

USW 1511 News Letter: Spring '26 Vol. 3

Hi from your Pitt Faculty Union, USW 1511. In this issue we will provide various updates, including news about committee work, upcoming opportunities to join general membership meetings, and ongoing actions to enforce our contract.

As usual, the upcoming meetings and contact info for committees are at the end of the issue.

Solidarity!

Bargaining Updates

Bargaining continues apace this semester. Some recent tentative agreements:

- We tentatively agreed to an updated Grievance and Arbitration article, building on the Discipline and Discharge improvements we agreed to in February
- We had productive discussions about part-time renewals and related issues
- Procedural articles like Grievance and Arbitration rarely make headlines, but they are what makes every other protection in our contract real and enforceable
- We heard testimony from a Deaf faculty member about the challenges of engaging in academic work and life and how the hiring of full-time sign language interpreters would be a step forward in including Deaf faculty in the Pitt community
- We reached a tentative agreement (TA) on Health and Safety and are close on Grievance and Arbitration
- We presented counterproposals on Intellectual Property and Artificial Intelligence and Facilities and Support
- We have not yet received a counterproposal on our Research Support article that we proposed over two months ago

Reach out to your steward if you're not receiving bargaining updates via email.

Research Support Letter

On Monday April 27, a small contingent from the Organizing Committee delivered a letter to the Senior Vice Chancellor of the Health Sciences, Anantha Shekhar, and Chancellor Gabel. The letter calls on the administration to respond to our proposal on research support. It is signed by 85 faculty members, most of whom either rely on external grant money for their salaries or support the salaries of research stream faculty members with their grant money.

Even in the best funding climate, these faculty members have little job security. Their precarity has been highlighted by the recent actions of the Trump administration. Our bargaining committee presented a proposal in February to support these faculty and make sure that faculty members with a track record of bringing in external grant money are able to remain at Pitt when they have temporary breaks in funding. It is the only proposal the administration has not responded to in bargaining. Our colleagues should not have to choose between fair pay and job security. Be on the lookout for information on ways you can help win important job protections for our grant funded colleagues!

Join a Union Committee

Participation in union committees is a great way to make an impact, share your expertise, and learn about your union. We've got updates from various committees in this quarterly newsletter. If you want to join a committee, reach out to the chair listed:

- **Civil and Human Rights:** Ellen Lee (ellen.cole.lee@gmail.com)
- **Communications:** Paul Johnson (paulj567@gmail.com)
- **Grievance:** Marcy Pierson (Piersonpittsburgh@gmail.com)
- **Organizing:** Melinda Ciccocioppo (melindaciccioppo@gmail.com)
- **Regional Advocacy Committee:** Kelli Maloy (loamlikely@gmail.com)

- **Research Stream Advocacy Committee:**
Brett Andrews
(brett.h.andrews@gmail.com)
- **Women of Steel:** Laura McCarthy
(laura.mccarthy.lcsw@gmail.com)
- **Workload Policy:** Gretchen Aiyangar
(1088.gretchen.aiyangar@gmail.com) and
Jeff Shook (jjshook102@gmail.com)

Research-Stream Advocacy Committee: Fighting for Job Security

Across Arts and Sciences, Engineering, and the Health Science Schools, many faculty are required to obtain external funding to pay their salary and support their research. These positions have always been precarious, and the situation has only deteriorated with the ongoing uncertainty surrounding federally-funded research. As a committee, we are fighting to increase their job security, so that they can continue to do their impactful research. To learn how to contribute, reach out to Brett Andrews:
brett.h.andrews@gmail.com

What Does Membership Get You?

Membership in your union is in addition to being a part of the bargaining unit.

- Members can have their voices heard by participating in surveys of the membership
- Can attend meetings to learn more about their union and its ongoing work, raise questions, and offer feedback
- Vote to approve or against any negotiated contract
- A stronger union: unions are only as strong as their membership!

If you are not yet a member of your union, you can sign up here: <https://www.pittfaculty.org/>

Observe Bargaining

Our contract permits us to observe bargaining. It's a great way to see your union and employer in action. Bargaining sessions are on the schedule at the Union of Pitt Faculty [website](#)

- You will need to be oriented before you can attend a bargaining session.
- Contact your steward if you'd like to observe bargaining.
- Observing bargaining is a great way to see the bargaining process in action and show support for your bargaining committee

Grievance Committee Wins

Recently we have:

- Investigated nonrenewal notices sent to part-time faculty members to make sure they are valid and secured reversals for those that are invalid.
- Secured multiple overload payments for faculty whose workloads exceeded the limits in the CBA.

Workload Policy Committee Work

Work is ongoing to write up workload policies that are consistent with our CBA. If your department or school has a new policy, let us know! You can get in touch with the co-chairs of this committee, Jeff Shook and Gretchen Aiyanger, to learn more.

Contract Corner: No Retaliation

Our contract has provisions preventing our employer from retaliating against employees for:

- Reporting workplace safety issues
- Demanding our employers fulfill the terms of our contract
- Pursuing grievances pursuant to our contract

If you think you might have experienced retaliation, reach out to your steward. Not sure who your steward is?

Regional Campus Advocacy Committee

During bargaining, the Regional Campus Advocacy Committee is operating primarily in conjunction with the Regional Campus Faculty Caucus. In the bargaining survey, 77 faculty members from across the Pitt system indicated interest in joining the caucus, and faculty from Bradford, Greensburg, Johnstown, and Oakland attended the first caucus meeting on February 20. Birney Young, a faculty member on the Bradford campus and a member of the RCAC, the regionals caucus, and the Bargaining Committee, unpacked specific articles in our CBA that are especially relevant to regional faculty. He also shared the results of the bargaining survey, in which regional faculty prioritized pay (especially salary compression), job security, academic freedom, and workload. In the discussion that followed, issues of concern included protections around the university's use of AI, facilities, and funding for faculty research and student travel. Takeaways included that this is the time to build membership. Especially as we negotiate our second contract, we are stronger together!

Union Meetings

- The next **general membership meeting for Pitt faculty union members will be Wednesday, May 20th at 6:30 PM** on Zoom. Email invites are sent to all union members; reach out to your steward if you did not receive that email. Subsequent

meetings will be Tuesday June 30, Thursday July 23, and Thursday August 27, all at **6:30 PM** on Zoom.

At these meetings, all union members can make motions, vote on motions, participate in discussion, run for leadership positions, participate in committees, and all the other activities that are involved in the running of our union. Your participation counts: every member has an equal vote.

Contact Your Steward

Having a workplace issue? Contact your steward!

The first person to contact for any union-related inquiry is your steward. This is usually a colleague in your department or center, so they will be familiar with issues in your area. Your steward can help you solve your issue or escalate your inquiry to the relevant person or committee. Not sure who your steward is? Want to become a steward yourself? Contact our Recording Secretary, Melinda Ciccocioppo: melindaciccioppo@gmail.com.

Penn State Faculty Unionize

Congrats to our colleagues at Penn State, where 2,510 faculty members voted yes to become a union and affiliate with the SEIU! Thanks to those of you who helped chip in by phonebanking on their campaign.

Contribute to Your Newsletter

If there is a subject you would like to see covered here, or if you have something you would like to share, contact Paul Johnson: paulj567@gmail.com.