

UNTF

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

New Faculty Welcome Issue

The UNTF would like to welcome those of you who are new to the fixed-term faculty at MSU. This issue of our newsletter explains some features of our contract and some recent issues that we have worked on. This is an especially significant year for our efforts to improve the pay, job security, and working conditions of fixed-term faculty because we will negotiate a new contract in the spring of 2018, and preparations are underway. It is critical that we know what our members are thinking, so we will be seeking your input and participation in a number of ways.

The Union was formed in 2009 as an affiliate of the American Federation of Teachers, AFL-CIO. We are one of nine unions in Michigan representing fixed-term faculty that are affiliated with the AFT. We are, also, the newest of eleven labor unions at MSU and the second to represent faculty; the graduate assistants organized before us.

The UNTF represents about 650 faculty and academic staff, with approximately 350 voting members. It is run by an executive board that is elected by the membership. The Board meets monthly, and these meetings are open to members. There is, also, a general membership meeting once every semester. The date of our fall semester meeting will be announced soon.

It will not surprise you that our membership has a high turnover rate. We estimate that almost 1/3 of fixed-term teaching faculty and academic staff who will teach this fall did not teach here in spring 2017. That turnover should not obscure another important fact about our membership. Many of us have ten and even twenty years as fixed-term faculty at MSU. We have many different career paths among us, so we are not unified by sharing a career path as other professionals are. What we share is a dedication to the professional work that we love in a culture, that compensates us only for doing a "job." We share this dilemma and the struggle to resolve it. The UNTF is part of that struggle at MSU.

This newsletter reviews some of the progress that we have made so far and explains some of the provisions of our contract. There is much work still to do. If you are not yet a member, please consider joining us in this work. A union is only as strong as its membership; the more members we have, the more effective we can be in gaining the pay, job security, and working conditions that can improve our lives and the education of our students.

We wish you a good semester! Please contact us with any questions or concerns.

Rich Manderfield
Acting President, UNTF
Fixed-Term Assistant Professor
Department of Writing, Rhetoric, and American Cultures



In This Issue

Page 2

- *Job Security*
- *Raise*

Page 3

- *Travel Fund*
- *Negotiations*

Page 4

- *Insurances*

Contact us

2990 E. Lake Lansing Rd., Ste. 201-E
East Lansing, MI 48823
(517) 203-0880

office@untf.org
www.untf.org
www.facebook.com/UNTF1855

Job Security

One of the major reasons the UNTF was formed was to fight for job security for fixed term teaching faculty and academic staff. Many departments at MSU were using fixed term employees semester after semester and offering no guarantee of future employment. Some even referred to fixed term employees as “temporaries” regardless of how many semesters they had taught for MSU.

One of the first achievements in job security was the creation of Designation B. This designation was part of the first MSU/UNTF contract in 2010. It ensured a minimum 3-year appointment for the faculty or academic staff.

The 2014 MSU/UNTF contract improved designation B to make the appointments rolling. Each year the appointment end date is extended 1 year. This ensures that the employee never reaches the end of the appointment.

More than 50 UNTF members have achieved this designation. Most of the designation B faculty and academic staff were previously given yearly academic year (AY) appointments. They were hired year after year but never given assurance they would be employed the following year. Now they know their appointment will continue.

There was a large group of fixed term faculty and academic staff who had even less security. They were hired semester to semester. MSU for historical reasons refers to these employees as AN. They could be hired each semester for years but still be “fired” each May and rehired each August. This year the UNTF gained additional job security for many of these employees. MSU agreed that most teaching fixed term faculty and academic staff should not be hired on a semester by semester basis. They agreed that the next appointments for these employees should be AY. So far more than 39 UNTF members have been converted to AY appointments because of this agreement. This makes the members benefit eligible in the summer and prevents the repetitive hiring and firing. More should be converted next semester and next fall.

There is still work to be done. Many long term teaching fixed term faculty and academic staff are still being given only 1 year appointments. But progress has been made.

Raise

The MSU/UNTF Union contract includes merit raises for each of the 4 years of the contract. In October 2017 MSU is required to give non-tenured faculty and academic staff an average 2% merit increase. To be eligible to be considered for the raise you must:

- Have had an appointment, Union or non-Union, on January 1, 2017
- Have an appointment on October 1, 2017

Raises awarded are reflected in the November 2017 paycheck.

MSU will establish a pool for each college based on the current salary of all fixed term merit raise eligible faculty and academic staff. That pool is given to the college to spend as they determine but it must be spent on fixed term faculty.

Before UNTF was formed, MSU used to set up a joint tenure and non-tenure merit pool for raises. This allowed departments to give their tenured faculty merit raises and exclude the non-tenured faculty. One of the benefits of the UNTF is that the merit pools are now separate ensuring that fixed term faculty get their share of the raises.

If you have any doubt, now is a good time to ask your department if they consider you eligible for the 2017 merit increase.

Travel Fund Made Academic Year

Because MSU provides limited travel reimbursement for fixed-term faculty and academic staff, the UNTF Executive Board established a fund in 2014 to help members with these expenses. Since then 57 UNTF members have received financial assistance through this program.

The UNTF Executive Board has set aside \$6,000 in funding for the UNTF Professional Development Travel Fund for the 2017/2018 academic year. This year the program will be run on an academic year basis rather than each semester.

The Rules and Procedures and an Application are available on the UNTF website or by emailing the UNTF office at office@untf.org. An applicant may submit for no more than 2 conferences or workshops which take place during the 2017/2018 academic year (this includes summer of 2018).

Applications will be reviewed on **October 31, 2017**. If the number of valid applications received exceeds the funds that are available, a lottery among valid applicants who did not receive funding in spring 2017 will determine which applicants receive funding. If funds are still available after **October 31, 2017**, valid applications will be approved on a first received first granted basis. No applications will be considered after **May 15, 2018**.

Approved members will receive \$200 per conference or workshop. If you have questions or would like to know your membership status to apply, call or email the UNTF office.

Negotiating Team

The contract between UNTF and MSU expires in May 2018. Negotiations on a new agreement will start in early 2018. A committee of UNTF members will start preparing for those negotiations soon.

The team will negotiate a new agreement with MSU. That agreement will be presented to the general membership for approval. The team will be assisted by AFT Michigan staff.

If you have an interest in serving on the negotiating team, e mail the UNTF office, office@untf.org. No prior experience is required but you must be a full member of UNTF in good standing.



Insurances Provided to UNTF Members

There are several insurances that UNTF members receive as part of their membership.

Accidental Death & Dismemberment

- active working AFT members in good standing have a \$5,000 accidental death and dismemberment insurance policy from the Union Labor Life Insurance company. This plan covers both on-the-job and off-the-job accidents. \$5,000 is paid to a member's beneficiary for accidental loss of life. Full or partial benefits are paid for accidental loss of limbs or senses.
- The UNTF purchases an additional \$25,000 in AD & D insurance for its members.

Occupational Liability – UNTF purchases an occupational liability plan for active members. It has 2 parts:

- Occupational Liability Plan. It provides up to \$1 million of protection for each member for bodily injury and property damage and \$1 million per member for personal injury with a \$3 million annual aggregate.
- Legal Action Trust. The AFT has a special Legal Action Trust that may provide reimbursement for other exposures. The trust has a \$1 million per occurrence limit and an annual aggregate limit of \$1 million.