



University Staff Association

the Union Voice

Winter 2013 Issue

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New Year Reminders

- ✓ 6 Personal days for 2013 were awarded 1/13/13.
- ✓ 1.5% Cost of living increase was effective 1/1/13.
Next increase: 1.5% on 7/1/13
- ✓ On-Campus applications are valid only for one year. If you wish to apply for any current openings in 2013 you will need to complete and submit a current on-campus application and skills inventory.
- ✓ Your Annual Dental Benefit of \$1200 began 1/1/13.

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Tax Season is here --

Union Dues Paid for 2012:

Full-time = \$449.41 / Part-time = \$235.04

For more information regarding your annual dues see:

<http://www.university-staff-association.org/dues-information/>

Filing Deadline: Monday, April 15, 2013 for both Federal & State returns (e-filed & postmarked)

2013 USA Executive Board and Delegate Elections:

Balloting tentatively set to begin 2/25/2013 and end 3/11/13.

Members will be receiving ballot materials prior to the opening of voting. Please vote – it's important!

The Career Ladder Training Fund article (Article 24A) became operational in our contract in May 2000. The Association bargaining team was successful in negotiating this language during the previous negotiation cycle for contract years 1998-2001, with a one-year phase in period.

In the first implementation of the provision, USA bargaining unit employees had opportunity to access up to \$250 to be used in pursuit of individual training for the purpose of enhancing employment skills, or to purchase equipment or materials to aid in that effort. That first year, over 200 members applied for and received individual reimbursement from the fund.

During the next contract cycle (2001-2004), the University declined to process individual reimbursements, due to reduced Human Resources staffing levels. As a consequence of this change, the CLT fund paid for several training courses offered through the Labor Management Workplace Education program and OIT. Though a number of USA members did enroll in those courses and workshops, a significant reduction in the number of participants from the prior contract cycle was noted. To address this, USA conducted a unit survey to identify what type of training topics/areas would be most beneficial for members. Those results indicated a greater need for advanced spreadsheet and database training, along with web design and maintenance. To meet this need, a contract with an outside vendor was established to provide a series of *Dreamweaver* workshops. Follow up evaluations indicated high satisfaction with the workshop content and delivery.

Over the last several years there has been a lull in activity with the Career Ladder Training Fund due primarily to protracted contract negotiations, relegating the use of the CLT fund to lower priority for the University. But beginning in 2013 the CLT fund will be fully utilized with the hiring of a dedicated computer instructor/trainer to develop and provide advanced computer curricula (e.g. Advanced EXCEL and ACCESS, Web Design, etc.) exclusively for USA members. This will be a jointly administered initiative between USA and the Labor Management Workplace Education Program. A formal request for space in Hampshire House has been made, to provide a classroom space for these future course offerings. The USA Educational/Career Ladder Committee is hopeful that an individual will be hired early in 2013 and that courses will be offered later in the spring semester.

SMALL NECESSITIES LEAVE ACT

MASSACHUSETTS GENERAL LAW (M.G.L) CHAPTER 149, SECTION 52D

The **Small Necessities Leave Act** permits eligible employees to take up to a total of 24 hours of leave within a 12-month period to attend a child's school activity or accompany a child or elderly relative to a doctor's appointment. The legislated effective date of this act is August 4, 1998

THE LAW

The **Small Necessities Leave Act** permits an employee leave for the following purposes:

- To participate in school activities directly related to the educational advancement of a son or daughter of the employee, such as a parent-teacher conference or interviewing for a new school;
- To accompany a son or daughter of the employee to routine medical or dental appointments, such as check-ups or vaccinations; and
- To accompany an elderly relative of the employee to routine medical or dental appointments or appointments for other professional services relating to the elder's care, such as interviewing at nursing or group homes.

The 24 hours of leave available under this benefit are in addition to the 12 weeks of leave provided for under the federal Family and Medical Leave Act. The 24 hours may be taken within the 12-month calendar year period and the time may be taken on an intermittent (i.e. 2 hours to attend a parent-teacher conference) or reduced-time schedule.

An employee is required to provide his/her department with seven (7) days' notice of the need for the leave if the leave is foreseeable. If the necessity for the leave is not foreseeable, the employee is required to provide notice of the leave as soon as practicable.

The law provides for an unpaid leave of absence. An employee may elect to use any available accrued vacation, personal or sick leave benefits provided the use of such time is in accordance with the employee's appropriate collective bargaining agreement.

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A department may require that written certification or documentation support a request for leave under this act.

DEFINITIONS

Son or daughter ... any child under 18 who is the biological child of the employee, who is adopted by the employee, or whom the employee supervises on a day to day basis and for whom the employee is financially responsible. A "son or daughter" is also a child over 18 who is incapable of self-care because of a mental or physical disability.

Elderly relative ... an individual of at least 60 years of age who is related by blood or marriage to the employee, including a parent.

School ... a public or private elementary or secondary school, a Head Start program, or a children's day care facility.

Federal Act ... the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) of 1993. Unless this section provides otherwise, the terms of FMLA shall apply to leave under this section.

Eligible employee ... an employee must have been employed by the University of Massachusetts Amherst for 12 months at the time the leave is to begin.

Also an employee must have **worked** at the University for at least 1,250 hours during the 12-month period prior to the beginning of the leave.

12-month period ... for the purposes of FMLA and this act, the University has defined the 12-month period as the calendar year (January 1 - December 31).

CONTINUATION OF BENEFITS

A leave of absence of no more than 24 hours may affect:

- Time & Attendance Accruals
- Effective date of a step-increase
- Creditable service calculations for retirement

Questions regarding this benefit may be directed to the Division of Human Resources at (413) 545-6115.

Article submitted by Linda Hillenbrand

Inclement Weather Update:

UMass Human Resources has recently updated their “Inclement Weather Time and Attendance Policy” as a result of the February Blizzard. Please read the revised policy below. If you had any time reporting issues during the recent storm, please call the Union Office or your Steward.



Subject: Inclement Weather Time and Attendance Policy Update

The Inclement Weather Time and Attendance policy has been amended as a result of the announcement on Thursday evening, February 7th to close the campus on Friday, February 8, 2013 at 12:00 p.m. due to last week’s snowstorm.

Employees who were scheduled not to work due to authorized vacation, sick leave, personal leave or leave without pay prior to the decision on Thursday evening to close the campus for part of the day on Friday should not be granted time off for Friday’s campus closure in the place of the previously authorized leave.

Because the decision to close the campus on Friday at 12:00 p.m. was made the day before the closure, employees who called in and did not to report to work on Friday, February 8th due to weather conditions in their area **should only be charged either vacation or personal leave from their normal starting time to until their dismissal time in the Staggered Release Rotation Schedule and not for the entire day. They should be credited with authorized leave for the campus closure period.**

This amendment to the Inclement Weather Time and Attendance policy only applies when the decision to close the campus for part of the day is made and announced the day before the early campus closure takes place. This amendment does not apply to when there is a delayed campus opening.

Submitted by Leslie Marsland

Have you ever seen one of those “think hard before you sign” videos shown by Target, Yankee Candle, Delta and Home Depot? There are likely to be more companies, but they rarely get “leaked” to the internet.

While watching the Target video, it’s a little like watching a cartoon. You have to ask yourself why these companies fear unions so much. Could it be that organized workers have too much power? Are they afraid they’d have to pay a living wage? Do they want more control over the benefits? Do they want more control over their employees?

I debate with the occasional family members about the benefits of a union. One interesting thing that comes up is that unions and their outrageously good benefits (this is a problem?). One point that I continuously make – management sits across from the workers during bargaining. Contracts are agreed upon and signed by both parties. If the organization can’t afford what they’ve agreed to, then why did they agree? It’s a question with many possible answers.

<http://gawker.com/5811371/heres-the-cheesy-anti+union-video-all-target-employees-must-endure>

<http://www.dailykos.com/story/2011/04/15/967234/-Home-Depot-s-PARANOID-anti-union-video-leaked#>

Article Submitted by Linda Hillenbrand

MEMBERSHIP MEETING – MONDAY, FEBRUARY 25TH, 2013

NOON TO 1:00 PM, CAMPUS CENTER 162-175

Main topic: Retirement Health Insurance Legislation recently filed by the Governor.

The MTA’s Director of Higher Education, Joey Hansen, will be here to answer any questions.

You can view the proposal by visiting:

<http://www.mass.gov/legis/journal/desktop/2013/HD3496.pdf>

WHY I'M GRATEFUL FOR A UNION CONTRACT

I recently found out that my husband doesn't have sick or personal days. He used to work for Whiting Energy Fuels (you've seen their blue and white tankers around town) and they sold their propane division to Osterman Propane back in November – this included all of the employees. Within four days he was an employee of a completely different company and at his age, had no option but to take the new job. I recently needed to get a ride to an appointment and he found out that he had no sick or personal days. It took me some time for the two of us to digest this and then we started thinking about the consequences. If he got a flu that knocked him out, he'd lose days of pay. Just going to the doctor will mean less hours in his paycheck. Don't we all count on our paychecks being a certain amount each week?

His first reaction to being sold to another company was that he wished he was in a union. A contract would have set up parameters for this type of sale/transfer of employees. At the very least, more notice would have helped him look at other options.

Companies are trending towards things make me uncomfortable as a worker...no sick days....credit checks....wellness checks (do you smoke?)....the list is long. Our contract is important for many reasons and I'm grateful to have been involved in the negotiation process and for being paid when I have the flu!

written by Linda Hillenbrand

Check out what's new at MTA Benefits - Visit <http://www.mtabenefits.com/>

Did you know that the on-campus UMass Five College Credit Union Office moved? They relocated from the Student Union to the Campus Center. You can now do your banking at the new branch, #224 Lincoln Campus Center (2nd floor). Same nice staff, same great service.

A CAUTIONARY TALE ON CORPORATE DENTISTRY

by Linda Hillenbrand

If you're unlucky enough to be familiar with root canals, you know that they are painful and that they give you relief. I had to have a root canal about 5 years ago and went to the MetLife site to find the closest provider. My dentist recommended a few out-of-network endodontists, but I couldn't afford the higher percentage of using an out-of-network dentist, so, I ended up at Aspen Dental's office in West Springfield – if you've been to Kohl's you know where it is. The root canal cost a lot and I felt better until about 4 months ago. I was feeling pain and soreness above the tooth in the gum. I travelled all the way to Keene, NH to an Endodontist recommended by my dentist and he determined I needed a retreat because the first root canal wasn't completed – they missed one canal which was now infected. I was blunt and asked him if I'd be in that chair if the Aspen Endodontist hadn't ignored/missed that canal. Professional courtesy took over at that point, but when he left I asked the assistant and she was honest. I wouldn't be in that chair if that canal had been done.

I'm now looking at about a \$3,000 cost to replace that tooth which I just had pulled last week. If you have a similar story about Aspen, please send it to me:

lindah@wost.umass.edu. As your H&W trustee, I will be sending information to MetLife about Aspen.

NEED LEGAL ASSISTANCE ?

Per the MTA's 2013 Association Representative Handbook: MTA provides its members access to reduced-fee legal services for non-employment legal problems. Under its attorney referral program, the MTA provides members with up to three free half-hour consultations for general legal advice and up to a 30 percent fee reduction in legal matters including real estate, domestic relations, wills and estates, consumer protection and motor-vehicle violations.

USA members can access these services by contacting the MTA Higher Education (617-878-8227) or Legal Services (617-878-8241) offices in Boston or by calling the toll-free Boston Office general line at 800-392-6175.

Submitted by Leslie Marsland & Miles Stern (MTA Uni-Serv Rep)

Can you volunteer and give some time to help?

We are looking for members for the following committees:

Submitted by Leslie Marsland

Charting Committee

What is charting? Charting provides leadership with a picture of the membership: where members are, to whom they relate, work location, job classification and mobilizers. The intent is to break down our membership in each location (building or department) and identify the everyday elbow to elbow contact within our work places. Think of it as huge membership phone tree.

Social Committee

The purpose of the Social Committee is to strengthen our union and foster a sense of community networking by organizing fun, interesting events for the entire membership. The ideal situation is to have enough members that each can choose one or two events to be involved with during the year, rather than just a few people being involved with everything. The responsibilities of the committee include:

- Brainstorm ideas for social events
- Report planned events to the Eboard for approval
- Execute planned events
- Submit a newsletter article to the Communication Committee for the Union Voice & Listserv

Public Relations Committee

The purpose of the PR Committee is to develop understanding of the purposes and the programs of the Union, the value of public education and the role of the employee. It shall inform members of the policies, programs, services and accomplishments of the Union.

**If interested please contact the USA Office at 545-0165,
usa@external.umass.edu**

We want to hear from you. Please feel free to email your ideas and news to the Communications Committee at usa@external.umass.edu or call Union Office at 545-0165.

Thank you, the Communications Committee--

Linda Hillenbrand, Donna Johnson, Leslie Marsland & Jim Plaza