

Your Union

Union of Nontenure-Track Faculty
at Michigan State University
Local 1855 AFT, AFL-CIO



Inside, you'll find information about what's happening at UNTF, and you can always check out back issues of Your Union at untf.org.

Our Fall General Membership Meeting is open to all full members in good standing. It is **October 6th at Beggar's Banquet** on Abbot Road across from campus. Appetizers will be served at 5:30 and the business meeting will start at 6:00 pm. Hope to see you there!

See page 4 for details on this semester's Professional Development Travel Fund.

Penalty on Late Appointments Works

For many years departments were required to either give UNTF members reappointment at least one month prior to the end of their current appointment or issue them a non-renewal notice. This was intended to give fixed term faculty and academic staff some advance notice and ability to plan their careers. It also was supposed to get fixed term faculty and academic staff in MSU's system in a timely manner so they could access their accounts and be paid. However, many departments ignored this requirement or issued only meaningless notices about summer semester appointments.

In the last contract MSU and UNTF added a provision that if reappointment or non-renewal was not made timely the UNTF would notify the University. Departments would be given a 3 day grace period. If reappointment or non-renewal was still not made during the grace period, the department would owe the employee 2 weeks' pay. The first real test of this new provision came at the end of spring term and in July 2015. It worked.

Most new appointments were given at least one month in advance. Most of the departments that missed that deadline, made the appointments or non-renewals during the 3 day grace period. Departments were motivated to avoid the 2 weeks pay penalty so UNTF members got more timely notices.

A few departments had trouble following the process. Twenty-five employees were given the 2 weeks pay penalty. Eight of those were in Teacher Education. There were another 45 that UNTF believed should have gotten the penalty but MSU for a variety of reasons, did not pay. A grievance was filed on their behalf and arbitration has been scheduled for February 2016.

Although we have an outstanding dispute about the penalty for some employees, we are pleased that both UNTF and MSU worked together to make the reappointment and nonrenewal notice process more efficient. We have met several times to discuss clearer contract language and a new interface for departments to follow.



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Overtime but not if teaching

Overtime Law Changes and UNTF

You may have heard about major changes to overtime regulations issued earlier this year by the US Department of Labor. In a nutshell, the new provision dramatically raises the salary ceiling at which an employee becomes ineligible for overtime pay. Salaried workers who make less than \$52,000 per year will now be considered eligible for time-and-a-half pay if they work over 40 hours during a given week.

What does this mean for UNTF members? For most of us, it will mean very little, since the changes retains the exemption for those whose primary duty is teaching. However, some employees with split appointments or partial teaching assignments may become eligible for overtime pay. Our officers and staff will continue to meet with MSU to discuss how these changes will be implemented on campus and what impact that may have on our members.

UNTF Local Reps meet: Small but mighty and looking to grow

Last month, a group of members who identify as Local Representatives met for coffee, pie and discussion. Most unions have a network of “stewards” who represent their departments, talk to new employees about the union, and identify potential issues or contract violations. We are very excited to revamp our Local Reps council during the 2015-2016 academic year! We hope to meet at least once a semester to discuss what’s happening in our departments and problem-solve together. So far, departments with representatives include: WRAC, Romance and Classical Studies, Social Work, English, Teacher Education, and Theatre. Don’t see your department on the list? We need YOU to help keep us strong!

Email us at office@untf.org or call at 517-203-0880.

“Lecturer Only” Delayed – Hopefully Derailed

In a recent meeting with MSU, a member of the Provost’s office told UNTF that the University still has “interest” in pursuing a policy that would require departments to hire all new fixed-term teaching faculty with the title “Lecturer” (rather than Assistant, Associate or Full Professor) but that no progress had been made in advancing the change.

In fall 2014, officials from MSU’s Office of the Provost announced to UNTF that they planned to enact such a policy. The reason for this change, MSU maintained, was that hiring fixed-term Assistant Professors made MSU appear to be lower in the national and conference rankings in faculty pay. UNTF objected and raised a series of legal and philosophical objections. Many UNTF members responded with heart felt and moving objections which were passed on to the University.

UNTF staff did extensive research and was able to prove that this policy would **not** change MSU’s rankings in faculty pay. The reason for our low ranking in the Big Ten (10th out of 11th in the institutions MSU considers its peers) is simply that MSU does not pay its Assistant Professors as much as its peers – both on and off the tenure track. These rankings will not improve unless MSU takes steps to increase pay for its Assistant Professors. When presented with this evidence, MSU told us that they still wished to pursue the policy change. They informed us that the new reason for the change was a wish to have “accurate” job titles.

UNTF continues to advocate for faculty maintaining their current titles and ranks. We are professionals with advanced degrees and advanced training, and we deserve to be treated as such. For now the change is delayed and hopefully it has been derailed. If it resurfaces we will let you know.

Merit Pay Process 2015

For the fifth year in a row, UNTF members will be eligible for higher raises than non-union and tenure-track faculty. Our contract, negotiated last year, guarantees a raise pool of 2.25% this year as opposed to the non-union raise rate of 2%. (The non-union raise pool is actually 1.85% once the “Dean’s withhold” is taken from the top.) In addition, minimum salary levels will increase 2% effective October 1. Read on for more information about how the MSU raise procedure works.

Eligibility: In order to be eligible for a raise at the UNTF rate, an individual must have been employed by MSU *in any capacity* (not necessarily a UNTF-eligible appointment) on January 1, 2015 and must have a UNTF appointment of any percentage on October 1, 2015.

461 members of UNTF out of about 570 are eligible for raise consideration this year. (Most that are not eligible did not work in spring 2015.) 17 individuals with late processed appointments were added after UNTF review.

For the first time this year, **fall-only** employees are eligible for UNTF merit raises. In April UNTF and MSU agreed that employees who teach in a UNTF position every fall semester, but skip spring semesters, should be eligible for merit increases. At least 2 fixed term faculty will be part of the raise process due to this agreement.

The Pool: For each eligible employee in UNTF in a particular college, the university puts 2.25% of their UNTF salary into a pool to be distributed among employees in that college. All money in the pool **MUST** be distributed to UNTF employees.

The 2015 raise pool for UNTF members will be almost ½ million dollars.

While it is possible that a given employee may receive no merit increase, the vast majority of UNTF members receive a raise at or near the pool standard, 2.25%.

UNTF Review:

Each year, UNTF staff conducts a review to make sure the raise process is administered correctly and fairly. First, we request a complete list of employees who are eligible to be considered for a raise. Then, we compare this list with the list of employees working this semester, and notify MSU of any discrepancies. This year, we identified 35 individuals who did not appear on the raise list. Because of our reviews in the past, MSU changed the raise process: department chairs now receive a list of all eligible individuals, and if any employee does NOT receive a UNTF raise, the chair is required to identify a reason. This helps make sure nobody slips through the cracks.

Performance Evaluations: Our contract explicitly ties merit increases to performance evaluations. This helps to limit the power of a chair to give raises only to his or her “favorites” and should increase transparency of the process. Article 18 of our contract also stipulates that employees should be evaluated once per year according to commonly accepted and publicly available standards and criteria. The contract also encourages departments to use multiple sources of information to evaluate employees – in other words, it discourages chairs or committees basing evaluations only on SIRS scores.

Split appointments: Those with split appointments are eligible for two separate raises prorated according to their appointments, one at the UNTF rate (2.25%) and one at the non-union rate (2.0%). For example, if Sally makes \$50,000 and her appointment is 50% teaching and 50% outreach, her UNTF amount is calculated based on 2.25% of \$25,000 and her non-union amount is calculated based on 2.0% of \$25,000. If Sally gets the average raise in each category, her UNTF raise would be \$562.50 and her non-union raise would be \$500.

Timeline:

September 4: UNTF raises should be entered in the system by this date. Changes may still be made after this date but they must be done manually.

October 1: New pay rate goes into effect. Employees will see the raise reflected in their October 30 paycheck but should receive a letter notifying them of their new pay rate some time during the month of October.

Minimum Full-Time Salary Guidelines effective October 1, 2015

Rank	Academic Year	Annual Year
Lecturer	\$29,160	\$35,641
Assistant Instructor	\$29,160	\$35,641
Instructor	\$29,160	\$35,641
Specialist	\$29,160	\$35,641
Assistant Professor	\$38,064	\$46,523
Associate Professor	\$48,281	\$59,010
Professor	\$59,457	\$72,669

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Professional Development Travel Fund Available

The UNTF Executive Board is pleased to announce that we will once again offer the Professional Development Travel Fund for fall 2015. The PDTF provides grants of \$200 to full members who are attending out of town conferences or other trainings for purposes of professional development. This semester the board has allocated a total of \$4000 for the trainings. If the office receives more applications for grants than moneys available, the board will choose recipients via a lottery system. The application can be found on the UNTF website and should be submitted by October 31, 2015.

“Professional development, whether for research or teaching, is so important to many of our members,” says **Deb Carmichael**, Vice President. “Unfortunately, fixed-term faculty in many departments are paid less than tenure-stream peers, and they often fall to the bottom of the heap when travel funds are handed out. It would be great if we all had equal access to resources, but until then, this fund is our way to help fix that problem.”

Changing Faces at UNTF

Big changes are afoot at UNTF.

Our Treasurer **Brian Holcomb** was given a tenure track position at Limestone College in South Carolina.

Our Organizing Committee Chair **Peter Sakura** has accepted a job at Western Washington University and will be moving there with his family this month.

Our Lead Organizer **Elizabeth Pellerito** has accepted a job with the United Academics at the University of Oregon and has headed west with her partner and their cats. We wish them both the best of luck!

As we say goodbye, we also welcome **Ashley Hewlett** as our new Treasurer. Ashley teaches in the English Language Center and is excited to begin her duties on the Executive Board. Welcome, Ashley!