

Your Union

Union of Nontenure- Track Faculty

at Michigan State University

Local 1855 AFT, AFL-CIO

Updated

Union-Made Syllabus

Many of us look for the union label when we go shopping to make sure that we're supporting fair pay and working conditions.

As you finalize your Spring Semester syllabi, why not add the following union tag to your syllabus?

Your Professor is a member of the Union of Nontenure-Track Faculty, AFT-MI/AFL-CIO Local 1855.

Many of our students have little understanding of the academic labor system, but fully support their teachers when they learn more.

Who Counts as Faculty?

Last week, UNTF met with Associate Provost Terry Curry and representatives from MSU Employee Relations to discuss a potential policy requiring new fixed-term faculty members to be appointed as "Lecturers" rather than as Instructors, Assistant Professors, Associate Professors, and Professors. Many of our members gave us extensive feedback via email about the impact such a policy would have on their careers and their departments, and we used that feedback to object strenuously to any such policy's implementation at MSU.

Currently, a "Lecturer" is defined as someone hired for teaching duties who has "professional experience or expertise in the area of instruction and are not required to have an academic degree" at any level. MSU's definition of "faculty" does NOT include those appointed as Lecturers: Lecturers are simply considered "academic staff." **We believe that teachers are faculty and should be treated as such.**

Continued page 2

See pages 3-4 for updated information on UNTF's most recent meeting with MSU about the faculty title change policy.

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Visit us on the web!
www.untf.org
www.facebook.com/UNTF1855

Faculty Health Care Council Update

Our new contract includes representation on the Faculty Health Care Committee, a branch of the Faculty Senate. **This marks UNTF's first formal representation in MSU academic governance.** UNTF's representative, **Jim Dudziak** (Lyman Briggs), attends biweekly meetings to discuss changes to the faculty health care plan with other faculty members and MSU administrators. The goal of the committee is to improve benefits and keep health care costs low for faculty and academic staff at MSU. Many thanks to Jim for his hard work on the committee!

The FHCC has held discussions recently about a new Wellness Center [name?] to be located on or near MSU's campus. This plan has been in development for a number of years and would cover all current faculty and all university retirees. Also included in the plan is a Wellness Initiative, which we discussed at the October General Membership Meeting. Faculty who enroll in this initiative would agree to undergo a biometric screening to detect and track ongoing wellness concerns for individuals, and then attend followup visits as necessary. The committee has considered multiple models for incentivizing this program. **UNTF continues to ask questions and make sure any new programs impact fixed-term faculty in positive ways that do not incur burdensome costs or procedures.** As we find out more information about any new projected plans, we will pass these ideas to you and seek your feedback to make sure fixed-term voices are represented in this process.

Faculty Title Changes, cont.

Continued from page 1, "Who Counts as Faculty?"

We were able to ask a number of questions at last week's Special Conference. The Associate Provost confirmed that the university's intention is to "grandfather" in current employees. He also told us that that the **only** justification for this policy change is to eventually move MSU up the rankings of average pay for Assistant Professors. Because those on fixed-term appointments are paid lower than their tenure-stream peers, the overall average is lower than for those institutions who do not grant ranked titles to fixed-term faculty. We did, of course, suggest the more obvious solution, which is to treat all those who do faculty work as equals, but this suggestion continues to be rejected by the University.

What's next? We know that the Provost presented this policy to the Council of Deans, and that the Provost's office has sent a survey to other CIC/Big Ten institutions about hiring practices and ranking policies. We have submitted information requests about the results of this survey. UNTF has also submitted a demand to bargain over this policy change, and the university has responded that they do not believe they are obligated to bargain with us on this issue. However, we do have a meeting scheduled for **Wednesday, December 10**. At this meeting, members of the Executive Board and members of the 2013-4 Bargaining Team will make a presentation about the real consequences of this policy, based on member feedback and research done by our office staff.

If you would like to be involved in this process, email us at office@untf.org or call the office at 517-203-0880.

UPDATE: Faculty Title Change

On December 10, UNTF and MSU met to discuss the draft policy to hire incoming fixed-term teaching faculty as Lecturers. Below are some of the questions we asked at the meeting and a paraphrase of the Associate Provost's answers.

How would this policy change be implemented?

Currently, MSU allows discretion for assigning titles at the unit level. This policy would remove that discretion and direct the units to only use the Lecturer title for those who are fixed-term and teaching.

Lecturers are currently categorized as Academic Staff rather than as Faculty. What is the difference?

Conceptually, MSU considers them faculty, but in the counting and reporting systems, they are considered academic staff. At the university level, fixed term faculty with three years' experience may vote in matters of academic governance. Departments have their own standards. We are still discussing whether to recategorize Lecturers as Faculty.

What response did you receive from the Council of Deans and the University Committee on Faculty Affairs (UCFA)?

The Deans' Council was generally supportive of implementing the policy on a going forward basis (i.e. for incoming hires only). Some Deans were interested to learn about the concept of working titles (wherein an employee may use a title or ranking for professional purposes but is categorized differently for HR purposes). UCFA presented a more mixed reception, and some individuals wanted to look at alternative titles besides Lecturer.

What is the current status of this policy, and what needs to happen before it is approved?

The university is still exploring issues with implementation. The Provost will make a decision about the policy and will send a directive to unit heads. No formal approval is necessary at any level of governance. The Deans Council and UCFA merely serve as advisory committees to the Provost, who makes a final decision.

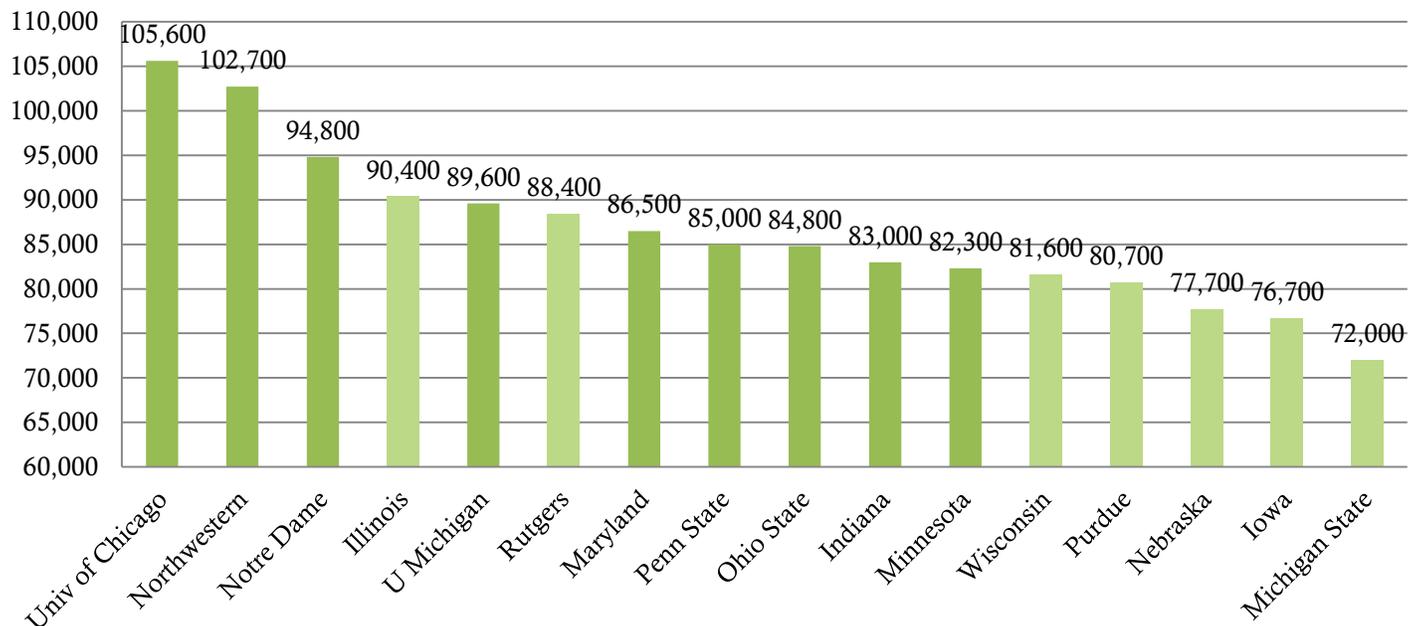
The draft policy indicates a new title, Senior Lecturer. Is there a raise associated with moving from Lecturer to Senior Lecturer?

Not at this point.

Will hiring only Lecturers affect the starting wage of new hires?

There is no intent to use the policy to hire people at lower salaries than they receive now. The Provost's directive would say that individuals who would have been hired as Assistant Professors in the past would start at the same minimum salary that they would have received before.

Average Pay for Assistant Professors



Source: AAUP Faculty Salary Survey, 2013-4

UPDATE: Faculty Title Change

One key area of dispute between MSU and UNTF is in the economic impact of this decision. On page 3, you can see the current faculty rankings for Assistant Professor salaries among CIC institutions, with MSU at the bottom. MSU maintains that eliminating fixed-term ranked faculty would move MSU from last place among these institutions to 6th or 7th place, a significant jump. When UNTF calculated the average salary without fixed-term teaching faculty included, MSU placed **second from the bottom** instead of dead last – hardly enough justification to make such a drastic change. UNTF has requested a copy of MSU’s calculations to determine the reason for this disparity.

To put it in plain language, we believe that MSU is at the bottom of the salary rankings because they simply don’t pay as much as other institutions.

UNTF presented a set of our key objections to the new policy, as described below.

- This change will make recruitment and retention of quality faculty members more difficult and will decrease morale among fixed-term faculty and academic staff.
- Students and parents will express their dissatisfaction as the number of ranked faculty teaching classes decreases.
- The change is being pushed through too quickly and without adequate input from faculty, staff and students. Slowing down and taking other viewpoints into consideration models democratic governance and allows departments time to change their governance structures to incorporate a title that is currently rarely used.
- MSU is currently 2nd in the CIC for the percentage of women hired as Assistant Professors. Because women are hired at a higher rate on the fixed-term track than on the tenure track, MSU’s ranking in gender equity would decrease.
- MSU claims that their hiring practices are in the minority of CIC institutions, because MSU is the only institution that hires fixed-term faculty in ranked positions without criteria. This is misleading on several levels. Only half of UNTF members are in ranked positions, so there are in fact criteria for hiring as Assistant Professor (as opposed to Lecturer, Instructor, etc.). About half of the institutions in the CIC use ranked titles for their fixed-term faculty. Since MSU already expects their fixed-term faculty to teach at a level equivalent to those on the tenure track, it is inaccurate to say that there is no criteria for MSU’s use of ranked titles.

What’s next:

We have requested a copy of MSU’s calculations as to how making this change would impact outside salary surveys. Our staff will continue to analyze this data to identify the discrepancy between the two projections. Both sides have agreed to meet in the near future to discuss the results of this analysis.

UNTF continues to maintain that these changes constitute a mandatory subject of bargaining, while MSU continues to maintain that they do not. Ultimately the Michigan Employment Relations Commission can determine if a change is a mandatory subject of bargaining.

Professional development travel fund update

Congratulations to the 18 members who received funds to attend conferences and trainings during Fall 2014. The Professional Development Travel Fund is available to any UNTF member who has a current teaching appointment and pays full member dues. The PDTF program, now in its second semester, provides grants of \$200 for eligible faculty members. If you missed out this semester, watch your email in January for the Spring 2015 Travel Fund announcement.

Fall 2014 recipients come from 12 different departments. Members will travel to Atlanta, San Antonio, Chicago, Tampa, New York, Minneapolis, Madison, Baltimore, San Juan, Moscow, Montreal, and more.

Recipients will attend a variety of conferences including: Russian Language and Culture in the Modern Educational Space, American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, Medievalisms on the Move, Association for Theatre in Higher Education, American Historical Association, Association of Writers and Writing Programs, National Council on Family Relations, Film and History, American Philosophical Association, National Women's Studies Association, Kenya Scholars and Studies Association, National Association for Research in Science Teaching, and Conference on College Composition and Communication.

In particular, we offer congratulations to **Emily Katz**, who received an award at the American Philosophical Association's Eastern Division conference for best published article by an adjunct professor. Her article, "Aristotle's Critique of Platonist Mathematical Objects: Two Test Cases from *Metaphysics M 2*" can be found in *Apeiron* 46.1.

Rank Discrimination

Age, color, gender, gender identity, disability status, height, marital status, national origin, political persuasion, race, religion, sexual orientation, veteran status, and weight-- these are all protected categories under Michigan State's harassment policy. But should faculty rank be included on this list?

Recently, a fixed-term faculty member filed a complaint that she was being harassed by a tenure-track colleague. She had complained before and had been told that since the tenure-track colleague treated her differently solely on the basis of her fixed-term status, there was no violation of University policy. This time she was told that there was not enough evidence to support the complaint. Her experience shows the need for the University to add faculty rank as a protected category and for UNTF to carefully document any inappropriate behavior in the work place.

If you believe that an individual in your department is harassing you for any reason, whether rank or any other category, please contact your UNTF staff. We will hold a confidential interview with you in a timely fashion, and then help you decide the best course of action in your situation. We do not share this information with anyone at MSU unless and until you direct us to do so.

Lame Duck Report

A number of bills that threaten public education may make their way through the Michigan legislature during the lame duck session. Please call your State Senator and Representative to make sure they are willing to support public workers and public ed! Go to aft.mi.org for more information.

HB4369: This bill would expand the Education Achievement Authority (EAA), which would allow the state to take over more school districts. It has passed the House and is awaiting action in the Senate.

HB5958-5959: Update the Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Act to include sexual orientation but not gender identity as protected categories, paired with a "Religious Freedom Restoration Act" that would weaken the protections in the original bill. UNTF and AFT-MI support civil rights for all, including transgender individuals.

Other attacks on public education include bills on early financial reporting for school districts, educator evaluation, and standardized testing.

Contact your State Representative and Senator today!

UNTF Statement on George Will

On December 9, the following statement was approved by the UNTF Executive Board. Copies were sent to MSU President Lou Anna Simon and the current MSU Trustees.

“The Union of Nontenure-Track Faculty at Michigan State University (AFT-MI Local 1855, AFL-CIO) objects to the University’s decision to invite George Will to speak at the December commencement and to grant him an honorary doctorate. We find Mr. Will’s representation of rape victims and his critique of university efforts to investigate and report sexual assaults deeply troubling.

We applaud MSU’s participation in the nationwide “It’s On Us” program to prevent sexual assault. However, presenting an individual who actively works against the ideals of this program with one of the university’s highest honors undermines the progress our campus community has made in the past year.

UNTF joins other groups on campus and in our community in asking that President Simon rescind Mr. Will’s invitation to speak, and commit an amount equal to his honorarium to the Sexual Assault Program on campus.”

Notice of Non-Reappointment

Did you know that our contract has new language about reappointment procedures? Departments must notify employees of whether or not they will be reappointed at least **30 days before the end of their appointment**. If a department chooses not to reappoint an employee, the notice must explain why.

If the Union notifies the University that an employee has not received timely notice, and the department still does not notify the employee, then they must give **two weeks’ pay** in recompense to the individual.

If you have not yet received notice of reappointment or non-renewal, please contact the office and let us know so we can notify the university.

Happy Holidays!
*From the UNTF Executive Board
and Staff*

