

# APA November/December 2011 Newsletter

## Bargaining Update

Maury Koffman, President/Chairperson

On Monday, October 10, 2011, months of tough contract negotiations concluded when the APA reached a tentative agreement with the administration of Michigan State University for a successor APA contract valid through September 30, 2015. As with most collective bargaining, neither management nor labor obtained everything sought at the commencement of negotiations.

As anticipated, the employer met the 2011 APA Bargaining Team with demands to codify the pronouncement by President Simon in spring 2010 to cease University funding for post-retirement health care benefits for employees beginning their University employment on or after July 1, 2010. The employer also sought modifications in overtime computation and educational assistance along with another 30 proposals. Responding to the information and data from APA membership surveys and input provided through member engagement events, emails, and phone calls, the APA Bargaining Team entered negotiations with proposals on access to employee-paid optional benefits such as short term disability and optical insurance. The APA also had an extensive proposal on enhanced dental coverage. In total, the APA proposed nearly 30 contract improvements at the beginning of negotiations.

From August to October 2011, the APA met with the employer on numerous occasions. Attempting to move the process forward, both sides mutually agreed to withdraw several proposals and focus on the larger issues in effort to reach a tentative agreement. Ultimately, the Bargaining Team agreed on proposals regarding post-retirement health care, overtime, and modification to educational assistance. Despite the difficult climate for labor negotiations in Michigan and the state of our economy, the APA was also able to secure multiple successes.

Improved language eliminates a mandatory trial or probationary period for member subject to a simple reclassification. New policies were added for members placed on Call-in and Standby status that mandates reasonable compensation. Discretion of family sick leave use was improved by allowing 80 hours from the previous 64 hour limit.

Other Eligible Individuals (OEIs) were added into multiple provisions to ensure each member of the bargaining unit is treated equally. And, letters of agreement were obtained that ensure discussions with the employer on enhanced dental coverage and self-purchased supplemental benefits will continue until there is a mutually agreeable resolution.

After notice of the tentative agreement was provided to the APA membership, information sessions were held on campus in East Lansing, as well as at the CHM Grand Rapids and COM Detroit Medical Center campuses. Members who attended delved into the issues and had productive dialogue.

Ratification voting opened on October 17 and concluded at 4pm on Monday, October 31. With 69% voting in favor, the tentative agreement was officially ratified by the APA membership.

The APA greatly appreciates the comments that were provided leading into and during negotiations and membership questions and engagement around the tentative agreement ratification. The APA understands that this ratified agreement may have a significant impact on individual members and will continue to be engaged on recent contract modifications to ensure impact to members is as minimal as possible. For further information or to ask questions, please contact the APA at [msuapa@msu.edu](mailto:msuapa@msu.edu) or at 517.353.4898.

## **Know Your Contract**

Melissa Sortman, MEA Uniserv Director

Does your job require you to be available after work hours? Or work beyond your scheduled work day?

As a professional, you may be required by your supervisor to be on standby or called into report to work if your job duties include after hour emergencies. In this round of bargaining (fall 2011), it was a priority of the bargaining team to address these issues since you should be compensated for all work. New language was bargained to provide compensation if you are required to be on standby or called in to report to work.

If you are placed on standby by your supervisor and are a grade level 8-11 APA member, you shall be guaranteed at least (1) one hour pay at straight time or equivalent in compensatory time for every 24-hour period scheduled for standby. Upon reporting to work, APA members shall be paid for the actual time worked at the rate of time and one-half or a minimum of two (2) hours, whichever is greater.

APA members, grade 8-11 who are required to report for emergency duty at the employer's request, outside regularly scheduled working hours shall be guaranteed at least (3) hours of pay at the rate of time and one-half.

The reason standby and call in compensation is only provided to grade level 8-11 members is because the University insisted the benefit reflect the current overtime qualification. Those APA members who qualify for overtime are grade level 8-11. For those who do qualify for overtime, you have a right to overtime if you work in excess of 40 hours in a work week. Compensatory time can be used instead of payment of overtime by mutual agreement. The APA member must agree that the time will be compensated by compensatory time not payment. If the APA member does not agree, the overtime is automatically paid as overtime wages at the rate of one and one-half hours of pay.

There were additional changes for what is counted as time worked for computation of overtime. Leave time such as vacation, sick, personal, jury duty, military leave, compensatory time or bereavement leave will no longer will be counted in a hours worked. Holiday time will still be counted in hours worked to reach the 40 hour a week maximum prior to the payment of overtime.

Members grade level 12 and above are not eligible for overtime pay. However, where unusual staffing and work requirements exist, the unit administrator may approve compensatory time off equal to the number of overtime hours worked.

For more information on overtime provisions visit:

<https://www.msu.edu/~msuapa/apacontract.pdf>

For the new call in and standby provisions visit: <http://www.msuapa.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/10/APA-2011-2015-Tentative-Agreement.pdf>

If you have further questions, don't hesitate to ask for assistance by contacting the MSU APA office at (517) 353-4898 or email [msuapa@msu.edu](mailto:msuapa@msu.edu).

## **Legislative Update**

Report from the political trenches

By Leo Sell, Legislative Committee Chairperson

LGBT, Redistricting, and Voting disenfranchisement

To look at what the Michigan Legislature has continually focused on since 2010 you would think that our state's biggest issue is not jobs but that it is teachers and public employee union rights. For APA members, the following new or pending laws are of particular importance:

Public Act 54 (passed) essentially is designed to force bargaining units to a settlement on the employer's terms. It freezes wages after a contract expires – prohibiting automatic increases such as the APL (Automatic Progression Level), passes on health care benefits cost increases to the employees and bans retroactivity. There are valid legal questions to be raised about whether this act applies to unions representing employees at MSU (or UMich, or Wayne). However, it is an onerous law that has had a seriously chilling effect on effective bargaining.

Public Act 62 (passed) reduces education funding by one billion dollars.

Public Act 152 (passed) requires public employees to pay no less than 20% of their health care insurance premium. This act (which applies after a labor agreement such as the Joint Health Care Agreement expires) essentially forces a “one size fits all” solution to reduce employer costs. Of course, the legislators ignore that this is a crass cost shift and effective massive pay reduction. What is particularly galling is that other efforts to contain costs,

even when determined by labor-management cooperation, are completely ignored. Though the bill did pass, and though the bill does specifically include MSU and other State Universities, the APA/MEA and MSU have valid reason to believe that Public Act 152 does not apply to MSU. This issue is long from decided at this point, but is certainly cause for concern.

A pending Right to Work (for less!) bill has morphed into a proposal that would affect ONLY the MEA and not other public employee unions or unions generally. Obviously the targeting of our state organization is intended to reduce our voice substantially. Other pending bills attack unions' ability to use public facilities (OK for a church or scout troop but not for union members to use for union purposes!!??); collection of union dues; release time; and more.

And, when they're not busy directly attacking unions and union member rights, they have focused on voter redistricting plan that very likely violates the Voting Rights Act as well as the benefits provided to those who are Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual or Transexual. A grossly discriminatory action!

Meanwhile, all of us wonder why our standard of living seems to be constantly reducing while the overall wealth in the country increases vastly. A good explanation of this issue is available at <http://i.minus.com/iiWpK.png>

No wonder the "Occupy" movement has struck a cord. We are well on the way to a government that is entirely "privately held". This has to be stopped!

So, we have to be in a position to fight back and elect people who SUPPORT human rights including union rights; who support public education and its funding; who support fair taxation and other policies.

A good step to take toward that end is to make a political action contribution via <http://meavotes.org/contribute>

## **Upcoming Retirement Plan Changes**

It is important to be aware of some changes to the MSU Retirement Plan vendors and fund choices that will become effective January 1, 2012:

- MSU will consolidate retirement plan vendor options from six vendors down to the two most widely used choices — Fidelity Investments® and TIAA-CREF.
- StraightLine also will continue to be available for third-party investment advice.
- A new simplified core investment menu will be implemented that will provide diversified and well-researched investment choices from multiple investment managers selected by Michigan State University with guidance from Hewitt Ennis Knupp, MSU's retirement plan consultant.

- For those investors who wish to continue investing outside of the new simplified core investment menu options and are comfortable assuming greater risk, there will be a self-directed brokerage account option that gives investors access to thousands of additional mutual funds from hundreds of available fund families.

These changes will apply to all new contributions that occur on or after January 1, 2012. You will have the choice to leave your existing contributions with your current vendor or to transfer those account balances to the new investment options that will be available starting in January.

As a result of these changes you may want to take some action during the month of November to review and potentially change your retirement plan vendor and fund selections. A lot more information is available on the Human Resources website, including the new core investment menus that will be available through Fidelity Investments® and TIAA-CREF, information about seminars that will be held on campus throughout the month of November and contact information for vendors. You can access this information and more at <http://www.hr.msu.edu/benefits/retirement/consolidation.htm>

And one final note: the University retirement contribution is NOT changing. MSU will continue to match the eligible employee's 5% contribution with a 10% University contribution.

## **Your Fellow APAs**

### **Interview with APA member Christina Swick**

Executive Assistant, Dean's Office | MSU College of Human Medicine

#### **How long have you been at MSU?**

I have been with MSU for over 11 years now total. I left the University for a brief period in 2008-09 when I relocated out of state and was fortunate enough to obtain a new position at MSU when I returned last year.

#### **Have you been a member of APA the whole time?**

I have been an AP for almost 4 years. I was originally hired in a part-time CT position that later expanded, and I spent many years as a full-time CT employee before transitioning to an AP position. I have held five different positions during my career at MSU, including my current one as an Executive Secretary in the Dean's Office at the College of Human Medicine.

#### **Can you tell me a little bit about what you do?**

This is always the toughest question for me because every day is unique and I wear many different hats. My primary purpose is to provide administrative support with the operational activities of the Grand Rapids campus. This includes human resources,

security, information technology, facilities, and communications. I jokingly tell people that I herd cats for a living — in reference to all of the various people I work with and how challenging it can be trying to support these busy individuals.

**What brought you to your job at MSU?**

I have considered myself a Spartan for as long as I can remember. I grew up in East Lansing near campus and took a lot of bike rides to the MSU Dairy Store or to feed the tadpoles in the pond at the Horticulture Gardens when I was young. My dad had a long career at MSU and my mother worked here a few years as well. After graduating from East Lansing High School it was a natural choice for me to work at MSU and to continue my education at State as well.

**What do you love about working at MSU?**

I love that MSU has always supported my continuing education. My supervisors have always been understanding of my class schedules and encouraged me to keep at it. It took me eight years to get my Associates and Bachelor's degrees while working full-time but it was worth it. I am currently enrolled in an MS program at Grand Valley State University.

**Can you tell me a little about the benefits and challenges of working at MSU's Grand Rapids campus?**

Grand Rapids is a really exciting place to live and work. There is such an atmosphere of philanthropy here and it's nice to feel the outpouring of support from the community and know how invested they are in the success of our College. There are also so many great events we are able to participate in; for example we served as a venue for two ArtPrize exhibits this year. The biggest challenge for me was (and still is) adjusting to a more formal working atmosphere. I was accustomed to a certain kind of dress, casual communication style, and a more informal way of doing business when I worked in East Lansing. Here it is more of a corporate environment and the expectations are a little different.

**What do you like to do when you are not at work?**

I enjoy taking my dog Watson for long walks and going up north to visit family on the weekends. My mom, grandparents, aunts, uncles and I will go fishing together or go to farmer's markets, grill out, play euchre, etc. Even though I like living in Grand Rapids, I'm a country girl at heart. There is something to be said for being able to go outside in your pajamas in the morning and not having to worry about your neighbors!

## **Community Based Events Update**

by Nick Bourland & Debra Porter, Co-Chairs Community-Based Events, MSU APA  
The Community Based Event (CBE) ad-hoc committee is pleased to report initiatives are underway and APA members are engaging in helping their communities. The CBE has helped support the 2011 Tri-county Alzheimer Walk and the ongoing donation of children's books to the Capital Area Literacy Coalition. Planned for November 30, 2011, APA members will conduct a campus-wide children's book drive to help improve youth

literacy in the greater Lansing area. Announcements will follow in the coming week on locations near your workplace to donate new condition children's books. If you are interested in volunteering to help with the book collection, please contact Nick Bourland at [bourlan2@msu.edu](mailto:bourlan2@msu.edu).

The committee is always looking for new ideas, organizations, and volunteers. To find out more, please visit the CBE committee page on the APA website.

## **APA Tailgate Followup**

The first APA tailgate on Saturday, September 24 was a great success!

The tailgate began at 10:00 am with burgers, hot dogs and lots of fun. The APA banner and tent were at the northwest corner of Shaw and Red Cedar, near the old Shaw Lane Power Plant. It was a beautiful day to walk around campus, enjoy food fresh off the grill and catch up with other MSU APA members. It was also a fabulous day to watch some football and the Spartans beat the Chippewas in a 45-7 rout. Member Chris Wilson and family were able to enjoy that victory up close as the lucky winners of the APA football ticket giveaway! Thank you to all who came out to visit with us and look forward to seeing everyone at next year's tailgate. Go green!