



MSU APA/MEA/NEA
3474 Alaiedon Pkwy., Suite 400
Okemos, MI 48864
(517) 999-4004

Calendar

APA Executive Board

Location TBD

March 9, 2021 | 2:00 pm

[A Word from the APA President](#)

APA Wages and health care negotiation update.

[Black History Month](#)

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) recognizes Black History Month.

[APA Election – March 2021](#)

Nominations open through February 19th at 5pm.

[UD's Corner](#)

Learn how to manage your student loan debt with Savi.

[Meet Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion \(DEI\) Co-Chair](#)

Interview with Jeremy Romel, APA-DEI Co-Chair.

[Follow-up: January's Anti-Bias Training](#)

Summary of January's DEI training event.

[Legislative Chair Update](#)

An important reminder about staying engaged.

[East Lansing City Tax](#)

How to request a refund for 2020 from East Lansing.

Your Fellow APAs

Meet Fellow APA member Valerie Geyer, Intake and Outreach Coordinator for the Office of the University Ombudsperson.

Area Representative (AR) Spotlight

Meet APA-Area Representative (AR) Juan Flores-Soto, Student Success Initiatives Coordinator in Student Services.

Calling for Advocates

We want you as an Area Representative! Do you have what it takes?

New Facebook Group for APA Members

Another source for receiving official APA information.

If you know colleagues who are not receiving the APA Newsletter, encourage them to sign up at www.msuapa.org.

A Word from our President

By Martin McDonough, MSU APA President

Wages and Health Care Negotiations

Our current fully funded healthcare benefits are defined in a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between MSU and the Coalition of Labor at MSU that includes APA/MEA. This MOU is set to expire December 31, 2021, so the negotiations for a successor agreement will start soon. The only issues in these negotiations are your healthcare coverage and October raise. A link to a Health Care survey was recently provided to members. It is important for members to complete that survey so the negotiating team can represent them well.

These negotiations are expected to continue into this summer. When there is a tentative agreement, that agreement will be brought to the membership for a ratification vote. An official ratification notification will be sent to all members in good standing. Prior to that vote, there will be information sessions.

The APA community has made great strides in the last year. The most visible gains have been our initial Furlough Letter of Agreement (LOA) and the subsequent extension agreement. By negotiating these agreements, the APA/MEA provided unprecedented job security and the promise of continued health care coverage to APA bargaining unit members who would have otherwise been laid off and would have lost insurance. The APA also turned back the University's strong effort to invoke a permanent salary reduction to all APA positions as well as a permanent 50% reduction in the retirement contribution. Working together is important for everyone's future.

Diversity Equity and Inclusion recognizes Black History Month

By Jeremy Romel, DEI Committee Co-Chair

The importance of Black History Month is something that our group takes seriously and wants to make sure our membership knows we recognize as an important month.

February 1st is the beginning of Black History Month. Black History should not be celebrated, uplifted and learned about, for just one month, we should do so every single day.



*“Do not get lost in a sea of despair.
Be hopeful, be optimistic.
Our struggle is not the struggle
of a day, a week, a month or a
year, it is the struggle of a lifetime.
Never, ever be afraid to make some
noise and get in good trouble,
necessary trouble.”*

- Rep. John Lewis
1940-2020

WHAMMIND
Cage Caribbees.com

APA Election March 2021

This communication serves as notice of the election and candidate nominations. All nominations must be submitted no later than 5:00 p.m. February 19, 2021. This year, nominations are required to be submitted via email to both the Nominations and Elections Committee Chair and Assistant to the Chair identified below. With everything that is happening with COVID, etc., we wanted to put a proactive measure in place should one individual become unavailable.

The 2021 election will include:

APA Executive Board

Five (5) three-year positions on APA Executive Board serving 9/1/2021-8/31/2024

MEA and NEA Representative Assembly Delegate/Region Council Delegate

Four (4) three-year positions serving 9/1/2021-8/31/2024

Individuals must be APA members in good standing to nominate or be nominated for office.

How to nominate someone:

1. Email **both** pitchea@msu.edu and brandts@msu.edu the following:
 - a. **Candidate's name.** Since there are some individuals on campus with the exact same name, it is suggested to also provide the name of the department where the individual works or their email address to avoid confusion.
 - b. **Indicate which position(s) the person is being nominated for.**
 - c. **Complete nomination information must be submitted by 5:00 p.m. February 19, 2021.**

After the close of nominations, properly nominated candidates will be contacted by the Nominations and Elections Committee to confirm their willingness to run and to provide some additional candidate information by March 3.

Each year, the APA Nominations and Elections Committee works diligently to operate an efficient, accurate and transparent election in compliance with the APA Constitution and Bylaws. The 2021 election voting will be held online and is scheduled to run from March 16, 2021– March 25, 2021 5:00p.m. A paper-based ballot option is available by contacting pitchea@msu.edu and brandts@msu.edu. Paper ballots must be received by the closing time of the election.

Election results will be tallied on March 25, 2021 at 5:15pm. Due to COVID-19 in-person restrictions, the results will be tallied via Zoom and any member in good standing is welcome to attend. Information on how to register for the Zoom will be provided at a later date. Election results will be communicated via the APA ListServ.

Further announcements around the election will be provided via the official APA ListServ. Information will also be posted on the APA Website under the *2021 Election* tab. Candidate information will be posted on the website for member viewing before the voting period begins.

The APA Elections Committee includes: Heather Litts, Chair; Sue Brandt Assistant to the Chair; Tonya Jamison, Gerlind Kiupel and Kasey Wilson.

If you have any questions, please contact Heather Litts or Sue Brandt.

Do you need help managing your student loan debt?

By Shannon Alston, MEA UniServ Director

If you need assistance managing your student loan debt, you are lucky that you are a member of the APA/MEA/NEA. As a member, you currently have one year of no cost access to NEA's Student Loan Debt Navigator powered by Savi. Savi helps you quickly find options to manage your student loan debt, makes filling out the forms a snap, and checks forms for common errors when it electronically files your documents. Savi also assists with yearly re-certification on re-payment plans, including loan forgiveness plans. Most members are eligible for student loan forgiveness programs as employees of MSU, but often run into obstacles with the paperwork. Savi can help with that. Read the testimonial below from your APA membership chair.

“Though I’ve been paying on my student loans for almost 9 years, the annual process for Income Driven Repayment application and certifying/recertifying employers current and past can be frustrating. After learning about Savi while attending a virtual conference through NEA, I decided to explore my options; of course, hearing we have the benefit with our membership of fees being waived the first year was certainly an additional motivator. What did I have to lose?

Within a matter of days the plan was in motion. Every two to three days I received an email from a representative with Savi with updates on my case and what the next step would be to proceed. Savi takes the guess work out of this experience. If you’ve been through this yourself in preparing for PSLF (public service loan forgiveness) missing one word or one check box could disqualify your application. I started my plan with Savi on January 8th this year and it was wrapped up by January 21st.

I highly recommend to reach out to Savi to see what they can do for you when managing your student loans.”

-Kandy Slack

You can sign up for Savi at: <https://www.neamb.com/products/nea-student-debt-navigator>

If you need your membership number, please contact your MEA Field Assistant, Heather Traxler at HTraxler@mea.org or your membership chair, Kandy Slack at slackkan@msu.edu

New Committee within APA Union, Diversity Equity, and Inclusion (DEI)

By Darius Bradley, Communications Chair

The MSU APA union has created a new committee in which our members can participate and become engaged. We currently have two Co-Chairs for this group, they are Elbony Hawkins and Jeremy Romel. I have conducted a short interview with them both. The last newsletter contained the interview with Elbony Hawkins, this month's newsletter will include the interview with Jeremy Romel.

If you are interested in being a part of this committee, please reach out to either chair at paytonel@msu.edu or romelj@msu.edu .

Jeremy Romel – Co-Chair

What department do you work in, and can you tell me a little bit about what you do?

I work for (RHS) Residential Hospitality Services. I am a Unit HR coordinator who's focus is on the hiring of students and on-call employees for the MSU Union Building and River Trail Neighborhood. Some of the areas that I hire for are the Residence Hall front desk staff, Facilities team members for resident Hall and the MSU Union, Tour Guides, UAB, and clerical aides for different areas in both the Union and River Trail.

How long have you been at MSU?

I have worked for MSU for 15 years.

Have you been a member of the APA the whole time?

No, I started out as a APSA for 7 years and for the last 8 years I have been a member of the APA union.

What drew you to wanting to be the chair for the new DEI committee?

The opportunity to ensure all our members and community are represented and have a voice.

What direction do you see the committee going in?

I see our group offering resources for our members and allowing members to know there are safe places across campus to connect with people who share similar interest. Some areas our committee is starting to look at are LGBTQ rights, Racial injustices, Religious freedoms, and Working Parents, just to name a few. I want our members to know they are not alone, all are welcome, and to be able to provide resources for those who want and or are searching out for it.

Please share any other comments you may have regarding the new committee.

We are just starting out so if you have ideas, please feel free to share your ideas for the committee to look into.

“Anti-Bias Training: Moving Dr. King's message forward in a 2020 platform.”

By Elbony Hawkins, DEI Committee Co-Chair

Below is a summary for the event:

Kia Hagens (MEA) facilitated an excellent discussion and training session on **January 19, 2021**. The session **“Anti-Bias Training: Moving Dr. King’s message forward in 2020 platform”** was engaging, educational and enlightening. The event was well attended, and the audience consisted of good representation of individuals from all different areas of MSU, faculty, students, and staff. Feedback from those that attended expressed that the event and presenter was fantastic. The session emphasized current issues in the nation such as diversity, difference of social statuses, and economical factors. This training provided the resources and tools to explore the many differences and work to be more inclusive in our local associations, work sites and while working with students and colleagues.

Legislative Chair Update

By Tonya Jamison, Legislative Committee Chair

Dear APA Members,

Happy New Year! I hope all is well with you and your family.

A new election year is here, and I am encouraging all of you to stay involved and educated. For your convenience, I have included a link to access your specific county election website with information on upcoming elections dates.

https://www.michigan.gov/sos/0,4670,7-127-1633_8722-103241--,00.html

It is so important to know your local officials and to be informed about matters that affect you on a daily basis. Furthermore, it is vital to know whether your elected officials advocate for issues/matters that positively impact the State of Michigan.

Lastly, we respect the divide between business and personal matters. Please be aware that no union dues are ever spent on political matters, such as partisan campaigning. If you are interested in learning more about the Michigan Education Association (MEA)'s Political Action Committee (PAC), please visit the link below. Remember, in these uncertain times, engagement is more important than ever.

<https://pac.mymea.org/>

East Lansing City Tax

By Darius Bradley, Communications Committee Chair

Dear Members,

With the recent change in tax laws, we are all subject to paying East Lansing city tax, due to our working in the city. Due to the Covid 19 outbreak this past year, a good number of us have not been required to report to campus, or if you have, it has not been 5 days per week. The university has sent out an email to employees with instructions on how to request a refund from the city of East Lansing.

Please go to the following link to get the instructions and the form that must be filled out by you and your Supervisor.
<http://www.ctlr.msu.edu/copayroll/CityTaxCertification.aspx>

Note: The form must be printed on University Letterhead

Meet Fellow APA Valerie Geyer

By Gerlind Kiupel, Communication Committee Member



What is your job title? *Intake and Outreach Coordinator/Case Administrator II*

How long have you been at MSU? *35 Years, started November 1985*

Have you been a member of the APA the whole time? *No, before taking this position in October of 2013, I was a member of the Clerical Technical Union.*

What department do you work in, and can you tell me a little bit about what you do? *I am the Intake and Outreach Coordinator for the Office of the University Ombudsperson. I am the first level of contact for students, faculty, and staff reaching out for assistance in handling issues involving students on campus, both academic and non-academic. I oversee the office's participation in various campus activities, maintain the business end of the office, gather data and compile reports on our services to the community, maintain our website, etc. and assist the Ombudsperson and Assistant Ombudsperson as needed.*

What brought you to your job at MSU? *I was brought up in a family of MSU Spartans, as both of my parents worked for and retired from MSU as well as other relatives. After attending LCC for accounting I was able to secure a position in the MSU Controller's Office working in Loans Receivable disbursing and collecting on student loans. From there I moved on to working with academic advising of undergraduate and graduate students in both the Department of Biosystems and Agricultural Engineering, and The School of Planning Design and Construction, before moving to the Office of the University Ombudsperson.*

What do you enjoy most about working at MSU? *I enjoy meeting the students. Seeing them arrive as young adults, growing, and moving on as alums or maybe staying around for graduate school and becoming MSU faculty. In all my positions on campus I have been able to help students during their time of need and I have found that most satisfying. Working at MSU keeps me young at heart!*

What do you like to do when you are not at work? *I like spending time at my family cottage in the Upper Peninsula and traveling around the country to visit new places. I enjoy playing the piano, going to concerts, cooking and baking, hosting parties. Oh and shopping! It seems I am even good at online shopping LOL*

In high school I was known for *my musical talents in band and choir and competing in office skills competitions at Davenport University (business school at the time).*

People would be surprised to know I am skilled at *riding ATV's and stacking wood LOL*

I have zero pets.

I like *Christian, Classical, Country, Rock and just about every kind of music other than heavy metal music.*

My favorite area restaurant is *Tomato Brothers in Howell and my favorite dish is Lasagna.*

My favorite junk food is *PIZZA (hot, cold, deep dish or regular) it is all good!*

Area Representative (AR) Spotlight – Juan Flores-Soto

By John Resotko, Communication Committee Member

What is your job title?

Student Success Initiatives Coordinator Level 12

What area of campus (this refers to the area rep info on the APA website, like, East, South, North, etc.) building and department do you work in?

I work in North area of campus, specifically in Student Services building.

How long have you been at MSU?

I have been here since my freshman year 2001 and professionally since 2008 after earning my Master's degree.

How long have you been an Area Representative in training?

I have been an area rep in training since December 2020.

What do you enjoy most about being an AR? What is the most rewarding part of being an AR?

Having benefited from union membership, I look forward to the opportunity to share it's value and assist colleagues across campus with challenges they may encounter. The training that I have participated in so far have been valuable. Conversations with union members have shown me that this union is serious about worker's rights and is not afraid to go above and beyond for us. It is an honor for me to be part of a team that's values diversity, equity, inclusion for all its members regardless of race, gender identity, political affiliation, and other differences in our work environments.

Why is being a member of the Union important to you and what value does it bring?

I did not realize how important the union was until I needed it. Three years ago I left a job on campus for another one that turned out to be completely different than what I was sold on. That's when I realized that because I am a union member, I could go back to my union job without any penalties. Then the pandemic hit. Folks on campus had to take a pay decrease and lose half of their retirement match. I was preparing for the worst but luckily the union came through again and fought for us. These experiences lead to my realization that being a union member is a tremendous deal for workers. The union is there for us when we need them. The union gives me peace of mind and knowing that I have representation available when I need it. The union helps me be brave in my work environment, to ensure that my colleagues and students we serve are treated fairly and with respect.

What words of advice do you have for the new hires at MSU?

My advice for all new hires is to get involved right away and appreciate the union. Participate in events and activities, pay your dues and utilize union services. Don't be like me and wait 10 years to get involved. Remember that without the union we wouldn't have the benefits package that we have or the representation that is fearless and ready to fight for our rights.

What do you love about working at MSU?

I value the opportunity to cross paths with so many students at Michigan State University on their journey to success. I value the opportunity to work on initiatives that aim to close the achievement gaps that exist for students from Marginalized backgrounds. The initiatives I work in provide awareness on diversity, equity, inclusion and social justice issues that exist to provide a warm and welcoming environment for all.

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

When I'm not at work I spend my time with my wife and two children. I also like to run, read, and reflect on social media. Follow me on Instagram Juale1313 :)

The AR's are appointed by the Executive Board and their role is to assist with distributing APA materials and information and to serve as a resource for members. AR's are assigned to a geographic area of campus, so if there is not an AR in your immediate building, you can find one nearby. For a list of AR's go to <http://www.msuapa.org/about/area-representatives-2/>



Calling for all Advocates

Check all the qualities you believe you possess

- You are good at your job & respected by your colleagues
- People ask for your advice
- You have a strong sense of justice & clear principles
- You are responsible
- You are honest
- You are compassionate
- You are a good listener
- You like solving problems as a team
- You put interests of the whole first, ahead of your individual concerns
- You respect group decisions
- You are knowledgeable about MSU and your contract
- You can stay cool under pressure
- You handle stress well

**If you checked 5 or more of the above,
your *APA- Administrative Professional
Association* wants you!**

**For more information on how to get started as an Area
Representative (AR)**

Contact: Pat Hampton at phampton@msu.edu

New Facebook Group for APA Members

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/apacommunications>

Hello APA members,

Your Communications Committee has a new Facebook group that will allow you to have another source to receive official information from your APA Union. This group is now open for you and we are waiting for you to join.

Listed below are a few things regarding the group that will apply to all members.

- You must be a member in good standing to be allowed to join the group
 - If a member drops off our active member list, their access will be revoked
- This group will be informational purposes only; therefore, members will not be able to post to the group, only the administrators will be allowed to post information to the group.
- Some examples of things that may be posted in the group are:
 - Information about upcoming union events, seminars, and activities
 - Information reminders about benefits
 - Important dates related to HR benefits, elections, and calendar dependent events
 - Photos of members at events

Facebook provides metrics on group activity, views, number of members, and other valuable information. These metrics will be used to evaluate the use and effectiveness of this as a communications channel after **6 months** of activity data is collected. In addition, a survey of interest will be sent to request feedback from members. At that time, the Communications Committee will evaluate allowing members to create and submit posts to the group or create a separate group for discussions and questions from members.

Again, the group is now open for members to request membership. Once you request your membership, an administrator will check your membership status with the union. Once that process is completed, we will allow you access to the group.

Our group can be found by searching for **MSU APA Communications Group** in Facebook
