

Oakton AFA News

Oakton Adjunct Faculty Association NEA/IEA

AFA Website: www.oaktonafa.org

Office: Room 2470—ext. 2193

Special points of interest:

- Upcoming Membership meeting this Sunday
- College financial situation better than previously expected
- Union representation at state and local level strong

Spring Membership Meeting This Sunday

On Sunday, April 11th at 4:30, those members who RSVP'ed will gather at Riggio's Pizza at Oakton and Milwaukee. This membership meeting will feature a speaker from Premier Credit Union. (Our previous credit Union, Maine, has merged into Premier.) Chester Kullis,

who has been organizing the event, recommends the website www.dropmybank.com to learn about the advantages of credit unions over banks.

At the meeting we will also have elections for union officers. If you would like to run for an offi-

cer position, contact John Spalletto in Division four.

Since we've had several meetings at Riggio's, we've become used to the process. As a small request, the union asks that any special orders are paid individually.

Update on Oakton's Financial Picture

In the previous newsletter, it was reported that the Adjunct Faculty Union's board had been attending meetings with the administration and the leadership of the other unions and affected campus groups to discuss the financial situation of the college. At the beginning of those meetings, there was an expected shortfall of approximately \$6.5 million this year, with expectations for the crisis to continue in coming years. There have been several developments and austerity measures put in place which have improved the picture for this year.

On the revenue front, tuition will increase for our students, but only five dollars per credit hour instead of the expected 6 dollars. The leasing of an airwave license the college owned to a cellular communications company will bring in another large bit of money. Finally, the state did come through with a check for 1.4 million, by all accounts "unexpectedly." Future moneys from the state are still a matter of projection.

There will be austerity measures also. These will range from attempts to cut utility cost, delays in filling staff positions, equipment and supply constrictions, and even fewer sabbaticals for full-timers. Adjuncts will notice and be affected by this renewed attention to budget in many areas. One area to watch for is in average class size. There will be more attention given to reducing the number of low-enrollment classes.

There will be more information on this given at the membership meeting.

As a snapshot of conditions at other state schools, it is worth remembering U of I Champaign is continuing with its furlough plans, while at Governor's State University the faculty just ratified a new contract. Most sobering, though, is the news that 45 employees at Chicago State University received layoff notices.



Barbara Dayton Wins National Award

Our president, who has led the Adjunct Faculty Association through several contracts, leading the way in the state for part-time representation at many colleges, has been recognized at

the national level for her work. Barbara Dayton has been awarded the Davenport Award by the National Council on Higher Education. Needless to say, she is the first adjunct to win this prestigious

honor as an adjunct.

The award was for her efforts at gaining recognition for part-time faculty.



State Pension Changes

In an extremely rushed legislative move, major changes were made to 13 state pension systems, including the State University Retirement System which we all fall under. Presently, a two-tiered pension system is being constructed. Those of us who are already in the system fall under the old rules. New hires will see changes such as a ten year, instead of 5 year, vesting time frame. Full retirement will only be available at 67 years of age to the new hires. Pensions will be valued based on the highest eight consecutive years of pay instead of the present four. Additionally, there will be limits on working other state jobs while collecting a pension from the state.

RA in Rosemont

The AFA was represented by Barbara Dayton, Steve Brody, Tracy Foster, Elena Garcia-Ansani, and Cheryll Wollin at the state-level Representatives Assembly held over a March weekend in Rosemont. They reported that the major topic of conversation was the state budget crisis, with school reform coming in second. State pensions was also discussed both in official sections and in conversation.

One of the most important votes taken was for a raise in dues next year. Your representatives voted against the raise, but it passed. The raise goes to the state level union, the IEA, and is out of the local's control. The vote was to raise full-time member dues \$17. Our adjuncts have been paying one-quarter dues, so we can expect to see a \$4.25 due increase next year. It is not known at this time if the national level, the NEA, will raise its dues.

Our thanks are due to those who sacrificed a full weekend to represent us so formidably.

Not only will these changes create a two class system for state workers (a condition we adjuncts may be used to), but they have been designed without adjuncts in mind. Our state colleges have become dependent on adjuncts, many of whom are retired professional educators.

Presently, opinions seem to be that the benefits we have earned to this point are protected by the Illinois state constitution. The state does seem to have the right to change the rules for new hires. One grey area that must be watched and is being publicly discussed is whether the state has the right to change the *future* earning of benefits of those who were hired under the old rules.

As a union, we must be concerned with the conditions for our next generation of workers. Please be active in contacting your representatives when the state union puts out a call.

Adjunct Office Changes

An architect, with advice from adjuncts, is looking at improvements that can be made to the adjuncts' offices. Particular attention is being paid to the Des Plaines office near Divisions one and two. If you have any quick fix suggestions, or longer term redesign hints, drop a note to Barbara Dayton in Div. four or leave a message on the union phone, the number of which is in the masthead.

Membership

As of this printing, our membership stands at 295. This is tantalizing close to a landmark of 300. As enrollments of students rise, we should be able to break through 300 in the fall.