
September/October 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

Report from the MSU APA

The Status of the MEA/NEA/APA

by Maurice Koffman
President/Chairperson, MSU APA

During the last few years of economic upheaval in the state of Michigan we, the members of the MSU APA, have experienced steady growth in our membership ranks, stable annual pay increases and maintenance of other of employee benefits.

This continued quality of work life as an employee of MSU is made possible by the hard fought efforts of the MSU APA.

The Value of Our Union

Due to the efforts of the APA and other unions on campus, APA members are scheduled to receive an eligible 2010 salary increase of 2.75%. Per the APA contract, this increase is subject to the provision of 40% across the board (guaranteed to each and every member without exception) and 60% on the basis of merit by application of the APA contract merit pay guidelines.

With the average APA member salary at \$54,671, the average APA member is set to receive a \$1503 raise this October 2010.

This collectively bargained for raise was obtained while continuing a fully-funded health care system for all unionized employees. Without the efforts of the unions, it is likely we would be facing the horrendous situations publicized on the daily news of reduced base salaries, zero wage increases for the foreseeable future, and complete elimination of fringe benefits. We are fortunate to not be in that situation today.

The Power of Our Union

There has never been a more important time to have a strong and united union. The APA is fortunate to be affiliated with the Michigan Education Association, the

most influential and largest labor union in Michigan. In addition to the rich history the APA has with the MEA, the MEA continues to provide APA members with legal counsel and service regarding workers' rights, access to labor consultants and union advocate professional development.

The APA business office is conveniently located off campus at the MEA headquarters in East Lansing. The MEA provides the APA with an office suite and supplies. More importantly, the MEA supplies the APA with a full-time, exclusively dedicated staff to assist in the daily affairs of the Association, including contract negotiations and maintenance.

And, in recognizing the growth of the APA membership over the last several years, the MEA has added a second staff position to service the APA commencing on January 1, 2011. This added MEA staff member will help in coordinating APA lunch and learn events, facilitate monthly new member orientations, as well as assist members with work related issues.

The State of Our Union

Despite MEA benefits realized by local APA members, the MEA as a statewide organization, to maintain strength and influence, audited its budget, staffing levels, and priorities. As was stated in the May/June 2010 APA newsletter, to meet the financial liabilities of the collective bargaining agreements of MEA staff, the MEA Representative Assembly passed a dues increase this year that impacts APA members by \$10 per member annually. While this increase inevitably is borne onto each member, the MEA has also made internal efforts to reduce expenditures by eliminating 26 positions – roughly 10% of its entire staff.

In effort to minimize the impact of the increase in MEA dues, the APA Executive Board reviewed local budget expenditures. Of the total dues amount assessed, less than 7% is held in local discretion. The overwhelming majority of the funds are assessed and paid out to the MEA and NEA as our state and national parent organizations. Yet, the APA Executive Board was

successful in identifying areas to save money without sacrificing service to the membership. Those reductions have been implemented.

The most difficult and important charge of the APA Executive Board, in compliance with the APA Constitution and Bylaws, is planning for our future. Noting the significant raise scheduled for this October 2010 (2.75%), the APA Executive Board passed a motion at the August 2010 monthly Executive Board meeting to increase APA member dues by \$10 per member, per month, commencing with the October 2010 paycheck. (Employees working 75% and 50% time will be assessed proportionately.)

This increase will provide the APA, for the first time, to fully cover local expenditures, assessments by MEA and NEA, and future increases by our state and national organizations. It is the hope and anticipation of the APA Executive Board that this dues increase in 2010 will forgo having to revisit the issue, in years with limited or no raise scheduled, until 2013/2014 or possibly later.

Furthermore, some members have asked why we continue having a standard flat dues rate. The answer is simple. The University continues to make it clear that until the new Enterprise Business System Project ("EBSP") is completely implemented, no changes in structure can be conducted. Once the EBSP is fully integrated across campus, the APA intends to review and evaluate any other potential structures of assessing APA member dues.

Preserving a strong union is crucial to our continued success in ensuring a quality working environment for all APA members. If you have comments, questions, or concerns, please feel free to contact any member of the APA Executive Board.

REPORT: Constitution & Bylaws Review

by Nick Bourland

*Constitution & Bylaws Ad-hoc Committee
Chairperson, MSU APA*

Last month (August 2010), voting members of the APA had an opportunity to vote proposed changes to our Constitution & Bylaws. The membership proposed changes to the APA Constitution and Bylaws were adopted by the membership with 78% of voters in favor and 22% in opposition.

These changes are effective immediately and the updated governance documents will be available on the APA website, msuapa.org or in hard copy upon request.

Introducing Melissa Sortman Our New MEA Staff Person (UniServ Director)



MSU APA is proud to announce that we have named a new MEA staff person to join us.

Melissa Sortman has become our new MEA Uniserv Director. Our former Uniserv Director John Van Dyken retired this summer after many years of service to the MSU APA and MEA.

Melissa began her career at MEA 10 years ago as a campaign consultant. As a campaign consultant, she was dedicated to the individual needs and diversity of the MEA membership. Melissa designed the first set of campaign literature that was based on the views of the diverse membership which include ESP (Education Support Professionals), higher education and K-12. Previous to that, she worked with MEA on political campaigns across the states, including Supreme Court races, congressional races, state house and state senate races.

Since being at MEA, Melissa has represented all classifications of members including Higher Education ESP and faculty at Jackson Community College. She was a Uniserv Director in Jackson for 6 years and a communication consultant for a year, handling public relations for MEA, writing opinion editorials and doing various stories for the MEA Voice.

As a Uniserv Director, she worked with members on advocacy issues, tailoring trainings to reach out to the membership needs, not just advocacy from "members who are struggling." Training that she has initiated include communication skills building, dealing with difficult people, "She's Having A Baby" (FMLA, short-term disability, long-term disability, contractual language on leaves), advocacy for women, and general bargaining.

"I enjoy getting members involved in their union," says Melissa. "I look forward to the challenge and diverse needs of MSU APA members. I believe our members are the MEA and the members deserve the service tailored to their needs. I believe in unionism and the strength of collective action making a difference in the lives of employees."

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Fall semester

Watch for the new look of the course catalog reflecting HRD's and LCT's collaboration - **Professional Development & Technology Training Opportunities** - it will reach you in the next few days. As result of the collaboration, a new joint portal (spartanslearn.msu.edu) be launched to help stream line the enrollment processes.

HRD classes are on the web and available for enrollment. Here are just a few of our fall programs:

[Navigating the FMLA, ADA and Workers' Compensation](#)

Tuesday, September 28, 8:30-2:30 (\$30; includes lunch)
This class is designed especially for supervisors and managers. Latest legal and policy information will be presented on these very important topics.

Educational Assistance: If you are planning to take MSU credit courses in the Spring 2011, please note that the deadline for submitting your educational assistance application for MSU Tuition Waiver is Friday, October 22.

Election 2010

MEA's collective political action makes a difference. So, when it comes to the Nov. 2 general election, we want you to know which candidates support public education. And, which candidates are recommended by MEA members who screened them and decided whether to recommend them to you.

MEA's screening and recommending committees have been meeting all summer interviewing candidates for State Representative and State Senator, and several other statewide positions including MSU Board of Trustees. Recommendations are based on the candidates' answers to questions about education-related issues. A list of recommended candidates can be found on the MEA Votes website: www.meavotes.org

Know Your Contract!

Article 17: Compensation Programs



The general salary increase distributed to APs for 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 increases. If these guidelines are not being followed in your department, please contact your union leadership. (See the back of this newsletter for names and contact information.)

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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**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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