



HFCC Adjunct Faculty Organization News

HFCC-AFO
AFT, AFL-CIO

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Help us build a *strong* Adjunct Faculty Organization and a *better* college!

Elections Committee To Oversee Vote on Constitution

After weeks of work by Joe Sorokac and a committee composed of Executive Board members Mary Beck, Glenn O’Kray, Bill Norris, Ron Webb, and Tom Anderson, a copy of the proposed Adjunct Faculty Organization constitution is being posted on the AFO website (HFCC-AFO.org). The constitution will be ratified if a majority of members casting ballots in an election being conducted by the newly established “Elections Committee” vote in favor of ratification.

Under the provisions of the constitution, the Elections Committee will oversee elections of officers and votes on other matters. It will be the most autonomous of the various standing committees mandated by the constitution. Four individuals present at the November 14 general membership meeting—Rene Givens, Pete Grant, Grace Plaza, and Lisa Weltman—accepted nominations to the Elections Committee and were elected to the committee by acclamation.

Ratification Process

Soon after it was formed, the Elections Committee elected Plaza as its chair and agreed upon the process by which the vote on the constitution will be conducted. Only “members and associate members in good standing” will be allowed to vote for or against the constitution. A “member in

good standing” is a member of the “bargaining unit” who has a signed membership card on file in the AFO office. Associate members are former members who are not working during the current semester.

If you are not sure whether you have a signed membership card on file with the

AFO website. Hard copies of the ballots can be obtained by calling or visiting the AFO office. Ballots can be mailed in (addressed to “Elections Committee” care of the AFO office) either through the U.S. mail or inter-office in time to be received by the date of the next general membership meeting which will be held on Friday,

January 30 at 3:00 p.m. (Meeting details including the location and agenda will be published in a January newsletter). Mailed ballots should be in a sealed envelope with the member’s name on the outside of the envelope. The ballot is secret, so no identifying information should be included on the ballot itself. Members will also be able to hand carry their ballots to the January general membership meeting or send them with a colleague as a

proxy. Ballots will be counted by members of the Elections Committee immediately after the January 30 meeting and the results will be certified and communicated to the membership before the end of February. Any challenges or objections to the election must be submitted in writing to the Elections Committee within five days of the count.

Summary Description

The constitution will establish the framework by which the AFO governs itself. As such it is a critical document (continued on back)



AFO members nominated and elected Rene Givens, Pete Grant, Grace Plaza, and Lisa Weltman to the Elections Committee during the November general membership meeting

AFO, you can contact interim secretary Bill Norris by calling the AFO office (313-845-9707). Anyone casting a ballot who is not a member (or associate member) in good standing will be identified as such by the Elections Committee and his or her ballot will be considered provisional. The person will then be contacted and if eligible for membership, will be given an opportunity to sign a membership card and have her or his ballot counted.

Electronic copies of the ballots are available on the

Contract Negotiations Update

The AFO bargaining committee is continuing to make progress in their negotiations with representatives of the College. “Tentative agreements” have been reached on nine of the 25 proposals the bargaining team has made to the College and agreements are expected on a handful of additional proposals before the end of December.

The management team presented budget information to the AFO during a late November meeting. The College expects declining revenues from property taxes and further cuts in state aid are anticipated, but on the upside, enrollment continues to swell.

Bargaining committee chair Tom Anderson passed proposals for salary increases and benefits in early December, completing the AFO’s package of proposals. Anderson repeated his position that the AFO’s demands for equitable pay will “not be constrained by the College’s finances. Our members have made it abundantly clear that it is not acceptable for HFCC adjuncts to continue to be the lowest paid community college teachers in the state. We intend to be responsible and we know that these are unique times from an economic point of view, but the status quo is not acceptable. Both sides must be creative in finding the way forward.”

This Issue's Member Profile: The Art of Wassma Mohana

Knowledge, experience and diversity are the traits many of our adjunct members bring to the College and the community. Some excel in their field of choice; others, like Wassma Mohana, bring a broad range of achievement with them to HFCC.

Wassma, an adjunct instructor of Arabic since 2005, has brought her years of experience as a professional artist, teacher, administrator and diplomat to the College. She uses her talents to draw people together and highlight what we all have in common. "We do not have to be divided between this country and that country," said Mohana in a 2005 interview. "It is not healthy. We have to gather people together around the same goals."



Originally a history professor from Damascus, Syria, Mohana served as General Director of the Franciscan Institute at Damascus and an art director of the Syrian Cultural Center in Paris, France. After that, she lived in Washington, D.C., where she received her Fine Arts degree in Middle Eastern History from Virginia University, taught art at the Duke Ellington School of the Arts and at Georgetown University, and served as an Arabic instructor for the U.S. State Department.

Wassma has three children, Sam, Mazan, and Dima. Although they are now grown up and living in different areas of the country, she maintains close contact with them. She sees her children as the biggest source of inspiration in her own life, and came to Dearborn to be near one of her sons and his family.

Wassma believes in art as an international language that can be used to break down national and cultural barriers, bringing people closer together in the process. She does this through her preferred choice of subject: the human being. "Painting people is difficult," she says, "especially a portrait. You have to get the features right; but even more, you have to get the personality."

Taking as inspiration the Dutch painter Rembrandt, Mohana seeks out the simple beauty to be found in everyday life. "I love beauty," she says. "I'm always after beauty."

Her art has been exhibited in many institutes, libraries, and schools, including the Caroline Kennedy Library in Dearborn. Her work can currently be viewed at the Bagley Housing Art Gallery (2715 Bagley in Detroit) until December 22 or the Hannan House (4750 Woodward also in Detroit) until January 16.

Today, Wassma not only looks to strengthen the bond of humanity through her art, but also, in more practical terms, through her support of the AFO. During her years in Washington, Mohana was a member of the Washington Teachers' Union, and the experience she gained as part of the labor movement there led her to become a charter member of our Union. "Unions give us a lot of things," she says. "I believe in the Union, and I'm ready to do whatever is needed to help with it."

Wassma believes that people should reach across national, religious and cultural divides for the same goal. Her support for the AFO extends beyond simple economic goals. "I teach to communicate with people, not for money," she says.

Through her art and through her participation in the AFO, Mohana's goals are the same: to find the beauty and inspiration that unity and solidarity of people can achieve.

Vote to Ratify AFO Constitution Is Underway (Continued from front page)

and all members are strongly encouraged to visit the AFO website (HFCC-AFO.org) and read the document in its entirety. The document defines a "member" and an "associate member" and spells out their rights including their right to vote in AFO elections. For instance, only members and associate members who have worked during the academic year in which a tentative agreement is reached will have the right to vote "yes" or "no" for the contract.

Under the constitution, the legislative power of the organization will be vested in the "membership meeting" and the executive power will be vested in an "executive board." The executive board will consist of at least six members including an elected president, vice-president, secretary, treasurer, and grievance officer as well as the chair of the bargaining committee. The document spells out the duties of officers, election procedures, the budget process, standing committees and the duties and responsibilities of stewards. The processes for conducting membership meetings and the business of the executive board are also set by the constitution. Dues and agency fees (to be paid by individuals who belong to the bargaining unit but who have not signed membership cards) will be assessed after our first contract is implemented and will be established in a "by-law" to the constitution.

It is important to understand that the proposed constitution was developed based upon models provided by the American Federation of Teachers and by reviewing the constitutions of other AFT locals including the HFCC Federation of Teachers, the Union of Part-Time Faculty at Wayne State, and the Lecturers' Employees Organization at the University of Michigan. As constitution committee chair Joe Sorokac said, "I think as much thought went into this constitution as the one written in Philadelphia a couple of centuries ago. It provides the necessary structure for our organization while giving us the flexibility to make the AFO an effective organization capable of reaching our goals."

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