

# Stockton Federation of Teachers Local 2275

Quarterly Newsletter



2020 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter



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# Welcome to the Rebirth Issue of the SFT Local 2275 Newsletter

Rodger Jackson, President of SFT Local 2275 provides a welcome back to the Newsletter of the Stockton Federation of Teachers.

## SFT newsletter

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The negotiations, as reported by our President Ralph Bean, continue in New Brunswick - and the clock is still running on the postponement of the strike deadline until Monday, February 11. The strike deadline was postponed because the

As I was researching the history of newsletters for SFT 2275 I initially concluded that we had never put one out. I reached out to a couple of former presidents and officers and they said we simply never started one. They would send leaflets, updates, and pamphlets to the membership via their mailboxes when necessary, as well as communicate with the local press, but there was never a perceived need for a regular publication. Fortunately, former president Michael McGarvey caught an early draft of this column and corrected my error. He explained that he and Ralph Bean (another former president) used to put one out but that when he designed the SFT 2275 website, that became the primary vehicle for disseminating information to the members. Fortunately, it need not be a case of either/or and so we have concluded that it is time to recover that part of our tradition.

If it seems as though this first issue comes at a challenging time for our Union, it's likely that anyone from ten, twenty, thirty, forty years ago would have said the same thing. This is not to minimize this moment in history or to suggest

that nothing ever changes. Rather, it is to recognize that many of the issues we are grappling with today are ongoing ones that the labor movement has always had to face. It seems as though we are constantly fighting for ethical employment conditions, challenging those institutions and people who denigrate our work, trying to re-imagine our own relationships with each other, demanding a fair wage, and so on. In one form or another, all of those who built this Union fought these battles and hundreds of others over the decades since its inception. We have to respect and honor the efforts of our predecessors.

One important way to show real respect is to engage in honest self-reflection and seek to address the revealed imperfections and shortcomings. Keeping everything the same is not honoring one's past; it is being afraid of the future. An organization that is governed by such fear will not be brave enough to successfully continue the fight for its members.

This newsletter is one small way of responding to this self-reflection. We have heard members say, "We

don't understand how the Union works on agreements. It's not clear to us how to take on a leadership position within it. Good people appear to be working hard for us, but what does that actually mean in terms of current endeavors or ongoing projects? What exactly is the relationship between this "Council" and our local? How can we make suggestions or recommendations? Is what the state is trying to push the same thing they did in the past? How is the Union constrained by federal law or New Jersey statutes?"

One of our goals of this newsletter is for it to be part of a larger process of opening up the Union, of recovering past traditions that have been forgotten and of re-conceiving its possibilities. As we always say, "The members are the Union." The more successfully we can do this, the more we will live up to that aspiration.

--

Rodger Jackson, Ph.D.  
Stockton University  
President SFT Local 2275

# A Student Leader's Message to the Members of our Community Regarding Racism

*Danielle V. Combs, Senior Political Science Major and President of the Student Chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) at Stockton University, provides an update on the Black Lives Matter movement on campus.*

As an African American woman and student, I stand firmly with Fannie Lou Hammer's statement and say that I am sick and tired of being sick and tired. I am sick and tired of hearing the same narrative on the news with another unarmed African American's name attached to it. I am sick and tired of still confronting racism both at school and in my community. I am sick and tired of being faced with racial injustices and inequalities. Simply put, I am sick and tired, of being sick and tired.

Too many innocent, and unarmed African Americans are losing their lives at the hands of police brutality. How many more families have to suffer and how many more have to lose their lives in order for change to occur? How many more times do we have to live through this burning issue? How many more Michael Brown's and George Floyd's where "I Can't Breathe" is being yelled and yet they still don't care? How many more Sandra Bland's and Breonna

Taylor's where a traffic stop can lead to our death or we aren't even safe in our own spaces? How many more Tamir Rice's and Trayvon Martin's where even the lives of kids are put at risk for just being kids? How many more times does this have to happen before real change is made?

Due to the systemic racism that are embedded in our country, African Americans have been relegated to a subclass of human in-existence. Injustice has been shown throughout history aimed against the civil rights of African Americans. Racism has been embedded into our criminal justice system, and oppressors are continually walking around free. This is a problem that needs to be changed! The color of my skin should not be seen as a threat or a weapon. I feel the pain of the mothers, fathers, brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles, cousins, nieces and nephews who are all hurting and traumatized by the unjust killings of African Americans. Black Lives

Matter is bigger than a hashtag, it is a movement and this conversation must continue on!

Changes in this area must start with us. We need to unite together to combat this systemic issue of racism. God made us all equal, so we need to be treated that way. Black Lives Matter and need to be treated as such. I stand firmly against police brutality, systemic racism, and racial inequalities. We need to break away from these unjust realities and unite together as one. The chant says, "THE PEOPLE UNITED, WILL NEVER BE DEFEATED". So, let's do just that, unite together and push for change!

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*Danielle V. Combs  
Stockton University  
Senior, Political Science Major  
President, Stockton Chapter of  
the National Association for the  
Advancement of Colored People  
(NAACP)*



# An Update from our President on Critical Matters to the SFT Local 2275

*President Rodger Jackson outlines the origins and challenges of the Union's negotiations over securing protections against layoffs.*

On June 29, 2020, the Council of New Jersey State College Locals reached a tentative deal with the state government on furloughs and a COLA deferral in exchange for protection against layoffs. I use the term "tentative" because it requires the AFT members all across the state to vote on it. The SFT 2275 leadership strongly recommends you ratify it. Not surprisingly, once the email announcing it was sent out, we were flooded with questions and we will probably continue to get more for some time. We hope that our meeting on July 1 provided answers to many of those questions, but rest assured the Union leadership will continue to field them throughout the year. This is not the first time we have gone down this path, and sadly it will probably not be the last. In any case, since the implementation of furlough days is clearly a topic of utmost concern to our membership right now, I will focus my first presidential column in the newsletter briefly discussing its origins.

As the pandemic unfolded in Spring 2020, it became increasingly clear that it would negatively affect the economic health of the state colleges and universities. Naturally, the management of these institutions began to make noises that they would have to find ways to address these fiscal difficulties. There were a number of possible fixes, but even a cursory glance at history warns us that the first thing that comes up is "the need to bring labor costs under control." There are basically three ways management does this: reduction in force (read "fire" or "layoffs"), salary realignment (read "pay cuts"), or both.

Fortunately, because we are represented by the Union, management is constrained from making these decisions arbitrarily. Many of these constraints are found in the document typically referred to as "The Master Agreement." This is the contract that is negotiated every four years between representatives of the state of New Jersey and the Council of New Jersey State College Locals - AFT - AFL-CIO. The Council is made up of representatives of all seven State Universities and the two State Colleges and acts as the sole bargaining agent for its faculty, librarians, professional staff, and adjunct faculty. Our local, SFT 2275, is represented at the Council by myself, Vice President Emari DiGiorgio, and lead negotiator, Tina Zappile.

The Master Agreement stipulates that AFT members must be given a minimum of 195 days for tenured faculty and 180 days for professional staff from the time of their layoff notice. This provides us with some protection, but not nearly enough. It would be cold comfort for members to know that, upon receipt of a pink slip, they would still have a job for just six more months. Moreover, the Master Agreement does not put a limit on the number of individuals who could be issued layoff notices. In a time when 50 million people across the country are unemployed, the Council saw it as imperative to do whatever was reasonably possible to protect as many of our members as possible from any layoffs.

We then considered what management might do with regard to the second option, pay cuts. The Master Agreement also states that if the financial situation requires

it and management does not have time to reduce costs through layoffs they can withhold 3% of our base salary. While they are obligated to return those monies sometime within the next two years, this does not preclude them from eventually implementing layoffs as well. A solution which deferred 3% of everyone's salary and didn't provide substantive job security didn't seem like much of a solution, especially if our goal was to keep as many members employed as possible for as long as possible.

Our dissatisfaction with these two options led us to where we find ourselves now. In the Master Agreement there is the following clause: Whenever there is a likelihood that this program of adjustment might have to be employed, the STATE shall consult with the UNION on all aspects of the crisis and consider any alternative suggestions which are offered.

So, we went to management and offered them an alternative suggestion: trade furlough days (pay cuts) and a deferral of our Cost of Living increase (not our base salary), for as much job security as possible. Please know that we are not happy about this "deal" any more than any of you. We are quite aware that these furloughs constitute a real hardship. However, our objective was to keep as many of our members working possible in the worst economic climate since the Great Depression. We believe this agreement is our strongest chance to do that.

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*Rodger Jackson, Ph.D.  
Stockton University  
President SFT Local 2275*

## Introducing our New Grievance Officer, Nazia Kazi and Related Matters

*Emari DiGiorgio, outgoing Grievance Officer and current Vice President, introduces Nazia Kazi, incoming Grievance Officer, and they describe the role of the position and how it supports members.*



Please welcome Dr. Nazia Kazi, Associate Professor of Anthropology, as the incoming Grievance Officer of the SFT Local 2275.

The grievance officer helps members and managers understand and apply the Statewide Master Agreement, which outlines the terms and conditions of our employment, and local memorandums of agreement. The Union strives for amicable employee/employer relations and aims to resolve contract violations internally; however, if an internal resolution cannot be made, the Union will pursue a formal grievance resolution, as outlined by N.J.A.C. title 4A.

As a reminder, all of the Statewide and locally negotiated agreements, including those that outline Alternate Time Off for Full-time and Part-time Professional Staff Members, the current Coordinators Agreement, Adjunct Course-load, among others, are found on the SFT website.

Please note that because the Union recognizes that this summer's orientation process and schedule is significantly modified because of Covid-19, we have agreed that for Summer 2020 participating faculty (full-time, part-time, NTTP, and adjunct) will be paid at the rate of \$90/hr, as an extension of the Continuing Studies/Institute MOA.

If you have questions or concerns about these agreements or your working environment, please contact Nazia Kazi ([nazia.kazi@sftunion.org](mailto:nazia.kazi@sftunion.org)).

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*Emari DiGiorgio, MFA  
Stockton University  
Vice President SFT Local 2275*

and

*Nazia Kazi, Ph.D.  
Stockton University  
Grievance Officer SFT Local 2275*

# Introducing our Negotiating Team and the Local Negotiation's Report for 2019-2020

*Tina Zappile, Lead Negotiator, introduces us to the negotiating team and describes new locally negotiated agreements.*



The local negotiations team expanded to include, in alphabetical order, Emari DiGiorgio (GENS), Rodger Jackson (ARHU), Tara Luke (NAMS), Adam Miyashiro (ARHU), Anne Pomeroy (ARHU), Kerri Sowers (HLTH), and Tina Zappile (SOBL). We have continued to meet with management virtually after the university closed in March, and will meet with them throughout the summer. We welcome your input on local issues, and you can contact Tina ([tina.zappile@sftunion.org](mailto:tina.zappile@sftunion.org)) or any of the team members listed here. Please also reach out if you have an interest in joining our team in the future!

For staff, we locally negotiated a new agreement on Protocols for Staff Chaperoning Office Sponsored Student Activities/ Events to ensure that staff are adequately compensated for student experiences such as Alternative Spring Break. We demanded to negotiate a new local agreement for Staff Reclassification application and appeal processes, and management has thus far refused. As of June, we are waiting for a response from the New Jersey state's Office of Employee Relations (OER) to determine if management will move forward.

We also demanded to negotiate a new Staff Performance Based Promotions agreement before the current one expires, in order to

address issues that came up in 2019. However, that demand was also refused and management plans to wait until it expires to renegotiate. We realize these issues are critical for our staff, and we will continue to keep them at the top of our priority list.

For faculty, a new local agreement for Non-Tenure Track Positions (NTPPs) was successfully negotiated in January 2020, only a few weeks after statewide negotiations for our new Master agreement concluded in late December. NTPPs are new full-time faculty positions, and they are eligible for step and merit increases to their salaries (just like other full time positions), benefits, and multi-year contracts. To be clear, NTPP positions do not replace what are commonly referred to as "visiting" or 13-D and 13-O positions, which still remain intact, and in fact were increased, in the new Master agreement.

Faculty leadership was another area in which there was a lot of activity. We successfully negotiated a delay for most of the positions in the local Coordinator & Faculty Leadership Agreement set to expire on June 30, 2020, and all positions in Section 1 and Section 2 are extended until June 30, 2021. There is a Task Force on Faculty Leadership working on the issue, with both management and local negotiators involved in

that process. In the meantime, we successfully negotiated a brand new local agreement for the Chair of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) Committee, and renegotiated individual agreements for Chair of Research and Professional Development (R&PD) Committee and Faculty Senate President, along with Directors for the Text Center, Pappas Center, South Jersey Culture & History Center (SJCHC), and the Stockton Center on Successful Aging (SCOSA). Highlights include no cuts to compensation, a new flexible option for work during the summer, and a new faculty position for SCOSA. Management declined to negotiate a faculty position for Directors for the Institute for Faculty Development (IFD) and Assessment, instead deciding to move those positions into management.

We also renegotiated a new agreement for Faculty Serving as Coaches for Dual Credit Courses, providing our members compensation for coaching consortium's of participating high schools and expanded travel benefits for travel to high schools in the local area and beyond.

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*Tina Zappile, Ph.D.  
Stockton University  
Lead Negotiator, SFT Local 2275*

# SFT Local 2275 Holds its First Ever Workshop Tailored to our Adjunct Community

*Maxine Patroni, Vice President of Adjuncts, describes the SFT Local 2275's first adjunct specific workshop.*

On Wednesday, June 3rd, 2020, the Stockton Federation of Teachers hosted its first workshop for the adjunct community at Stockton University. Since schedules and plans for returning to campus for the fall 2020 semester are still being discussed, the union wanted to ensure adjuncts knew their rights. This includes new protections under the 2019-2023 contract such as course cancellation compensation policies, ability to request a letter of employment status, and updates on NJ A4132, which would expand unemployment insurance benefits to adjuncts.

**COURSE CANCELLATION:** The amount paid to an adjunct faculty member whose class has been canceled or reassigned less than two

weeks before the start date is one teaching credit hour. If the course is canceled or reassigned after the first class taught, the faculty member is owed the amount of one and a half teaching credit hours.

**REQUESTING DOCUMENTATION OF EMPLOYMENT STATUS:** Adjuncts who will not be offered a letter of employment contract have the right to request a letter confirming this within ten calendar days of the request. Adjuncts seeking such a letter should reach out to Dawn Channell (Dawn.Channell@stockton.edu) in Human Resources.

**BILL NJ A4132:** This bill will make it easier for adjuncts to secure unemployment insurance benefits. It has passed in both the Senate

and Assembly, and hopefully, will be signed into law by Governor Phil Murphy. If you'd like to follow the time-line of NJ - A4132, please click the [link here](#).

As fall 2020 approaches, it is likely SFT will host another adjunct workshop when we have a better idea of how the semester will look. As always, any concerns or questions can be sent to Maxine Patroni, Vice President of Adjuncts, SFT Local 2275 at maxine.patroni@sftunion.org.

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*Maxine Patroni  
Stockton University  
Vice President of Adjuncts  
SFT Local 2275*



# Very Timely Issues Facing Professional Staff at Stockton University

*Joe Everett, Vice President of Professional Staff, describes concerns of Professional Staff at Stockton University, including the reopening procedures and ongoing local negotiations.*



This has been a tumultuous season for Stockton's professional staff. The move to remote work for most of our members was unforeseen and difficult for many. Communication from administrators came in stages and was not always clear. Now that we are discussing the potential of returning to our physical workplace, we are pressing administration to communicate with greater clarity. We are told there is significant ongoing work to make the campus safe for returning staff, but our members have not been kept abreast of this work, creating anxiety for some. We need to know more about the safety procedures and policies that will be put in place to ensure our safety. We also need to know more about how decisions will be made regarding how/when staff return to campus, and what exceptions will be made for those with health or logistical concerns.

Right now, we do not have all the answers to very specific questions. However, it is our understanding (as communicated by the university's restart committees) that when we do return to work, we will resume use of the process we utilized early on in the pandemic, whereby if you or someone living with you are immuno-compromised, if your childcare center is closed, etc., that you will be able to request

a continued work from home allowance. We are looking into exactly what the eligibility criteria will be and how exactly this will all work. If you have questions, please email me at [joseph.everett@sftunion.org](mailto:joseph.everett@sftunion.org) and also fill out the survey I emailed in early June. Our goal is to compile all the concerns of our members and make sure they are heard and addressed.

In the midst of all the chaos, our negotiating team has been trying to address a number of issues that have been frustrating us long before the pandemic: Performance-Based Promotion (PBP) and Reclassification for Professional Staff. For PBP, we requested that administration renegotiate this procedure after finding numerous problems during its initial year. Administration has refused to negotiate this with us until the current procedure expires in 2026. However, we will certainly revisit and try to renegotiate again once the climate moves in a more peaceful direction. In pursuit of a clear procedure surrounding Reclassification, we actually issued a formal demand to negotiate after a number of problematic experiences by our members (not getting clear answers, not knowing what the process was, not having any appeal process, etc.). The

administration again did not want to negotiate a formal policy with us, but we believe they are legally/contractually required to do so. We are currently waiting for guidance from the state level on this, hoping they will tell administration they must negotiate and formalize this process. A number of our members are still in limbo, having applied for reclassifications without receiving clear answers or the opportunity for appeal. Our hope is that they will get both of those things under the new procedure.

As mentioned above, SFT Professional Staff members are always welcome to email me at [joseph.everett@sftunion.org](mailto:joseph.everett@sftunion.org), and are invited to complete the survey I emailed in early June. Despite the chaos and uncertainty of the world around us right now, our Union remains strong and Professional Staff issues are constantly considered by our leadership. The value of Union membership and solidarity is on full display during trying times.

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*Joe Everett  
Stockton University  
Vice President of  
Professional Staff SFT Local 2275*

# This is the Committee on Political Education (COPE) and an Update on Recent Activities

*Patrick Hossay introduces us to COPE and provides an update.*

Of the SFT officers, the COPE Chairperson may be the biggest mystery. You know what the AFT President does. You can imagine what the Grievance Officer does. You can probably guess what the membership officer does. But, what is a COPE? And what does it do? The Committee on Political Education (COPE) is the SFT's voluntary bi-partisan Political Action Committee. We're tasked with helping to pursue political change that supports the interests of the SFT and organized labor more generally, and supporting political efforts and legislative activities that preserve these and related interests. In other words, COPE is the political arm of the SFT. Our normal activities might include participation in political events, fundraisers, local and state debates, offering public and financial support for local and state campaigns, and coordination with the state-wide COPE in providing endorsements and contributions to state and national leaders who share our aims and interests. In general, our interests have included support for organized labor, of course, as well as support for public education, accessible healthcare, public health and related concerns.

Why do this? Quite simply because the rules that define our bargaining rights, access to healthcare, benefits, and working conditions are decided by elected officials. So we have a powerful stake in influencing who these officials are and the choices they will make.

The COPE is not a partisan organization, but it is clearly political. So, it never utilizes general union funds. COPE activities are funded by a separate budget defined by voluntary contributions from members. (If you'd like to contribute to these funds, let me know!) Membership in COPE is voluntary, and currently includes

Patrick Hossay, Arleen Gonzales, Ron Hutchison, Elizabeth Shobe, Elizabeth Elmore and Tait Chirenje. (Again, if you think you'd be interested in being a member, let me know!)

Things have been pretty slow in the COPE this summer, since political gatherings, fundraisers and other actions have been suspended due to the Covid crisis. But we have found two very promising local leaders to support. In the battle to unseat Congress member Jeff Vandrew in the 2nd District, The SFT COPE Committee, the NJ State Council, the National AFT, and the AFL-CIO took the unusual step of offering an early and strong endorsement to Brigid Harrison. Harrison has an impressive and clear record of support for organized labor, higher education, and affordable health care. She is a professor of political science at Montclair University where she teaches on democratic theory and women in politics. Brigid is an old friend of the SFT, as her late husband Ken Harrison taught economics here for many years and was an SFT leader before he passed in 2010. And Brigid received her BA in Political Science from Stockton in the late 1980s. The race has achieved a higher profile than it otherwise might because Harrison is running against Amy Kennedy, wife of former Rep. Patrick Kennedy, and both are aimed at unseating Van Drew, who broke with Democratic impeachment efforts, switched parties and expressed his 'undying support' for President Trump last Fall. Harrison is an exceptional candidate; and the committee believes Van Drew must be defeated.

We have also endorsed and offered support to Pamela Thomas-Fields in her campaign for mayor of Atlantic City. She too is no stranger to the Stockton community. Thomas-Fields

is an SFT union member, an adjunct professor in the School of Business, and a graduate of Stockton. Education, public health, social justice and the rights of workers have been central to her campaign. She will be competing against Marty Small and two other candidates in the Democratic primary next month to complete an abbreviated term caused by Mayor Frank Gilliam resignation after pleading guilty to fraud. Thomas-Fields has received the endorsement of several unions, the Atlantic City Democratic Committee and several City Council members. However Senator Corey Booker and Governor Phil Murphy have endorsed Small. So this will be no easy battle.

The old joke is that battles in academia are so vicious because the stakes are so small. But, in this case, the stakes are absolutely not small. It is not exaggeration to say that core elements of our democracy may hang in the balance of the forthcoming national election. And, at the local and state level, we will be electing the leaders who will be responsible for defining the policies and practices that determine our collective rights and shape the terrain on which we will negotiate our next contract. It is vital that our interests, solidarity and determination be apparent not only in the negotiating room and on campus, but in the political realm as well. Ensuring our long-term collective interests requires political action. And that's where COPE comes in.

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*Patrick Hossay, Ph.D.  
Stockton University  
Director for the Committee on  
Political Engagement (COPE)  
SFT Local 2275*

# Introducing the SFT Local 2275 Anti-Racism Coalition

*We will keep you apprised in this column of ways you can become more active with the Union. In this issue, Emari DiGiorgio introduces the SFT Local 2275 Anti-Racism Coalition.*

In an effort to demonstrate the Union's commitment to equity and anti-racist practices, the Union advertised an open call for all members—full-time, part-time, and adjunct faculty; professional staff; and faculty librarians—to join the SFT Anti-Racism Coalition, a group that will be guided by two fundamental principles: 1) Ensure that the Union articulates and enacts a vision of true social equity and 2) Recognize and address issues of racism and institutional bias throughout the University.

In the coming months, the SFT Anti-Racism Coalition will set its specific agenda, foregrounding an anti-racist climate on our campus. If you missed the initial discussion sessions on June 26th and want to be involved, please contact Emari DiGiorgio (emari.digiorgio@sftunion.org).

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*Emari DiGiorgio, MFA  
Stockton University  
Vice President SFT Local 2275*

## Thanks for Reading!

This newsletter was produced through the generous contributions of our Executive Committee and Friends. If you have any questions, comments, contributions or suggestions, please do not hesitate to reach out to the lead editor, Brian Tyrrell, Communications Director for the SFT Local 2275, at [Brian.Tyrrell@SFTUnion.org](mailto:Brian.Tyrrell@SFTUnion.org)

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