MSCA Newsletter                  Patricia V. Markunas, editor                  NEA/MTA/MSCA                  September 2009

Contract and Legislative Updates

By C.J. O’Donnell, MSCA president

Day Contract Sent to Governor Patrick

Commissioner Richard Freeland signed and transmitted to the governor on July 22 the funding request for the day contract. Gov. Patrick has said repeatedly that he would submit to the legislature funding for contracts settled within the parameters of his administration. The economic provisions of the MSCA day contract fall within those parameters.

The law provides that the governor has 45 days to submit the funding request, which would be Sept. 8. However, governors typically hold agreements and bundle requests rather than submitting them separately. Gov. Patrick has submitted the UMass contracts (the costings of which were finished prior to ours); funding requests for the APA and AFSCME agreements had not yet been submitted to the governor at press time. We will stay in touch with the governor’s office to ensure that he submits our funding request.

Once the request has been submitted we will be working with legislative leadership to get the request funded. Given the continued faltering of the economy, this will be a more difficult task than in the past and there will likely be a time when we will call upon you for your assistance.

MTA Consultant Donna Sirutis, day bargaining chair Dan Shartin and I have worked this summer to proofread the 2009-2012 agreement. We hope to send a final document to the printers early in September so that paper copies can be shipped to the campuses early this semester.

DGCE Contract Negotiations Stall

The DGCE team held six negotiating sessions this summer before talks stalled on Aug. 24. The unresolved issues are the graduate stipend (currently 107%), work-load equivalencies and DGCE stipends. The presidents’ current offer of 7% over four years is 1.5% less than any other Massachusetts public employee union that does not have automatic step increases has accepted. The team will not offer for ratification an agreement that contains economic provisions less than what every other union has been able to achieve this year.

MTA consultant Beth Boyer (filling in for Bob Whalen), bargaining chair Sue Dargan and the rest of the team worked all summer to reach an agreement by August 31, the expiration date for the current agreement, but that goal was not possible given the presidents’ offer.

MSCA is pursuing three consolidated grievances alleging procedural violations in the post-tenure review process. A major component of those grievances relates to misuse and inconsistent use of SIR-II student evaluation forms.

These issues are not unique to PTR but are pertinent for faculty members undergoing personnel action, members of contractual evaluation committees and department chairs, and have been conveyed to representatives of management.

The Student Instructional Report II (SIR-II), published by the Educational Testing Service, was adopted in July 2000 to conduct student evaluations of class room and laboratory teaching. The ETS website www.ets.org contains substantive information about appropriate use of SIR-II and its results.

John A. Centra, Ph.D., the major researcher in the development of SIR-II, has published an “issues paper” on the ETS website that forms the basis for this article. Also important is the explanation page (page 4 of “Interpreting SIR-II”) of the reports that faculty members receive with SIR-II results for their classes.

 MSCA supports S1173, a bill to allow members in the optional retirement program (ORP) to switch back to or join the state employee retirement system.

Several bills of interest will have hearings this fall. We will keep you updated via email notices and postings on the MSCA website mscaunion.org.

Legislative Items

Several bills of interest will have hearings this fall. We will keep you updated via email notices and postings on the MSCA website mscaunion.org.

MSCA supports H1170, a bill to repeal the statute requiring seven years of state college service prior to sabbatical eligibility. The 2009-2012 agreement has a provision to allow sabbaticals after six years, which cannot take effect until repeal or amendment of the statute. This change would line up state college sabbaticals with the rest of the academic world. This bill will be heard before the joint higher education committee on Sept. 29.

MSCA supports S1173, a bill to allow members in the optional retirement program (ORP) to switch back to or join the state employee retirement system. Many ORP participants now believe that the ORP, as currently structured, has been a huge failure and a detriment to their financial future in retirement. This bill will be heard before the joint public services committee on Sept. 21.

Reviewers Cautioned on Use of SIR-II Student Evaluation Results

By Patricia V. Markunas, editor

There are three purposes of SIR-II.

1) Identify areas of strength and/or areas for improvement; 2) provide information on new teaching methods or techniques used in class; and 3) provide feedback from students about their courses. These are pedagogical, not summative, purposes.

The explanation page cites three purposes for which SIR-II was designed: 1) identify areas of strength and/or areas for improvement; 2) provide information on new teaching methods or techniques used in class; and 3) provide feedback from students about their courses. That is, Item 1-40 (“Overall Evaluation”) is more appropriately used for personnel decisions and remaining items are to be used more for the individual instructor’s benefit.

SIR-II results are not intended to be the sole determinant of teaching effectiveness. Course materials, classroom observations by one’s professional peers and self-evaluations are equally important components.

Continued on page 2
measures of central tendency may provide a more complete picture of SIR-II responses than using just the mean score.

Measuring “Teaching Effectiveness”

The original SIR used qualitative terms (“excellent,” “good,” “neutral,” “weak,” “poor”), but those terms were dropped in favor of the current five-point scale on “effectiveness.” Personnel decisions for faculty members must include consideration of “teaching effectiveness.” Remarkably that SIR-II results indicate a faculty member’s teaching effectiveness to be “excellent,” “very good,” “good,” “average,” “moderate,” “low” and the like, terms rejected by the SIR-II designers themselves, is a misuse and misrepresentation of SIR-II results.

The mid-point (3) on SIR-II scales is “moderately effective,” which may be low enough to be below the 10th percentile on some comparative means. This does not mean that the faculty member’s teaching is ineffective; it means that the faculty member’s teaching is “moderately effective.” Persons involved in personnel decisions must understand this point to use SIR-II results appropriately.

The “Micrometer Fallacy”

Dr. Centra cautions against the “micrometer fallacy,” or making decisions based on small differences. He explains what every student in elementary statistics understands: differences cannot be deemed as significant, meaningful or consistent without consideration of the standard error (equal to the standard deviation) for the sample of scores in question. Ratings that fall within the standard error on either side of the comparative mean are properly deemed to be “no difference.”

Despite this caution, evaluators frequently magnify minute differences between a faculty member’s SIR-II ratings and comparative means without any consideration of the standard error. The mid-point (3) on SIR-II scales is “moderately effective,” which may be low enough to be below the 10th percentile on some comparative means. This does not mean that the faculty member’s teaching is ineffective; it means that the faculty member’s teaching is “moderately effective.” Persons involved in personnel decisions must understand this point to use SIR-II results appropriately.

Conclusion

Judgments about the meaningfulness of SIR-II results must not go beyond the parameters within which the SIR-II instrument was developed or misinterpret the statistics generated by it. Faculty involved in personnel actions should be vigilant in reading interpretations attributed to their teaching effectiveness based on SIR-II reports and use the opportunity provided in the agreement to respond to misuses and/or misinterpretation by evaluators.
**Table 1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CAMPUS</th>
<th>Overall r</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>p</th>
<th>Men r</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>p</th>
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<td>146</td>
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<td>-0.344</td>
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<td>FRAM</td>
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<tr>
<td>MCLA</td>
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<td>-0.413</td>
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<tr>
<td>WORC</td>
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<td>TOTAL</td>
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<td>853</td>
<td>&lt; .05</td>
<td>-0.219</td>
<td>470</td>
<td>&lt; .05</td>
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**Table 2**

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<th>Percentage of Men</th>
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**Sex**

Sex was significantly related to PTR ratings at Bridgewater ($\chi^2 = 8.04$, Salem ($\chi^2 = 12.98$) and Worcester ($\chi^2 = 9.13$). Sex was also significantly related to PTR ratings over all nine campuses combined.

**Age**

Table 1 shows the significant correlations (r) between the final percentage pay increase awarded through the PTR process and the age of the members evaluated, by campus, by sex and over all nine campuses. Age was significantly negatively correlated with final percentage pay increase over all nine campuses combined. This means that older faculty members and librarians received smaller percentage pay increases than did younger faculty members and librarians. This relationship was significant at five individual campuses (Bridgewater, Framingham, Mass Art, MCLA and Worcester).

The difference between the sexes is important to note. Age was negatively correlated with final percentage pay increase for men but not for women. This relationship was significant at two campuses (Bridgewater and Mass Art).

It is worth noting that most non-significant correlations were negative as well. Of the 27 correlations calculated, 25 were negative, demonstrating the negative relationship of age to final percentage pay increase.

**Academic Discipline**

Table 2 presents the percentage of non-exemplary ratings for general academic disciplines by campus. The percentage of men in each general academic discipline is included in the final column.

Faculty in natural sciences/mathematics/computer science/industrial technology/engineering received significantly more non-exemplary ratings than members in other disciplines ($\chi^2 = 4.29$). When faculty in English and communications departments were combined with all other humanities, the resulting group received significantly fewer non-exemplary ratings than members in other disciplines ($\chi^2 = 5.69$). These two general academic disciplines, represented at nearly all nine campuses, have the largest percentage of men.

Faculty in humanities (other than English and communications), art history and interdisciplinary studies departments received significantly fewer non-exemplary ratings than members in other disciplines ($\chi^2 = 13.10$). Faculty in business and economics received significantly more non-exemplary ratings than members in other disciplines ($\chi^2 = 4.29$). When faculty in English and communications departments were combined with all other humanities, the resulting group received significantly fewer non-exemplary ratings than members in other disciplines ($\chi^2 = 5.69$). The percentage of men in this combined humanities discipline is 53%.

No other comparisons were statistically significant.
IN THE ASSOCIATION

Two Views of NEA’s Representative Assembly

By Seasoned Delegate Ted Welsh

Greetings from the floor of our National Education Association’s annual Representative Assembly! As we wrap up our business, I thought I would share the results of the world’s largest democratically elected deliberative body.

Many decisions centered around pre-K education — too many to list here, but I would be happy to share with you if you drop me a line. We enacted several mundane but wise self-oversight measures and elected some national representatives and officers.

We agreed to work with President Obama and Education Secretary Duncan on reform issues, especially those surrounding reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (aka No Child Left Behind). We will work toward full and accurate coverage in next year’s federal census. We will work to balance military recruiters’ access to high schools with the access given to other employers and colleges.

On health care, we will study indoor air quality, H1N1 and vaccination programs. We will work toward honest health care debate and continue efforts to repeal GPO/WEP offsets (reduction of Social Security benefits) through visibility and advocacy, short of withholding further PAC campaign contributions until repeal is successful.

We took several steps to further union solidarity. We oppose the anti-union, unilateral bargaining in East Providence. We stand with the unionized workers at Northwest Airlines as they fight to survive the merger with non-unionized Delta. (For my part, I slapped a whole sheet of “Union Yes” stickers on Delta passengers’ suitcases.) We will publish a report on international academic freedom. We voted to support our colleagues in Iran following their election turmoil (though not our colleagues in Honduras following the coup there — I’m still steamed about that vote). We will fight to defend ethnic studies in states like Arizona where they are under legislative attack.

I am most proud of the forceful, unequivocal, yet sensitive support our association gave to same-sex marriage (or fully equivalent unions). Thanks to thoughtfully crafted words and tireless lobbying, even the Georgia state delegation got on board and helped resoundingly pass a measure for us to work on state and federal levels toward marriage equality for all. Having participated in close and contentious debates on gay rights in previous years, I had tears in my eyes being part of that massive ocean of “Aye!” The NEA stands proudly and solidly on the side of love.

We showed our love for Robert Chanin, honoring him as he concludes 41 years of service to NEA as our fiery legal counsel. Having represented us as far back as 1962, Bob is retiring after almost a half-century of fighting for the collective bargaining rights of educators. We will miss you, Bob.

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By First-time Delegate Nancy George

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