

APA July/August 2015 Newsletter

APA Health Care Coverage in Light of the SCOTUS Same-Sex Marriage Ruling

by Maury Koffman, APA President

MSU Human Resources is working to change its systems in light of the Supreme Court's June 26, 2015 ruling on same-sex marriage.

For marriages occurring on or after June 26, 2015, once the HR/Payroll system is changed, employees who have submitted a marriage license for their same-sex spouse and an enrollment form will receive a confirmation email from Human Resources that their spouse has been added to their health benefits. All coverage will become effective on the date of the marriage. Employees have 30 days from the date of marriage to submit a marriage license in order to add a spouse to their benefit plans.

Employees who were married prior to June 26, 2015, and whose spouse is not already covered under their MSU health plan, may add their spouse during the October Benefits Open Enrollment period for coverage effective January 1, 2016.

Employees whose spouse is already covered by their MSU health plan will no longer have imputed income as of their July paycheck. The Payroll Office is working to adjust imputed income retroactive to January, however, the adjustment may occur over more than one paycheck.

All questions may be directed to the HR Solutions Center at 517-353-4434 or via email at SolutionsCenter@hr.msu.edu.

Questions From The Trenches

For this installment of APA Questions From The Trenches, we asked APA President Maury Koffman to answer questions about the bargaining process.

Who represents all APA members at the bargaining table?

Per Article VII of the APA Constitution and Bylaws, the APA must begin preparations to negotiate a successor agreement by naming our Negotiations Committee in January of the year our current contract is set to expire. Accordingly, roughly 30 members comprising a cross section of the membership were appointed to serve on the APA 2015 Negotiations Committee in January 2015.

Additionally, a group of seven members and two alternates from the Negotiations Committee have been appointed to serve as the 2015 Bargaining Team, the body of individuals that sit at the table to negotiate a successor contract.

Will wages and health care be part of the 2015 negotiations?

No. The APA negotiates our wage and health care as part of a joint coalition of campus support staff unions. That agreement – lead by APA UniServ Director Melissa Sortman as the chief negotiator – was bargained in 2013. The union is proud to have fought off a high deductible health care plan and also secured eligible annual wage increases each year 2015 – 2018. Fully funded health care, annual wage increases, lump sum bonuses, 2-1 match on member's 403(b) and other benefits we all enjoy would not be possible without a strong and properly resourced union.

What topics or items can be bargained during the APA 2015 negotiations?

All other elements – except base wage and health care – that are regarded as a member's wages, hours, and conditions of employment may be elements bargained at the table such as sick time, educational assistance, notice requirements, and pro forma functions of the APA contract.

How can members provide input?

Several APA member forums have already been held around campus including our Community and Regional Luncheons as well as other member meetings. Additionally, the entire membership was recently sent an online survey soliciting member input. More member input sessions and venues are being scheduled and members can directly email their input to msuapa@msu.edu.

What happens when a tentative agreement is reached at the bargaining table?

Once a tentative agreement is reached between the APA and University bargaining teams, the full tentative agreement will be communicated with the APA membership. Member forums will be scheduled so members can ask questions to better inform their vote. Ultimately, the tentative agreement and change in contract language will be presented to the APA membership for an electronic vote. A majority of voters must vote in the affirmative to ratify the tentative agreement before the document officially becomes our successor contract.

What are the next steps?

Be sure to watch for official APA ListServ messages, attend APA campus meetings, and read our bargaining communications to stay updated during the 2015 bargaining cycle.

Know Your Rights: Benefits of Union Membership

by Melissa Sortman, MEA Uniserv Director

Why should I be in the union?

The answer depends on what matters most to you regarding your employment.

A majority of members say wages and benefits matter most. On that front, the wages of APA members steadily increase each year. The bargained wage increase for 2014 was 2% and this October will be 2.5%. The next three years will be a range of 2.6% to 1% depending on the increase of the health care spend (if the health care spend is an unprecedented increase above 11%, there could be a wage freeze).

The health care benefits will be fully-funded through December 31, 2017. There will be no premium share for the duration of the Wage and Health Care Memorandum of Understanding. The non-unionized tenure track faculty and academic specialists pay a monthly health care premium for the same health care coverage bargained by APA. There is a difference and it is financial.

All other benefits and working conditions are bargained and enforceable in the union contract. The beneficial retirement plan with a 2-to-1 match is a bargained benefit. Working conditions such as paid leave time, educational assistance, course fee courtesy and basic rules governing the work environment are contractual.

Why would a professional want to be a union member?

APA members are professionals who may question the need for a union environment, but every employee deserves job security, financial security and equitable treatment. APA is a professional union and provides educational opportunities to maximize contractual provisions, access benefits and advises employees on employment law and rights in the workplace.

MSU is a great place to work but it is still an employer and not a benevolent charity. Employees need advocacy and collectivism to balance the power such a large employer wields.

Why does an employee of MSU need to be a union member?

MSU is technically a state agency and has the complexity of a \$2 billion organization. Union membership provides a legal avenue to deal with basic employment issues and have an advocate whose purpose is to provide equitable treatment and navigation of the MSU bureaucracy. Strength does come in numbers. One voice of one employee on campus can fall on deaf ears, but a representative of the union has legal access to information and to problem-solving for individual members and the collective whole.

Why be a member of APA/MEA/NEA?

The employment safety net of the union is not just the contract. The contract is the framework to deal with specific contractual issues. The MEA Legal Representation

policy only covers members in good-standing. The Legal Representation Policy covers all employment law that includes FMLA, Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Wage and Hour Laws and all other employment laws. A law that a member does not have the financial resources to enforce, is not a protection.

Additionally, only full members are eligible for significant home and auto insurance discounts through MEA Financial Services, member benefits, a free life insurance policy, and \$1 million liability insurance for all matters that occur related to performing the duties of your campus employment position.

APA is the largest union on campus, representing more than 2,400 members employed in more than 300 positions.

MEA is the largest union in Michigan, representing k-12 and higher ed units across the state of Michigan including CMU, Ferris State, Saginaw Valley, and many community colleges.

NEA is the largest union in the United States, representing 3 million members nationwide. Our collective voice affords us the power and influence we exercise on behalf of each individual member.

Union Membership? Yes!

The quality of work life for an APA member is good. In order to sustain and build the strength of an employee community, it takes individuals dedicated to their profession and a union committed to represent its members both individually and collectively. Let's continue to build a future for you, MSU and APA together.

Your Fellow APs

Interview by Laura Wise, APA Executive Board

This month we feature D. Corey Noyes, Department of Horticulture

What is your job title?

Research Assistant – Laboratory and Field Manager

How long have you been at MSU?

8 Years 8 Months

Have you been a member of APA the whole time?

No, I started as a temporary employee and was hired into an APA position approximately 4 months after I started.

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

I oversee and coordinate field, greenhouse, and laboratory operations associated with research, teaching, and extension programs in Sustainable Vegetable Production in the Department of Horticulture. In conjunction with my research and extension responsibilities, I oversee laboratory and field assistants. Additionally, I provide teaching support for several Plant Soil and Microbial Sciences lab courses.

What brought you to your job at MSU?

A temporary position as a Lab Tech in Soil Fertility and Nutrient Management, which seemed like a perfect opportunity to figure out what I wanted to do next after completing my BS in Biology. Originally I hadn't planned on being at MSU for more than a year or two, but I enjoyed my work and was hired into a full-time APA position after 4 months, so I decided to stick with it and see where it would take me.

What do you love about working at MSU?

I really enjoy being involved with science and to be always learning new things; MSU is a great place for both! I also love the fact that my job provides a wide variety of work environments: time in the office, time outside in the field, time in the lab, and operating big tractors!

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

I enjoy spending time with my family and being outdoors fishing, hunting, and camping.

The Big Event

Dear Team MSU,

I would like to invite you and your family members to participate in “[The Big Event](#)” — an opportunity to celebrate the university’s 160th birthday and the extraordinary impact of our MSU employees. Without your commitment to quality, inclusiveness, and connectivity, Michigan State University would not be advancing knowledge and transforming lives. You play an integral role in our university’s international acclaim for its academic programs, services, research, and athletics.

We hope you will join us on Saturday, August 15, 2015, from 4:00 to 9:30 p.m., to celebrate your indispensable contributions to the continued success and inspiring legacy of Michigan State University.

The Big Event will have a variety of free family-friendly events to engage people of all ages. Here are a tentative schedule and list of activities:

- 4:00 to 6:00 p.m. – **Swimming** at IM West Pool
- 4:00 to 6:30 p.m. – **Ice Skating** at Munn Ice Arena
- 4:00 to 6:45 p.m. – **Carnival** at Pentecost Plaza at Old College Field – Inflatables, games, and concessions
- 4:00 to 6:30 p.m. – **Be a Tourist at MSU** – A unique opportunity to be bussed to different locations on campus that are not always readily accessible and get an inside-look at these spaces, as well as meet campus leaders. Tentative Be a Tourist stops include the following:
 - Spartan Stadium Tower
 - Breslin Center
 - Broad Art Museum
 - Beaumont Tower
 - Abrams Planetarium
 - Cowles House (The President’s residence)
 - WKAR media studio
- 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. – **Concert/Entertainment** at DeMartin Soccer Complex/Pentecost Plaza at Old College Field
- 9:05 p.m. - **Fireworks**

To ensure the success of The Big Event, please [RSVP here](#) and take a few minutes to complete the brief survey no later than July 24, 2015.

Please call 517-355-6560 or email presmail@msu.edu, if you require any special accommodations.

Thank you for your dedication and hard work! Again, we hope you will join us for this special day in Spartan history.

Spartans Will.

Lou Anna K. Simon, Ph.D.

President