



EQUITY ☆ OPPORTUNITY ☆ EXCELLENCE

AAP Advocate

Association of Academic Professionals
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
Affiliate, Illinois Education Association (IEA/NEA)
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Lawmakers Are Targeting Your Benefits

Pensions and benefits for today's public education employees, as well as those of the future, are under heightened attack in the State Capitol.

In February Governor Rod Blagojevich urged a joint session of the General Assembly to adopt recommendations that include reducing pension benefits for current members of the Teachers' Retirement System (TRS) and the State Universities' Retirement System (SURS).

IEA President Anne Davis urged the governor and lawmakers to seek creative solutions to the state's problems that won't have a negative impact on teachers and educational quality in Illinois. Among the proposals the governor supports:

- Having the state reduce its contribution to the five state retirement systems by \$750 million in projected savings and use the money to shore up the 2005 state budget, a maneuver that would require a change in the pension funding law.
- Requiring local employers of current TRS and SURS members to fund increased pension benefit costs resulting from pay increases exceeding 3% during the final four years of employment. The governor also proposed reducing the Money Purchase Plan benefit for current SURS members.
- Establishing a two-tier system of benefits for newly hired workers which includes the following reduced pension benefits:
 - Reducing the annual cost-of-living increase from 3 percent to 2 percent on the first \$24,000 of a retiree's annuity
 - Requiring future employees to work until age 60 if they want to receive full benefits
 - Eliminating the Money Purchase Plan benefit for new SURS members

IEA President Anne Davis met with reporters after the budget address and reminded the governor and the members of the General Assembly that reducing benefits for education employees would have the result of diminishing overall education quality in our state. ■

Reprinted from the Illinois Education Association Web site

Take It to Springfield!

Our retirement benefits
are under attack!

Join us on the IEA bus
on Capitol Lobby Day,
Wednesday, April 13,
to talk to your legislators
about the value of higher
education and the
University of Illinois.

More inside.

The Association of Academic Professionals is a group of academic professional employees at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign that is organizing 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:

Chairperson: **Jenny Barrett**, *Psychology*
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Bobbi Trist, *Integrative Biology*

IEA Staff: **Gene Vanderport**, **Steve Vaughan**, and **David Vitoff**

'VAP' Election Approaches

Visiting APs to Vote on April 18

For about 350 Academic Professionals with a visiting prefix in their job title, April 18 is a date of great significance, the day they will vote on

Visiting APs: Mark your calendars for April 18.

collective bargaining. Visiting APs and the University itself will look back on this day as the beginning of an important new relationship, one that will provide a good number of APs—through a legally binding process—a *place at the table* in decisions affecting their professional lives.

We urge University administration to abandon its attempts to squelch a vote on even the *question* of a union for visiting APs and adopt a more collegial attitude toward its hard-working employees.

As with the GEO battles, an effort by the administration to deny the inevitable is more than a waste of scarce resources and attention—it is an effort to repudiate the democratic right of citizens to choose. ■

Some FAQs on the VAP Election

I hear there is a union election coming soon. Who will be voting?

Visiting Academic Professionals (VAPs) will be voting on April 18 to determine whether they want to exercise their right to collectively bargain the terms of their employment via a union. There are about 350 VAPs in departments across campus.

Why are only visiting APs voting?

Visiting APs are among the most vulnerable employees at the University. They have virtually no job security. Unlike non-visiting APs who, depending on their length of service, can earn up to 12 months of advance notice of non-reappointment, VAPs receive no advance notice.

They are also not eligible for the employee relocation program that helps locate new positions on campus for non-visiting APs who are laid off. Verbal assurances that a VAP position will be continued or converted to a non-visiting position are non-binding. While *all* unrepresented APs are “at will” employees (wholly subject to employer discretion regarding job status), those with a visiting title have even fewer rights and are most in need of the sort of job security, grievance procedure, and due process provisions a union contract can provide.

In general, what are the benefits of forming a union?

- Real decision-making power regarding the terms of our employment.
- A contract with employee rights clearly defined and a grievance clause ending in binding, outside arbitration to resolve disputes.
- Credibility: being taken seriously when we raise concerns.
- The resources, expertise, and assistance of the IEA-NEA.
- The rights and protections of the Illinois Educational Labor Relations Act.
- Fair treatment. Consistent policies. Respect.

For additional FAQs about the VAP election, please visit the AAP Web site.

Ask AAP, continued from page 4

If you cannot get relief within your unit, you can make an appointment at Academic Human Resources (AHR; 333-7466). Although the campus no longer employs an ombudsperson independent of AHR, Mary Ellen O'Shaughnessey is the person within that office who attempts to fill the ombudsperson role. If she suspects illegal discrimination or ADA or FMLA violations, she will inform legal counsel and take steps to ensure that the supervisor is following University policy and procedures. If she hears multiple complaints about the same person, she will bring the situation to the attention of AHR director Peg Rawles.

If you still feel your concerns have not been addressed, you can file a grievance with the Council of Academic Professionals (CAP), an elected body of academic professionals.

See www.cap.uiuc.edu/pages/griev.html for the CAP grievance procedures. CAP may agree to investigate grievances that do not relate to legally prohibited discrimination or harassment (e.g., based on race or age), which fall under the purview of the Office of Equal Opportunity and Access (www.eoa.uiuc.edu).

Unfortunately, CAP's recommendations as a result of a grievance investigation are not binding and the chancellor can choose to ignore them. Nevertheless filing a CAP grievance is useful because documentation makes it more difficult for your supervisor to mistreat you or others. Not reporting mistreatment by supervisors ends up protecting bad supervisors.

For charges of discrimination that are not resolved on campus, you can file a grievance with the Illinois Department of Human Rights (www.state.il.us/dhr/), which also registers your complaint with the federal Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (www.eeoc.gov). You should consider hiring a lawyer to help you with a time-consuming and technical charge of discrimination. (AAP members have access to free legal counsel through the Illinois Education Association.)

If your grievance concerns ethics violations or retaliation for speaking out about ethics and violations of law (whistle blowing), you can lodge a grievance with the University Ethics Office (ethics.uillinois.edu).

Unfortunately APs have no legally binding contract that spells out your rights and specifies a grievance procedure with binding arbitration.

If you would like to discuss a job-related concern, write to aap@shout.net and ask to meet with the AAP grievance chair.

Also remember that the University provides free and absolutely private counseling for you or any member of your family at the Faculty Staff Assistance Program (244-5312) www.admin.uiuc.edu/fsap/. This office does not mediate between supervisors and employees, but sometimes it helps to talk to someone about your work problem and the effect it is having on you and your family members. ■

Document your actions.

Documentation helps establish a pattern of behavior.

New UI President Proud to Work with Unions

"When I was a young man, I worked for six years at Cummings Engine Co. in Columbus, Ind., a diesel engine company. When I left, the officers of the diesel workers union came into my office and handed me a little memento and said they wanted me to know that they found me honest and fair.

They thanked me for my years of service. We had been through some very hard times together. Earning the respect of hard-working people is something I'm proud of.

I'd like to do that always."—Joe White, President of the University of Illinois, quoted in *Inside Illinois*, Vol. 24, No. 15, Feb. 17, 2005



Lobby Day Is April 13

Our retirement benefits are under attack! Some proposed changes, if implemented, would cut the pensions of current employees. You can make a difference by talking to your legislators. Help them understand the importance to the state of adequate funding for higher education and the University of Illinois.

Plan to participate in the Illinois Education Association's Capitol Lobby Day, Wednesday, April 13. We will be chartering a bus to go to Springfield to lobby on the behalf of higher education.

To reserve your seat on the bus please contact AAP (aap@shout.net). ■

This month's answer provided by Geoff Bant.

Send your questions to aap@shout.net.



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**Read about one of the new
UI President's proudest
accomplishments, page 3**

Ask AAP

*How do I resolve a
problem with my boss?*

Q: My boss is being really vindictive and unprofessional in her behavior toward me and my coworkers. I think she is setting me and others up to be terminated. It is making my work life unbearable. What can I do to defend myself and bring her behavior to the attention of those who might be able to correct her and make our office more professional?

A: In this case and many other situations there are a number of actions you can take to register your concerns and seek relief. First, you can try talking to your supervisor and making your concerns known. Sometimes supervisors have no idea how their actions are perceived.

Your performance appraisal meeting, which is coming soon, could provide an appropriate opportunity to discuss your concerns. If your boss does not seem to acknowledge or understand your concerns, you should write a summary of your discussion that states your complaint and ask to have it included in your personnel file.

If you can't resolve the problem with your immediate supervisor, make an appointment to speak with a higher authority in your unit, such as a personnel manager, dean, or department head (but don't expect them to take your side). Ask for the meeting in writing and briefly describe your concerns; follow the meeting with a letter summarizing the meeting and what was said on both sides.

It is important to document your actions and the substance of meetings because then they cannot be ignored. Documentation also helps to establish a pattern of behavior. If your boss is acting unprofessionally with others who also document their concerns, it becomes harder for department heads to overlook bad supervision.

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