

HFCC Adjunct Faculty Organization Organizing Committee News



Help us build the Adjunct Faculty Organization! Help us build a better college!

Why Form a Union?

In our conversations with adjunct faculty across campus, we have heard a number of concerns that we believe can be addressed most constructively with a strong union, including:

- Low *pay* (we currently make \$200 per class less than any other comparable local college)
- Access to HFCC's *health insurance* and other benefits, even if we have to pay some of the costs
- No assurance of contract renewal from term to term, which leaves us vulnerable to being bumped from a course at the last minute without consideration of our performance
- *Professional supports* like offices, computers, space to meet with students, and secretarial support
- The current situation of *higher education in general*, including the erosion of tenure-track positions, an increasing dependence on poorly treated part-time faculty, and the way the economic realities of having to teach courses at several different schools make it difficult to support our students and teach the way we would like.

Who Are We?

We are more than 600 adjunct, or "part-time" faculty members teaching in every department on campus.

Some of us have taught every term for 35 years, some of us are in our first semester of teaching.

Some of us have full-time jobs elsewhere and teach only one course; others are trying to patch together a living teaching at HFCC and at two or three other colleges. Some of us are retired from other jobs, while others are working

on advanced degrees at other schools.

Toward the end of the 2006, a couple of us approached John McDonald, the President of the HFCC Federation of Teachers (AFT Local 1650, the union that represents full-time faculty members) to

talk about forming a union.

John agreed to invite all 600 part-time faculty members working at HFCC to a meeting to assess their interest. Widely-shared interest at that meeting led to a group of volunteers forming an Organizing Committee over the summer of 2007.

We are from Business & Economics, Sciences, Counseling, English, Fine Arts & Fitness, Math, and Social Sciences—and we need your help as well!



Organizing Committee members at our Campaign Kickoff

What Can We Accomplish Together?

The core principle of unionism is simple: we can accomplish more if we work together than as isolated individuals.

As an officially recognized union, we will gain the legal right to negotiate salary, job security, health insurance, and other working conditions, which we will

discuss with the administration until both sides agree on changes to be codified in a binding contract.

How Will the Process of Forming a Union Work?

The first step in official union representation involves asking people to become members of the union. After a large majority of HFCC adjuncts have joined, we will file the cards with the Michigan Employment Relations Commission (MERC), which will conduct an election. The membership cards, the names of individual members, and the voting process will be strictly confidential.



A Union of Professionals

After the election, the AFO membership will adopt bylaws governing how the bargaining team will be chosen, the terms and duties of officers, and membership dues. Based on the experiences of similar unions, dues will likely need to be between 1-2% of our pay depending on if we want staff, an office, etc. (but won't begin until after we get the raises in our first contract).

Most important, WE (all 600 of us) will determine what we want to see in our first contract and what kind of union we want to be. Everyone will have a chance to

have her or his voice heard through meetings, surveys, and an official vote on the final contract.

We look forward to working with HFCC President Gail Mee and other administrators in a constructive manner. Unfortunately, the administration has already sent out a piece of anti-union literature, but we hope that they will take a cooperative approach going forward. In fact, we believe that a union is not only in our best interests as adjuncts, but will also be part of building a stronger HFCC.

What Have Other AFT Adjunct Unions Won?

At the University of Michigan (Ann Arbor, Dearborn and Flint), the Lecturers Employee Organization (LEO) negotiated a first contract in 2004 that included:

- *Job security* provisions that provide for an ongoing "presumption of renewal" as long as faculty members meet performance standards;
- *Notification* of Fall Term appointments by April 1 and Winter Term appointments by December 1;
- Increases in minimum salaries, annual *raises* equal to those of tenure-track faculty, and promotional raises based on departmental evaluations of teaching;
- University-paid *health insurance* for those teaching two or more courses (including summer coverage);
- A binding *grievance procedure* in case these or other provisions are not followed.

The Adjunct Faculty Organization (AFO) organizing committee has chosen to work with the American Federation of Teachers because we believe the expertise of the AFT can help us achieve our goals. The AFT has the proven ability to organize (locally, the AFT-MI has recently helped part-time faculty organize at Wayne State, UM, Eastern, and Wayne County Community College), and affiliating with them places us within the worldwide union movement.

An organization like the AFT has the resources to help us achieve our immediate goals (e.g. gaining access to HFCC health care benefits) while contributing to a national agenda (e.g. passage of legislation that provides universal access to health care for all Americans). AFT-MI organizers Lynn Marie Smith, David Dobbie, and Jon Curtiss have been working with us since the beginning, and we will have staff and legal assistance to help us bargain and implement our first contract and beyond.

What Can You Do?

If you're an adjunct, please sign an AFO membership card as soon as possible. Becoming a member means that you intend to vote "yes" in the recognition election and that you can participate in setting up the union and identifying our most important concerns.

If you are willing to give some time to reach out to our colleagues, to enter data into our database, or to make phone calls, we will be assured of success! Speak to an organizing committee member, call (313) 274-6314, or email afo@hfcc-afo.org.

We're a diverse group. Some of us support the formation of a union out of the need for a living wage and access to health insurance; others support it out of recognition of the needs of others. But as we talk to people all over campus, we are struck by what we have in common: our love for teaching and our commitment to our students.

Please join us...we need your help in building a stronger college!

hfcc-afo