



Associated Faculties of the Universities of Maine

November 25, 2024

Dear Colleagues,

We are nearing the finish line for the fall semester. As the new President of AFUM, I have been making road trips to our campuses with our MEA Uniserv Director, Stephanie von Glinsky. So far Stephanie and I have visited UMF during peak foliage, spent Halloween at UM and have visits scheduled to UMFK on December 5, UMPI on December 6, and UMM on December 12 before the snow flies. USM and UMF are hosting us in the spring semester.

Our union dues support staff members at the MEA such as our Uniserv Director. They work with our AFUM leadership at the state level and each campus chapter as a resource – they attend collective bargaining sessions, grievance hearings, arbitrations, fact findings, etc. and provide guidance when asked (but do not vote on anything).

In solidarity,
Lydia

1. BARGAINING UPDATE

AFUM met on November 22 for another round of collective bargaining, and we have scheduled dates in December. A few critical issues remain and both sides are working to resolve these issues in a responsible manner.

Our sister MEA unions, UMPSA (professional (salary) staff) and ASCUM (classified (hourly) staff), have each ratified a new 3-year CBA that will be in effect through June 30, 2027. They won salary increases (retroactive to July 1, 2024) of 3.5% in year one, 4% in year 2 and 4% in year 3 plus a one-time payment of \$1,000 in year one that will not be applied to base. Each of the unions also won important language that will improve their work lives and the university.

Just a reminder that a 1% increase for AFUM's 1,000 members is \$800,000; a 1% increase for UMPSA's 1,800 members is \$1.2 million; a 1% increase for ASCUM's 464 members is \$189,000.

2. EHPTF and OUR HEALTHCARE

Neil Greenberg, UMPSA President, made a short 20 minute video titled "[Understanding the University's Self-Insured Health Plan](#)" and we have posted it to our AFUM website. It is an easy and useful way to understand an important benefit and part of negotiations.

3. SYSTEM FINANCES and STATE APPROPRIATIONS

Over 400 MEA members from ASCUM, AFUM, and UMPSA joined one of the two webinars MEA hosted on the Fund Maine's Future campaign. Thank you to those who attended and to the 100 MEA members who filled out form on the ways in which you are willing and able to help. We cannot do this without you supporting the effort.

We will be offering one more [**webinar on December 10 at 7pm**](#) for our members and we have opened it up to potential members. We have also begun reaching out to our fellow employees in other unions and communities. These are just the first steps in what will need to be a much larger effort, and we welcome your thoughts, ideas, and assistance to chart a course forward to make sure legislators understand the important role the UMaine System campuses play in our state and to make sure funding flows to the campuses.

We will need all hands-on deck for communicating with legislators and the public about the importance of funding UMS. There will be varying opportunities ranging from quick actions like submitting online testimony, talking to a colleague, student or neighbor, and sending letters to larger time commitments such as making comments at BoT meetings and writing Op Eds – something for everyone.

3. KNOW YOUR CBA

Article 19 – Leaves

While we tend to focus on sabbaticals, we have other forms of leave available to us. We have paid leave to take care of ourselves or immediate family members (and reasons for that leave is always confidential between you and HR unless you choose to share reasons). The length of a leave being paid leave depends upon how many hours of sick time we have accrued (we accrue a max of 1200 hours).

We can take paid leave for our entire workload, or we can take intermittent leave which allows us to take a block of paid time off during a semester or plan a reduced workload by perhaps taking a course release or cutting back on our service and/or research, scholarly and creative activities while we tend a family member or heal ourselves. If you return from leave mid-semester, you and the administration may develop an alternate work assignment for the remaining portion of the semester to 'replace' teaching, but it cannot be unilaterally imposed and is not meant for you to 'make up' work not done during your leave.

We also may take leave without pay for many reasons – medical issues for you or your family, other family obligations, a state or federal appointment, holding public office, educational purposes, fellowships, etc. Each kind of leave has different timelines for applying for it, implications for health care and retirement contributions by UMS, and different effects on tenure clocks. It is always best to check the Collective Bargaining Agreement, check with your local AFUM leadership and your HR office – depending on the reason for taking leave, it can be a difficult time – there are people here to help.

I am always a little saddened at how reticent faculty are to use their sick time. Much of this has to do with knowing it will affect our colleagues and students, but the University always manages to go on and you will be healthier for it in the long run.