360.416.7994
  
- Joe Buenaventura
  - SVC IT Dept. Network / Telecommunications Admin
  - WPEA Shop Steward
  - Office: 360.679.5216
  
- Deb Montez, WPEA Staff Rep.
  - Member Representative
  - Cell: (425) 697-0390
  - Email: [deb@wpea.org](mailto:deb@wpea.org)

### Contact us

- [SkagitValleyLeadershipTeam@wpea.org](mailto:SkagitValleyLeadershipTeam@wpea.org)

The WPEA has begun contract negotiations for Higher Education. At the same time, our members are looking ahead to July 10, when they expect to see their raises reflected and receive the back pay lump sum. The Office of Financial Management (OFM) has not yet confirmed when these payments will be issued. While we are hopeful they will appear on the July 25 paycheck, we recognize that it may take longer.

As we move into spring, we are also thinking about the future of our Head Start programs. These programs are facing increasing financial challenges, with fewer resources available each year. We remain hopeful they will not experience further setbacks, but the situation is difficult.

When you meet someone who works in Head Start, take a moment to thank them—their work makes a meaningful difference in the lives of children and families every day.

Thanks,

Stacie M. Leanos

WPEA Member Representation Specialist for the  
DOL Statewide | LCB Statewide | WSDA Statewide | Skagit  
Valley College | Edmonds College  
360-810-1627 | [Stacie@wpea.org](mailto:Stacie@wpea.org)

*Know a classified staff member that works closely with faculty? Encourage them to become a shop steward to strengthen our faculty and staff ties and union presence!*

HONORING OUR VETERANS



K PAUL 2026

# ALL MY RELATIONS 2026

# POW WOW

## MAY 16 & 17

▶ **Grand Entries** ◀  
Saturday May 16, 6 p.m.  
Sunday May 17, Noon

Head Staff:

**Vendor Information:**  
(please bring your own table).

**Additional Information:**  
Prizes in many categories, specials,  
RV camping is allowed.



**Questions/ Inquiries:** [AllMyRelations@skagit.edu](mailto:AllMyRelations@skagit.edu)

SKAGIT VALLEY COLLEGE • 2405 East College Way, Mount Vernon, WA

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Skagit Valley College Federation of Teachers

## **The Redwing values your feedback!**

Please complete this short, anonymous survey to share your feedback with the editor of The Redwing, Amanda Wells. You can access the survey by following [this link](#) or scanning the QR code below.

