

LEO calls upon the University to value lecturers' contributions!

► This Course Brought to You by a Lecturer

Sheryl Edwards

What do you do when students call you "professor"? Do you just ignore it or tell them that your title isn't "professor"? Do you talk with your students about why, officially, you aren't a professor—even though you seem like one? Well, if you're not sure what to do, it's no wonder that students have no idea who we—the lecturers—are at Michigan.

While the quality of our work in the classroom, like that of professors, is visible to the students, our employment status, however, may not be. At one level, this is as it should be, since the students' educational experience—not the instructor's job—should be front and center in the classroom. However, when we fail to define who we are for our students, we miss the opportunity to help them understand who does the lion's share of the teaching at Michigan.

The invisibility of our status could have implications for the success of our contract negotiations with the Administration next term. As bargaining progresses, students will hear about lecturers asking for better salaries, fighting to keep their healthcare affordable, and seeking more job security. Will students back our struggle for fair compensation and fair employment conditions if they don't understand the role of lecturers at Michigan? If we want our students' support during negotiations, then we must ensure that they understand what we—some of their best instructors, the people they have come to know and respect for their work in the classroom and beyond—contribute to their education.

So, consider taking a few minutes of the first meeting with each of your classes in January to explain to the students who we are, that is, to identify the differences—and the similarities—between a lecturer and a tenure-track professor at Michigan. Participants in the November membership meetings thought that this was a good idea: in addition to ratifying

the bargaining platform, they agreed to participate in a first day action of this sort to educate their students about lecturers and to build a foundation toward successful contract negotiations.

What might you do on the first day? Your action can take whatever form you think appropriate. You'll find three suggestions in the "Get Organized!" box below.

In short, let your students see and know who we—the lecturers—are!

First Day of Class—Get Organized!

Make a statement by wearing the new LEO button to class—get your button from your steward or a LEO organizer. Imagine the impression we will make on campus in the early days of the term if every LEO member wears this button.

Make LEO a part of your lesson plan. You'll find a short PowerPoint presentation at leounion.org with information that you can use to teach students about lecturers at Michigan.

Paste a "This course brought to you by a Lecturer" bug into your syllabus and other course materials. This bug and others like it will be available at the LEO website.

► Why We Can and Should Ask for Raises: Reframing the Question

Team LEO

Why are we campaigning for raises in a bad economy?

This has been an important question for us to answer, because 78% of lecturers who responded to the recent LEO survey believe that getting more money for our work should be a key objective in this campaign.

Our answer is detailed in the full list of talking points (on the back). Here it is in brief: the University has the money, and if it were

truly placing the education of undergraduates—a core mission—at the top of its budgetary priorities, lecturers would be much better paid than they are now.

Take a close look at what our talking points imply: undergraduate teaching brings in 72% of General Fund revenues; lecturers do 30-50% of the undergraduate teaching at the University; compensation of lecturers—which constitutes only 3% of the General Fund revenues—demonstrates that the University's current priorities are wrong.

If undergraduates truly matter to the University as much as it claims they do, then the working conditions, the professional support, and the pay of lecturers should reflect this claim.

On the surface, we are campaigning for our own interests. But on a deeper, truer level, we are striving to reorient the culture of the University. As Cary Nelson, current AAUP president, remarked upon the recent settlement of the strike by graduate student instructors at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, "Once again an activist union is working to keep higher education's core values in place."

As LEO lecturers, we are fighting to expose the distorted agenda of the University, which devalues undergraduate instruction and denigrates the professionalism and expertise of the lecturers, who teach most of the core and entry-level courses. With this objective in mind, we want to reframe the initial question that people ask in such tough economic times to be:

What can we do to best support both undergraduate education—a core mission of the University—and lecturers—the people who deliver that service to our students—in a bad economy?



December 2009

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Friday is Bargaining Day in 2010 starting January 22!

▶ Asking for Raises: Talking Points

Lecturers are essential to undergraduate education, a core mission of the University.

- We teach between 30-50% of student credit hours across the three campuses.
- We are concentrated in core curriculum and introductory courses.

Lecturers are underpaid.

- Our minimum full-time salaries are less than the GSI salary rate.
- Lecturer IIs are paid 50-53% less than the median salary of Assistant Professors.
- We make \$13-15K less than high school teachers with MAs in our respective communities.

The University has money.

- The \$6 billion Endowment, the seventh largest in the country, is growing again.
- The estimated 2009 Endowment revenues are \$304 million.
- Tuition increases are always much higher, percentage-wise, than our wage increases.

When it comes to spending money, the Administration does not prioritize undergraduate education.

- Central administration expenditures have increased by 50% in comparison to an 8% increase in the instructional sector (since 2005, taken as a whole across all schools).
- \$30 million has been set aside to hire 100 tenure-track professors by 2010.
- Capital fund raising for new buildings has been extensive, including stadium renovations at \$226 million and the Art Museum expansion at \$35.4 million.
- The football coach is paid \$2 million+ per year.

When it comes to spending money, the Administration does not value lecturers' contribution to undergraduate education.

- While we teach 30-50% of student credit hours, our combined salaries equal \$42.4 million, which is only a 4-9% share of tuition revenues, and a 2-6% share of General Fund revenues.

• The Administration wants to eliminate lecturer salary bumps for passing additional major performance reviews.

• The Administration wants to raise health insurance premiums for lecturers with 50-79% appointments to levels that will be unaffordable.

• Last year, the Administration tried to cheat us out of the full raises to which we were entitled based on our collective bargaining agreement with the University.

The cost to pay lecturers equitably is not an unreasonable demand.

• Over six years (two collective agreements), we could eliminate the gap between the starting salaries of LIs and high school teachers with MAs by increasing full-time LI pay by \$2,500 each year.

• Over six years, we could eliminate the gap between the median LIV salary and the median Assistant Professor salary in Flint and Dearborn, and reduce the gap by 68% in Ann Arbor, by raising full-time LIV salaries by \$2,500 per year.

• Salary increases of this magnitude for full-time lecturers, and proportionately less for those who are part-time, would require an extra 1.2% of the 2009 tuition revenues, or an extra 0.9% of the 2009 General Fund revenues, raised on the three campuses.

• Such an increase, on our current salary base, would keep our share of the General Fund in 2016 to 3.9% at the most.

• Given that we do 30-50% of the undergraduate teaching, and that undergraduate teaching brings in 72% of General Fund revenues, a 3.9% share of the pie for 1,400 lecturers seems a very reasonable demand!



Mark your calendar!

First negotiating session—
January 22,
Ann Arbor,
Michigan League,
Rooms C&D

Support your bargaining team—
be there!

Why Me?

Carole Lasker, School of Education—ELMAC program, Ann Arbor School of Education Steward, LEO Bargaining Committee Member, LEO Secretary, LEO Snack Provider

My life inside UM: *I love being a Field Instructor. This semester, I have eight interns in two Detroit Schools.*

My life outside UM: *I love being retired from the Detroit Public Schools.*

Why me? *When I went to my first LEO membership meeting, I was shocked to hear accounts of lecturers whose positions were threatened, eliminated, and/or reorganized beyond recognition. If I can contribute any time and energy to changing these practices, I will. People should be safe, secure, and respected employees of an institution that enjoys a high level of respect from others.*

My favorite... *experience is watching children learn. Because...learning is exciting and freeing.*

LEO Links:

leounion.org
theleosshare.blogspot.com
twitter.com/leounion
Facebook: Lecturers' Employee Organization
LEO office: 734-995-1813