



Universities of Maine Professional Staff Association

UMPSA Newsletter 12/04

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Message from the President:

Jeff Dorman, former UMPSA President, has resigned. His resignation becomes effective December 10th. Jeff will be leaving the University to finish his degree and prepare for his CPA exam. We wish him well in his endeavors and thank him for all he has done for the UMPSA association.

Since I will finish the term as the new UMPSA President, I thought it would be good if I introduced myself to UMPSA unit members. I am Kerry Ann Sullivan. I have been working at the University since 1993. I started as a classified employee and worked my way up to my current professional position as a Computer & Database Specialist II at Muskie School of Public Service, Institute for Health Policy. I have been involved in UMPSA since classified as a professional. I have been on the UMPSA negotiation team for the last two contracts, a campus grievance representative, Vice-President, and Co-Chair for membership at USM. I have also attended Higher Education Conference in Seattle last year.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions, concerns, or would like to discuss any of your benefits.

Kerry Ann Sullivan
UMPSA President
Campus Phone: 780-4124
Email: kerrys@usm.maine.edu

Introduction:

It has been a long time since UMPSA has had a regular newsletter. The UMPSA Executive Board hopes that this will be the beginning of regular communication within UMPSA and the beginning of a constructive dialog on issues concerning professionals.

Our hope through this and the next few newsletters is threefold:

1. To help define UMPSA as an professional organization as well as it's goals and opportunities
2. To help define UMPSA as a professional organization and raise awareness of what it does
3. To communicate the importance of your participation

We appreciate member support, and encourage you to participate, either actively through campus executive boards and statewide committees. or by keeping in contact with your campus and state officers. We need to know what your issues are in order to represent you effectively.

For those who have yet to join, we ask that you read this and subsequent newsletters with an open mind. Those that participate in UMPSA have seen much evidence showing the importance of our organization. Unfortunately, all 1350 professionals cannot participate in negotiations, be at the Board of Trustees meetings, or travel to see how things operate on other campuses. What good is having information if you cannot share it with the organization? Before we get into details, we ask that you keep a few things in mind while you read these newsletters.

First, our intention is to have a positive perspective. Everyone in UMPSA understands that University administration is not malicious. They are doing their jobs to run a department, campus, and system. To vilify them is counter productive and is acting like the stereotypes we hear about some union/association members. Neither side wants to hear it.

Second, the association is the only legal bargaining organization for the professionals in the University system. It is in the state statute. Despite personal opinions, labor associations are part of a checks and balance system. You are a part of this system whether you are part of an organization labor union, part of a professional association that maintains a positive/constructive relationship with management, or whether you choose not participating and put the fate of your salaries and benefits in someone else's hands.

Finally, the UMPSA executive board is genuinely concerned with our association's welfare. We will expand on the reasons through the next few newsletters. Our purpose here is to hopefully convey the importance of participation and inspire some of you to take part in the evolution of your University system work environment before the opportunity no longer exists.

With that said, thank you for reading this far, and here is an update of the major activities UMPSA is doing on your behalf right now.

Contract Negotiations:

As of last October, UMPSA is enjoying the first year and a half in about a decade when it has not been in contract negotiations. UMPSA has Nancy Fletcher from UMPI to thank for an excellent job as Chief Negotiator. Nancy kept the team organized and on track, increasing salaries by 5.5% over the term of the contract, and protecting health care benefits in a very difficult economic situation. We will be looking at contract negotiations again in the next few months.

Our current contract expires on June 30, 2005. The contract is binding until we negotiate another one. That means that after January 2005, there will be no increases in healthcare costs, but it also means that we will not see any increases in salary nor improvements to our work environment either.

UMPSA has assembled the next negotiating team and they will begin contract negotiations in January of 2005. Your Chief Negotiator is Jen Moreau from UM. There will be a survey of members in the next couple of months and a general comment link on the web site for anyone interested in making suggestions. Until that is set up, people can email me with comments.

Please understand that your participation in completing surveys is an integral part of our efforts. Only dues paying members will receive the survey and have a say in what your contract will consist of.

Health Care:

UMPSA and the University have finally finished the 2002-2005 contract. Although it has been in effect for the last year, we left a re-opener to negotiate healthcare should the situation change. We agreed to accept an 18% increase in healthcare premiums in January of 2005 based on the Anthem projections. That increase has been reduced by over 8%. The savings is about \$150 a year for those with family coverage. In our current arrangement, we pay 10% of the total monthly insurance premium, but we have it tied to a dollar figure in the contract. As long as the contract is in existence, the University cannot increase health care premiums and co-pays without our permission. We had lower healthcare costs than the non-represented professionals during the 2003 fiscal year thanks to our contract. As a result, those of you with family plans saved about \$500. The short version of all this is that we renegotiated the contract based on new information to cut the January increase in your healthcare premiums by about half.

Salary Study:

UMPSA has a three-member salary study committee working with the University to sort out the details of the proposed compensation plan. The committee consists of Cassandra Fitzherbert from USM, Lynda Kinley from UMF, and Bruce Littlefield from UM. These three employees have been working with UMS, and have been dealing with professional salary issues for a long time. They have put in a great deal of time and effort to move this salary study as far as it has come already, and are continuing to work toward a fair and equitable salary system.

The process is currently in mediation. We have a state labor board appointed mediator who's job it is to bring both parties together. Knowing our history in negotiating with the University, our last negotiating team put a caveat in the contract that gives this mediator more power than one would normally have. This is to ensure that we have an understanding and this is implemented in a way that is fair to everyone. We cannot predict where UMPSA and the University will make compromises, nor do we have the ability to determine what the mediator is going to decide upon. Therefore, we will broadly explain what the major issues are that are holding up the process and assure you that both sides are working to see an equitable solution.

UMPSA's three major issues are with the statistical model, the market target, and the implementation. Before discussing any of them, we need to be perfectly clear in that there are NO Positions! That means that any combination of solutions may be the best alternative. We have not picked a percentage of the national average, a specific implementation process, nor any specific model. We are looking at the whole, and will not settle on something unless it truly solves the problems of inequitable pay for the same job across the system, salary compression, and fair pay for the work done. We want to make it clear that both sides understand that this will not solve all of the problems, but our objective is to create a strong base which we can use for continuous improvement with each successive contract.

The first major issue is the statistical model. We need enough information to prove that the model is effective in representing a reasonable market value for the majority of the jobs in the system. If the model is inaccurately representing jobs, then we need to make changes.

The second major issue is the market target. Currently professionals in the University system are paid around 15% below the market value of their work. The target market is defined as pay at a University of similar size with a similar mission (i.e.: 4 year, 4 year + research, etc...). The current plan aims for 90% of the market target (stated also in the strategic plan), but is built so that jobs up to 15% below market (an 85% market target) would not receive additional compensation. Roughly translated, those egregiously underpaid would receive increases up to 10% below market, and nobody else would receive a raise. Without UMPSA input, the system would have simply rationalized everyone's current pay instead of addressing the problem. If we

all agree that 90% of market target is reasonable, then we need to make sure that the University keeps to its strategic plan promise to bring us all up to 90% of market.

The third major issue is the implementation process. Its job is to answer questions about how to implement the program. How long should we give the University to bring everyone up to the market target? If you disagree with your jobs market value, what is the appeal process? How close to the market target is close enough? There is not enough money to bring everyone up at once; how do we distribute it? Some people are over their target salaries, how do we deal with that issue? Do not worry; both sides have agreed that nobody will experience a salary decrease.

The point is that if management implemented the process as it was first presented, it would have institutionalized pay at 15% below the market value of your work, and created a statistical model that forced salary compression. The point of this is not to rib on the University, they are working with the mediator, as are we. The point is that it is not the association holding the process up, it is a mutual process, and it will not be finished until both sides are satisfied. We hope that it will be completed by the next contract; however, there is a lot of ground to cover, and it is in everyone's best interest to be patient. It is also very important that we support the salary structure committee who are working hard to make sure that UMPSA has a fair and equitable salary system.

Membership:

In the last year and a half UMPSA has:

- Negotiated 5.5% in salary increases over the years 2003, 2004, and 2005 when the University intended to give us 0%, and many other organizations received 0%.
- Protected healthcare costs from being changed to a moving percentage of what the University pays. In other words, preventing the University from increasing the insurance premiums at will.
- Prevented \$100/day hospital co-pays (up to 5 days), \$75/visit special services co-pays, and automatic generic drug plans.
- Negotiated a higher travel reimbursement rate and the employees right to choose per diem or actual for overnight stays.
- Working with the University to create a compensation program that is fair and equitable.

If you are a member, then your dues pay for this. If you are a non-member, then to paraphrase two UMS administration representatives: "if people were not happy with us, then they would join the union." When we go to the table to ask for cost of living increases, not raises, but US Government calculated cost of living, we are told "because of your (UMPSA's) low membership, we don't feel your representing the opinions of all the professionals in the system." These people represent the University system when they say this. According to management, it is not a jump to say that by not being a member of the association, you do not feel that you need one. We understand that some of you may feel that way, but most have not been asked or felt that they did not need to participate. To those who are unsure, the University system hires 100+ professionals a year (40% are soft money). Unless, the association membership grows and becomes active, the University will continue to discount and erode our ability to advocate for professional needs. When it does, you will lose your contract, and your rights (other than Federally protected ones). If you are not paying dues, then you are saying two things, according to management:

- You are happy with your pay and benefits as they are.
- That Management is better equipped to determine your pay, health care, and working conditions than you are

This is not meant to try to scare anyone into becoming association members. It is more of a reality check. As employees in this system, we are part of a community, and if we want to have any control over how we are

treated, we need to educate ourselves and be active members of our community. The check and balance to how management treats its professionals in the system is UMPSA. If your not participating in UMPSA, then you are leaving decisions about your salaries, benefits, and workplace rights up to someone else.

The world will not end if we do not have an association. However, when a year like 2002 happens again, when the economy's doing poorly, or health care costs are increasing rapidly, there will be no protection from pay cuts and large cost increases. It's almost like insurance; you do not know it is there until you need it. Luckily, not all of us will ever need it, but you never know.

We understand the misconceptions and the stereotypical views about unions. The last thing we want to do is paint UMPSA or ourselves with that brush. Our goal is to make UMPSA function as a professional organization. To cultivate relationships, use facts and not rhetoric, and function as an organization of professionals stewarding their workplace by educating new hires and continuously improving their work environment.

- For those that would like more information on how to join, please look at the attached dues schedule, and the enrollment form.
- For those that would like to get involved, please check out the attached campus contact list for more information on your campus.
- For those that have questions, please email Kerry Sullivan at KERRYYS@usm.maine.edu

Closing:

In the next newsletter we will have more detailed updates of the salary study, information on the contract negotiation survey, discussion of the UMS Strategic Plan, more on association membership, reader feedback, and upcoming campus events.

Thank you for time. Members, we thank you for your support, and to non-members, UMPSA would greatly appreciate your enrollment and your participation.

Sincerely,

The UMPSA Executive Board

Kerry Sullivan (President), Christine Hall (Secretary), Eric James III (Treasurer), Cassandra Fitzherbert (USM), Nancy Fletcher (UMPI), Cindy Hook (UMA), Linda Kinley, (UMF), Jerry Nadeau (UMFK), Tom Trip (UM).

Reference Links:

State Statute: UMS labor relations act:

(<http://janus.state.me.us/legis/statutes/26/title26ch12sec0.html>)

Salary Study Update

(<http://www.maine.edu/pdf/salsysup604.pdf>)

2002-2005 UMPSA Collective Bargaining Agreement:

(<http://www.maine.edu/umpsa0205.html>)

UMPSA website (last updated 12/1/04):

<http://umpsa.maine.edu/>