UCHC-AAUP NEWS

Chapter Newsletter

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President's Column

By
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Do the Right Thing

Recent press reports have created some confusion about the impact of the newly created Hybrid Plan -- and particularly of employees who exercise their right to move from the ARP to the Hybrid Plan– on the finances of the State Colleges and Universities and the State. In fact, some un-informed reporters have even suggested that employees moving from the ARP to the Hybrid Plan cost the State money. This is absolutely incorrect. Here are the facts:

- In SEBAC 2011, the parties created a new Hybrid Plan, which provided what is for many employees a more rational and cost-effective retirement choice, while saving money for the State. Employees who move from the ARP to the Hybrid Plan pay the full actuarial cost of moving with respect to their past service -- every penny. If they move and don't immediately retire, their future service costs in the Hybrid Plan are less expensive than they are in ARP -- for newer employees much less expensive. Thus members who move from the ARP to the Hybrid Plan, or new members who choose the Hybrid Plan over the ARP or even over SERS, save the State money.
- Some of these rules are set by the federal government, not the State. Of particular importance here is that for employees whose salaries are partially funded by federal reimbursement, the federal government will reimburse based on the employee's salary, plus fringe benefits. (Continued on page 2)

UCHC-AAUP HIRES EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The UCHC-AAUP is delighted to announce the hiring of Michael Bailey as its first Executive Director.

Michael has been the Executive Director for the Michigan State Conference of the AAUP for the past 2½ years. Previous to that, he was located at the University of Rhode Island – AAUP Chapter for 10 years.

In Michigan, Michael coordinated the collective bargaining and advocacy activities of the twelve AAUP Chapters. He brings experience in defending faculty rights, negotiating contracts and managing collective bargaining agreements.

ARE YOU A MEMBER?

Presently, there are almost 400 members of the UCHC-AAUP – a very impressive number. Membership in the UCHC-AAUP allows you to vote on your collective bargaining agreement, elect chapter and national AAUP officers, serve on local and national AAUP committees and become a candidate for chapter and national office.

But more importantly, you will be joining your other UCHC-AAUP colleagues and faculty across the country who are fighting cutbacks in state funding of higher education, against corporate and legislative attempts to control faculty research and teaching and against threats to academic freedom and shared governance.

There are no additional costs for becoming a member. Connecticut State law states that the membership dues will be the same as the fee assessed for collective bargaining – the agency fee.

In order to become a member you need to sign a membership form, which may be found on the website. If you are unsure if you are a member, please call Susan in the UCHC-AAUP office. (860)-678-0826

There are many hundreds of millions of dollars, which come back to the State government based upon these reimbursements.

- The federal government will reimburse for fringe benefits for current employees at rates that include payments towards the unfunded liability of the pension plan to which the employee belongs, even if the particular employee had nothing to do with the unfunded liability of the plan. But the federal government will do so, only if the State applies the same rules for accounting for fringe benefits internally that it does for the federal government.
- The State's normal protocol is to attach to each SERS participating employee a pro-rata share of the State's unfunded liability for all of the SERS plans. This means that even though the majority of the unfunded liability for SERS plans is for Tier 1, all SERS participants are attributed with the same pro-rata share of overall SERS unfunded liability, regardless of the Tier in which they participate. Under this protocol, the federal government contributes hundreds of millions of dollars towards the unfunded liability of pension plans selected by state employees whose salary is partially reimbursed by the federal government.
- The State's normal protocol does not attach any unfunded pension liability to ARP participants, since the ARP does not promise any particular benefit and therefore does not have any unfunded liability. This protocol makes SERS appear to be much more expensive than the ARP even though the State's normal contributions towards the ARP are higher -- and for new employees much higher – than they are for SERS.
- The State also has unfunded liability for retiree health care. Due to an even more complex set of rules, the State attributes unfunded liability for retiree health care in a way which makes retiree health care for SERS participating employees appear to be over 7 times more expensive than it is for ARP participants, even though the benefits and ongoing costs per participant are identical.
- These protocols are also applied when adjuncts, tuition-funded, or other non-general funded employees are employed by higher education institutions to determine the amount that those institutions will reimburse the General Fund for benefits provided to those employees. The result is that higher education institutions are charged substantially higher fringe benefit rates for employees choosing SERS pension coverage than ARP coverage, even though the SERS coverage is actually costing the State less money.

- For determining the fringe benefit rate for the Hybrid Plan, the State treats the Hybrid Plan as though it were a SERS plan, and thus as though it has inherited all the unfunded liability which SERS plans have. This means, for purposes of fringe benefit protocols, the State attributes to each Hybrid Plan participant a pro-rata share of the unfunded liability of all of the SERS plans. For adjuncts, tuition-funded, and other non-general funded employees, this means that the higher education institutions reimburse the General Fund for their fringe benefits at a much higher rate than they do for ARP participants, even though the actual cost for those employees to the State is less expensive than it would be if they elected to participate in, or remain in, the ARP.

While these facts are complex and perhaps confusing, there is no confusion about the right result. ***The parties created the Hybrid Plan to provide an important new option for higher education employees and to provide a more efficient retirement choice that saves the State money. It was not created, and must not be allowed, to create a windfall for the General Fund at the expense of our Higher Education institutions.***

The higher education unions are working with SEBAC and the administration to undo this unintended consequence of the creation of the Hybrid Plan, and to achieve a more rational structure for charging higher education institutions for the fringe benefits provided to adjuncts, tuition-funded, and other non-general funded employees. The solution is not simple, and may take a little time. But there's no doubt that it's the right thing to do, and together, we must and we will make it happen.

WHAT DOES THE UCHC-AAUP DO?

Many of you have seen increases in salary and merit over the past year that can be directly attributed to negotiations by your collective bargaining council. But there are many other things the UCHC-AAUP does for you.

The UCHC-AAUP enforces the benefits and protections that have been negotiated in the collective bargaining agreement. These include grievance processing and due process timelines; exclusive representation for determining the terms and conditions of employment for members of the bargaining unit; strengthening a system of shared governance in areas of academic concerns; and working with the administration to mediate and resolve non-grievance issues.

The union will also keep you informed of state and national issues through our newsletter, website, email alerts, general membership meetings and events throughout the year.

In adapting a phrase, "it is not what the union can do for you, it is what you can do for the union." In order to function smoothly and efficiently, member participation in union activities is extremely important. Running for office, participating on committees and attending meetings will help strengthen our Chapter.

LOAN FORGIVENESS PROGRAM

The Direct Loan Public Service Loan Forgiveness Program was established with the passage of the College Cost Reduction and Access Act of 2007.

The Program allows eligible borrows to cancel the remaining balance of their Direct Loans after they have served full time at a public service organization for 10 years, while making 120 qualifying loan payments.

The UCHC is a qualified public service organization. You may qualify for this loan forgiveness program. Follow the link below or call the UCHC-AAUP office for more information.

Federal Student Loan Forgiveness Program
http://studentaid.ed.gov/repay-loans/forgiveness-cancellation/charts/public-service

Executive Director's Column

Faculty Rights and Union Representation

The Connecticut State Employees Relations Act (SERA) allows state employees to engage in concerted activity for, among other things, mutual aid and protection. This means that if an employee feels that when called to a meeting with the administration, 1) questions are asked to obtain information, and 2) The employee has a reasonable belief that discipline or adverse consequences may result, including discipline, the employees must assert his/her right to request union representation before the interview continues. When the request is made, the employer can:

1. Grant the delay and wait for representation
2. Deny the request and end the interview immediately
3. Give the employee a choice of: (a) having the interview without representation or (b) ending the interview.

The UCHC-AAUP suggests you end the interview immediately and call the union office for representation.

National AAUP Names New Executive Director

Washington, DC—The American Association of University Professors (AAUP) is pleased to announce that Julie Schmid has joined the Association as its executive director. The executive director, formerly called the general secretary, heads the national office staff. Schmid was formally the chief of staff of AFT-Wisconsin, which represents higher education faculty as well as K–12 teachers and public employees throughout the state. She has worked for other faculty unions around the country, including as coordinator for the Portland State University AAUP chapter and as an activist with COGS-UE Local 896, a union for graduate student employees at the University of Iowa, where Schmid earned her PhD. She served as a senior program officer in the AAUP's Department of Organizing and Services from 2002 to 2008.

AAUP STAFF

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2013-2014 EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

Officers

President –*David Gregorio,* Community Medicine and Healthcare

Vice President – *Kevin Claffey,* Cell Biology

Secretary/Treasurer – *Ann Cowan,* CCAM

Members

John Carson, Medical/Basic, CCAM

Carolyn Drazinic, At-large, Psychiatry

Frank Nichols, Dental, Oral Health and Diagnostic Sciences

Doug Oliver, At-large, Neuroscience

Joe Palmisano, Medical/Basic, Nephrology/Medicine

Jon Goldberg, Dental, Reconstructive Sciences

Les Bernstein, Medical/Basic, Neuroscience

Rebecca Andrews, Medical/Clinical, Medicine