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September/October 2009

# 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

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## REPORT FROM THE 2009 NEA Representative Assembly July 1-6, 2009

by Cynthia Schneider  
Vice President/Vice Chairperson, MSU APA

They say San Diego is a beautiful city to tour. I can definitely speak for the gorgeous weather and what little I experienced traveling from my hotel to the convention center during the NEA Representative Assembly.

But, I do not begrudge the opportunity to serve in governance of our association. As an NEA delegate (I am also an MEA delegate who attends the annual state Spring and Fall Representative Assembly), it is my charge to represent the interest of higher education support staff, primarily those at MSU of course, but higher education support staff in general.

At this year's Representative Assembly it was business as usual, with two large exceptions – new NEA president Dennis Van Roekel and special guest speaker, secretary of education Arne Duncan.

Secretary Duncan addressed the assembly on the morning of July 2. Speaking before nearly 10,000 delegates, Duncan voiced his concerns regarding education “reform,” teacher accountability and the broken No Child Left Behind. In what was a nearly 45-minute speech, I counted only twice that the word “college” was mentioned and as to what I perceived as an after thought and not of substantive context.

While the Recovery Act monies do offer a boost in the Pell Grant -- \$500 – for the neediest of students, I feel the whole notion of college affordability and the middle class has been overlooked. We may have a new administration that is more education friendly than the one of last 8 years, but does this mean that higher education will also be front and center when it comes to funding?

College and vocational training is no longer a choice but a necessity for many. It is truly the opportunity that

allows a generation to do better than its predecessors. In Michigan, we have a governor who states the need to retrain our workforce. “Diversify, diversify the workforce”...that’s the state mantra. But, the governor continues to cut education with every annual swipe of her administrative red pen.

I know that these are perilous times. But there have been perilous times before. And future generations will have their challenges as well. Education – especially community colleges and traditional four-year public institutions – is the place people flock to during economic downturns. It is the one place people feel safe to put their money. But if the cost becomes too much for the middle class, that truly puts us at an economic disadvantage for generations to come. As support staff, if there is no one to fill the classrooms and the dorms, then we truly are a disadvantaged group.

I am cautiously optimistic about the state of higher education and where we sit on the national and state stage. Where is higher education in this whole budget drama? I see our importance or maybe I am too invested in our interest. But our interest has to be of state and national importance, too.

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## MSU CLO

**Health Care Negotiations Have Begun!**  
A word from the APA bargaining team.



Last month, the MSU Coalition of Labor Organizations and the University began negotiations for a successor agreement to the current health care agreement that expires on December 31, 2009.

This is a crucial point in time to be facing contract talks, and the unions, working through the CLO at MSU are preparing to defend the interests of the approximately 6,000 support staff employees. The unions have chosen the individuals who will represent them in negotiations—many of whom serve on the CLO board and attend the monthly Joint Health Care Committee (JHCC) meetings. (The JHCC is the group that monitors the “cost and spend” of our health care dollars at MSU.) The executive boards of all the unions covered under the current agreement have met to discuss the CLO’s shared agenda and common goals.

The bargaining team representing the APA consists of Maury Koffman, APA president; Cynthia Schneider, APA vice president, and John VanDyken, MEA UnviServ director and APA contract administrator. All three serve on the CLO board and attend the monthly JHCC meetings. VanDyken is also the secretary of CLO.

The first set of meetings between the University and the union representatives was essential for establishing the ground rules of bargaining. In the first meeting, it was clear that both sides are committed to work together to support and promote the health and well-being of MSU and its employees and their families. We all know that we can do this through cost effective, accessible, quality health care. It is in the best interest of the University to ensure a productive, healthy workforce.

During the upcoming months, the CLO and APA will inform you of the progress of our negotiations. Through the CLO MSU Together newsletter, the APA listserv, and APA newsletter, members will receive information regarding negotiations. The APA leadership is also conducting informal meetings around campus regarding healthcare. The first meeting is scheduled for **Tuesday, September 8, from 5:15-6:30 p.m., room 147 of the Communication Arts and Sciences building.**

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## 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 new member orientation meetings scheduled for **Tuesday, September 15 and Tuesday, October 13.**

**All meetings are set from noon-1p.m., in the Spartan room at the International Center.** A dining voucher will be provided, so you won’t have to go without the mid-day meal!

Please RSVP to Christina Canfield at [Christina.Canfield@mea.org](mailto:Christina.Canfield@mea.org) if you plan to attend. We want to make sure we have plenty of meal vouchers for attendees!

Hope to see you there!

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## APA Professional Development Update

**We have been training...for a stronger union!**



APA leadership has been very busy this past year serving the needs of our members as well as seeking out learning opportunities for the general membership. Along with newly elected NEA board member Maury Koffman, newly elected MEA board member Cynthia Schneider and the reelection of Leo Sell to the MEA Board of Directors, several APA leaders have attended a variety of trainings that help facilitate more effective bargaining and union representation for our association.

The MEA Bargaining, Political Action, and PR conference is the largest of all the MEA training conferences. This event enhances the skills of local leaders and members and addresses the current issues in bargaining, public relations and political action. Other MEA and NEA conferences include an annual higher education conference sponsored by both organizations; training administered by the American Arbitration Association on labor advocacy, and NEA Regional Leadership Training that brings together members from the Midwest to work collaboratively on specific issues

facing their locals while attaining legislative and legal updates. All in all, in the last year APA members have engaged in nearly a dozen union advocacy trainings totaling hundreds of hours of related work.

The annual year-long training program NEA Emerging Leaders Academy is a competitive selective opportunity where 20 higher education members from around the country develop their leadership skills as well as assistance in how to improve local involvement. The NEA graduated one successful APA candidate in 2009 and will graduate another in 2010.

The most recent training offered to APA members is MEA Higher Ed SPARKS. This training fosters development of leaders and provides skills to assist in the everyday working environment and is intended for newer members of the bargaining unit. In May 2009, APA had five members attend this three day training. Because of the size of our bargaining unit, MEA is planning a SPARKS event for APA members only.

If interested in participating in MSU-APA SPARKS please contact APA president Maury Koffman at koffman@msu.edu.

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## Know Your Contract!

### Article 17: Compensation Programs

#### It's About Raise Time!!!



The general salary increase distributed to APs for October 2009 will be 1.75%. October 2010 will be 2.75%.

Page 37, Article 17 of the contract reads:

#### I. General Increase

-126 Effective October 1, 2009 and October 1, 2010, general salary increase monies calculated on the September 30, 2009 and September 30, 2010 total salary base (respectively) will be made available for all employees who received a satisfactory rating on the latest employee evaluation, the amount of which will be

based on the Memorandum of Understanding between Michigan State University and the Coalition of Labor Organizations, which was separately ratified and signed by the Association. For purposes of this provision, an employee shall not be considered unsatisfactory until the employee's performance is determined to be unsatisfactory in two consecutive evaluations.

The general salary increase monies available for all eligible employees, sixty (60) percent of which will be allocated on the basis of merit consideration and forty (40) of which will be allocated across the board.

Beginning on page ninety of the APA contract is a letter of agreement between Michigan State University and the MSU APA regarding merit pay guidelines and how they are to be applied when determining merit increases. If these guidelines are not being followed in your department, please contact your union leadership.

Other information in this article of the contract includes the Salary Progression Program, given to employees who have completed at least one (1) year of service on the effective date of the increase, whose current performance is determined to be not less than satisfactory, and whose salary is less than one hundred twenty-five (125) percent of the minimum hiring level; Minimum Hiring Rates and Salary Schedules through September 2011.

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## Lunchtime Information Meetings

**Yes, lunch is included! Yummmmmmm....**

Due to a response from a membership survey last year, APA is offering several noontime information meetings focusing on topics noted by the membership.

The September meeting will feature a "financial tune-up" presentation by MEA Financial Services. This will be held on **Wednesday, September 9.**

**Tuesday, October 7** will feature "Know Your Numbers: The New Science of Cardiovascular Disease – a Survival Guide." This session presented by Steve TePaste of MESSA will give you the newest research on how cardiovascular diseases (CVD) like heart attacks and strokes happen, and what you can do about it.

**All meetings are set from noon-1p.m., in the Spartan room at the International Center.** A dining voucher will be provided. Learn a little and have some lunch!

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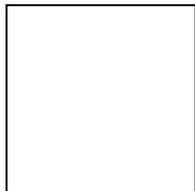
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*\*Executive Board meetings are normally held on the second Tuesday of each month commencing at 2:00 p.m. in the APA office located at 1480 Kendale, Suite 300, East Lansing. Visiting members should call in advance to verify the time and place.*



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