



A Union of Professionals

Metropolitan State Faculty Federation

Newsletter

MSUDENVERFF.ORG • FALL / WINTER 2023



Voluntary Recognition of Collective Bargaining Rights

One of our most important long-term goals is to win collective bargaining rights. Collective bargaining would mean that an elected MSFF committee would negotiate a binding contract with the university to determine our terms of employment, from salary and benefits to hours and disciplinary procedures. The contract would then be voted up or down by the union membership. In the United States, collective bargaining has been one of the most important means by which working people have improved their wages and working conditions. It,

and the struggles and movements that enabled it, is largely responsible for the creation of a stable middle class, and for ending the dangerous and demeaning workplace conditions that used to be common practice. It would enable us to win rights together that would be virtually impossible to win as individuals. It would also enable us to better represent the interests of the most precarious faculty members, especially those not on the tenure track, by allowing us to negotiate as a unit.

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In the state of Colorado, however, employees of public institutions of higher education are denied the right to force their employer to collectively bargain. MSFF has been fighting to change this legislation, and we have

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Work To Rule - Colorado

Working to rule involves employees meticulously adhering to the letter of their employment contracts, following workplace rules, procedures, and regulations to the exact specification without engaging in any additional tasks or putting in extra effort. Here's a detailed guide on how faculty can implement this labor action effectively at MSU Denver:

1. Understand the Rules: Thoroughly familiarize yourself with your employment contract, Faculty Handbook, Department Guidelines and College or School Guidelines to be fully aware of your contractual obligations as well as the expectations for retention, tenure, and promotion.

2. Strict Adherence: Follow these rules precisely and strictly, ensuring that you comply with the prescribed procedures and processes in your day-to-day work.

3. No Voluntary Overtime or Extra Effort: Refrain from working beyond your stipulated obligations or offering any voluntary additional teaching, service, or scholarship. Stick to your defined duties.

4. Communicate Clearly: If a task falls outside the scope of your contracted duties, communicate this to your supervisor and seek guidance or delegation to handle it.

5. Report All Issues: Report any workplace concerns, safety hazards, or policy violations in line with the prescribed reporting procedures.



6. Document Everything: Keep meticulous records of your work activities, tasks completed, and any instances where you adhered strictly to the rules or encountered situations that required deviation from them.

7. Encourage Colleagues: Encourage fellow workers to also strictly adhere to their job descriptions and follow all rules, fostering a collective effort in working to rule.

8. Maintain Professionalism: Despite the deliberate slowdown in productivity, maintain professionalism and a respectful attitude towards colleagues and supervisors.

9. Monitor and Evaluate Impact: Track the impact of the work-to-rule action on operations, productivity, and workplace dynamics, while remaining open to dialogue with management for negotiations and resolutions.

Working to rule is a strategic approach to showcase the importance of employees in an organization and advocate for improved working conditions and fair treatment within the confines of the established rules and agreements. It is difficult to persuade administrators or the Board of Trustees that our workload is unsustainable as long as we continue to sustain it.

AFT-CO Endorsements Statewide

PROP HH YES
PROP II YES

ARVADA

Mayor: Lauren Simpson
City Council District 2: Shawna Ambrose
City Council At-Large: Sharon Davis

AURORA

Mayor: Juan Marcano
City Council Ward IV: Jon Gray
City Council Ward V: Chris Rhodes
City Council Ward VI: Brian Matise
City Council At-Large (choose 3): Alison Coombs
City Council At-Large (choose 3): Curtis Gardner

CENTENNIAL

City Council District 1: Amy Tharp

LAKEWOOD

City Council Ward 1: Glenda Sinks
City Council Ward 2: Isabel Cruz
City Council Ward 3: Roger Low
City Council Ward 5: Jacob LaBure

THORNTON

Mayor: Jan Kulmann

WESTMINSTER

City Council At-Large (choose 3): Claire Carmelia
City Council At-Large (choose 3): Amber Hott
City Council At-Large (choose 3): Tim Pegg

CHERRY CREEK SCHOOL DISTRICT BOARD OF EDUCATION

District A: Anne Egan

DENVER PUBLIC SCHOOL BOARD

District 1: Scott Baldermann
At-Large: Kwame Spearman

DOUGLAS COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT BOARD OF EDUCATION

District A: Susan Meek
District C: Brad Geiger
District F: Valerie Thompson

DOUGLAS COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT RE-1

Ballot Issue 5A: SUPPORT
Ballot Issue 5b: SUPPORT

DID YOU KNOW?

MSFF testified in favor of affiliate faculty receiving 48 hours of accrued annual paid SICK LEAVE.

FALL 2023 COMMITTEE SCHEDULE

Steering Committee

Fri., 9/8, 3-4 pm ([Zoom](#))
Fri., 9/22, 3-4 pm ([Zoom](#))
Fri., 10/6, 3-4 pm ([Zoom](#))
Fri., 10/20, 3-4 pm ([Zoom](#))
Fri., 11/3, 3-4 pm ([Zoom](#))
Fri., 11/17, 3-4 pm ([Zoom](#))
Fri., 12/1, 3-4 pm ([Zoom](#))
Fri., 12/15, 3-4 pm ([Zoom](#))

Membership Committee

Thurs., 10/9, 5-6 pm ([Zoom](#))
Thurs., 11/16, 5-6 pm ([Zoom](#))
Thurs., 12/7, 5-6 pm ([Zoom](#))

Grievance Committee

As needed, and private.
These are confidential meetings to protect members seeking counsel.

CHEIBA Insurance Increases

Beginning with the December paychecks, employees who enroll in MSU health plans will see an ~12% price increase in overall premium, while dental-plan premiums will increase by ~5% overall. Benefits-eligible employees will have an opportunity to review and make changes to coverage options for 2024 during **MSU Denver's open-enrollment period, Nov. 1-17**. MSU Denver will continue to pay nearly 75% of employees' insurance premiums. That's among the highest contribution percentages of the eight higher-education institutions that belong to the Colorado Higher Education Insurance Benefits Alliance (CHEIBA).

BlueAdvantage Point of Service Plan (HMO/POS) and Prime Blue Priority PPO Plan

Employee Only
Total cost: \$811.00
Your monthly cost: \$207.00

Employee + Spouse
Total cost: \$1,948.00
Your monthly cost: \$497.00

Employee + Child(ren)
Total cost: \$1,786.00
Your monthly cost: \$455.00

Employee + Family
Total cost: \$2,238.00
Your monthly cost: \$571.00

2500 High Deductible Health Plan

Employee Only
Total cost: \$678.00
Your monthly cost: \$173.00

Employee + Spouse
Total cost: \$1,629.00
Your monthly cost: \$415.00

Employee + Child(ren)
Total cost: \$1,493.00
Your monthly cost: \$381.00

Employee + Family
Total cost: \$1,872.00
Your monthly cost: \$477.00

[Read More Here](#)

Voluntary Recognition of Collective Bargaining Rights

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come close to winning in recent years, but the law remains in place. However, we do have the right to petition the administration to voluntarily grant collective bargaining rights. While this may sound unlikely, it is possible, and there is precedent in higher education. To cite one prominent example, the NYU administration voluntarily recognized the graduate worker union after a years-long organizing campaign put them under

tremendous reputational pressure. Moreover, several efforts to legalize collective bargaining for employees of public universities in Colorado have nearly succeeded, and it appears that such legislation will likely be passed in the near future. It would therefore behoove the administration to voluntarily recognize collective bargaining before they are forced to concede the point anyway.

For that reason, the Steering Committee has agreed that, if and when a majority

of MSU Denver faculty are members of MSFF, we will petition the Board of Trustees to request that they voluntarily recognize us as a collective bargaining unit. We will also continue the fight for collective bargaining rights for all workers, whether in the public or private sector, in the state of Colorado.



MSU Denver Faculty are invited to

MSFF HAPPY HOURS!

Hear about what your union is doing, provide input and feedback, and learn how to get involved!

5 PM | TIVOLI
WEDNESDAY 18 OCTOBER
THURSDAY 9 NOVEMBER
TUESDAY 5 DECEMBER

For more information, visit us at
<https://msudenverff.org/>



Community Hour Proposal

Dear Dr. Davidson,

I am writing on behalf of the Metropolitan State Faculty Federation Steering Committee concerning the Community Hour proposal.

We believe that this proposal is well intentioned but that there are several problems with both the proposal and the process by which it was initiated that warrant a pause on implementation if not a complete re-investigation of the plan's likely impact on our students.

Impact on Student Retention and Completion

The idea of building community among students as a retention strategy is interesting but a community hour in the middle of the day, during peak student demand for classes, is likely to damage credit hour production across all schools and colleges. As you've noted, nearly all MSU Denver students work; asking them to take an hour out of their available work time seems quite tone deaf. As it is, early morning and late afternoon classes are difficult to fill; students have already voted with their feet, and it seems to us that their preferred class times are between 11 and

3. Students we have spoken with have suggested that they will take fewer classes, not wanting to be on campus for "down time" in the middle of the day, thus delaying their graduation. Those that would take the same number of credits have told us they would use that time to nap. It seems risky to assume that students will adjust their schedules to accommodate classes offered either earlier or later, depending on how class periods are shifted. Given that we have only just stabilized enrollment, we believe this is no time to eliminate the most popular class periods driving students to either extend their time to graduation or electing to attend school somewhere more accommodating to their busy lives.

Process and Campus Community Input

Early in your presidency you confronted MSU Denver's policy chaos. As I'm sure you remember, there was no clear process for policy development or promulgation, resulting in a proliferation of poorly vetted, often contradictory or duplicative, policy, much of which was invisible to the campus

community. In response, you charged Nick Stancil and me with developing a policy process, now known as UPAC, to ensure that all policy initiatives with the potential to impact the University community are fully vetted, publicized, and developed in conjunction with the appropriate administrative divisions. As part of that process, we also worked with the Faculty Senate and its Academic Policy Committee to ensure similar transparency for academic policies. The proposed Community Hour emerged from neither of these processes; many in the community learned of it only after it had reportedly been approved.

It has been my experience at UPAC, that policy processes developed under your leadership has resulted in better policy. Community review has revealed impacts and issues that were resolved prior to implementation. A policy as far-reaching as the Community Hour will certainly impact students, faculty, and staff in ways that were not anticipated in its hermetic development in Student Affairs. While we admit that we are skeptical

Guest Commentary

Richard Wagner, PhD
Co-Chair, MSU Denver's
Academic Program
Review Committee

It is high time to reinvest in instruction. Under President Davidson's leadership, university revenues have increased even with roughly steady enrollment. As documented in state audits, however, little of the increased revenue has gone into instruction.

of instruction, creating a serious headwind against the current priority of increasing student retention. Students come here and stay because of the faculty, but faculty loyalty is waning. Ultra-dedicated amazing faculty have been the strength of the institution for years.

I've heard second-hand that longtime Provost Golich used to joke at Program Review recaps that two issues al-

in that faculty lines are not being refilled after retirements and resignations. Faculty lines remaining vacant increases the workload for the remaining faculty. More faculty are choosing not to go above and beyond ([see Work To Rule - Colorado](#)).

Faculty (and administrators) know that effective searches for the best faculty should be advertised by November at the latest. Programs and departments are left with no power to initiate a search nor information about when yes/no decision can be expected.

Reinvesting in our wonderful faculty WILL pay dividends whether through workload reform, a professional wage for all faculty, increased benefits.

A corollary of ROI is Return on Disinvestment. Lack of appropriate resources to the front-line educators (faculty) diminishes the quality

ways came up, the need for more space and the need for additional new TT lines (both difficult to find). The situation has become worse

about whether this policy is appropriate for our University, at a minimum we believe it should be subject to the same transparent development process as every other policy at this institution and are confused as to why it seems to have been treated differently.

Conclusion

We share your commitment to our students and, as fac-

ulty, continue to implement strategies both in and out of the classroom to promote retention and completion. We are unambiguously committed to our students' success. Meaningful input from students, faculty, and staff will help us achieve these goals. Poorly vetted policies with little proven effectiveness in institutions similar to MSU Denver threaten to undo the progress we have

made. We strongly urge you to put a pause on this policy and direct Dr. Simpkins to present it to UPAC prior to any decision regarding implementation.

If you have any questions or would like to discuss this further, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,
MSFF Steering Committee

| Full-time Non-Faculty Exceed Full-Time Faculty | | |
|--|--------------|-----------------|
| | T/TT Faculty | Non Faculty FTE |
| Fiscal Year 2020 | 447 | 527 |
| Fiscal Year 2023 | 431 (-4%) | 595 (+13%) |