

APA September/October 2014 Newsletter

Higher Ed Affordability – And Our Union – Takes Center Stage on Capitol Hill

At a Capitol Hill event with supporters behind the [Bank on Students Emergency Loan Refinancing Act](#), Sen. Al Franken told a story about meeting with Joelle Strangler, a student at the University of Minnesota.

Strangler's mother was a lifelong teacher who desperately wanted her kids to go to college. To help with the rising costs of college tuition, she left teaching to get a higher paying job in hopes that she could help her children avoid the massive debt most graduates face.

“This is about our educational system. We lost a great teacher because she can make more money in the private sector,” said Franken. “Joelle is now a junior, student body president, and she will still graduate with a mountain of debt.”

Franken is a cosponsor of the Bank on Student Act, which help millions of Americans with existing federal student loans and private loans in good standing to refinance at a lower rate to make repayment more manageable.

“This is putting a damper on our entire economy. There's over \$1.2 trillion in debt, and this is simply saying, ‘Let's let people refinance, just like you can refinance your car loan, just like you can refinance a home loan. Why not allow graduates to refinance their student loans?’”

Currently, there are forty million Americans that have student loan debt. More than [70 percent of America's students borrow money](#) to attend college, and the average student graduates from college [owning nearly \\$30,000](#). The act would allow [an estimated 25 million student loan borrowers](#) to refinance at a lower rate.

In order to offset the cost of the proposed legislation, the bill will implement the “Buffet Rule,” a minimum tax rate of 30 percent for individuals with incomes of \$1 million or more.

“It's just an approach to make this fair. It's for people who make millions a year or even billions a year, asking them to pay what the rest of us pay, what middle class Americans pay,” said Franken. “This is just fair. It's the least we can do.”

When the bill was introduced this summer, it [failed to pass in the Senate](#), falling short by just two votes with support from both sides of the aisle.

Chelsey Herrig, a Minnesota native and [NEA Student Chair](#), was at Capitol Hill to lend her support to the legislation. Herrig was there on behalf of the 60,000 future educators she represents, many who will or already have incurred substantial student loan debt.

“Many students are entering college who want to be teachers, and they’re really passionate about education. When they see that they might never be able to pay off their student debt, they get discouraged,” said Herrig. “We often lose very passionate educators that would be awesome in the field.”

What’s really on the minds of her student members, said Herrig, is how to make college affordable for the students that will be in their classrooms after they graduate.

“We’re always looking out for our future students. That’s why we’re going into it teaching, we want to make a difference in our student’s lives,” said Herrig.

“We want to be sure to protect them. We have the voice and we need to speak up for them.”

The vote for the bill is expected sometime in the next two weeks. In the meantime, [tell your Senator that America’s students deserve degrees, not debt!](#)

APA Lunch & Learn with NEA President Lily Eskelsen Garcia on Sept. 24

The APA is delighted to announce the next installment of our APA Lunch & Learn series: [A lunch conversation with NEA President Lily Eskelsen Garcia](#)
12noon – 1pm on September 24, 2014

Spartan Rooms of the MSU International Center Crossroads Food Court

We are honored to have NEA President Eskelsen Garcia making her inaugural visit to Michigan State University after taking office on September 1, 2014. Lily will address the role of our national affiliate in advocating for higher education and organized labor.

Do not miss this opportunity to hear directly from our national union president. We are aware that President Eskelsen Garcia will be working on a tight schedule but we will also try to save a few minutes for Q&A.

A lunch voucher will be provided to those members who attend and stay for the presentation so you do not have to go without your midday meal. As a reminder, there are several staff parking lots near the MSU International Center and your staff ID can be used for campus CATA bus routes.

We hope to see you there!

Collective Bargaining Agreement, University Policy and Department Policy

The APA Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA), University policies, and individual department policies determine the working environment of an APA member on campus. The APA CBA is bargained between MSU-APA and Michigan State University. It is a legally binding contract for those employees in APA bargaining unit positions. The contract can be found under Association Documents at <http://www.msuapa.org>.

The mechanism for enforcing the contract is through the grievance procedure which may include processing the grievance to arbitration. An arbitrator's decision is a binding decision and enforceable. In addition, the MEA Legal Representation Policy covers an APA member for enforcement of all employment law, including but not limited to: Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA); Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Act; Pregnancy Discrimination Act and the Payment of Wages and Benefits Act. This legal policy provides for additional avenues beyond contractual provisions to protect the rights of an APA member. The legal costs are a covered benefit under MEA membership at no additional cost to the member or our association.

University Policies are determined by Michigan State University and through the MSU Board of Trustees. The policies should not be in contradiction with the APA Collective Bargaining Agreement. Wages, hours, benefits and working conditions are mandatory subjects of bargaining and, therefore, can be bargained. In addition, the University has the ability to provide policies for the topics not directly bargained nor referenced in the collective bargaining agreement. You can find the University Policies and Procedures at <http://www.hr.msu.edu/documents/supportstaffpolproc/index.htm>.

Departments are allowed to determine policies within the confines of the collective bargaining agreement. For example, a department may have a policy of how to request and receive approval for vacation leave. Vacation pay accrual is found in Article 21 of the MSU-APA Collective Bargaining Agreement which determines the amount of accrual and the usage requirements. A department policy may include the process of approval of vacation leave time. The policy must be consistent and equally applied to all APA members within a department, in most cases it should be applied consistently for all employees in the department or unit.

If you have any questions for concerns regarding your wages, hours, or working conditions, please contact the APA office at (517) 353-4898 or send an e-mail to msuapa@msu.edu.

Questions From The Trenches

For this installment of APA Questions From The Trenches, we asked APA President Maury Koffman to answer questions regarding the APA 2014 October wage increase.

How much is the negotiated APA annual wage increase this year for 2014?

The APA negotiated annual wage increase is applied every year in October. For the 2014 year, the APA annual base wage increase is 2%. Per the APA contract, 40% of the wage increase is automatic – across the board – and 60% applies the merit pay guidelines that require objective and consistent application. Your immediate supervisor should also provide advance notice of you annual wage increase amount before it is realized on your October 2014 paycheck.

How is the merit pay portion of the wage increase determined?

The APA contract codifies a mandatory objective process in determining the merit pay portion of the APA annual wage increase. The full details can be found within the Letter of Agreement on Merit Pay located at the end of the APA contract. In short, the criteria must be openly communicated and objectively applied in the department. Additionally, the decision on merit pay allocation is to be discussed between you and your immediate supervisor before your October 2014 paycheck is issued.

Does the APA contract define a minimum and maximum annual salary for all members of the bargaining unit?

Yes and no. The APA contract outlines minimum salary requirements for all grade levels within the bargaining unit. However, the APA contract serves as a floor and individual bargaining unit salaries may rise above the APA minimums and progression levels. Per Clause 132 of the APA contract:

Salary Progression increase consideration [annual 3% maximum] will be 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.

What is the APA base wage increase in future years?

The following annual base wage increases are subject to the APA contract provisions of 40% across the board and 60% using the merit pay process:

October 2014 – 2% base wage increase

October 2015 – 2.5% base wage increase

October 2016 – 2.6% maximum base wage increase through matrix formula

October 2017 – 2.6% maximum base wage increase through matrix formula

October 2018 – 2.6% maximum base wage increase through matrix formula

How does the matrix formula work to determine my annual base wage increase?

The matrix in the ratified agreement defines the formula for the annual APA raises commencing with the October 2015 base wage increase. For example using the matrix,

*because health care costs increase between 1.01% – 2% in the first year of the agreement, APA members are eligible for a 2.5% base wage increase in October 2015, subject to the contract provisions of 40% across the board and 60% using the merit pay process. The complete matrix can be found within the ratified agreement which is conveniently located on the APA website:
<http://www.msuapa.org/wp-content/uploads/2009/08/MOU-2014-2017.pdf>*

Your Fellow APs

This issue of the APA Newsletter features Suzanne Levy. She serves as the Authority Control Coordinator in the Metadata Management Unit for the main MSU Library.

How long have you been at MSU?

Prior to working at MSU I was a graduate student in the Department of History, earning a Master of Arts in 1979. I was also a graduate assistant in the University Archives & Historical Collections for a year, as well as a teaching assistant for a number of years. I did some work toward my Ph.D. but basically ran out of steam and funds at about the same time. I worked odd jobs in the area until 1984 when I was hired in as clerk in the serials unit in the Main Library.

Have you been a member of APA the whole time?

I have worked at MSU in excess of thirty years. I have only been an APA for the last few years, but regardless of my union affiliation here at MSU I have always been a strong and vocal union member and supporter, perhaps due to my upbringing in the labor capitol of Detroit. During the CTU strike of 1987 (?) I was a picket captain and was proud to see the strike through to a positive outcome.

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

I have been the authority control coordinator for the MSU Libraries since 1989. The best way to describe what I do is quality control for the Libraries' various databases. It is a very complex and challenging position and I love my work here. I have been blessed to have great supervisors who basically have given me a good deal of latitude in my work. As the libraries have migrated from a paper card catalog to an online catalog my job has evolved dramatically and I was re-classed as an APA a few years ago. And since then my work has further grown in complexity. I am strictly a behind the scenes person, but you can see elements of my work/job are in all aspects of the catalog and this enable our patrons to access our holdings to make the best use of their time here at the libraries.

What do you love about working at MSU?

I consider MSU to be my family. The University has treated me well, given me a great education and a wonderful work life. I couldn't ask for a better situation of work, friends and colleagues. My dedication to this, my family, is evidenced in the number of endowments I have established both at the library and Vet College.

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

When I am not at work I enjoy music in all forms, playing and listening. I love to go to the hear the Lansing Symphony Orchestra and am glad we have at MSU a world class venue such as the Wharton Center for a broad range of cultural events. I am a member of the Broad and enjoy going to shows there as well. Additionally, I play mandolin and guitar, learning the former and teaching the latter. I am a bookworm and a blogger and a fabulous cook. I have three cats and I believe this qualifies me as the quintessential library employee.

Always Vote For Public Education, Especially This November

For the past 15 years, South Lyon High School social studies teacher Toni Simovski has made it his mission to help young people better understand the society they live in and how they can make a difference.

Whether he's teaching AP Government or U.S. History, he favors creative approaches to introduce his students to some of the intricacies of politics so they'll never be intimidated about participating. One class favorite is "Gerrymandering," a video game in which students try to redraw districts to help their party, and in the process learn what is behind redistricting battles in real life.

"I remember back when I was in high school I thought I knew politics and now looking back, I wasn't anywhere near what you'd call politically savvy," admitted Simovski. "I know I've improved my students' knowledge far beyond where I was at their age."

Simovski knows a lot more about politics these days, and the direct impact that elected officials have on what goes on in the classroom.

He says educators can play a huge role in the midterm elections, simply by speaking with other voters in their communities about making the commitment to head to the polls and elect pro-public education candidates to start the process of repairing the damage done to public schools and the middle class.

"You gotta just get to the parents and say, 'Look, your kid can't do band. Your kid can't do art. Why? Because some of these guys in office are cutting those opportunities for your kids,'" said Simovski.

Those are just some of the immediate effects—felt deeply by educators, students and their families—that have taken hold in Michigan since the 2010 midterm elections.

Governor Rick Snyder and his allies in the state legislature cut funding for K-12 schools and higher education by more than \$1 billion to offset more than \$2 billion in tax giveaways for the wealthy and big corporations who don't need them.

Snyder then signed off on expanding for-profit charter and cyber schools without ensuring accountability, and held secret meetings to develop a school voucher scheme that would funnel even more taxpayer money meant for public schools into private schools. He has also spoke about significant changes to public higher education and funding.

Simovski knows that the ballot itself can be intimidating to new voters, and even to those more experienced.

"We not only need people to vote, they need to vote down the entire ballot. As educators, we can help people get to know the candidates who will protect public education."

“Otherwise, if educators and parents don’t take a stand, these guys in office who are hurting schools and universities go about their business and get away with it. Getting people out to vote during the midterms is the key.”

Democracy with a lower case “d”

The base of our democracy is exercising our right to vote. As Thomas Jefferson said, “An educated citizenry is a vital requisite for our survival as a free people.”

An educated citizenry can be both from an individual perspective and from a group perspective. Our common value of education connects us. The election on November 4, 2014 will determine many national state and local offices including the Michigan Governor and a United States Senator. Michigan may be the deciding factor in which party holds a majority in the United States Senate.

You have the chance to choose a decision-makers who works to enhance the quality of our public lives. A sustainable public education for students in K-12 and higher education is at stake. You make the difference when you vote.

For more information on comparisons of the candidates on public education and public employment issues, please go to www.mea.org and click on the Members Only tab. You will need your MEA Member ID Number which is on the MEA Advantage Membership Card you were sent this spring or email htraxler@mea.org for your membership number.

“An enlightened citizenry is indispensable for the proper functioning of a republic. Self-government is not possible unless the citizens are educated sufficiently to enable them to exercise oversight. It is therefore imperative that the nation see to it that a suitable education be provided for all its citizens.” Thomas Jefferson

Inspirational Woman of the Year Award

The MSU Women's Resource Center is proud to announce the creation of a new opportunity to celebrate and feature the accomplishments of women-identified faculty and staff at Michigan State University. The Inspirational Woman of the Year Award will honor women who have demonstrated professional achievement, community engagement, or have created a culture of empowerment.

The award will honor three outstanding women affiliated with MSU each year in three distinct categories: Professional Achievement, Community Engagement, and Culture of Empowerment. The category for Professional Development will include a woman who demonstrates a unique drive and passion for her career and contributes positively to MSU's culture of excellence. The woman selected for the Community Engagement Award will demonstrate a commitment to engaging and advancing communities and organizations at Michigan State University, and in the greater Lansing community, through service/volunteerism, leadership and/or involvement. Lastly, the award for the Culture of Empowerment will recognize a woman who has mentored and/or utilized leadership opportunities to encourage other women to reach their full potential.

Please share this announcement broadly throughout your unit(s). If you know an individual who demonstrates outstanding character in the area(s) of professional achievement, community engagement, and/or has created a culture of empowerment, you are encouraged to nominate them for this prestigious award. Additionally, there are likely colleagues within your unit and within the MSU APA who know women who meet the criteria and we ask that you encourage them to make nominations as well.

Please visit the MSU Women's Resource Center website at <http://wrc.msu.edu> (under the "News and Announcements" tab) for additional details and/or to download a nomination packet (also attached). Questions in regard to the award and nomination process should be directed to Ms. Lydia Weiss at [517-884-7316](tel:517-884-7316).

The deadline for nominations is **Friday, October 24, 2014**.

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