

APA March/April 2013 Newsletter

Sequestration: Impacting Higher Education

At the beginning of 2013, due to the inaction of Congress, sequestration took effect. As a result, colleges and universities may have to toll the bell for many of the critical programs that help poor Americans go to college and get jobs, as well as much of the grant-funded university research that saves lives, creates alternative energy sources, and fuels American innovation.

The 8.2 percent across-the-board federal budget cuts, which went into effect on January 2, may devastate the futures of too many students and families and damage the programs that support America's economy and health.

"It will be devastating to our future," said Mark F. Smith, NEA senior policy analyst. "In education alone, more than 75,000 jobs will be lost, and critical research funding and student aid programs will be slashed." And it comes on top of record cuts in state funds to higher education in recent years, which have already forced colleges to limit enrollments and shutter programs, and left students staggering under unprecedented amounts of debt.

The January cuts, which total more than \$1.2 trillion, may have "destructive impacts on the whole array of federal activities that promote and protect the middle class in this country," said Sen. Tom Harkin (D-IA), who recently [issued a report about the harmful effects of the cuts](#) on two federal programs that help low-income, first-generation students make it to college. Those programs may lose \$90 million, eliminating services to more than 100,000 students, according to Harkin's report.

While [federal Pell Grants](#) for poor college students would be protected from cuts in 2013, other college affordability programs, like federal work-study and the [Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants](#), will be cut the same 8.2 percent.

Meanwhile, the ground is also shaking underneath university laboratories, where faculty, staff, and graduate students depend on federal grants from agencies like the U.S. Department of Energy or the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA). Sequestration means a cut of \$2.4 billion in National Institutes of Health-funded research alone—or basically half the budget of the National Cancer Institute. (The total effect of sequestration on health research specifically would be \$3.6 billion, according to ResearchAmerica.)

"Our institutions appear staid and inflexible, but in practice, they have produced the most important innovations of the past three centuries," wrote Chad Hanson in a [recent NEA Thought & Action article](#). "Albert Einstein enjoyed the benefit of tenure when he produced the theory of relativity. James Watson and Francis Crick used the non-profit facilities at Cambridge to discover the double helix, and a group of mostly tenured faculty from the U.S. completed the Human Genome Project."

As time passes, the impact of sequestration will become more apparent. The APA will be working with our state affiliate, the MEA, and our national affiliate, the NEA to mitigate the impact the cuts will have on our members, our students, and Michigan State University.

The Path to Autism Coverage

Michigan mandated under Public Act 101 of 2012 that commercial and non-profit insurance carriers provide autism coverage. Michigan State University is a self-insured provider and does not fall under the stipulations of the new law. APA, along with the Coalition of Labor Organizations (CLO) on campus is advocating within the Joint Health Care Committee with the University to provide coverage for families with children with autism.

The new law established a tiered system that covered Autism Diagnosis, Pharmaceuticals, Psychiatric, Psychological, and Therapeutic services (Speech, Occupational, Applied Behavior Analysis, and Physical therapies; and social workers).

- Children up to 6 years of age get up to \$50,000.00 annually.
- Children 7 through 12 years get up to \$40,000 annually
- Children 13 through 18 years get up to \$30,000 annual

The Legislature appropriated funds for self-insured employers like MSU by creating an Autism Reimbursement Program. The fund was initially appropriated \$15 million dollars and will have additional annual appropriations. As of January 2012 only 2 claims had been processed. The CLO is working with MSU to sign up for the Autism Reimbursement Program so that union members can have immediate coverage for their children. Claims that have an autistic diagnosis currently are denied by the third party administrator MSU contracts to process the medical claims, Blue Care Network and Blue Cross/Blue Shield of Michigan because MSU is exempt from the autism coverage law. The University would need to agree to cover autism related medical claims.

MSU has an expert on autistic medical coverage in Dr. Jane Turner, a professor at the College of Human Medicine, Department of Pediatric and Human Development. Dr. Turner is on the Governor Snyder's newly created Autism Council charged with overseeing Michigan's Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) State Plan. <http://www.michigan.gov/snyder/0,4668,7-277-281766-,00.html>. Having a leader in the field on campus will hopefully assist MSU in agreeing to add autism coverage to the self-insured plan.

Josh Wortz, APA member and autism activist, has been working to connect staff members on campus who are affected by MSU not covering these claims.

“For my family, having coverage would mean that my family could afford therapeutic services that would help my son gain the skills that will help him be successful and independent,” said Wortz.

If your family would benefit from MSU covering autistic claims and related behavioral, speech and occupational coverage, please contact the APA office at (517) 353-4898 or email msuapa@msu.edu. It is important the University hear the voices of the families whose children need this coverage to improve the quality of their life and give them adequate medical coverage.

For more information:

1) Senate Fiscal Agency Analysis of PA 101

<http://www.legislature.mi.gov/documents/2011-2012/billanalysis/Senate/pdf/2011-SFA-0414-N.pdf>

2) Frequently Asked Questions about PA 101

http://www.michigan.gov/documents/lara/LARA_Autism_Fund_FAQ_FINAL_4001577.pdf

3) Autism Reimbursement Program information

<http://www.michigan.gov/lara/0,4601,7-154-62954-287554-.00.html>

4) For additional information and resources, families may want to contact Autism

Alliance of Michigan, autismallianceofmichigan.org or Autism Speaks,

www.autismspeaks.org.

Your Fellow APs

Allyson Rogers | Communications Manager I
Student Health Center

How long have you been at MSU? Have you held other positions prior to your current on at the University?

Since 2007—I finished undergrad in 2010 & graduate school in 2012. I had several appointments on campus during graduate school—I was a communications coordinator for the Graduate Student Life & Wellness program for over a year, a research assistant for the Health & Risk Communication Center for 2 years, a teaching assistant my last semester as well as a research assistant at Olin prior to being full time.

Can you tell me a little about what you do? Any specific projects you are working on?

My role at Student Health Services is a novel and evolving one- I am the Health Promotion and Communication Specialist; a dual position split between Communications & Health Education. My main tasks have included analyzing the 2012 MSU National College Health Assessment (NCHA) data for various presentations and publications, managing and writing content for the new Olin Student Health Services website, chairing the communications committee for the MSU Moves program, serving on the social norms and celebrations committees, co-advising the Student Health Advisory Council, and managing social media for both Student Health Services and MSU Moves.

What brought you to your job at MSU?

As a Spartan through and through, the job itself was attractive given my degree background and familiarity with the campus and area. During grad school, I had positions both in a communications as well as health-related research—both encompassing of the position offered in Student Health Services. As a previous research assistant for Olin and interest in both areas, I am so fortunate to have had the opportunity to work in a position that relates directly to my masters degree.

What do you love about working at MSU?

The campus and community. I explored different career options and cities, but it is really difficult to beat East Lansing and MSU. The experience, opportunities, and networking available to employees here is hard to come by and something that made the decision to work here an easy one. Also, I work with a great team of coworkers in health education that make my position that much more enjoyable.

Can you share a little about the challenges of working at MSU or Student Health Services?

With such a large campus, cross-departmental communication has been a bit challenging at times. Also, with a brand new position that is split between two departments, my responsibilities and duties can be confusing at times to coworkers and people outside of the department. Oftentimes the two departments overlap, but the balance is something novel (and exciting) to all of us.

What are your favorite things to do when not at work?

Fresh out of grad school, I'm still adjusting to having "free time" after work and on weekends (but loving EVERY minute of it). I just moved into a new place—so that has been fun to decorate and has kept me fairly busy. I also like to run and spend time with friends and family every chance I get!

McCarthyism Returns

by Leo Sell, Chair, Legislative Committee

Interesting isn't it that for certain people at the Michigan Legislature local control ends whenever they disagree with the local entity or wish to force their narrow perspective onto all regardless of the law. Witness what's happened here and there with contract extensions by a number of school districts, universities, and colleges. Some didn't like the idea that LOCAL people found it MUTUALLY agreeable and beneficial to extend their contract in advance of the implementation of Right to Work (for less!!!). Leadership from those institutions were recently called on the carpet with a demand to "explain yourselves!!" and ornery statements about trying to circumvent the legislature's will. Not to mention threats to cut appropriations. Bullying and intimidation tactics that would make Joe McCarthy proud. And there are those who took the coward's way out and refused to stand up to the bullying.

It is so very important that we working people work hard between now and the 2014 election to make it possible to throw these people out.

Let me be frank. The voters need to punish the Republican party. Because of their right wing extremist policies and long ago discredited economic approaches, our institutions, cities, safety nets, higher ed, K-12 ed, roads, environment, economic opportunity, health care system, are all crumbling around our ears. This must not continue.

Voting rights, women's rights, economic rights, human rights, and so much more, are at greater risk than ever.

We must change that. If WE don't vote differently, WE may not be allowed to vote AT ALL in the not too distant future. It just would not be hard for this country to go back to "free, white, male, and property-owning" as the requirements to cast a ballot. Not hard at all.

APA/MEA members and their families save on auto and home insurance

APA/MEA members can save hundreds of dollars each year on automobile and homeowners' insurance through MEA Financial Services, a full-service insurance agency that provides policies exclusively for public education employees.

Because the agency is actually owned by the higher education members, teachers and education support professionals who comprise MEA, MEA Financial Services' team of insurance specialists does everything possible to keep costs down and save money for members, while providing them with high-quality coverage.

“MEA members have exclusive access to numerous money-saving discount programs that aren't available to the general public,” says Ross Wilson, executive director of MEA Financial Services. “The high-quality auto and homeowners' insurance policies offered through MEA Financial Services provide two great examples of how being an MEA member can save money for school employees and their families.”

MEA members can also take advantage of group discounts on personal umbrella protection and coverage for rental property, boats, RVs, motorcycles, snowmobiles and more.

To receive a no-obligation quote, call 1-800-292-1950 or visit www.meafs.com.

Member Engagement Updates: Museum Reception and More

Expanding opportunities for members to engage their union and colleagues has been a priority of the APA over the past few years. Through ever-increasing actions of the Membership Committee and others, APs now regularly engage in opportunities to meet colleagues and union officers both inside and outside the workplace. The past couple months have been no exception!

Broad Art Museum Special Viewing & Reception for APA Members

The MSU Administrative Professional Association, with the generous support of the Michigan Education Association and MEA Financial Services, hosted a reception at the Eli and Edythe Broad Art Museum on February 19, 2013. The doors of the museum were kept open well past normal closing times to enable members to view the collection after-hours and to mingle with colleagues, union officers, and local legislators. Michigan Representatives Sam Singh and Andy Schor; MEA Vice President, Nancy Strachan; and Michael Ross, Broad Art Museum Director, provided remarks and stayed to talk with members. Approximately 150 individuals attended this great event.

Community Lunches

As part of an ongoing effort, APA members around campus are being invited to attend “community lunches” in their respective buildings/areas. The lunches serve as an opportunity for members to hear updates on bargaining, learn about the impacts of legislation, ask questions, and share quality conversations with colleagues. Thus far in 2013, fifteen lunches have been held in buildings and groups of buildings with high concentrations of members. Another eighteen community lunches are planned through mid May.

“MSU’s Technology Training and You”

On February 28, 2013 the APA held its latest installment in the “Lunch & Learn” series in the Spartan Rooms of the MSU International Center. During the lunchtime session, featuring Todd Ring of the MSU IT Services Technology Training team, members received an overview of the resources available to them to advance their technologic skills and receive certifications. Todd reminded participants to use their annual \$800 Human Resource Development budget. The series is driven by member suggested topics and participants receive a lunch voucher to use at the International Center food court. The April 18, 2013 session will feature alternative and green commuting methods.