

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%), workload 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 (filing 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.

Reviewers Cautioned on Use of SIR-II Student Evaluation Results

By Patricia V. Markunas, editor

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 classroom and laboratory teaching. The ETS website <www.ets.org> contains substantial 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.



C.J. O'Donnell presides at the 2009 MSCA Delegate Assembly at Worcester State.

Pat Markunas

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.

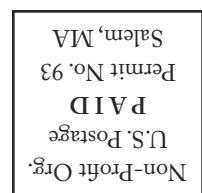
Purposes of SIR-II

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. These are pedagogical, not summative, purposes.

The ETS website lists other purposes but recommends that college administrators "rely more on global ratings than other items for personnel decisions." That is, Item I-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.

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Reviewers Cautioned on Use of SIR-II Student Evaluation Results *continued from page 1*

Comparison Group of Four-year Institutions

SIR-II reports for individual faculty members include a comparison of their results to average results (comparative means) obtained from faculty members at other four-year institutions. The explanation page in the most recent SIR-II reports indicates that the comparative means cited in the reports are based on "19 four-year institutions," whose identities are not published.

According to the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, there are 2,474 four-year institutions in the United States. SIR-II comparative means are based on 19 of those institutions, a sample of only 0.77%. ETS acknowledges on the report's explanation page, "... the selected comparison group is not necessarily the most appropriate comparison group for a particular class or institution."

MSCA has maintained that the SIR-II comparison group is misrepresented in personnel decisions whenever it is described as "peers," "peer institutions," "national peers," "comparable institutions," "comparable group of institutions," "similar institutions," "like institutions" and "comparable four-year institutions." The SIR-II comparison group is composed of 19 four-year institutions that may be substantially different from the nine state colleges in Massachusetts.

Comparative versus Normative Means

Dr. Centra's issues paper on the ETS website includes this important statement: "Because the sample of institutions does not proportionally represent all of the various types of colleges and universities in the country, the data represent comparative rather than normative information."

Comparative does not mean comparable. SIR-II comparative means are not norms and must not be used as such. MSCA has asserted that the following descriptors in personnel decisions ("norms," "national norms," "national comparative means," "comparative national means," "national means," "top 10% nationally," "top 10% of our national peers" and "top quartile of national peers") represent a misuse of SIR-II results for individual faculty members.

Measures of Central Tendency

SIR-II results use the arithmetic mean of student responses to its items based on a Likert scale (e.g., strongly disagree to strongly agree) that generates subjective evaluations of classroom teaching effectiveness on the part of students.

Scores that arise from such a scale constitute at best an ordinal scale and thus, mean scores may not be appropriate for reporting the central tendency for responses to individual items. The median score (the middle-most response) or the modal score (the most frequently selected response) may be better indicators of central tendency for SIR-II responses.

One junior faculty member whom I know re-analyzes her SIR-II results to include both median and modal scores for all SIR-II items when she prepares her annual evaluation portfolios. Inclusion of these three 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." Remarking 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 half 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.

Statements such as "at or a little below [or above] the comparative means," "significantly above the comparative means," "below [or above] the comparative means," "consistently below [or above] the comparative means," "very close to the mean," "hover around the mean," "consistently exceeded the means," "ranked well below [or above] the comparative means," "at the means, with a few exceptions slightly below the mean," "consistently near the comparative means," "well beyond the comparative means," etc. are a misuse and misrepresentation of SIR-II results.

Most troubling are interpretations that differences are "significantly below [or above] the comparative means" or that results are in the "bottom [or top] quartile" of comparative means. It is impossible to make these statistical determinations without using the detailed statistical information provided on the ETS website.

Individuals involved in personnel actions should take into account other cautions and qualifiers on the ETS website and the explanation page attached to reports to faculty members. For example, small classes and low responses rates are less reliable and less likely to fall in the 90th percentile or the 10th percentile when compared to the comparative means for any given item.

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.

Did you know?...

Appendix A (the A-1 form for faculty and the A-2 form for librarians found at the end of the collective bargaining agreement) must accompany your portfolio when you are a candidate for reappointment, promotion or tenure. This form, due on September 15th, requires careful consideration. What you select under the three categories listed will be the bases of your evaluation by your chair, your peer evaluation committee and the academic vice president.

Of the three, Category I (Continuing Scholarship) is often the category that causes the most difficulty. It is this category that is assessed according to "quality, significance and relevance." You are strongly encouraged to check off only one of the options available even though you may have engaged in activities that span several options.

For example, faculty who have been active in professional organizations (the second option) and have manuscripts that demonstrate published or unpublished work (the third option) are advised to check off contributions to the content of the discipline (the first option). This option is inclusive and thus allows evaluation for a range of activities under Category I without putting your personnel action in jeopardy. Documentation included in the portfolio to demonstrate your work under this category will be the foundation of the evaluation.

If you would like to have someone look over your portfolio prior to submitting it, don't hesitate to call your MSCA chapter office. September 15th is just around the corner.

—Margaret Vaughan, Chair
MSCA Grievance Committee



Margaret Vaughan

MSCA Perspective

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PTR Ratings Related to Academic Discipline, Sex and Age

By C. J. Donnell, MSCA president, and Patricia V. Markunas, editor

Presented here are the results of analyses of post-tenure review ratings as related to academic discipline, sex and age. Appreciation is given to Chris Melin for her work on the research analysis for this article.

Age, sex and general academic discipline are inter-related and thus, drawing distinct conclusions about the "causes" of PTR ratings is problematic. However, ratings differed significantly among several groups. Further research is planned and strategies to deal with these differences are being considered.

In all, 855 faculty members and librarians who held tenure on September 1, 2004 were evaluated under PTR, alternative one. Seventy-four (74) members tenured as of that date either opted for alternative two (no pay increases) or left the unit prior to their PTR evaluation. We did not research the demographics of this latter group.

Tables showing four-year campus expenditures for post-tenure review have been posted on the MSCA website <www.mscaunion.org>. A comprehensive report on post-tenure review was published in the summer issue of the *MSCA Perspective*, available upon request to the editor (please see the masthead on page 2) and posted on MSCA's website. The October 2008 issue of the *MSCA Perspective* (similarly available) included a description of the 10 general academic disciplines used in this article.

The analyses on sex and on general academic discipline compared "exemplary" to "non-exemplary" ratings ("meritorious" plus "not acceptable") using a 2 x 2 Chi-square analysis (with one degree of freedom and probability less than 0.05) in all cases.

The age of each person reviewed was determined from the MSCA salary database and fixed as if the birth date were Jan. 1 of the year that the PTR rating was initially issued. The analyses used the percentage of the final pay increase (6, 3 or 0) as correlated with age.

The Westfield administration granted exemplary ratings to 100% of PTR candidates. Analyses were not performed for this campus, but Westfield's results were included in all totals.

Men comprised 55% (472) of the group evaluated under alternative one and were on average 58.9 years of age. Women comprised 45% (383) and were on average 56.5 years of age. Overall, the average age of the group was 57.8 years.

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.

In all cases, women received significantly more exemplary ratings than men, who received significantly more non-exemplary ratings.

At Mass Art, MCLA and Framingham, women received proportionately more exemplary ratings than men; this difference was not statistically significant. At the three remaining colleges (Fitchburg, Mass Maritime and Westfield), the proportion of men and women receiving exemplary ratings was equal.

These results were unexpected and ironic. During previous negotiations, MSCA opposed management's merit pay proposals in part on the basis of nationally published research that found male faculty members to be favored over female faculty members in merit pay schemes.

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

Table 1
Significant Linear Correlations between Age and Final Percentage Pay Raise
(all four years: 855 total)

CAMPUS	Overall r	df	p	Men r	df	p
BRI	-0.275	146	$p < .01$	-0.344	78	$p < .01$
FRAM	-0.253	85	$p < .02$			
MCA	-0.365	56	$p < .01$	-0.413	26	$p < .05$
MCLA	-0.284	54	$p < .05$			
WORC	-0.264	84	$p < .02$			
TOTAL	-0.192	853	$p < .05$	-0.219	470	$p < .05$

Table 2
Percentages of Non-exemplary PTR Ratings by Discipline and Campus
(all four years: 855 total)

General Academic Discipline	Percentage of Non-exemplary Ratings										Percentage of Men
	BRI	FIT	FRA	MCA	MLA	MMA	SAL	WES	WOR	Total	
Natural Sciences, Mathematics, Computer Science, Industrial Technology and Engineering	40	27	17	100	14	15	30	0	21	24	74
Business and Economics	0	56	14	NA	38	NA	42	0	14	23	62
Nursing and Allied Health Sciences	NA	38	33	NA	NA	NA	18	NA	0	19	8
Librarians	0	0	50	NA	0	NA	22	0	25	17	13
Professional Maritime Faculty	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	15	NA	NA	NA	15	100
Overall	9	21	17	16	13	19	21	0	15	15	55
Social Sciences, Criminal Justice, Social Work and Consumer Science	0	9	18	50	11	33	16	0	32	13	58
English and Communications	12	9	13	33	10	33	13	0	8	11	56
All Other Humanities, Art History and Interdisciplinary Studies Departments	0	25	18	10	0	NA	13	0	7	9	51
Health and Physical Education	0	0	NA	NA	0	NA	25	0	NA	8	42
Education and Art Education	10	22	0	0	0	NA	14	0	0	8	39

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 ($\chi^2 = 13.10$). Faculty in business and economics received significantly more 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 ($\chi^2 = 4.29$). 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 ($\chi^2 = 7.38$). The percentage of men in this combined humanities discipline was 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-12 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.



Ted Welsh

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!"s. 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.

In closing, let me thank you for giving me the opportunity to represent Massachusetts public education at this vital meeting these past three years. Next year's meeting will be in New Orleans. If you would like to be a voice for public higher education, please contact me. Travel support is available, and the people are nothing short of wonderful, especially the Massachusetts delegation.

— Ted Welsh

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By First-time Delegate Nancy George

The National Education Association-Representative Assembly (NEA-RA) is the NEA's highest decision-making body and the world's largest, democratic, deliberative body. It meets each year in a major US city over the July 4th holiday; this year the location was San Diego, California. MSCA members are elected to attend the NEA-RA as part of MTA's delegation. After receiving some encouragement to participate from a fellow MSCA Board member, I attended the NEA-RA for the first time this year.

I arrived in San Diego. Registering was easy — easier, in fact, than at American Library Association (ALA) conferences. MTA's daily caucuses were interesting and enjoyable, with free breakfast, MTA leadership and plenty of familiar faces from MTA annual meetings. During caucuses our delegation took positions on issues to be brought before the NEA-RA.

Finally, the first day of the NEA-RA arrived. I entered the convention center, credentials around my neck, backpack filled with snacks. Immediately I was overwhelmed by the noise. In the outer halls of the convention center were delegates in various costumes loudly shouting cheers for their favorite NEA candidates (voting would take place on July 4th). This surprised me — the raucousness of it all. Entering the convention center's hall I was totally consumed with the sounds of 10,000-15,000 people shouting and cheering; loud music and announcements from the sound system; the sights of 10,000 delegates dancing, cheering, waving their hands; lights being flashed. It was an education rock concert.

Thankfully, things quieted down a bit, but this initial experience will stay with me forever. The NEA-RA was filled with voting on a variety of items (imagine 5,000 people shouting "aye" and another 5,000 people shouting "no") and terrific presentations by NEA leaders, politicians, the teacher of the year and even some delegates. The days were long, with few breaks; I slept well each night.

Over the course of the NEA-RA a bond developed among our delegates, produced by a shared experience, common goals and a commitment to public education. It was obvious that many delegates look forward to attending each year to help set NEA's direction.

As I was a first-time attendee, nothing could have prepared me for the NEA-RA. Not 20 years of American Library Association meetings (20,000 attendees) that I have attended, not regional meetings and not even the MTA annual meeting. It was an amazing opportunity to participate in setting the agenda for public education on the national level. As such, I highly recommend the experience to other members of MSCA.

— Nancy George

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First-time delegate Nancy George (MSCA secretary/Salem) points the way to the NEA Representative Assembly in San Diego.

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