

St. John's University AAUP Chapter

NEWSLETTER

November 14, 2022

Message from the President

Dear St. John's University Faculty,

Your AAUP leadership has been working hard this semester! Most of our efforts have been focused on CBA negotiations, which seem to be ever-ongoing. But we have also had to address other issues, including supporting individual faculty members as they navigate the occasional grievance or contractual issue.

But by far, the most dominant issue has been contract negotiations. Last year, we were able to negotiate a relatively fast one-year contract that gave some advantages to faculty including a salary increase for full-time faculty, a more sizeable percentage increase for part-time faculty, and a one-time contribution of \$300,000, paid out as a pro-rated reduction in the health care premium for those faculty that are contributing to health care costs. This effectively reduced those faculty's health insurance contribution to 17.2%, rather than 20%, although it left the language the same in the CBA. At the time, we had a strong emphasis on raising the pay rates for our lowest paid faculty, namely adjunct faculty. We considered the raise negotiated for them in that contract only a down payment on our continued efforts to address that issue, but it was a start. Some of the full-time faculty may not realize that their part-time colleagues are being paid at a rate that is at the very bottom of the local market. For those of our colleagues who depend on the part-time faculty wage, in these difficult economic times, it has been a significant struggle to make ends meet.

The shift in the economic conditions since the beginning of the year, and in particular the steep rise of inflation, led the CBA Bargaining Team to reassess the priorities going into the current negotiations. From the summer, we have been clear with the administration that faculty need to see a pay raise that is above what has been offered in the recent past,

and one that takes into account the lack of raises between 2018 and 2020. When the formal negotiations for compensation began, we presented a proposal that was based on the value of the faculty to the university. We did our homework, looked closely at past payroll expenses, as well as the financial reports that the university has shared with us. Unfortunately, I must report that, at least as of now, the administration has not presented a reasonable counteroffer. We are still meeting and working to come to a compromise. I am hopeful that we will begin to see movement on their side soon.

One thing that helps our cause, and that all of us can participate in, is demonstrating the solidarity of the faculty. Administration needs to understand that the faculty are united in our demands for a just compensation package that reflects the work that we do to ensure student success. Get your AAUP sticker and place it prominently where it can be seen – on your laptop, on your folders, on your car. Make sure you share your commitment to the union with your fellow faculty members. Tell them you're Union Faculty and encourage them to join! Let the administration know that we are a united faculty, and that we stand together.

Onward!

Fred

KNOW YOUR CONTRACT

Did you know you have the right to initiate a salary review based on Article 14.08 of the CBA?

Requests must be made in writing to the Provost, stating your rationale for the review.

Equity Advocate's Corner

Elected as a voice for the common good and for accessible health care as a human right, I urge faculty to voice support for vulnerable colleagues and their families. When deliberating on labor contract priorities, please consider the following equitable proposals, which would also slow the university's loss of part-time and early/mid-career faculty:

- **Pay market-rate stipends to part-time faculty.**
Before securing a "living wage", we can at least achieve market-rate compensation, relative to regional competitors. We lose many part-time colleagues to institutions that offer superior compensation.
- **End health care inequality for full-time faculty.**
In 2022, most full-time faculty members hired *before* August 1, 2003 pay \$0 for the Oxford Premier plan. Faculty hired *after* August 1, 2003 (and some hired before) pay \$2,894.64 for this plan; a paying colleague who covers a spouse and/or children pays \$7,453.68.

In every contract since 2003, administration has promoted unequal regard for faculty health by demanding that newly hired faculty pay 20% of the premiums on "premier" or lesser quality insurance plans. The one exception to the 20% premium rate was in our recently expired contract, when union bargainers successfully reduced the portion of premiums that most full-time faculty pay to 17.2%. Further, administration uses this insurance inequality for bargaining leverage—a wedge between the 39% of faculty who receive "premier" care at no cost and the 61% of faculty who pay for "premier" or less quality plans. Even the recent agreement to temporarily off-set a small portion of insurance premium costs was structured in a way that gives administration power at the bargaining table.

Most faculty hired *after* August 1, 2003 (and some hired before) use annual salary increases to pay for health insurance premiums. Others opt for cheaper insurance of lesser quality from a spouse's employer or incur the federal penalty for not obtaining any insurance. But we can choose solidarity and remove the administration's wedge. We choose our union's bargaining priorities and we vote on contract proposals. We can do better, SJU!

Membership/Finances Update

As of November 14th 2022, the St. John's University Chapter of the AAUP has 125 paid members, 102 Full-Time members and 23 Adjunct members, for the current fiscal year (Sept. 1, 2022 - August 31, 2023).

This is comparable to the total number of members the Chapter had last year (Sept. 1, 2021 - August 31, 2022). Two years ago (Sept. 1, 2020 - August 31, 2021) there were significantly more members, totaling 232.

Membership is the sole source of support for the Chapter's expenses. A significant portion of the Chapter's expenses are for outside legal advice, which includes advice on legal wording related to contract negotiations and legal counsel in support of the Chapter's responsibility to protect the collective rights of faculty against the overreach of the administration.

More members means a stronger union and a stronger contract.

Please join or renew now! bit.ly/3A7copE



President: Fred Coccozzelli

VP: Frank LeVeness

Treasurer: David Rosenthal

Secy (corresponding): Elda Tsou

Secy (recording): Anthony Todman

Equity Advocate: Jeremy V. Cruz

Grievance Officers: G Ganter, Catherine Ruggieri

Know Your Health Insurance Change

Do you know what [the contract](#) says about health insurance?

Starting in January 2023, our health care provider will be Aetna POS 2.0 (not Oxford). Check with your provider(s) to avoid coverage gaps.

Per our recent contract, SJU administration can change the insurance provider so long as the new provider offers a “comparable plan.”

If you notice any coverage gaps, please contact Elda Tsou at tsoue@stjohns.edu. We are collecting and communicating gaps to the administration.

There is an option for “transition of care” (to remain insured by Oxford), but you must submit a separate [application form](#) to Aetna for approval and certain medical equipment is NOT covered.

Entering 2023, unless improved by new contract provisions, the *percentage* of SJU’s contribution to health care premiums will remain 80% (though the dollar amount of premiums may increase). SJU pays 80% of insurance premiums for approximately 61% of our insured faculty, most of whom were hired after August 1, 2003. The faculty member pays 20%.

Because of a stipend secured in our last contract, these faculty should be paying less than 20% of the total premium in 2022 only. (Double check your pay stub and let us know if you see a discrepancy.)

For approximately 39% of insured faculty, most of whom were hired before 2003, SJU continues to pay 100% of the premium.

Of St. John’s two levels of health care, most faculty members (91%) have selected the more expensive “premier” plan. Only 9% of faculty members have selected the less expensive “core” plan.

Know Your Retirement Benefits

Do you know what [the contract](#) says about retirement benefits?

Your retirement benefits have not changed.

If you were hired before June 1, 2012, when you contribute a minimum of 5% of your salary, SJU will contribute 10%.

If you were hired after June 1, 2012...

...and have taught less than 5 years, when you contribute a minimum of 5% of your salary, SJU will match that contribution at 5%

...and have taught more than 5 years, when you contribute 5% of your salary, SJU will contribute 10%

There is no university match for adjunct retirement benefits.

Grievances

If you think that you have experienced a contract violation, please contact one of our grievance officers:

G Ganter: ganterg@stjohns.edu

Catherine Ruggieri: ruggierc@stjohns.edu

Upcoming Meetings

Next General Meeting is Monday, 11/21/22, common hour:

<https://sju.webex.com/sju/j.php?MTID=m4647ec81c148a144ff8d542c341667d3>