



EQUITY ☆ OPPORTUNITY ☆ EXCELLENCE

AAP Advocate

Association of Academic Professionals
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
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Just Ask: Your FAQs about AAP and an AP Union

AAP is conducting a petition card drive to move toward union representation and collective bargaining rights for academic professionals. Members have talked to many APs over recent months, and following are some of the common questions we've encountered.

If APs are represented by a union, won't that just protect mediocrity? The common perception is that Civil Service employees are so protected by unions like AFSCME that it is impossible to terminate or discipline employees who are poor performers.

Unions are primarily concerned about protecting excellent employees from unfair termination and about unfair treatment and reduction or withdrawal of benefits. Union members decide what terms should be in a negotiated contract. APs would determine what AAP would bargain for in a contract; they could call for a contract that would reward excellent employees in a fair manner based on assessments, rather than protect mediocre employees.

The Civil Service system, which was set up to avoid patronage and other abuses, long preceded the unionization of the clerical staff. Job titles, bumping rights, pay grades, and merit board appeals are Civil Service protections. The AFSCME contracts and other collective agreements retained these protections while adding the right to appeal, equitable work hours, guaranteed grievance procedures, procedures of progressive discipline, and guaranteed levels of pay and benefits.

Staff employees are protected by federal law, state Civil Service rules, and their collective bargaining agreements. APs have none of these protections or rights and therefore can be hired and terminated "at will." APs can also be forced on a regular basis to work longer than 8-hour days and more than 40-hour weeks. The movement of titles from Civil Service to AP has made it easier to make "special hires" because there are not as many safeguards as there are in Civil Service. These hires could not have been made—as easily—under Civil Service rules.

If you haven't signed and returned a petition card yet, why not? We'd like to hear your questions or concerns! Why not call today or stop by our holiday happy hour on December 18? (See inside!)

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The Association of Academic Professionals is a group of academic professional employees at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign that is attempting to organize for the purpose of collective bargaining. The AAP is affiliated with the Illinois Education Association and the National Education Association. We are part of a national movement of academic professionals who seek collective bargaining rights.

In order to maintain and improve on the benefits of working at this great university, we believe that we need to organize so that our voice commands attention when administrators make decisions that affect our jobs.

The AAP seeks to ensure certain rights such as:

- ☆ clear paths for career development and advancement
- ☆ third-party resolution of disputes with supervisors
- ☆ fair, timely, and consistent evaluation procedures
- ☆ safeguards against arbitrary dismissal
- ☆ rewards for good job performance
- ☆ compensation for mandatory overtime
- ☆ paid and unpaid leaves
- ☆ *a meaningful voice in decisions that affect our employment*

AAP Advocate—UIUC Association of Academic Professionals

AAP Officers:

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IEA STAFF: Dan Chambers

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Won't a union interfere with the special relationship I have with my supervisor? I like and respect her and she likes and respects me. We are professionals.

A union would be invisible in a situation where you have a good relationship with your supervisor. Contract negotiations are done at the campus level. But if you have an abusive supervisor, you can bring in your union. Currently, you have very little recourse or protection.

Even with good performance reviews, your situation could change overnight if your supervisor leaves. Your special relationship could end without notice, and you have no protections or recourse unless you have a collective bargaining agreement to protect you. A collective bargaining agreement can set a tone of respect and protection that will permit professional employee/employer relations to flourish.

I get good raises because my supervisor respects the work I do and my dedication. With an AP collective bargaining agreement, won't everyone get the same pay increase despite the merit of performance?

You are fortunate that your supervisor recognizes your worth and that your unit makes it a priority to compensate you fairly. Many APs are doing excellent work and are not rewarded for their efforts, while others seem to be rewarded because of their title or their friendships.

With a collective bargaining agreement, merit can still be used for pay increases, but the way merit is assessed becomes public and equitable. If APs think that merit is important to salary structure, we can negotiate a contract that incorporates merit increases, but we must also set up an effective system of assessment. Right now assessing merit for pay increases is up to the department management and supervisors without any University-wide standards. The most inequitable system is one based on merit but with no system of evaluation.

If we are covered by a union contract, will I lose the flexibility I have now to record my vacation and sick days? My supervisor leaves it up to me to determine when I take sick leave and vacation.

A collective bargaining agreement will not change any flexibility you may have. Now you are required to report your sick leave and vacation each year. How you keep track of it is up to your supervisor, not you. Indeed, Banner, the new University computer system, may require a more stringent monthly accounting in the near future.

If we get an AP union, won't I have to go on strike?

Unions rarely strike. The vast majority of union work is dealing with day-to-day concerns of members, negotiating for better pay and working conditions, and amicably solving disputes between supervisors and their employees. However, the news media, TV and films always seem to focus on strikes because they are more dramatic. A strike is a last resort when all else has failed.

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I am a long-term employee of the University, and even if I was terminated I would have a year of notice to look for another position. Can AAP negotiate better protection than that?

The length of terminal contracts is indeed a benefit in a bad situation, but the Senate can vote to eliminate this benefit. Since APs have no vote in the Senate, APs do not get to decide on this matter. Visiting APs, in fact, are not covered by the termination notice policy, and a visiting AP who becomes permanent must start at zero accruing time toward terminal notification rights. With this benefit being part of a union contract, the University would have to negotiate with us over any change in benefits. APs get to decide.

I sympathize with the issues AAP is raising, but what if I sign the card and then am labeled as a troublemaker? My job may be jeopardized.

Your supervisor won't see the cards; therefore, he/she won't know you signed one. In addition, the Illinois Labor Board protects you from being harassed or dismissed because you signed a card. Signing the card is the first step in protecting yourself and your job.

It is hard to take a stand, but we are trying to get a collective bargaining agreement precisely so you won't have to fear for your job just because you want to exercise your rights. Professionals cannot live in fear and feel good about their jobs.

Why should I support AAP? I am a professional. Professionals don't belong to unions.

Professionals, more than other groups, appreciate the value of associations and job-related societies. Professionalism is synonymous with collegiality and community of interest. The Association of Academic Professionals is just that—a group with a common interest aimed at building community, collegiality, and collective security. AAP and other associations are a way to effect change, exert pressure for common rights, develop relationships, improve professionalism, and share the burdens and pressures of professionalism.

By supporting AAP, you have control of its actions and goals. AAP is affiliated with the National Education Association/Illinois Education Association (NEA/IEA), which represents millions of teachers and educators across the country. Supporting the AAP is part of being a professional in higher education.

Having an AP union assures that we will be at the table when resources are allocated.

What has happened at other universities that have unionized APs? Are there "professional" unions after which the AAP could be patterned?

Michigan State University and the University of Maine both have AP unions. You can look at their contracts at <http://umpsa.maine.edu/> and <http://www.msu.edu/user/msuapa/>, respectively. Our contracts could easily reflect what you see here. It depends on the will of our members. ■

Terminal Contracts Issued to UIUC Academic Professionals, by Gender

This data was distributed at a recent meeting of the Council of Academic Professionals. The 82 T-contracts reported on are those issued for budgetary reasons as of August 19, 2003. ■

<i>Gender</i>	<i>No. of T-contracts</i>	<i>Total # of APs*</i>
Female	51	1625
Male	31	1724




* Taken from Campus Totals data found at <http://www.dmi.uiuc.edu/cp/>.

Ask Anyone...

...What Are Faculty Saying about AAP?

I support the AAP because it will make this a better university: a better place to work for academic professionals, so we **attract and keep the best people**; a more just and democratic workplace, one we can proudly present as a model to our students; an institution that takes seriously **basic human needs—safety, child care, health care, equitable pay**. This will be a better and happier place for me to teach and to do my research when all workers, whatever the color of their collars, have strong and effective unions.—

Walt Robinson, professor of atmospheric sciences

  **AAP Holiday Party**
@ the Bread Company
on Goodwin in Urbana
Dec. 18, 5 to 7 pm
Bring a friend! 

Ask AAP

Vacation Payout in Terminal Contracts

Q ■ In my terminal contract letter, a paragraph stated that I was supposed to work with my supervisor to make sure I used all my vacation time before the end of the contract. I have the maximum of 48 days vacation plus whatever time I accumulated. Can the University force employees who are retiring or leaving the system to use accumulated vacation time?

A ■ According to a source in Academic Human Resources, a department can request that accumulated vacation days be used at the convenience of the AP before the person leaves the position, but the unit cannot refuse to pay the AP for vacation days that are not used. ■

Ask Anyone...

...What Are Faculty Saying about AAP?

Active and strong unions, and the traditions of solidarity they embody, are **a crucial component of a democratic and just society**. Through unions, working people of all kinds can have a collective input into their conditions, remuneration and security, as well as contribute to the effectiveness of their institutions. In times like the present when institutions such as ours face severe budget pressures, it will, in spite of the best intentions, often be the weak and unorganized who lose out. I strongly support the current AAP union campaign, and believe its **success will enhance the overall educational mission** of the University.—*Anand Pillay, Swanlund Chair and Professor of Mathematics*

It's Personal: A T-contract Story

For years I helped faculty across campus set up Blackboard and other courseware, and I wrote about instructional computing. I worked with so many people, I could not walk on campus without saying hello. But thanks to budget cuts last year, I was dismissed with a T-contract.

The worst part was that the supervisor who let me go knew that I was in the process of buying a home and said nothing to me. I was told of my dismissal the day I was closing on my old home, in which I had lived for 25 years. My husband died in March, and I had to sell the new house I lived in for only a few weeks.

The other bad part about the job loss was being told it “wasn’t personal.” I love this University. It was very personal to me. I take some comfort in knowing that the job died with me, that I will not be replaced.

When I got my notice of dismissal, I went into depression. Realizing what was happening to me, I went to the doctor, who gave me an antidepressant and set up an appointment with a psychologist. The

antidepressant kicked in and was very helpful. It took six weeks to get the appointment with the psychologist. During that time I received a lot of support from a dear faculty friend and my sister. Although my sister lives in California, she encouraged me to hang through this period of change.

I would have to prove age discrimination to contest the dismissal, and I cannot. I don’t have the statistics to know if there is age discrimination, but I have heard from one manager on campus that when told he had to let someone go, he picked the older worker “because he could retire early” rather than lay off the 25-year-old worker.

It is not fair to either person, but there should be some more worthy criterion than just age.

People can land on their feet after these ordeals. I know of an employee in his 20s who was laid off and ended up in the psychiatric unit of Covenant. Believe it or not, he is now out and was rehired! And my situation is stable now, too. I retired from the U of I and took a very good position at Boeing in St. Louis. I grew up in St. Louis and have family and friends there.

If life is change, then I have lived a lot this year. I wish you all well in your efforts to make academic professionals a stronger force on this campus. I came to this University as a starry eyed student and left feeling beaten down by the politics of this place.

Two words of wisdom: First, have a dog or two to keep you balanced and aware that life can be fun and pretty silly. Second, beware whom you confide in at work! ■

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