

President's Message—Jim Gubbins

Like the fall, the beginning of the spring semester has been a very busy time for the local MSCA.

The union called three special meetings. In November Graduate Coordinators met to work on issues surrounding graduate programs. In January around 50 chapter members came together to discuss issues and possible actions related to ongoing problems in the School of Continuing and Professional Studies and the Graduate School. In November a large contingent of the membership convened to discuss proposals for the new contract. Suggestions were made regarding such matters as maternity/paternity leave, civic engagement work, campus safety, employment of lab assists, adjuncts, and clinical part-timers, equity in advising loads, SHCI credit for teaching labs, and the diversity of new hires.

Last year's parking grievance went to mediation in December. Local chapter leadership, statewide leadership, an MTA attorney, an attorney representing the Board of Higher Education, and John Keenan met. The result was a Settlement Agreement that calls for the establishment of a Task Force. The first meeting is set for February 2, which will bring together union leadership with representatives of the administration. A call will go out to the membership requesting volunteers for the Task Force. In brief, its charge is to assess current parking and pedestrian issues, review restricted parking spots, review parking and pedestrian aspects of the North Precinct Study, and make recommendations to optimize parking for all categories of employees. At this point, it appears that more spots will open up on North Campus sooner and more later, however the details need to be worked out.

Whenever possible, we need to make our voices are heard in the presidential search and in the strategic planning process. Note that the union has supported the push for divestment from fossil fuels and the Black Lives Matter teach-in.

The Holiday Party in December was fun and well attended and we hope the same will be true of the April 25 Chapter Luncheon.

Grievance Officer's Message— Anne-Marie Hakstian

Since the start of the spring semester, the grievance activity relates to personnel actions. Three grievances have been filed and more are being prepared for filing this week. Here are some updates regarding last semester's grievances:

1. In response to the chapter's grievance about decisions made outside the governance process, Provost Silva challenged our characterization of the University's actions as "the removal of programs of study from the DGCE's offerings." Instead, he described them as "decisions regarding course scheduling" which fall within the purview of Academic Affairs. As such, he found no violation of the contract. Nevertheless, Dr. Silva indicated that he would "direct the Dean of Continuing and Professional Studies to prepare a roster of all those majors and concentrations that can be completed exclusively through matriculation in CE." His finding also describes a more comprehensive matrix that will be shared with the All University Committee showing "which Salem State undergraduate majors and concentrations can be pursued by those enrolled as either day, evening, or "combination" (day + evening) students." We have not yet received this information.

2. When Provost Silva assigned Neal DeChillo to conduct evaluations for faculty in the College of Health and Human Services during AY 2016-17, Dr. DeChillo was serving as the Dean of that college. The collective bargaining agreement provides that evaluations are to be conducted by the Dean of the College. On Friday, January 27th, the chapter presented its argument that Dr. Corcoran, interim Dean of the College of Health and Human Services, should be conducting the evaluations to the MSCA's statewide Grievance Committee. The committee voted to move the grievance forward to mediation (step 3).

3. Provost Silva agreed to retract his October 20th memo regarding the scheduling of courses and assignment of instructors for Summer I. The chapter's grievance was placed in abeyance in anticipation of an official retraction of the memo which has not been received at this time.

4. Please refer to Jim Gubbins' description of the agreement that was entered into between the MSCA and Salem State University resolving the chapter's grievance filed during AY 2016-17.

Grievance process:

Faculty members who believe a violation of the collective bargaining agreement has occurred and wish to discuss a potential grievance should contact Anne-Marie Hakstian for assistance with initiating the process. The first step involves an informal hearing with the Provost. At step 2, the grievant meets with President Meservey. Grievance forms must be submitted within 15 calendar days from the date of an alleged breach of the collective bargaining agreement (or from the date the grievant learned of the breach).

Graduate Program Coordinators: Duties, Compensation, and Support – Andrew Darien

In 2010, Salem State College became Salem State University, marking its commitment to building a comprehensive institution distinguished by its graduate programs. While most of our graduate programs predated university status, the understanding was that the new designation signified a pledge to support and enhance existing programs and certificates while developing new ones. The unfortunate reality is that the absence of a full-time and permanent Dean of Graduate Studies committed to sustaining and growing these programs has left Graduate Coordinators operating in a murky world of responsibilities and compensation. In numerous cases faculty have coordinated programs with no advance notice of the specific duties or compensation. The vast majority of coordinators feel undercompensated for their leadership of these programs.

Members of the Executive Committee met with coordinators in November to identify their concerns and have had subsequent meetings to express them to Dean Churchill and Provost Silva. Dean Churchill has initiated a process to be more transparent about release time, provide advance notice of contracts, and streamline the list of coordinator duties.

Some of the items discussed at that meeting include:

1. Instituting an earlier timeline for decisions about coordinator appointments (APRs and stipend positions).
2. Developing with coordinators a template job description that includes only essential tasks (additional tasks added to contracts/APRs varying by program needs).
3. Ensuring that faculty selected to complete managerial tasks (such as course scheduling, assigning student advisees, evaluating faculty, and conducting classroom evaluations) are completed by DGCE chairs. These tasks should not be part of APRs (the day contract limits managerial activities to chairs). The DGCE program chair could be the coordinator (who might receive both an APR for coordinator duties and a stipend for DGCE chair duties...or straight pay for both). Tenure-track program coordinators should not be hired as DGCE chairs or complete chair duties (this places them in a vulnerable position).
4. Achieve equitable compensation for coordinators.
5. Creating a committee with faculty representation that conducts a search for a full time and permanent Dean of Graduate Studies

The Executive Committee recommends that coordinators refrain from agreeing to any commitment until the responsibilities and compensation are clearly identified in a written contract. The goal is to have these contracts in place well in advance of the fall semester so that departments, programs, students, and chairs can plan accordingly.

In early December, Executive Committee followed up with a letter of concern to President Meservey about the lack of a permanent, full-time dean of the Graduate School, hired through governance, who can provide leadership and advocacy for the interests of the Graduate School and its students.

Around the State— Tiffany Chenault

Worcester: The chapter is trying to resolve the issue of librarians being deemed essential employees during weather and emergency closings. The chapter is seeking assistance from academic affairs staff for governance committees, as is the case on most MSCA campuses. There is currently no clear policy distinguishing between a concentration and a minor, and this matter will go through governance.

Westfield: A grievance has been filed over a member of the university Board of Trustees being placed on the provost search committee. The president removed the trustee from the committee and the grievance was dropped. After the presidential election, there was an increase in hate crimes on campus, and many faculty feel the university administration is not handling the situation well.

Mass Maritime: The potential removal of tenure of a faculty member was resolved. Eight people signed up for the early retirement incentive. In response to a report that students are seeking courses with “easy professors”, the MMA president has removed professors’ names from the schedule of course offerings during pre-registration.

MassArt: A group of students has asked the administration to restrict the instruction of courses that relate to issues regarding race, diversity & ethnicity to ethnically diverse faculty members. However, faculty feel that to do this would violate their academic freedom.

MCLA: The college administration has been criticized for its leadership to the campus community after the presidential election.

Framingham: The campus is proceeding with work on the strategic plan. The campus MSCA Director stated that there is a need to support faculty doing public, intellectual work. Institutions need to formulate a response pattern to support faculty, especially in this post-election climate. In addition, the union needs to take a stand regarding faculty targeting on sites such as ProfessorWatchlist.org.

Fitchburg: There is concern about a proposal to out-source several online degree programs to a company called *Academic Partnerships*. The statewide MSCA Executive Committee voted to send a statement of opposition to the proposal to the FSU leadership.

Bridgewater: The chapter president was recently asked for guidance on how to terminate faculty members. The chapter president refused to respond.

Upcoming Dates

November 21, 11:00am-12:30pm (MH241):
Graduate Coordinator Duties & Comp. Forum

November 28, 11:00am-1:00pm (Vets Hall):
Faculty Forum regarding Bargaining

December 5, 8:00am-9:30am (SB202-B)
Executive Committee Meeting

December 8, 4:00pm-7:00pm (Hawthorne Hotel):
Chapter Holiday Party

Executive Committee Members

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