

As the academic year comes to an end I decided to share some of my thoughts about bargaining and our treatment by the Board of Higher Education. Time marches on. We have had twenty bargaining sessions with the Board of Higher Education (BHE) to negotiate a new contract. As of May 1st, we will have been without a contract for 306 days, and it will be 579 days since our last pay increase. In the past few years we have been forced to accept higher deductibles for our health insurance, higher contributions for our health insurance, and mandatory changes to many of our GIC insurance plans. In addition, the Governor has filed legislation to take away our already limited collective bargaining rights, and proposed changes to diminish our pension benefits. We are currently in mediation for a one-year extension (for academic year ending June 30, 2004). If this step does not work we hope the mediator will recommend fact-finding in an effort to get a fair and equitable contract proposal. We have also given the employer our three-year proposal as well. To date the only economic proposal, delivered verbally from the Board of Higher Education, is zero. Over the years this unit has been forced to take many zeros, and this is the root cause that our salaries have fallen way behind our peers. You never make-up zeros! It is important to the morale of the faculty and librarians that the "pay gap" between the Massachusetts State Colleges and our peers not increase. In fact, the gap must be reduced.

This past Wednesday I spoke at the meeting of the Board of Trustees at Salem State. I presented some of our concerns to them and they voted unanimously to support us. All Trustees present felt that we are being treated unfairly, that this has happened in the past, and it must end.

They unanimously passed the following motion:

On motion duly made and seconded, it was

VOTED:

That the Board of Trustees of Salem State College respectfully requests that the Board of Higher Education deal with the MSCA negotiations in a fair, expeditious and good faith manner and that the Chair person of the Salem State College Board of Trustees forward a letter asking for a one-year extension of the MSCA Contract.

On behalf of the membership I thanked the Trustees for their support and asked that they advocate, when and where appropriate, that the atmosphere at the bargaining table improve as we move forward to a fair and equitable three-year contract.

I would also like to thank those Salem members who traveled to Fitchburg State College to hold signs and attend the BHE meeting, Patricia Markunas, the

statewide President, gave an outstanding speech that was well received by the many unit members in attendance. Her remarks are posted on mscaunion.org.

Finally, attached to this newsletter is a copy of the Salem State Operating Budget.

Chapter Meeting

The year-end Chapter Meeting will be held on Wednesday, May 5th at 12:00 p.m., Veteran's Hall, Ellison Center. The officers and the Executive Committee members will take office at this meeting. The 2004-2005 MSCA/Salem Chapter budget will be presented for approval.

Lunch will be served. Please come and join your colleagues for an end of academic year gathering.

Executive Committee Meeting

The first 2004-2006 Executive Committee Meeting will take place immediately following the Salem Chapter Meeting.

Professional Development Money

If you have been awarded professional development money, either round one or round two, please be aware the deadline for spending the money is approaching. With the exception of June 2004 approved travel, all reimbursement requests must be submitted to the Office of Academic Affairs no later than May 31, 2004.

Changes to Health Insurance

To those unit members who must change health insurance providers: please fill out the paperwork at the computer lab in the Ellison Center. As of Friday, there were 120 unit members who are required to but have not as yet changed insurance programs. If you wait until after classes end, there could be long lines. May 14th is the deadline for signing up. You will also have a chance to sign up or increase your life insurance without having to take a medical exam. The process does not take long – ten or fifteen minutes, and it doesn't hurt – it's not like going to the dentist.

Did You Know...

that one of the most important sections of our collective bargaining agreement is Article V: Academic Freedom and Responsibility. Academic freedom is expressed as the "right of scholars in institutions of higher education freely to study, discuss, investigate, teach, exhibit, perform, and publish." In addition, teachers are entitled to "...full freedom in the classroom in discussing his/her subject, most specifically in the selection of his/her classroom materials including selection of texts."

Of course, this freedom carries certain responsibilities. Faculty members are obliged to "preserve intellectual honesty" in their teaching and research as well as respect the "free inquiry of his/her associates." Moreover, "As a person of learning, affiliated with an education institution, he/she should remember that the public may judge his/her profession and his/her institution by his/her utterances." Thus, "he/she should at all times be accurate, should exercise appropriate restraint, should show respect for the opinions of others, and should make every effort to indicate when he/she is not an institutional spokesman."

Article V is brief but meaningful. It ends with these words: Institutions of higher education are committed to the search for truth and knowledge and to contribute to the solution of problems and controversies."

Maggie Vaughan
Grievance Officer