

► LEO Bargaining Platform Approved at Convention

Catherine Daligga & Bonnie Halloran

The 2009 Annual Convention took place on Saturday, October 24 at UM Dearborn, in the luxurious setting of the Henry Ford Estate. Members enjoyed each other's company, the inspiring words of LEO President Bonnie Halloran and AFT Organizer Jon Curtiss, and the delicious lunch (as promised). Upon arrival, each member was invited to choose two different flowers keyed to represent the lecturer's campus and title. The resulting bouquets at the center of each table, no two alike, reminded us in their lovely variety of our own vibrant membership. We also designated a few moments during lunch to recognize the outstanding contributions of some of our members during the preceding year and we approved the 2010 operating budget.

But the central task of the meeting was a challenging one: to draft the 2010 Bargaining Platform. The chairs of the Salary, Benefits and Job Security Subcommittees made presentations about their key issues, citing the evidence used in the formulation of their proposals. These presentations marked the culmination of work that began in May—collecting data, conducting a member issues survey, analyzing contractual shortcomings, and discussing possible improvements. The Subcommittees had also prepared ballots listing possible bargaining goals, which served to focus small group discussion at each table. Each small group shared the priorities that emerged from its discussion with the meeting as a whole. In both the small group and whole meeting settings, ballot items were carefully analyzed and prioritized. Lively discussions broke out at our individual tables, and the open-floor debate saw several vigorous and articulate exchanges among members whose opinions differed. Good will, open-mindedness, and mutual respect were also much in evidence.

At the end of this demanding and exhilarating discussion, we

accomplished our charge. The Convention unanimously adopted the LEO Bargaining Platform (see box). Now we can take the next step in the contract negotiation process: to secure the informed ratification of our Bargaining Platform by the LEO membership at large when we meet during the week of November 16th.

The vote to ratify the Bargaining Platform is much more than a procedural formality. It is crucial for a unified kick-off to bargaining in January. The November Membership Meetings, like the Annual Convention, provide the opportunity for us to come together to discuss, face-to-face, what matters most to us as a union. Having these conversations about how to achieve our ideals creates a sense of cohesion, a vital attribute to cultivate as we approach the bargaining table together.

What that union cohesion—solidarity, if you will—means in practice is evident in several notable parts of our platform. A Bargaining Platform is hammered out by individuals who bring different perspectives to the process, and consensus is not automatically achieved with a multiplicity of interests in play. Yet consensus was easily reached at the Convention even regarding issues that affect a minority of our membership. For example, the health insurance changes likely to be proposed by the Administration would negatively affect everyone, but the most serious impact would fall on a limited number of lecturers, the 20% or so of our membership with appointments between .50 and .79 FTE. There was solid agreement at the Convention that we must protect our most vulnerable members.

Other issues, such as seeking university sponsorship for permanent residency status of international lecturers with continuing employment, or securing paid parental leave for lecturers, are likely to affect only a small number of lecturers directly—yet the principle of equal access supporting these planks was compelling to all. We adopted other planks, including opposition to the proposed elimination of

the University's contribution toward retirement funds for all first-year employees, although the University's plan would have no immediate impact on any current lecturer. We know what is right and equitable, and we know that such tactics will eventually erode our unity.

As we observe frequently, LEO is a member-run union, relying on the active participation of many to set policy and direction. The process of formulating, adopting, and ratifying our Bargaining Platform provides a fine illustration of this principle. It is inspiring to see the principled commitment of our LEO colleagues to each other. Please join us at the upcoming Membership Meeting on your home campus so you, too, can experience the satisfaction of being part of a group that stands behind its ideals.



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LEO Bargaining Platform

Salary

- Significantly raise the minimum salary on all campuses.
- Significantly raise the salaries of all lecturers.
- Equalize compensation for late lay-offs for all ranks.
- Institute paid course-load reductions to develop new courses.

Benefits

- Stop the current proposed changes to the benefits structure.
- Protect our most vulnerable members.
- Expand eligibility for extended sick pay and long-term disability to all lecturers after two years of service.
- Establish a one-semester paid parental leave.

Job Security

- Increase the weight for teaching experience in determining EAP ("expertise, ability and performance").
- Create stronger interim review provisions.
- Mandate UM-sponsored visas and permanent residency for international lecturers.
- Establish the just cause standard after the last major review.
- Count spring/summer teaching when part of a regular workload towards major reviews.
- Stop major reviews (in their current form) after the 2nd major review.

Link to LEO: connect with your union on the web, via Twitter, by blog & on Facebook!

Editors' Note: In 2009-10, a year in which we plan and bargain for a new contract, LEO Matters will focus on these efforts. However, given that implementation issues and the grievance process are fundamentally concerned with our current contract—and perhaps portend what negotiations about our future contract will bring—we feel that it is important to report occasionally on this area of the Union's work, if only in brief.

► Implementation & Grievance Update— In Brief

Kirsten Herold

The successful outcome of last year's salary grievance in Ann Arbor resulted in a retroactive raise for many lecturers (paid out in June) and a raise for 2009-10. Yay! In addition, we have since identified several other lecturers who were also eligible for the settlement, and we are waiting for the final accounting from Management, so we can make sure eligible lecturers receive the correct grievance pay.

Since then we have had problems with lecturers' appointments—ostensibly because of the grievance. Management had difficulty entering appointments for the current academic year into the system in time for September pay. This was true even in Flint and Dearborn where there was no grievance (go figure!). This delay had the unfortunate side effect of terminating many members' health insurance coverage effective September 1, 2009.

While we continue to address issues that affect our members university wide, we also keep an eye on individual schools and departments. Here are two examples of issues we are working to address: one of the professional schools continues to appoint lecturers wrongfully into positions outside of our bargaining unit, and an Ann Arbor department required its lecturers to work on Labor Day. Both actions are clear violations of our contract.

It is important that we address all contract violations, but we need your help. If you are experiencing any problems or know of any issues, please contact the LEO office.

► LEO Links

LEO Website
www.leounion.org

LEO Blog
theleosshare.blogspot.com

LEO on Twitter
twitter.com/leounion

LEO Facebook Group
lecturers' employee organization



LEO Membership Meetings

Same meeting on 2 different days to accommodate your schedule—come to one.

Tuesday
November 17
5pm
or

Wednesday
November 18
5pm

LEO office
330 E. Liberty
Suite 3F

Snacks,
beverages &
child care
provided.

Why Me?

Jeri Mannion, Language, Culture, and Communication, Dearborn Member, Salary Subcommittee of the LEO Bargaining Committee

My life inside UM: Coordinator for 100-level French courses, Beginning and Intermediate French Instructor, Faculty Advisor for 'Le Club Francophone.'

My life outside UM: chorister in Vanguard Voices, animal-lover, movie-lover, fiction-lover, roller-coaster rider, really good roller skater.

Why me? I am an energetic person who likes to help out and support LEO in any way that I can. This organization works hard for me, and likewise I will commit to working hard for it wherever and whenever I am able.

Before becoming a lecturer at UM Dearborn, I worked part-time on a semester-by-semester basis, and with no benefits. After having been hired by UM Dearborn, I truly appreciate what LEO has done to give equality and security to lecturers, and I am glad to see that this organization has the motivation to continue to strive for better contracts. I will support that effort in any way I can.

My favorite...Parisian monument is the Pantheon. **Because...**I appreciate being able to see history and innovation together in such a breath-taking setting. Among the murals of Joan of Arc and by the swinging pendulum, I never tire of spending time in the resting place of Victor Hugo and Alexandre Dumas.

Get Organized!

- Talk with other lecturers about the LEO Bargaining Platform.
- Take an inventory of your benefits and consider what they mean to you (and what you're willing to fight for).
- Bring a new member to a membership meeting.