



A Union of Professionals

Metropolitan State Faculty Federation

# Newsletter

[MSUDENVERFF.ORG](http://MSUDENVERFF.ORG)

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## GAZA & ACADEMIC FREEDOM

Since October 7th, we have witnessed the wholesale destruction of the education system in Gaza alongside a sweeping attack on academic freedom and freedom of speech at universities across the United States. In an attempt to suppress legitimate criticism of US and Israeli policy, students and professors have faced threats to their work, their careers, and even their safety. Supporting student activism, and Palestinian rights, is essential as teachers, scholars, and union members.

Professors across the United States have faced significant material sanctions for speaking out about Palestine, or even simply teaching about the conflict. Indiana University

ty [canceled](#) an exhibition by a respected Palestinian artist and [sanctioned](#) a professor “after booking a room for an event organized by the Palestine Solidarity Committee.” Individual departments and professors have been [suspended](#), dishonestly [attacked](#) in televised congressional [hearings](#), and faced [threats to their safety](#). Universities have created antisemitism task forces that [bypass](#) their own specialists in antisemitism and Jewish history, neglecting the critical work of fighting discrimination in favor of suppressing dissent. This suppression has at times reached absurd proportions. Harvard University, for instance, [opened](#) an antisemitism investigation into Professor Marshall Ganz, an expert

in political organizing and a prominent civil rights and labor activist, who is himself Jewish. The most affected faculty have been the most vulnerable; we will likely never know how many

*Continued on page 2*

### Inside

[Gaza & Academic Freedom](#)

[Department Chair Reform](#)

[MSFF Annual Meeting & Elections](#)

[Current Officers & Steering Committee](#)

[In Case of Emergency](#)

# GAZA & ACADEMIC FREEDOM

*Continued from page 1*

non-tenure-track faculty have been quietly fired by means of contract non-renewal.

This is also a pivotal movement to show support to student activists, who face the threat of material harm, arrest, and even violence for supporting Palestinian rights. Nationwide [blacklists](#) [falsely](#) accuse pro-Palestinian student activists of antisemitism to try to end careers before they begin. Students have been [doxed](#) in a national [campaign](#) that posts their images on billboard trucks across US campuses. Large corporations have [threatened](#) to prevent the hiring of students who sign pro-Palestinian statements or engage in pro-Palestine activ-

ism, a threat that, given the [career repercussions](#) faced by supporters of Palestinian rights across the country, must be taken seriously. At the University of Michigan, student activists were not just disciplined, but [arrested](#), and now face criminal charges. The Michigan ACLU [described](#) these arrests as part of an “escalating pattern of repression” and “unnecessarily outsized police response.” Indeed, a new [proposed](#) university policy on “disruptive activity” threatens to outlaw many essential forms of protest, and even subject student protestors to legal charges. Several universities have [suspended](#) Students for Justice in Palestine chapters in an effort to suppress critical speech. In a particularly tragic incident in Burlington, Vermont, three Palestinian students were [shot](#), one of whom is now paralyzed from the chest down. These are just a handful of the best-reported cases; the true toll on students is much higher. These attacks threaten our students’ educations, futures, and even their lives.

Finally, we feel an imperative to support our colleagues in Gaza. The Middle East Studies Association has [documented](#) the staggering impact of the war on Palestinian students and educators. Israeli forces have destroyed every university in

Gaza—many not in the course of fighting, but by demolition in areas under the complete control of the Israeli army. Over ninety professors and over two hundred teachers have been killed, often alongside their entire families. Thousands of students—most of whom are children—have also been killed, while those who survive face mass displacement and [starvation](#). Many of these people have been killed by weapons designed and built in Colorado by companies that MSU Denver officially [partners](#) with, including some of the largest weapons firms on earth: Lockheed Martin, Ball Aerospace, and Raytheon. Genocide in Gaza is not just happening “over there.” We are institutionally complicit in enabling it.

## ***Additional notes:***

AFT Executive Council unanimously called for a ceasefire on 30 January:

<https://www.aft.org/press-release/aft-executive-council-adopts-resolution-unanimously-calling-end-israel-hamas-war>

Call for faculty groups to organize events, pass resolutions, and otherwise speak out about scholasticide in Gaza:

<https://www.palestine-studies.org/en/node/1655363>

**Enjoying  
Your  
TENURE?**

MSFF and AFT restored faculty tenure rights in 2004, by winning a lawsuit against MSCD.

***You're Welcome***

# Department Chair Reform

“The chair or head of a department, who serves as the chief representative of the department within an institution, should be selected either by departmental election or by appointment following consultation with members of the department and of related departments; appointments should normally be in conformity with department members’ judgment.” [AAUP Statement on Governance of Colleges and Universities](#)

Dr. Davidson’s decision to reinstate Dr. Adriana Nieto following her abrupt dismissal in December 2023 resolved one particular issue where the judgment of the department members was very much at odds with that of a dean. While the *Handbook* indicates that the department chair position serves at will (this authority delegated from the President to the Dean), this power should not be abused. This incident also highlights the need to review current policies and practices which stifle effective functioning of academic departments. Faculty productivity and morale suffers when departmental members do not feel supported by their Chair and hesitant to raise concerns. In some cases, department chairs may refrain from differing with a dean’s decisions for fear of unfavorable decisions (e.g. faculty hiring decisions).

There is a perception that appointed chairs are accountable only to a dean.

## Major Recommendations

1. The dismissal of a department chair without consulting with departmental colleagues during a term should be exceedingly rare. Such dismissal should only occur when this conforms with departmental members’ judgment or in the case of major misconduct.
2. Academic Departments should be afforded the opportunity to appeal when a dean appoints a department chair counter to the department’s recommendation.
3. At the beginning of a Department Chair’s term, the dean and chair develop goals with respect to the Chair’s duties.

These goals should be shared with departmental faculty (currently not) and should involve consultation with faculty.

4. Departmental faculty should have a role in the decision to reappoint Category II faculty. To minimize faculty workload, the departmental RTP committee would have the opportunity to weigh in only in the instance that the department chair recommends against reappointment.
5. Department chairs serving more than two terms is not the norm in higher education. We would suggest that department chairs should be term-limited to 6 successive years. Department chairs are currently eligible for reassigned time their first semester back in their faculty role, and therefore should contribute to the Chair transition.

## What can we do together?

Defend academic freedom, tenure, & shared governance • Support adjunct faculty • Advance equity & inclusion • Champion the interests of faculty and students

Together, we shape the future.

Join the MSFF union!

# MSFF Annual Meeting & Elections

## SAVE THE DATE

Annual Member Meeting  
April 26, 2:30pm

King Center #493  
Political Science Conference Room  
or join us online

ZOOM link  
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/5232473283>



**WHAT WORKS?  
FACULTY WORK  
Faculty Get Shit Done**

Elections for MSFF Officers and Steering Committee members will be held in the fall (**date TBD**), with the new Steering Committee starting a 2-year term a month after the election. With the continued lack of progress on faculty workload, we have struggled retaining our all-volunteer steering committee. We are actively soliciting volunteers to fill some Steering Committee vacancies through October, subject to MSFF Steering Committee approval. Thank you to all 2022-2024 Officers and Steering Committee members. Special thanks to MSFF Sheila Rucki, who represents our newly won seats at several tables.

## MSFF Constitution Update

Proposed Amendment to MSFF Constitution  
*(Vote on at Members Meeting, April 26).*

### ARTICLE IV

#### OFFICERS AND STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBERS

**Section 1.** The following officers shall be elected by the entire membership for a two (2) year term:

- President
- Vice-President
- Treasurer
- Secretary
- Not less than seven (7) members of the Steering Committee

**Section 2.** To be eligible for office an individual must be a member in good standing of the organization for a period of one (1) year prior to the date of the election.

**Section 3.** Officers and Steering Committee Members shall be elected bi-annually by the membership by means of secret ballot.

**(new addition) Section 4.** In the event of a vacancy among officers, the Steering Committee may appoint a member on an interim basis until the next biennial election.

# Current MSFF Officers

Sheila Rucki ..... President  
 Richard Wagner..... Vice President  
 Andrea Maestresjuan ..... Secretary  
 Matt Maher ..... Treasurer

# Current Steering Committee

Alex Boodrookas  
 Membership/Executive Board Member

Leslie Boyd  
 Executive Board Member

Kim Klimek  
 Executive Board Member

Mikkilynn Olmsted  
 Executive Board Member

Lisa Ortiz  
 Website/Newsletter/Executive Board Member

# Low-End Faculty Salaries

The MSFF is investigating practices concerning faculty salaries of the lowest paid full-time faculty. The biggest roadblock is the unavailability of data. The “Staffing Pattern” which includes the positions and salaries is not available for 2023-24 due to the Workday transition. The FY 24 Budget Recommendations from UPBAC\* (May 16, 2023) included “Maintain the CUPA minimum for faculty using the most recent survey based on existing tiers.” We also found the institutional “2021 Faculty Compensation & Position Structure” presentation at the FAC Meeting in March 2021 which listed CUPA minimums.

There are 3 current assistant professor searches

underway within CLAS where the top of the published range is below 90% of CUPA.

The situation is even more problematic in the case of CAT II faculty. Because these positions were never included, we have not been able to verify that CUPA adjustments have been made consistently. Furthermore, we have CAT II faculty with more than 15 years of service still capped at 88%. Raising the salaries of these faculty need to be a priority for reinvesting in faculty.

\*The MSFF has a vote on the University Planning and Budget Advisory Committee. There will be a short window in April to provide feedback for our MSFF delegate.

T/TT CUPA Years Of Service	%
CUPA Min. 1-3 years	94.0%
CUPA Min. 4-6 years	95.0%
CUPA Min. 7-9 years	96.0%
CUPA Min. 10-12 years	97.0%
CUPA Min. 13-15 years	98.0%
CUPA Min. 16-18 Years	99.0%
CUPA Min. 19+	100.0%

CAT II CUPA Years Of Service	%
1-3 Years	80.0%
4+	85.0%
Senior Lecturer	88.0%
% of CUPA average for Assistant Professor	

# In Case of Emergency



AFT Academics is excited to announce the speakers for our upcoming online event, [\*In Case of Emergency\*](#).

The event will be held **Thursday, April 4 from 6:00-7:00 pm MST**, with a 30-minute question and answer section to follow.

Higher education workers are invited to a panel discussion on how to prepare for the current widespread attacks on funding, academic freedom, and due process in higher education across the country. Activists from institutions across the country that have faced attacks will be discussing their experiences and sharing lessons from their campuses. Additionally, activists will reflect on what structures they wish had been in place prior to their attacks.

## Meet the speakers:



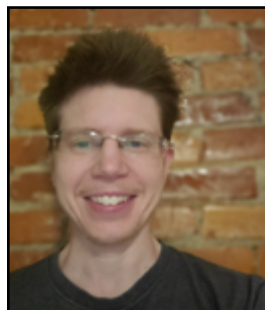
**Lisa M. Di Bartolomeo, Ph.D.**, has been an advocate for non-tenure track faculty for nearly two decades, becoming the first NTT elected to a Faculty Senate Chairship in the US in 2013. She became a vocal and public leader of West Virginia Campus Workers during the fight against the

extensive program cuts in 2023, playing a crucial role in highlighting the opposition to these cuts in national media. She is currently co-editing a book with Kevin Gannon about campuses in crisis



**Sarah Kilpatrick** has served as the AAUP Ohio Conference Executive Director since February 2011. She has been a tireless advocate of collective bargaining rights, academic freedom and due process for faculty in Ohio.

She has helped lead the ongoing fight against Ohio's SB 83, including driving a campaign of public faculty testimony, lobby days, and protests that have effectively weakened the dangerous provisions in the bill.



**Junior Brainard** is the co-president of the Faculty and Staff Federation of Community College of Philadelphia (FSFCCP). Junior has led this wall-to-wall union of faculty and classified employees through a historic strike vote, negotiated job

security for members during the COVID-19 pandemic, and most recently is on the front lines fighting for funding on a state and city level. Junior and the leadership at FSFCCP believe in organizing for the common good and the vision of community college as an agent for change.



Click [\*here\*](#) or scan the QR code below to register now!