

BEING PART OF A STRONG UNION ON CAMPUS

by Maury Koffman, APA President

What is MSU-APA?

Our membership is comprised of a wide array of professionals with more than 300 job classifications performing some of the most vital supporting roles at MSU. The Administrative Professional Association (APA) has more than 2,400 members, making it the largest union group on campus.

As a professional, why do I need a union?

Everyone has a need for fair wages, quality health care and decent working conditions. MSU-APA negotiates those important issues so that they are provided fairly and consistently across campus to every APA member.

The biggest difference between a unionized workplace and a non-unionized workplace is the difference between being employed at will versus with just cause.

An at will employee has no job protections and can be disciplined up to and including discharge for no reason.

An employee with union representation is afforded just cause and due process that are contractually guaranteed and enforced which mandates discipline be based on just, equitable and reasonable actions. The University cannot be arbitrary or inconsistent in the procedures or discipline itself. Discipline should be with the desire of improving performance and correcting behavior. Therefore, a standard of progressive discipline is also a part of a unionized workplace with a verbal warning, a written warning, a suspension and then termination being the typical escalation of discipline.

What do I get for my union dues?

As an APA union member you have the right and protections of being represented by the MEA/NEA in many different ways including:

- Negotiating with the University for fair compensation, benefits, working conditions, education development, and other plans and programs.
- Participating as a member organization in the MSU Coalition of Labor Organizations to pool resources, lower costs, and increase coverage to MSU employees.
- Assisting you in navigating the world of MSU support staff policies, practices, and how they align with your daily life and your contract.
- Connecting you with pertinent information regarding administrative and legislative actions that affect you and your family, your colleagues, and MSU.
- Advocating for you at every level of MSU and state and federal government.
- Defending your contractual and legal rights as a member of the APA.
- Linking you with MEA resources and programs such as MEA Financial Services and others found at www.mea.org.

- Access to professional development, experts, and resources to enhance your daily work life and experience at MSU.
- Creating communities of colleagues to educate and assist you in building a better career and connection within the MSU community.
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Where do my dues go?

The majority of your dues go to support contract bargaining, advocacy and enforcement of your contract. It provides for the legal representation for each member and for the union collectively. The local APA budget supports local member engagement activities and the governance structure of MSU-APA.

The balance of the dues is decided by a democratic process at the regional, state and national level. The Michigan Education Association (MEA) and National Education Association (NEA) are both member driven organizations with members representing their constituencies at all decision-making levels.

How do I get more information about APA?

- Visit www.msuapa.org
- Call the APA office at 517-999-4004
- Email msuapa@msu.edu if you would like to get more involved with APA

DOCUMENTING PROFESSIONAL EXCELLENCE: EVALUATIONS

by Melissa Sortman, MEA Uniserv Director

The University is prioritizing professional excellence and part of the focus is on the evaluation process of employees. APA leadership has been meeting with MSU Human Resources regarding potential changes to the evaluation forms and the evaluation process. APA will be meeting with the University to discuss the impact of any changes on the membership.

The performance evaluation process should be valuable time used to get constructive feedback from your supervisor that reflects a review of the last year, but also lay out a plan for the following year. It may also be an opportunity for you to set goals. This may include the criteria for the merit portion of the bargained raise received each October.

APA provides trainings for members to assist in the preparation for the evaluation, discussion of how to request an off-cycle raise and ways to use professional development to support your career plans. Monthly notice is sent out to sign up for *More You Know* trainings.

Contractually, the performance evaluation review should be done annually, according to Article 12 Clause 101 of the MSU APA Master Agreement. <https://www.msu.edu/~msuapa/apacontract.pdf> If an employee is having performance issues, more frequent evaluations are allowed. The Performance Evaluation Form is a standard form and can be found on the Human Resources website: <http://www.hr.msu.edu/performance/supportstaff/PerfDevProg.htm>.

The formal evaluation form is one of the few documents that may be placed in an employee's official personnel folder. In addition, an employee may add additional comments regarding the evaluation to be placed in the personnel file. You have a right to know what is placed in your personnel file which is governed by the Bullard Plawecki Employee Right to Know Act <http://www.hr.msu.edu/documents/uwidepolproc/righttoknow.htm> Many members would like the supervisor feedback and recognition of work performance. You may request to schedule your evaluation. If you are not evaluated, there is a presumption of satisfactory work. The University is making it a priority to have annual evaluations.

If members receive an unsatisfactory evaluation and/or placed on a Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) http://www.hr.msu.edu/performance/supportstaff/staffperformance_docs/PIP.pdf, you should notify the APA office at msuapa@msu.edu or call the office at 517.999.4004. If you contact your union, it will be kept confidential.

If placed on an Improvement Plan, you will typically have monthly meetings with your supervisor with a reevaluation within ninety days from the date of being placed on the PIP. The union representative can assist you in many ways through the process. The APA representative can, at the member request, call a conference with the evaluator prior to the ninety day evaluation. This meeting can be useful to facilitate a problem solving path versus a punitive one. Don't hesitate to ask for assistance, the MSU APA office is (517) 999-4004.

Resources:

Employee Self Review Worksheet:

http://www.hr.msu.edu/performance/supportstaff/staffperformance_docs/selfReview.pdf

APA REACHES A SUCCESSOR CONTRACT THROUGH SEPTEMBER 30, 2019

On Thursday, September 24, 2015, contract negotiations concluded when the APA reached a tentative agreement with the administration of Michigan State University for a successor APA contract valid through September 30, 2019. As with most collective bargaining, neither management nor labor obtained everything sought at the commencement of negotiations.

Responding to the information and data from APA membership surveys (<https://www.surveymonkey.com/results/SM-F5PNYQ9C>) and input provided through member engagement events, emails, and phone calls, the APA Bargaining Team entered negotiations with proposals on nearly 30 different contractual items.

A brief recap is as follows:

The **APA was successful in fighting off University proposals** on topics such as:

- Attacks on job security
- Total elimination of current Longevity Pay program
- Harmful changes to the evaluation process
- Increasing merit pay to 100% of your annual base wage increase which could prevent members from receiving any base wage increase any year at the exclusive discretion of your immediate supervisor/department

The **APA is proud to have negotiated:**

- Greater protections from discrimination in the workplace
- Maternity/Paternity leave planning enhancement through increased vacation maximum accrual rates for new employees
- Increase of maximum accrued sick leave bank to 1,400 hours
- Maintained fully funded Aetna DMO dental coverage (no changes to Delta Dental plan)
- Improved professional development to allow for use of annual \$800 for off campus and college credit bearing courses
- Enhanced job security for all members and additional rights for off-date employees who are subject to layoff
- Maintained current 40% across the board and 60% merit pay process for annual base wage increases unless the total base wage increase is 1% or less in which case the annual base wage increase will be applied 100% across the board
- Protected 403(b) retirement fund contributions for employees who began at MSU on or after July 1, 2010 who are no longer eligible for post retirement health care benefits

Additionally, your APA Bargaining Team pursued key issues members brought to attention:

- Paid paternity/maternity leave and short term disability benefits
- Improved dental coverage
- Additional objective criteria to determine the merit portion of the annual APA base wage increase
- Parking rate equity for members working at the MSU Secchia Center

After notice of the tentative agreement was provided to the APA membership, information sessions were held on campus in East Lansing, as well as at the CHM Grand Rapids. Members who attended delved into the issues and had productive dialogue.

Balloting for the 2015 – 2019 APA Tentative Agreement ratification concluded on October 13, 2015, at 4pm.

In total, 702 members cast a ballot. 639 (91%) cast a ballot in favor of ratification with 63 (9%) in opposition. Therefore, the contract was officially ratified by the APA membership.

As soon as possible, the ratified contract will be printed and copies made available to APA members. Additionally, an electronic version will be posted on the APA website.

The APA greatly appreciates the comments that were provided leading into and during negotiations and membership questions and engagement around the tentative agreement ratification.

For further information or to ask questions, please contact the APA at msuapa@msu.edu or at 517.999.4004.

RECEPTION IN THE GARDEN RECAP

Over forty members gathered for our first ever Reception in the Garden. This reception offered members an opportunity to meet, mingle, and network with other members and executive board members while enjoying wonderful hors d'oeuvres and refreshments.

Members discussed APA topics of interest such as educational assistance, MSU retirement benefits, new member lunches, More You Know lunch opportunities, as well as other community based events. If you would like more information on continuing your involvement as an APA member, or would like to participate in the APA Area Representative training program, please let us know by reaching us at msuapa@msu.edu