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Our Pensions . . . by Jackie McNeilly, Editor



Our pensions are on everyone's mind. The other day I was in a division office when an adjunct instructor told me her concerns about ever receiving her pension. This is a concern of us all. We are part-time employees and our salaries are small and so are our pensions. We teach for the love of teaching but we still must have a secure future.

In the recent *SURS Advocate*, it is reported that the Fund's investment portfolio experienced its highest rate of return in 25 years for the Fiscal Year ending June 30, 2011, a stellar 23.8 % return, net of investment management fees, increasing the Fund's asset valuation by nearly \$2.1 billion.

There are many abuses to the system and we have to write to our legislators to enact legislation to safeguard our Fund.

The following is reprinted from Dec. 2011 *SURS Advocate* which should help you understand what is being legislated to safeguard our system:

Legislative Update Veto Session Ends Without Major Pension Reform

by: Jeff Houch, Legislative Liaison

The Illinois General Assembly adjourned the 2011 Veto Session on November 29 without tackling major pension reform legislation. Specifically, Senate Bill (SB) 512, which passed out of the House Personnel and Pensions Committee by a 5-4 vote on November 8, was not brought to the floor of the House for a full vote.

SB 512, commonly referred to in Springfield as "Pay to Stay," was introduced in the 2011 Spring Session. Two amendments to the bill were filed that were similar in concept with a few key differences. SB 512 would have required participants who earned service



prior to January 1, 2011, (Tier 1 participants) to choose one of the following benefit formulas:

- The Traditional or Portable benefit (Tier 1);
- The revised benefit plan (Tier 2); or
- The Self-Managed Plan (SMP)

Participants beginning work on or after January 1, 2011, would choose to participate in either the revised benefit plan or the SMP. Participants in the Tier 2 plan would contribute an amount equal to Tier 2 total normal cost less 6 percent (the 6 percent represents the state's share of normal cost). Tier 1 and Tier 2 participants would make their initial elections by June 30, 2013, or within the first six months of employment. Inactive participants would make their initial election within six months of returning to service. Participants who failed to make an election would have defaulted into the Tier 2 plan. Participants could have elected to move to a different, lower tier of benefits, but could not have moved up. The benefit election would not have applied to the Self-Managed Plan participants who elected to participate in the SMP before July 1, 2013.

Under House Amendment #2, Tier 1 participants that chose to remain in Tier 1 would have increased their contribution rate from eight percent of salary to 15.31 percent of salary beginning in Fiscal Year 14. This fixed rate of 15.31 percent represents the total normal cost of Tier 1 less six percent (the six percent represents the state's contribution to normal cost). Then in Fiscal Year 17, Tier 1 participant contributions would be recalculated to reflect the Tier 1 total normal cost less six percent, but such an increase would not cause Tier 1 participant contributions to exceed 17.31 percent of salary.

This is one of the key differences of House Amendment #2 when compared with House

Amendment #1, as House Amendment #1 would provide for such recalculation periods to occur every three years. Said differently, under House Amendment #2, Tier 1 participant contributions would only increase twice (Fiscal Year 14 and Fiscal Year 17) and the total Tier 1 participant contribution would not exceed 17.31 percent of salary. House Amendment #1 would increase Tier 1 participant contributions every three years with no limitation on how much that contribution could increase.

The General Assembly will likely revisit pension reform during Spring Session 2012. SURS is gearing up by talking to legislators and encouraging them to meet with those at the heart of the debate, like participants and retirees, state university and college leaders, and retirement associations.

HB 3813 - Pension Loopholes Closed

On November 29, the General Assembly passed HB3813 that closes several loopholes in the pension statute. The legislation, sponsored by Rep. Tom Cross (R-84) and Sen. Kwame Raoul (D-13), bans future union leaders on leave from public jobs from collecting pensions from both systems or from basing their public pension salaries on salaries earned while in union leadership positions. It also eliminates the practice of allowing union leaders entry into TRS by performing minimal teaching duties. The bill now goes to Gov. Quinn for his signature.

A call for Adjuncts to attend Monthly Board Meetings. . .

Our attendance is important at the **monthly board meetings**. It shows we are concerned about our College.

We are asking each adjunct to attend at least one meeting per year. The dates are:

January 17, 2012
February 21, 2012
March 20, 2012
April 17, 2012
May 22, 2012
June 26, 2012
August 21, 2012
September 18, 2012
October 16, 2012
November 13, 2012
December 11, 2012
7 pm, Board Room, DesPlaines.

Please check in with Barbara Dayton to let her know you are present.

Myths about the AFA

Myth #1: I pay dues therefore I am a member of the AFA.

Truth: You may pay IEA/NEA dues, but you are not an AFA member until you fill out two forms for membership. These can be obtained from Cheryl Brown, CBrown@oakton.edu

Myth #2: All part-time faculty are covered under the AFA contract.

Truth: In order to be covered under the AFA contract an adjunct must teach at least 6 hours once every 3 semesters. Only people covered under the contract have grievance rights. In other words not all part-timers are covered under the contract.

Myth #3: All part-time faculty vote on the contract between the AFA and the Administration.

Truth: Only members have input and are entitled to vote on the contract between the AFA and the Administration.

Need a little extra cash?

Need a little extra cash or need to log in some professional development time? Consider the Problem Based Learning Course. I took this course and have used it successfully in my class. The information for this class follows:

PBL is an eight week course facilitated by Majid Ghadiri and Ruth Williams, will meet every other Tuesday afternoon (1:00pm - 3:00pm) starting January 24th. In this seminar, you will learn how to use the PBL methodology to enhance your faculty 'toolbox,' transform how you teach, and how your students learn. Enrollment is limited to 20 registrants, and will be handled on a first-come/first-served basis. A waiting list will be maintained. Please contact the facilitators if you would like more details about the topics or expectations.

Faculty participants who successfully complete these 8-week seminars will be paid for one overload LHE. Full-time faculty may choose instead to use this as credit for lane advancement. Participation in professional development seminars counts towards continued eligibility for adjunct faculty. PBL is

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From Beverly Stanis, Grievance Chairman . . .

Please send your comments/suggestions/complaints regarding our current contract to: Beverly Stanis at besbus221@comcast.net. It is not too soon to start to prepare for the negotiations for our next contract.

Remember that all adjuncts who have taught 22 semesters or more will be sent a Commitment to Teach form. This form provides significant contract protections. Please do not waste this hard earned right. Fill out the form and send it on time to protect your rights!

Adjunct Profile . . .

Larry Marks, Ph.D.
Adjunct Psychology and Global Studies
Instructor

There's a reason Larry Marks captured the 2009 Ray Hartstein Award for Outstanding Professional Excellence in Teaching. He has nothing but the highest expectations for students who enter his classroom.

I definitely consider myself a rigorous teacher. To me, there is nothing wrong with being demanding. No matter what profession students choose, they will need to have verbal, writing and business skills. By the end of the semester, my students improve tremendously in each of those areas.

One of the things I require from my students is to write a 30-page term paper with a group. Usually when students hear this, they run for cover since many of them have never written such a lengthy report before. At the end of the semester, students will come up to me and tell me they didn't think they could do it. I always smile and tell them, "Surprise! You did it!" My goal is not to torture students by having them write long papers or give oral presentations, but to train them to be successful in the workplace.

I must be doing something right. Receiving the Hartstein award made me so proud. To me, it's about the symbolism. When an organization puts money behind something, it shows how important it is to that organization. I also have gained a new-found status. After winning the award, I received e-mails from teachers I didn't know asking me how to handle certain situations. It's quite an honor to be respected not only by my students, but my colleagues as well.