

### 1.16.25 AFT2026 Pre-Bargaining Meeting

- Good morning y'all, and God bless you. Thank you for letting my team and I sit in on your meeting and see just how y'all work.

So I am Councilmember O'Rourke, of the Working Families Party, always willing and ready when the Faculty and Staff of the City's University call.

- And I know it's been a long fight, so I just want to take this moment to say that your effort is an inspiration.

I've been part of union drives at Philly universities, but what makes this different is how comprehensive and unified your demands are across three different units. *And I know that you know, that makes you all very, very special.*

- We all know that the boss will divide and conquer to break unity. But these three units won't be broken and this fight will be a model of solidarity in Philly.

I want you to know that.

- I also want to acknowledge that the administration has not given you all the respect that you deserve. What's most disappointing to me is how the Board of Trustees has been acting, since they should be the most interested in the practical challenges of working at CCP.
  - **If they understood their role properly, they'd be sitting straight up at attention whenever you'all have something to share — especially as many students are standing in solidarity with you all.**
- But, as I understand it, they've actually been pretty dismissive, and that's when they're not being actively disrespectful.
- **I have a problem with that, but I know y'all have the solution: *unity*.**
- I'm sure it takes a lot of unity to have a little more patience when you hear unserious answers for the real changes you want to see.
  - Classified Employees call for better harassment protections, and the administration answers, "*How about doing a training instead of better regulation?*"

- Adjuncts ask for pay equity, and the genius negotiators for the admin reply, *“Maybe they should be full-time.”*

This one feels especially disrespectful, because they know full well that the market for full-time professors is small and shrinking. They also know that the adjunct system works best, **for them**, when it maintains a relationship of deep dependency on college administrators. An adjunct system that paid people what they’re worth, or at least paid a living wage, would be seen in their eyes as a failure.

So, they must fail.

- Here’s a weird one. Faculty explain the challenges of crowded classrooms, describe how overcrowding restricts inventive, intentional, innovative teaching, and can hinder active learning.

The admin’s negotiators across the table thought this would be a great time to share a graph showing the size and makeup of other community colleges in the region.

**If they see pointing across county lines as a way to address overcrowding ... well, Lord help us.**

And to be fair ... I’m a reverend so I believe he will!

- Last budget season, I was proud to push to increase funding for CCP, and I was proud to help negotiate for an extra \$5 million on top of what the mayor proposed.

Let me tell you, I didn’t do that with President Generals in mind. My office didn’t set that priority because of the Board of Trustees.

**We did it with you all, and with the students and their families in mind.** The support you’ve received from me and my Council colleagues is because of one thing: It’s because you all are willing to fight.

Over 150 of you participated in open bargaining last semester, so I know there’s plenty of fighting spirit.

**You are fighting for your rights, and by virtue of the work you do, you fight to make our city and our democracy stronger. So thank you for fighting.**

- I'll say one more thing. Please understand that we are on the verge of a real political shift in this country, maybe a deep shift.
- Through it all, I ask you to hold onto this: **Please, keep on bargaining for the common good.**
- This country made real solidarity illegal in 1947, when Congress banned solidarity strikes.

But bargaining for the common good — *for the civil and economic rights of your neighbors and communities* — is what we will need as we live through what I pray is the resurrection of **a labor movement with freedom on the mind.**

- You will hear a lot about freedom this weekend as we celebrate Dr. King — as you should. **But Lord knows, freedom feels far away sometimes.**

But I hope you can believe, and believe it deeply, that you are in a fight for freedom. For dignity and respect. For what is right and what the next generation needs.

**All I can ask of you, and I'll be forever in your debt, is to keep fighting.**

**God bless you, and power to the union — which makes us strong.**