



Help us build a strong Adjunct Faculty Organization and a Better College

Adjunct Faculty Organization News

HFCC-AFO AFT Local 337 AFT, AFL-CIO
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Dues By-Law and First Year Budget Approved by Large Majority

As soon as the Adjunct Faculty Organization's first contract with the HFCC Board of Trustees was ratified by the AFO membership (on May 11) and by the HFCC Board (on May 18), the AFO Executive Board and Finance Committee put the finishing touches on the organization's first year budget and finalized a dues and agency fee proposal. Both the budget and dues by-law were then submitted to the membership for approval and when the votes were counted at a special general membership meeting on June 9, 47 of 48 votes were in favor of approving both the budget and the dues proposal. The 48 total votes included 29 cast by AFO members by acclamation at the general membership meeting as well as 19 votes received as proxies or by mail.

The dues and agency fee by-law sets membership dues at 1.85% of earnings (\$18.50 for

See page four for an explanation of the difference between dues and agency fees and why you should pay membership dues rather than fees.

every \$1,000 of income) and agency fees at 1.70% (\$17.00 for every \$1,000 of income). Based on the size and expected earnings of the bargaining unit, it is estimated that the dues and agency fees will generate approximately \$137,730 of income for the AFO against projected expenses totaling \$128,433 leaving a first year surplus of just under \$10,000.

The AFO's first fiscal year runs from July 1, 2009 through June 30, 2010. The AFO should begin receiving revenues from dues and agency fees at the end of July, but because relatively few adjuncts work during the summer term, revenues are expected to be lower than expenses until October. To compensate for

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Bill Norris Named Staff Organizer

Bill Norris, a pioneering member of the Adjunct Faculty Organization (AFO), accepted the Executive Board's offer to serve as Staff Organizer. As Staff Organizer, Bill will have primary responsibility for developing and managing the AFO's organizing drives. Bill will also be responsible for keeping the AFO membership informed and for keeping the membership active and involved in activities related to the union's goals.



Under the terms of the agreement, Bill will continue to serve as the AFO's

interim Recording Secretary and, if elected by the membership, he will continue in that capacity for the term of his office. He said that he would work full-time for the AFO, but will only accept three quarters pay because "one quarter of my time should be considered voluntary service to the organization."

Chief Grievance Officer Tom Anderson said, "we're lucky to have Bill. Organizing is and will continue to be a major priority for the AFO and Bill is as good as they come as far as organizing goes. He believes in the AFO and will serve us well."

"These expenses are not luxuries. We couldn't have gotten to where we are without the support of the AFT and other affiliated organizations and we won't get to where we want to be without supporting ourselves. We did cut corners wherever we could in the interest of keeping our dues as reasonable as possible. However, I'm convinced that if we tried to cut further that it would harm us in the long run."

Bill Breger
Interim Treasurer

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Dues By-Law and First Year Budget Approved by Membership

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the shortfall, the AFO applied for and received a \$25,000 interest-free loan from AFT-Michigan. It is expected that the loan will be repaid by the end of the fiscal year. (Neither the loan nor the repayment of the loan are reflected in the income or expense numbers reported here.)

Interim treasurer Bill Breger called the budget and dues proposal “fiscally responsible” and noted that a line-by-line explanation of projected AFO expenses was made available to members before they were asked to vote on the budget. (The AFO 2009-10 “Budget Narrative” is currently posted on the AFO website, HFCC-AFO.org.) Breger said that “our expense budget should be looked at as an investment in the future of the AFO. Every dime we are spending contributes to the strength of our organization and the stronger we are, the more we will be able to accomplish.”

Breger pointed out that the three largest line items in the budget are (1) dues and insurance premiums owed to affiliated organizations; (2) the salary for a Staff Organizer; and (3) stipends for certain officers. “These expenses are not luxuries,” Breger said. “We couldn’t have gotten to where we are without the support of the AFT and other affiliated organizations and we won’t get to where we want to be without supporting ourselves. We did cut corners wherever we could in the interest of keeping our dues as reasonable as possible. For instance, we will no longer print hard copies of our newsletter or use the U.S. mail for general communications to our members. However, I’m convinced that if we tried to cut further that it would harm us in the long run.”

According to interim president Mary Beck dues paid to AFT-Michigan and other organizations benefit the AFO “because we gain

strength and expertise from our involvement in the international labor movement.” Beck said that the AFO needs a Staff Organizer because “the high rate of turn-over in our unit means that we will be in a perpetual organizing mode.” She added that the AFO will apply for a reduction in dues owed to the national AFT that will help pay the Staff Organizer’s salary. The AFO grants such waivers to new locals that represent a significant number of part-time employees especially those that have ongoing organizing requirements.

Interim secretary and newly

Members Approve Amendments to Constitution

Members of the Adjunct Faculty Organization (AFO) approved four amendments to the organization’s constitution at the June 9 special membership meeting, the same meeting during which the first year budget and a dues and agency fee by-law were approved. Two of the amendments were passed unanimously; the other two were passed by large margins. The AFO constitution was written and approved with a clause that allows the constitution to be amended relatively easily during the first two years and it is likely that the document will be “tweaked” further through amendments in the coming months. A total of 44 votes were cast in the referenda on the constitutional amendments—29 by members present at the general membership meeting plus 15 received by mail or proxy.

Approved unanimously were amendments to reduce the number of general membership meetings from four per year (two in the fall term and two in the winter term) to two per year (one in the fall and one in the winter). Interim president Mary Beck said, “our members are too busy to meet for the sake of

named Staff Organizer Bill Norris said that he recommended providing key officers with a modest stipend—equal to the amount a Ph.D. at step four would earn for teaching a three-credit hour class in the fall and winter semesters—because of the amount of time required to fulfill position responsibilities. “The jobs of the President, Treasurer, Chief Grievance Officer, and Financial Records Secretary are all very demanding. I believe we should provide a stipend to compensate these officers for all of the work they do and to encourage the next generation of AFO leaders to get involved,” Norris said.

meeting and we can always call a special general membership meeting if we have important business to conduct” when asked to explain the reason for the amendment.

Also approved unanimously was an amendment to add another elected officer position—a Financial Records Secretary. Given the size and turn-over of the AFO, the treasurer’s job is expected to be an especially demanding one. The Financial Records Secretary will be responsible for developing and maintaining the AFO member database and will otherwise assist the Treasurer in the fulfillment of that position’s responsibilities. The Financial Records Secretary will also be a member of the Executive Board.

A third amendment, this one passed by a margin of 43 to 1, converts the Chief Grievance Officer position from an elected position to a position appointed by the President with the approval of the Executive Board. This amendment was asked for because the chair of the bargaining committee is the person

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Officer Elections Slated for Fall Term

In May, 2008, soon after the Adjunct Faculty Organization (AFO) won recognition as the legal bargaining agent for Henry Ford's 600+ adjuncts, the organizing committee elected a slate of "interim" officers. Now that the AFO has implemented its first contract with the HFCC Board of Trustees and has a constitution in place, the time has come to take the "interim" out of officer titles by electing qualified members to a regular term of office.

Accordingly, the Executive Board, in consultation with the Elections Committee and in accordance with the constitution, has scheduled an election of officers to be conducted during the Fall, 2009 term. The election will be finalized during the general membership meeting which will take place in mid to late October.

During this first general election of officers, the membership will elect a President, Recording Secretary, and Financial Records Secretary to two-year terms that will begin on December 1, 2009. In addition, a Vice President and a Treasurer will be elected to one-year terms, also beginning on December 1, 2009. Members will be asked to elect a Vice President and Treasurer again in the Fall, 2010 to two-year terms and from that point, officer elections will occur each year with the President, Recording Secretary, and Financial Records Secretary elected in odd years and the Vice President and Treasurer elected in even years.

In keeping with the constitution, the floor was opened for nominations to officer positions during the June 9 special general membership meeting. The four current interim officers, President Mary Beck (psychology), Vice President Glenn O'Kray (counseling), Treasurer William Breger (business and economics) and Recording Secretary William Norris (sociology) were nominated. All accepted their nominations. In addition, Darlene Cox

(health careers) was nominated for the position of Financial Records Secretary. Other qualified members of the AFO wishing to run for office have until September 15, 2009 to submit a petition signed by at least 20 members to the Elections Com-

mittee to get their name on the official ballot.

The Elections Committee will conduct the election using a "double blind" system similar to the process used to ratify the AFO's first contract.

First Contract Goes into Effect

The first ever contract between the Adjunct Faculty Organization (AFO) and the Henry Ford Community College Board of Trustees went into effect on July 1, 2009, the beginning of the summer term. The new contract provides HFCC adjuncts with an increase in pay, improvements to their benefits, and some measure of job security. A digital copy of the contract has been posted on the AFO website (HFCC-AFO.org) and Bargaining Committee Chair Tom Anderson hopes to have printed copies available within a few weeks.

Anderson told the Board shortly

after they ratified the contract during their May meeting that the agreement was a "win, win, win" contract: a win for AFO members, a win for the College, and a win for the community the College serves.

Anderson anticipates that both administration and the AFO membership will have a steep learning curve now that the contract is in place. He urged all members "to read the contract in its entirety now that it is posted on our website. The contract isn't going to be enforced by me and a dozen or so stewards—it is going to be enforced by a well-informed membership."

Constitutional Amendments Approved

(Continued from page two)

best suited for the Chief Grievance Officer position and that position is already an appointed position. The Chief Grievance Officer will continue to serve on the Executive Board.

The fourth amendment (passed by a margin of 41 to three) reduces the requirement for a quorum for a general membership meeting from 5% of the membership to the lesser of 20 members or 5% of the membership. Executive Board members asked for this amendment out of concern that it might sometimes be difficult to conduct business if the quorum requirement remained at 5%. "Our members live busy lives—many have full-time jobs, teach at other schools, and have family responsibilities and the like. Even though they are obviously concerned and care about the di-

rection the AFO takes, many have a hard time making meetings," said Glenn O'Kray, interim Vice-President of the AFO.

Each of the amendments provides for language changes throughout the constitution to ensure consistency throughout the document. A revised constitution, reflecting the new changes, and a technical change regarding the definition of a "member" (so that the constitution conforms with the contract) is being posted on the AFO website (HFCC-AFO.org) coincident with the distribution of this newsletter.

The Executive Board is in the process of reviewing the constitution and has hinted that further amendments may be submitted to the membership in the interest of ensuring that the constitution enables the AFO to operate in an efficient, and transparent, manner.

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



Welcome to AFT Local 337

In a union recognition election supervised by the Michigan Employment Relations Commission in May, 2008, 337 Henry Ford Community College Adjuncts, 89% of those participating, voted in favor of recognizing the Adjunct Faculty Organization as their legal bargaining agent. These 337 adjuncts believed that if HFCC was serious about fulfilling its mission to students and to the community that something had to be done about their working conditions. All of us who voted in favor of unionization strongly believe that there is a direct correlation between our working conditions and our students' learning conditions.

Given the significance of the number 337, I was greatly pleased to learn that that number was available when we contacted the American Federation of Teachers to secure a number to designate our local. We will soon apply for our charter and when it is granted we will officially become Local 337 of the American Federation of Teachers.

If you are new to HFCC, we want to welcome you to the College and to AFT Local 337. Whether this is your first semester or 100th, we want you to become a member of the AFO if you are eligible. By becoming a member, you will help us "build a strong Adjunct Faculty Organization and a better College." We do not see our relationship with the College as a "zero sum" game. Most of us teach as much or more for the intrinsic rewards as for the extrinsic ones. As we inch ever closer to the goals specified in our "Statement of Principles" (you can find the statement on our website, HFCC-AFO.org), we come closer to making sure that HFCC continues to live up to its reputation as the "Harvard of Community colleges."

Mary Beck, Interim President of the Adjunct Faculty Organization

Why pay dues? Agency fees are cheaper!

You don't have to be an economics major to know that it doesn't make sense to pay more than necessary for goods and services. After all, who would pay \$100 for an item if she could get the same thing down the street for \$91.90, a savings of \$8.10?

I didn't just pull those numbers out of my hat. Members of the Adjunct Faculty Organization are required to pay either "membership dues" or agency fees." Dues amount to 1.85% of a member's earnings (\$18.50 for every \$1,000 of gross pay) while agency fees are 1.70% (\$17.00 for every \$1,000 earned). Do the math—agency fees (1.70%) are equal to 91.9% of dues (1.85%). Said another way, an agency fee payer who earns \$5,405.41 in a year will be paying only \$91.90 in fees while a member earning the same amount will have to pay \$100 in dues.

So, why pay dues? Why not keep that \$8.10 in your pocket?

Because, as many consumers learn through painful experience, "you get what you pay for." Agency fee payers are charged fees because under Michigan la-

bor law they can be required to pay their "fair share" of the cost of negotiating and enforcing a collective bargaining agreement. However, by paying fees instead of dues, an otherwise eligible person gives up certain rights and weakens the organization that bargains on their behalf.

By becoming a dues-paying member in good standing of the AFO, an HFCC adjunct gains the right to participate in the democratic decision-making process of our union. It gives you the right to voice your opinion at meetings, to help determine the goals and priorities of the organization, and to participate in member surveys. Only members have the right to vote in AFO elections: they elect officers, approve the constitution and any amendments to it, determine the budget and dues (and agency fee) structure, and, perhaps most importantly, get to vote yes or no for any tentative agreement to a contract. Members also have the right to run for office, to volunteer for various standing committees and to serve on the Executive Board.

As important and valuable as these rights of membership are, they pale against the primary reason for becoming a member of

the AFO. The higher the proportion of our collective bargaining unit that elects membership over agency fees, the stronger we are. The AFO was successful in negotiating a "fair and equitable" first contract because of the strength of our membership. If only a small fraction of the people eligible elected membership, do you thing administration would pay much attention to us?

We don't ask much of our members, but we do expect them to support their bargaining committee. As pleased as we are with our first contract, it is only a first contract and we still have a great distance to go before our long range goals are in sight.

To build on our first contract, we need you! We need you to complete a membership form and to check off "dues" rather than "agency fees" on the payroll authorization form you are required to complete as a condition of employment. (Both are available on our website—HFCC-AFO.org.)

You can help us build a strong Adjunct Faculty Organization and a better College!

Bill Norris, Staff Organizer