
January/February 2010

The APA

NEWSLETTER

The Official Newsletter for the Administrative-Professional Association of MSU
MSU Administrative-Professional Association MEA/NEA/1480 Kendale Blvd, Suite 300/East Lansing MI 48823/(517) 353-4898

MSU APA Receives Training Grant from NEA

We are continuing to work...for a stronger union!

by Maury Koffman

President/Chairperson, MSU APA



In these constrained economic times, it is critical to have engaged and educated union members and advocates. This, however, requires training and professional development. As with most other things in life, offering such opportunities costs money. So, over the last several months, the APA has submitted financial grant applications to assist in covering the costs of these trainings and workshops.

Between the Michigan Education Association and the National Education Association, the APA has secured three grants totaling \$18,800 for specific training projects and workshops during the 2009 – 2010 academic year.

The first grant awarded was for \$3,800. This grant was requested and awarded to assist in covering the cost of our monthly APA new member orientation, member lunch information sessions, and trainings for potential area representatives. Through these efforts, we have already connected with more than 500 APA members who have availed themselves to the training opportunities.

The second grant award was in the amount of \$10,000. This money is to cover the MSU APA SPARKS program scheduled for January 28 – 30, 2010. Intended for the newer members of the bargaining unit, the SPARKS training fosters development of leaders and provides skills to assist in the everyday working environment.

The third and most recent grant award was in the amount of \$5000. This grant is intended to assist in our member engagement plan that includes noontime information sessions for our members – lunch included. It may also assist in training newly identified leaders and for advanced training of union advocates.

We are proud to report these results of our efforts and know they are enhancing the education and engagement of the APA membership.

“Attendees to our noontime information sessions have expressed how much they appreciate learning more about state and national legislative issues and related University opportunities,” states MSU APA Vice President and Communications Chair, Cynthia Schneider.

“The APA Contract Overview was one of the highest attended sessions. And the new member orientations are a hit too. The recent \$5000 grant from the NEA will go a long way to continuing these programs for our members.”

Health Care TA* Information Meeting

Thursday, January 14; Spartan Rooms/International Center (MSU Campus)

The MSU APA has scheduled an information session/discussion forum over the lunch hour, **noon to 1 p.m., on Thursday, January 14, in the Spartan Rooms of the International Center**. This brown-bag session will give APA members the opportunity to ask questions regarding the recent Health Care Tentative Agreement*.

If you are able to do so, please take a moment out of your day to attend this event. We will also discuss the ratification process and any other related issues regarding health care.

New Generic Prescribing Program

A word from the MSU Coalition of Labor Organizations (MSU CLO)



Everyone should have received an email from MSU Human Resources about the new Generic Prescribing Program that goes into effect March 1, 2010. The new program provides further incentives for members to move to less costly generic versions of medications by requiring enrollees to pay the cost difference between brand name drugs, when a generic option is available.

The MSU Coalition of Labor Organizations (MSU CLO) was involved in researching and implementing this new program in keeping with the charge given it by the members of all the MSU unions. **(Section 6B of the MSU/Coalition Health Care Agreement (December 2005-2009) states: "The parties shall continue to meet, discuss and negotiate, as necessary or appropriate, concerning all aspects of the University's health care plan for the purpose of identifying and implementing necessary and beneficial changes. The parties shall have the authority to implement changes concerning the health care provisions of this Agreement.")**

Please be assured that, in making a decision on the Generic Prescribing Program, we took into consideration how this change will affect the members of all the unions. There were countless meetings throughout the year with CVS/Caremark, MSU Staff Benefits, the MSU CLO, and the Joint Health Care Committee (JHCC) debating, charting, costing and arguing many ideas on how to save health care dollars. The plan that was adopted was the best option.

In general, generics are equivalent to brand name medications. However, we have built safeguards into the system so that individuals who have legitimate medical reasons for choosing brand name drugs do not experience financial penalties for circumstances beyond their control. For example, some people have conditions that the industry acknowledges are difficult to treat with generics. The name brand drugs used to treat these conditions are excluded from the new Generic Prescribing Program rules and the new rules will not change what patients pay for these drugs.

There is also an appeals process built into the program whereby physicians can request an exception if there is a medically necessary reason that a patient needs to take a brand name medication instead of the generic equivalent. **There will be no additional charge to you or your physician to file an exception.** (Although your physician may charge you a co-pay for his or her time). And, if someone without a medically necessary reason opts for a name brand prescription, they can still do so as long as they pay the difference.

What did we get for making this change? It cut over \$4 million out of the \$30 million spent annually to insure MSU employees. We should all be very aware of the escalating costs of health care. Recognizing the impact that rising health care costs have on our wages and other conditions at MSU, the MSU CLO has worked with the University for over 12 years to build efficiencies into the system so that we could continue to enjoy quality and effective health care options.

The MSU CLO has been very good at finding creative ways to protect our benefits in a world in which most people have experienced deep cuts in coverage and/or outrageous premium sharing and cost sharing measures. This is only the most recent of many changes we have made over the years.

For questions about how the new program will affect you and your family, specifically, you might want to visit www.hr.msu.edu/generics. You can also call CVS/Caremark at 1-800-565-7105 or contact MSU Human Resources Benefits by e-mail at benefitsinfo@hr.msu.edu or by phone at 517-353-4434.

And you can always contact any one of your APA board members or call the union office at (517) 353-4898.

NEW Member Orientation

Stop By and Learn About Your Union!

by Vikki Tormala

Membership Chairperson, MSU APA



Are you a new employee with Michigan State University? Have you recently made a transfer to the APA bargaining unit from another on campus? Or are you

nearing the end of your probationary or trial period and want to learn more about the union in which you belong?

Well, good news! If you haven't already heard, the APA offers a new member orientation meeting to answer many of the questions you may have about your organization. We have a new member orientation meeting scheduled for **Thursday, January 21**.

The meeting is set from noon-1 p.m., in the Spartan Room of the International Center. A dining voucher will be provided, so you won't have to go without the mid-day meal!

APA Professional Development Session

"How to Remain Competitive in a Changing Work Environment"



As part of our commitment to membership engagement (see article on page one of this newsletter), MSU APA has asked MSU Human Resource Development (HRD) to create a noontime information session for members that focuses on obtaining skills vital to today's workforce.

"How to Remain Competitive in a Changing Work Environment" will touch upon what skills and tools are most needed such as updating your resume, networking for the future and updating basic computer skills. Representatives from HRD will also go over some of the courses offered by the University.

This information session will be offered on **Wednesday, January 20, noon-1 p.m., Spartan Rooms in the International Center.** A lunch voucher will be given to those who stay and attend the session.

Hope to see you there!

Campus Happenings

What's Going-on In Your "Neck of the Woods"?

Send your information to Cynthia Schneider, Communications Chairperson/Editor, APA Newsletter, cschneider@mea.org. Include basic information as well as contact name and number for follow-up support.

[Note that the APA does have an editorial policy. Please consult the website for it prior to your submission. All submissions will be held to APA editorial standards.]

Know Your Contract!

Article 18: Special Provisions

Overtime...APs are eligible for it!



In these times of department downsizing and restructuring, it is important to be aware of overtime language when it comes to our bargaining group.

Page 40, Article 18 of the MSU APA contract reads:

--145 Bargaining Unit Employees in grade levels AP 08, 09, 10, and 11 will receive overtime payment at the rate of time and one-half for scheduled hours worked in excess of 40 in a work week. Compensatory time at the same rate may be used where mutually agreed to by the employee and the Unit Administrator.

--146 In health care delivery facilities where bi-weekly work schedules of eighty (80) hours are maintained, overtime pay or compensatory time off will be given for any scheduled hours worked in excess of eighty (80) hours in a bi-weekly period.

-- 147 Paid time (vacation, sick leave, holiday, personal leave, compensatory time, jury duty, military leave and bereavement leave) is considered as time worked for the purpose of overtime computation. Overtime premium shall not be pyramided, compounded or paid twice for the same time worked.

-- 148 Unit Administrators or designees are responsible for the approval of overtime prior to the performance of overtime work. Approval means time worked as directed by the employee's supervisor and does not include casual or unscheduled time spent at work beyond the normal work day or work week.

-- 149 Employees at grade level AP 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.

APA Executive Board**PRESIDENT/CHAIRPERSON**

Maurice Koffman
1480 Kendale Blvd, Ste. 300
East Lansing MI 48823
353-4898
koffman@msu.edu

VICE PRESIDENT/VICE CHAIRPERSON

Cynthia Schneider
1480 Kendale Blvd, Ste. 300
East Lansing MI 48823
353-4898
cschneider@mea.org

TREASURER

Sharon Nichols
Zoology
203 Nat Sci
353-9865
nicho196@msu.edu

SECRETARY

Rachel Zakhem
ATS, Acad. Tech. Serv.
110 Computer Center
432-5367
rz@msu.edu

Nick Bourland

CARRS
147C Natural Resources
432-0271
bourlan2@msu.edu

Jean Chisnell
Radiation Chem/Bio Safety
C124 Engr Rsch Complex
355-6734
jchisnell@msu.edu

Ramiro Gonzales
Counseling Center
355-8270
RamiroG@cc.msu.edu

Ann Hancock
Horticulture
A240A Plant & Soil Sci
353-5191 ext 1348
hancocka@msu.edu

Sean Leahy
Virtual University
101 Wills House
432-0711
leahysea@msu.edu

Vivian Leung
University Development
Eli Broad College of Bus.
505 N. Business Complex
355-8504
leungv@msu.edu

Deb Porter
Inst. Water Research
101 Manly Miles Bldg
353-5575
porterd@msu.edu

Leo Sell
404G Computer Center
432--0186
lsell@msu.edu

Vikki Tormala
Univ. Physician Office/351 Olin
353-9137
tormala@msu.edu

UNISERV DIRECTOR

John VanDyken
1480 Kendale Blvd, Ste. 300
East Lansing MI 48823
353-4898
jvandyken@mea.org

MEA SEC'Y/ASSOCIATE (MEMBERSHIP)

Monica Graham
1480 Kendale Blvd, Ste. 300
East Lansing MI 48823
353-4898
mgraham@mea.org

WEBSITE:

<http://www.msuapa.org/>

**Executive Board meetings are normally held on the second Tuesday of each month commencing at 2:00 p.m. in the APA office located at 1480 Kendale, Suite 300, East Lansing. Visiting members should call in advance to verify the time and place.*

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