



A Union of Professionals

Metropolitan State Faculty Federation

Newsletter

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National Union News

As an independent local (No. 6321) of the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), we are involved in the broader struggle being waged in defense of higher education and academic freedom.

Since 2022, AFT has been affiliated with the AAUP, with both organizations sharing resources and coordinating their efforts. In addition to accelerating organizing efforts, AFT and AAUP have launched a series of [lawsuits](#) to challenge the Trump administration's assault on universities. These have challenged arbitrary funding cuts, the dismantling of the Department of Education, and the elimination of diversity, equity, and inclusion programs.

It is an AAUP lawsuit that has [positioned](#) Harvard and its faculty in a much stronger legal position than the efforts led by the university administration itself. AAUP v Rubio, which challenges the mass deportations of non-citizen students, has already [revealed](#) much about the inner workings of the deportation state and its efforts to silence dissent. You can follow the Chronicle of Higher Ed's [tracker](#) to follow lawsuits against the Trump administration - many of which are being spearheaded by AFT and AAUP.

The portion of your dues sent to the national union supports lawsuits such as these. We expect these to continue, given the nature of the deals reached

between the administration and several universities. The deal with Columbia places several university departments under the external supervision of an "internal administrator," meaning that faculty hiring and curriculum decisions are under indirect federal control. It also requires the university to report non-citizen students who have been expelled, or even just suspended, to the federal government - the implication being that their visas will be revoked. University administrators have been deputized into the Trump administration's deportation campaign. Brown has [agreed](#) that anonymous student evaluations will be "regularly reviewed to identify any reports of antisemitism" which "will be promptly referred" to the federal government for "appropriate action."

Message from MSFF President

Welcome to the 2025-26 Academic Year! The new semester brings both difficult challenges (e.g. state and federal funding) and exciting opportunities (Welcome **Provost Matt Makley** and **Deputy Provost Shaun Shaefer**). Thank you to MSFF members for your support and especially to the 2025-2026 MSFF Officers and Steering Committee. The election results were announced in the [Winter 2024 MSFF Newsletter](#), which you are encouraged to read. We have at least two vacancies on our steering committee (a variable commitment, sometimes as little as ~5 hrs per month) to serve the remainder of the 2-year term prior to the November 2026 election. We invite you to join us at the October 8 Membership Meeting, a Steering Committee Meeting, or, especially, our Membership Committee, which is an excellent way to get involved.

In this Fall 2025 newsletter ([past issues archive](#)) we are pleased to share with you some of our accomplishments of 2024 to date, upcoming work, and opportunities for broader engagement from members.

We are in the unique position of contributing to MSU Denver in both an official capacity on committees and as an external advocate for faculty working conditions as part of a broader labor coalition. We thank the administration for involving us in



shared governance and at least listening to our concerns. Even when we disagree with a policy or direction, we are confident that our participation has resulted in better decisions.

We are pleased that **President Davidson** emphasized in her Welcome Letter that “we know our faculty and staff are the driving force behind our success” highlighting that “100% of classes are taught by faculty, giving students direct access to experts in their fields. This approach - rare among universities - delivers more personalized instruction, deeper mentorship and richer learning experiences that prepare students for real-world success.”

Our #1 mission at MSFF is to ensure that faculty have adequate resources, respect, and recognition to provide that important personalized instruction and mentorship. This opportunity to make a difference with students is what faculty love about MSU, but decreasing leeway to do so is also a source of faculty discontent; with outsized workload this engagement may be declining.

This seems to be true in departments with heavy general studies contributions, where essential skills are developed. We are sounding the alarm that further cuts to instruction, both faculty and students (TAs, LAs, tutors), will compound low retention rates among 1st year students.

By way of further introduction, this is my 29th year at the institution as full-time faculty, administrator in Academic Affairs, and now Emeritus Professor of Meteorology, working 15-20 hours per week on a voluntary basis, including campus and community engagement and leadership relating to science education outreach and collaboration, community-engaged learning, campus sustainability, student and faculty mentoring. You can find me in the Earth and Atmospheric Science Depart. Emeritus Office (Science Building 2055) on Tuesdays and generally another day per week.

In Solidarity,

Richard Wagner, Ph.D.

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(for confidential communication)

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PRIORITY ISSUES

Affiliate Pay Schedules

This year, as every year, we hope to make a positive impact on the university by focusing attention on our [priority issues](#). Our main concern this semester are affiliate pay schedules. Our affiliate faculty work for weeks before receiving their first paycheck, which can cause significant hardship and frustration. We have long been following this issue and had thought that it was resolved

last year, but it appears that the issue persists. While virtually everyone acknowledges that this is a problem, there does not seem to be sufficient will to fix it. We plan to start pushing for resolution, as it appears that this is a very do-able policy change that would make an immediate impact for many affiliate faculty. Please reach out to us.

Policy Alert

Only a few days left to make your voice heard on the proposed **Con-**

flicts of Interest and Time policy. The proposed policy extends the existing conflict of interests policy to include “an employee’s external professional or personal activities {that} interfere with their ability to fulfill their professional obligations to the University” and requires the completion of disclosure forms by all faculty each semester. The proposed policy changes and public comment submission form and be found at: https://msudenver.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_3lrUpb5ZiTBX-EOO

MSFF Fall 2025 Events

Steering Committee ([Zoom](#))

F Sept. 5, 2pm-3:30pm
F Sept. 19, 2pm-3:30pm
F Oct. 3, 2pm-3:30pm
F Oct. 17, 2pm-3:30pm
F Oct. 31, 2pm-3:30pm
F Nov. 14, 2pm-3:30pm
F Dec. 12, 2pm-3:30pm

Membership Committee ([Zoom](#))

F Sept. 19, 1:00-1:50pm
F Oct. 3, 1:00-1:50pm
F Oct. 17, 1:00-1:50pm
F Oct. 31, 1:00-1:50pm
F Nov. 14, 1:00-1:50pm
F Dec. 12, 1:00-1:50pm

Fall All-Member Meeting

W Oct. 8, 3:30-5:00
Central Classroom 222
[Zoom Attendance](#)

NO KINGS Rally

Sat., Oct. 18, State Capitol

2025-26 MSFF Officers

Richard Wagner, President
Alex Boodrookas, Vice President,
Membership Committee Chair
Arlene Sgoutas, Secretary
Matt Maher, Treasurer

Steering Committee

Leslie Boyd, Exec. Board Member
(Sabbatical Leave, Fall 2025)
Kim Klimek, Exec. Board Member,
MSSF Representative to Shared
Governance Taskforce
Andrea Maestrejuan, Exec.
Board Member
Lisa Ortiz, Webmaster/News-
letter/Exec. Board Member
Sheila Rucki, Exec. Board Member
MSSF Representative to UPBAC

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AAUP/AFT Campaign to Defend Higher Education

Together AFT and the AAUP are the largest and most powerful force for higher education workers in the U.S. In this moment of profound crisis our collective power carries a responsibility not only to defend our colleges and universities from sustained political and economic attacks, but to advance a bold, collective vision of higher education as a democratic, accessible and transformative public good. That's why we are mobilizing a national movement—one that defends higher education both in the streets and the ballot box, and one that paves a pathway to opportunity for all students. On this Zoom webinar you will hear from AFT President Randi Weingarten and AAUP President Todd Wolfson, who will share how we are organizing to protect our members' vital work, defend the future of higher education and ensure that every student has the chance to thrive. Join us to learn more about this campaign and about how you and your campus chapter/local or state affiliate can be part of this important movement

Back to School and Building Strength

Six Ways to Meet the Moment

- 1. Organizing**
 - Information about AFT Higher Education
 - Why Organize with AFT? Higher Ed Faculty
 - Why Organize with AFT? Higher Ed Staff
 - Organizing a Union on Your Campus
 - Value of Belonging Poster
- 2. Academic Freedom and Campus Free Speech**
 - Academic Freedom Field Guide
 - Academic Freedom First Aid Kit
 - Academic Freedom Syllabus Materials
 - Campus Free Speech Guide
 - Academic Freedom FAQs
- 3. Mass Mobilization**
 - Know Your Rights (KYR): Protesters' Rights
 - AFT Higher Ed eLearning Sign-up
 - Wellness Tips for Mass Mobilization
 - Mutual Academic Defense Compacts
- 4. Racial Justice and Equality**
 - Changes to Accessibility in Higher Ed
 - Pushing Back on Anti-DEI efforts
 - Back to Campus DEIA FAQ
 - Student Basic Needs Coalition: SNAP Into Action
 - Believe in Students: FAST Funds
 - Executive Order DEI Fact Sheets
- 5. Supporting International Communities**
 - KYR: Academic Freedom & Campus Free Speech for Scholars & Students on Visas
 - Return to Campus for International Faculty, Staff & Students
 - Summer Travel Guide for International Faculty, Staff & Students in the US
 - Resources for International Travel
 - KYR: Preparing for an Immigration Raid
- 6. Digital Safety**
 - Digital Security Resources
 - Dox Defense Resources
 - Digital Safety Snacks

 Education Healthcare Public Services  AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF UNIVERSITY PROFESSORS

What MSFF is Doing

- Fought several grievance cases. Grievance protection is a critical benefit of joining the union. Our contractual protections are only as strong as they are enforced. Our grievance work sets important precedents in defense of academic freedom.
- Reached out to the Student Affairs office to make sure that officers and faculty advisors of student organizations are not saddled with sweeping legal liability.
- Wrote a letter of support for, and testified in favor of, HB25-1312 - Legal Protections for Transgender Individuals.

Immigration Resources

What to do if ICE Comes to Campus

The MSU Denver Office of Immigrant Services has put together an invaluable [Know Your Rights](#) page, including a useful flyer on what to do if ICE comes to campus.

AFT Immigration Hotline for current members

AFT has established an emergency immigration hotline for AFT higher ed members designed for those who are emergently facing situations such as having their visas revoked, or imminent possibility of detention and deportation. The Emergency Immigration Hotline number is **888-416-2110**. Please be advised this resource is for urgent situations and dues-paying members only.

WHAT WE'RE Reading

“As Universities Yield to Trump, Higher Ed Unions Are Fighting,” Inside Higher Ed, https://www.insidehighered.com/news/faculty-issues/labor-unionization/2025/04/04/universities-yield-trump-higher-ed-unions-fight?utm_campaign=IHESocialEditorial&utm_content=as_universities_yield_to&utm_medium=Social&utm_source=twitter

Ellen Schrecker, “In the Hallowed Place Where There’s Only Darkness,” <https://www.vqronline.org/spring-2025/portfolios/hallowed-place-where-theres-only-darkness>

David Pozen, “Regulation by Deal Comes to Higher Ed,” <https://balkin.blogspot.com/2025/07/regulation-by-deal-comes-to-higher-ed.html>

Joan Scott, “A General Air of Anxiety.” Boston Review, <https://www.bostonreview.net/articles/a-general-air-of-anxiety/>

Alex Boodrookas, “They Don’t Want to Learn about the Middle East,” Inside Higher Ed, <https://www.insidehighered.com/opinion/views/2025/06/05/they-dont-want-learn-about-middle-east-opinion>

Higher Education and the Foundations of Democracy

Democracy flourishes not only through elections and institutions but also through an informed and engaged citizenry. Higher education plays a vital role in sustaining democratic societies by cultivating critical thinking, civic responsibility, and the capacity for informed public discourse. The relationship between an educated public and a functioning democracy is not incidental—it is foundational.

Historically, philosophers and political leaders have emphasized the role of education in democratic life. Thomas Jefferson argued that an informed electorate was essential to the republic’s survival, famously stating that “if we are to guard against ignorance... it is the responsibility of every American to be educated and informed.” Higher education builds on this premise by equipping individuals with tools to evaluate evidence, question authority, and navigate complex societal challenges.

Universities serve as training grounds not just for careers, but for citizenship. Research shows that individuals with postsecondary education are more likely to vote, volunteer, and participate in civic organizations. According to the Pew Research Center (2018), college-educated individuals are significantly more engaged in political discussions and more likely to consume a diverse range of news sources.

Moreover, higher education fosters tolerance and pluralism—qualities central to democratic societies.

Through exposure to diverse perspectives, academic environments help students understand competing worldviews, strengthening the social fabric needed to sustain civil discourse. Institutions that uphold academic freedom further protect democracy by resisting authoritarian pressures and encouraging dissent.

However, when access to higher education becomes limited—due to rising costs, systemic inequality, or political interference—the democratic project is threatened. Disparities in educational attainment often parallel disparities in political participation, leaving marginalized voices underrepresented.

In a time of widespread misinformation and rising authoritarian tendencies globally, the role of higher education in preparing citizens for democratic life is more urgent than ever. Universities must reaffirm their public mission not only to produce skilled workers, but to cultivate informed, ethical, and engaged citizens.

References

Jefferson, T. (1787). Letter to Edward Carrington.

Pew Research Center. (2018). Political Engagement and Education Level. Link

Gutmann, A. (1999). *Democratic Education*. Princeton University Press.

Nussbaum, M. C. (2010). *Not for Profit: Why Democracy Needs the Humanities*. Princeton University Press.

Kerr, C. (2001). *The Uses of the University*. Harvard University Press.

Dewey, J. (1916). *Democracy and Education*.