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How the Pandemic has Changed Us

President of SFT Local 2275, Emari DiGiorgio, reminds us that, as we see pandemic restrictions ease, the work we've done the past several years was worthwhile despite the challenges.

Let me start this column by asserting that there is no going back to "normal." Or perhaps what I want to say is that as an educator and professional, I don't want us to return to some idealized version of 2020. That pre-COVID life was full of inequity, injustice, and an absurd worship of productivity.

This past week marks the two-year anniversary of Stockton's shut-down, when all of us—faculty, faculty librarians, and staff—flipped courses and services fully online. Instead of meeting in classrooms and around conference tables, we logged into Zoom, and the line between work and home blurred to erasure for many of us.

I want to acknowledge and honor

***"...the line between
work and home
blurred to erasure..."***

the sacrifices we have collectively made to keep our students and each other as whole as possible, without expecting this Herculean effort as some new glorified standard for performance.

I want to thank you for all of the intellectual and emotional labor you have invested; the flexibility and ingenuity you have shown converting your course material, programming, and high-touch services to an online modality back to face-to-face, to online, to hyflex, to face-to-face, again, while our students and all of us grapple with illness, testing, quarantine, anxiety, financial instability, death, caregiving, shitty wifi, isolation, poor communication, and ineffectual leadership.



If your dean or manager has not told you what an incredible job you are doing *in a pandemic*, let me praise your resilience for showing up, for meeting our students and peers where they are, for listening, for speaking up, for the care you put into a reappointment file or a letter for your colleague, for operating outside of your comfort zone, for retooling, for writing a report only two people have read, for salvaging a research or creative project, for starting over, for taking a break, for all of the invisible labor on which the University depends but does not acknowledge.

We are Stockton. Not the buildings or state appropriations or the anniversary logos. We don't need an external accreditor to tell us what we're doing right. We continue to inspire students, to help them become

conscientious, compassionate, critical thinkers and citizens.

The pandemic has changed our day-to-day experience, and it has made our jobs more challenging. SFT sees and acknowledges this burden, and wherever it is within the purview of the Union to push back, we are lined up, contract and MOA in hand, to secure and retain our rights.

Together, we have weathered similar storms in the history of the University, and together, we help see each other through this one.

In solidarity,

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

Update on Adjunct Scheduling Policies

Why are adjuncts losing classes? Vice President of Adjuncts, Maxine Patroni, dives into the issues at hand.

Dear Adjunct Colleagues,

The previous newsletter addressed concerns over budget cuts to schools across Stockton University and what that means for our adjunct faculty. Over the past month, the SFT executives have investigated these pressing inquiries further by reaching out to department chairs with the following questions:

1) Have you, as the chair, or any members of your program received instructions from administration as to the number of classes an adjunct would be permitted to teach in a year?

2) If you have, have these instructions been given to you via email or verbally?

3) Is there any other information you feel you could pass along to us that could help us regarding this issue?

While I cannot provide the specific details of the responses, I hope to summarize the tone, gist, and information communicated to us from those who are hiring and assigning classes to adjuncts. Most chairs said they are operating under the current terms in our state-wide

contract: adjunct faculty are allowed to teach 12 teaching credit hours (TCH) per academic year; this usually works out to be three classes per year at four TCH. However, some adjunct faculty may have seen a change in their schedule. For example, if you usually teach two courses in the fall and one in the spring, one of those classes might have been canceled or reassigned.

A few of the following scenarios could have happened: deans and assistant deans canceled classes with low enrollment. If one of these canceled classes belonged to a full-time faculty member, that faculty member had to absorb another class to meet their minimum course load. In most of these cases, adjunct faculty ended up having their class reassigned to a full-time faculty member so they could meet their course load. Next, full-time faculty were asked to teach more core classes and less electives, and in some cases, were asked to teach larger sections of classes, which took away the possibility of more sections of that same class. Finally, the most obvious but disheartening scenario is that adjunct and staff adjunct classes were scheduled based on available funds. Since some of the Stockton schools saw significant budget cuts,

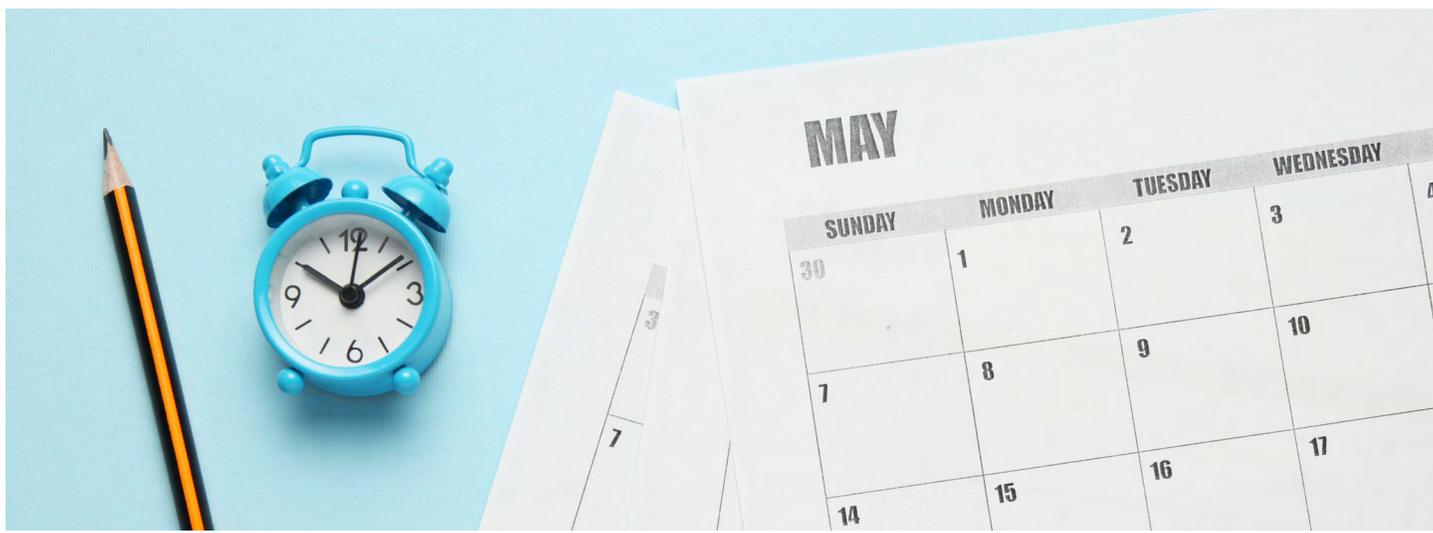
less courses were offered, and the available classes went to full-time faculty first. Some chairs mentioned they were asked to submit adjunct course schedules to the dean's office where costs were analyzed, then it was determined whether the school's available funds could support the class.

If no changes have been made to your schedule this academic year and you're teaching all courses you usually teach, this is great news. It doesn't necessarily mean that budget cuts won't affect you or your department in the future, but again, no change to your schedule is the best outcome right now.

What I've conveyed here is the most current information we have regarding adjunct scheduling and course loads. If you have heard anything outside of this information and would like SFT to find out the validity of the claim, we'd be happy to do so. Please remember, we're here for you.

In solidarity,

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



You Are Not a Loan: The Movement to Cancel Student Debt

Nazia Kazi, Grievance Officer, lays out the founding precepts of the grievance process and reminds us to stay active and talk to one another.

My students are often stunned to learn that privatized higher-education, the kind that leaves college graduates with mountains of debt, is relatively new in American society. The history of free, high-quality public universities (like the entire CUNY or University of California systems), founded with the very purpose of making education free and accessible, is a forgotten part of American history.

In fact, it was only after campuses were awash with increasingly politicized students in the 60's and 70's – those who called for an end to US militarism, systemic racism, or an expansion of civil rights – that the widespread privatization of university education was normalized. Making higher education available only to America's wealthy or to those willing to be straddled with debt was one way to quell the growing momentum of student activism.

Today, Americans face an unprecedented student debt crisis. The total amount of national debt is 1.8 billion dollars. Student debtors report remarkable and devastating impacts of this debt crisis: many don't want children because of their financial limitations; others report deliberately under-earning so that they do not have to make the exorbitant loan payments that would be triggered by a higher income.

This is why there is an urgent and growing push to cancel student

debt, which can be done with an executive action by the president. Supporters of the debt cancellation movement argue that it would serve as a stimulus for the economy, boost voter turnout, and close the racial and gender wealth gap.

Yet many Americans, stuck in a paradigm that deems debtors “irresponsible” for their borrowing,

Washington, DC at the Department of Education. Just weeks before the COVID moratorium is set to expire, the rally will put pressure on the government to heed the demands of this growing movement. Those who cannot attend the rally are encouraged to “come out of the debtor's closet” and [wear a placard displaying their debt amount to work on the 4th.](#)



I spoke with Jason Wozniak, one of the founders of the Debt Collective, Assistant Professor of Education at Westchester University. Wozniak underscored the crucial role unions ought to play in this campaign. “Debt is a labor issue,” he said. “Having debt impacts how workers behave and what they feel empowered to advocate for. Someone with debt might be less willing to take action or to take positions to improve their work environment. If you're afraid of losing

your job, you risk falling behind on debt payments. And in America, that means all kinds of trouble.”

see debt cancellations as a pie-in-the-sky dream. Yet let us remember that debts of major American corporations are frequently forgiven, with little in the way of public outcry. Debt cancellation already exists in the American political vocabulary – just not for ordinary American workers.

The Debt Collective, the national union for student debtors, seeks to change all of this. [On April 4th, a national rally will be held in](#)

The student debt crisis is acutely felt by contingent workers in academia, such as adjunct professors or graduate assistants. Furthermore, women and people of color carry the highest amounts of debt, and are paid, on average, less than their white male counterparts. Student debt cancellation is thus a racial and gender justice issue as well.

The Debt Collective has [circulated a petition for those in higher education](#) to sign in support of their call for full student loan cancellation.

While many Stockton employees have recently received relief through the new Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF) extensions, these are “means-tested” approaches that do not provide the relief that the current student debt crisis calls for. They are only available to certain workers after a decade of public service, an option that is not feasible for those most saddled by student debt.

Today, debt of all kinds is a growing burden on Americans, deepening the chasm between the rich and the rest of us. Medical debt has only intensified with the pandemic’s devastating economic blow to workers, and many American children carry school lunch debt. “Those children unable to pay are prevented from participating in school activities, which is a travesty,” says Wozniak, who is also working on a campaign to abolish school lunch debt in Bucks County.

Further readings on the student debt crisis are here:

- [“A Matter of Life and Debt: A Conversation with Michael Hudson.”](#)
- [“It’s Not That Complicated. Cancelling Student Debt is Good.”](#)
- [“Cancel It: Every Penny.”](#)
- [“Why the Student Debt Catastrophe was Avoidable.”](#)

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

Let’s Talk About Balance

Treasurer, Stacey Rose, talks about inflation, savings, and planning for a future with balance in mind.

As life meanders towards some kind of normalcy, creating a budget for the next fiscal year has become a priority. In the last two years, the ways in which we spent money changed; adapting to virtual tools, purchasing more disinfectant, and having fewer-but larger-events became the norm. Thankfully, we were able to save money during this time.

It is very fortunate we did. With inflation on the rise, everything we do costs significantly more than it did before. For the time being, we have to anticipate that these numbers will continue to climb. When planning for the next fiscal year, where we will hopefully see the return of the legendary PayDay Parties, we will have to increase our anticipated costs significantly. As a Union, we try to support local businesses. Their costs are definitely up and that is being passed on to us. This is why it was so important that we saved when we could; we want to help the small businesses thrive!

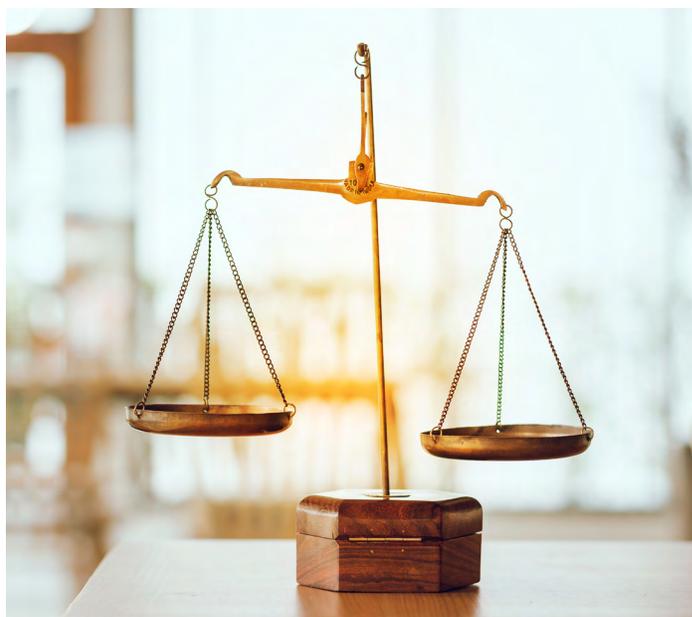
While we have savings to offset this rise in inflation, we must also keep in mind that our income from

the dues you pay will also go down. Part of the responsibility of the Treasurer is to attend the Board of Trustees meetings. I scour the Personnel Actions, noting all of the retirements and resignations. While the percent of our dues paying members may remain the same, the financial contribution from a longtime member against a new employee is not. This is simply due to the differences in salary they make. We anticipate our income from your dues will contract, meaning less money coming in for the next fiscal year.

This is where the balance will come into play. The savings will help us offset inflation and retirements while we recalibrate what our budget looks like, how it should work, and what life looks like post pandemic.

P.S. If you are retiring, congrats! It’s the only job I’ve aspired to have. Enjoy the fruits of your labor because we certainly appreciated the incredible labor you’ve done.

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Stacey Rose
Stockton University
Treasurer, SFT Local 2275



Update on Negotiations

Our Lead Negotiator, Tina Zappile, has more updates about the ongoing negotiations and where we stand on the big ticket items.

We have a new team member for Spring 2022! in addition to Emari DiGiorgio (GENS), Rodger Jackson (ARHU), Tara Luke (NAMS), Anne Pomeroy (ARHU), and Kerri Sowers (HLTH), we now have VP of Professional Staff Maria Spade (LAP Office) as a full-time member of our negotiating team. We are thrilled to have her as a permanent member and welcome her perspective as full-time professional staff who also teaches courses.

Professional Staff Evaluations

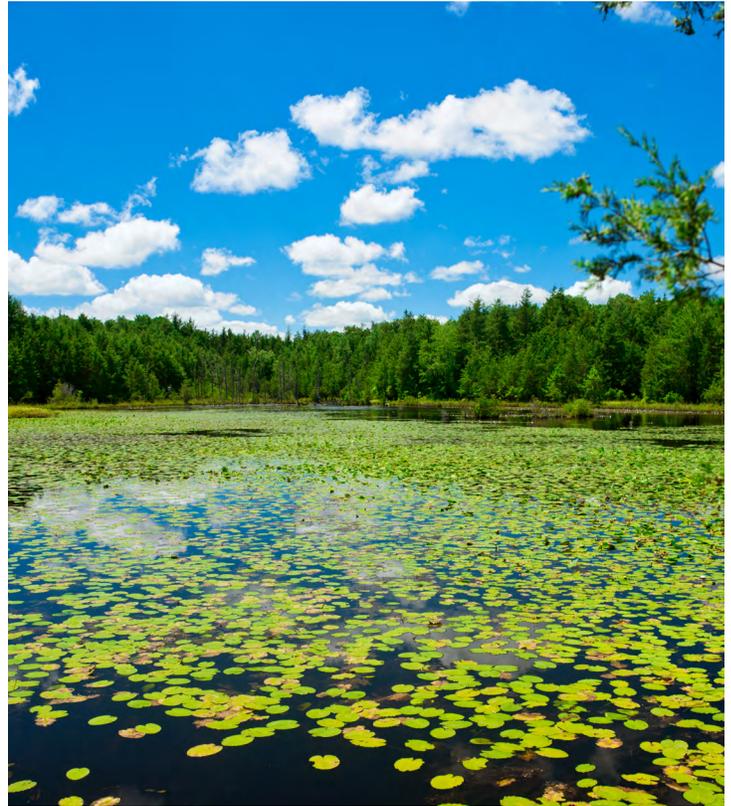
In April 2022, we will be actively negotiating a new MOA for Staff Evaluations to replace the outdated one from 2014. Thanks to Maria and several other professional staff, we have revised the old MOA and look forward to a significantly improved agreement to make the evaluation process more transparent. We used the survey data and other input to clarify the (many) issues you raised about the evaluation process, and can't wait to finalize this agreement for the 2022-2023 evaluation cycles.

The Summer Institute for Peer Evaluation of Teaching (SIPET)

Good news! In Summer 2022, SIPET will run according to the same model (1-2 faculty leaders for a total of 2 TCH compensation, and 12 participants with compensation of \$1600/each for a 3-day workshop. Details should be forthcoming very soon (if they haven't already) from the Provost Office so you can plan accordingly.

Background (repeated from the last newsletter): In 2021, we agreed with the administration to a one-year extension of our previous summer workshop to train peer evaluators. As you know, in December we requested that the Faculty Senate take up this issue. At the first Spring 2022

Senate meeting, we heard overwhelming support for the current model and therefore advocated to continue with that model until the Senate Task Force decides otherwise. We are in full support of a rigorous training program for peer evaluators of teaching, in whatever form that takes. As you know, faculty are required to have a minimum number of peer evaluations for the review process for tenure and promotion (and beyond). For more than a decade, the SIPET program has been run in the format of a 3-day intensive workshop that is open to faculty from across the entire university. This intensive seminar-style of training has been the foundation for the rigorous and consistent peer evaluation process at our institution. Our faculty can confidently rely on peer evaluations as reliable and valid data to support excellence in teaching in their files, in large part due to this training. This is especially critical for faculty of color, faculty with accents, cis-women, LGBTQIA+, and others who face well-documented biases in quantitative teaching evaluations like our IDEA system (check out this source for details and citations). SFT fought for this over a decade ago and will continue to do so. Our commitment to you is that we will continue to advocate for the



following: 1) fair compensation for both facilitators and participants (i.e., faculty learning how to do peer evaluations); 2) a commitment of trained peer evaluators to carry out a certain # of evaluations, and; 3) FULL faculty leadership of the training process. These three pillars are critical for our peer evaluation process to remain reliable and valid.

Other Issues

We have continued to work with our members on our agreements for Dissertation & Thesis Credits and Tenure Track Instructors. Thank you to everyone who has already provided critical feedback, as we determine the best path forward to get you fair pay for your hard work.

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

Reach Out With Grievance Concerns

Nazia Kazi, Grievance Officer, reminds you to reach out when you have concerns about negotiated agreement violations.

The grievance procedure refers to the process by which we remedy a violation of any of our agreements. Feel free to reach out to me (from a non-Stockton email address, preferably) if you are concerned that a negotiated agreement has been violated. It is always helpful if you can provide a detailed description of the violation, attaching any documentation of the matter that you have.

Quite often, members approach me with concerns that they are doing out-of-title or uncompensated work. To this end, I ask that you ensure you always have a current, up-to-date job

description. Without knowing the formal duties associated with your position, it becomes very challenging to engage in a formal remedy for a contractual violation.

All of SFT's negotiated agreements, as well as our state-wide Master Agreement, are posted on our website. Don't hesitate to contact me with any questions.

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



Professional Staff Workshops Are Here!

Maria Spade, Vice President of Professional Staff, has delivered on her promise to bring workshops focused on professional staff issues.

The Professional Staff Advisory Committee has been working hard to bring important information to professional staff. In January we held our first meet and greet, which allowed staff the opportunity to network with staff members outside of their division. During this session we were able to gather questions and topics that staff want to learn more about, which will guide our future events. Based on the feedback we received, we held our first workshop on March 16th which focused on reclassifications and performance based promotions. It was a rousing success.

The next workshop will be held in April and will provide information on the union and how we can help staff members. We are looking forward to being able to provide even more workshops in the upcoming academic year and bringing staff together across divisions.

I would like to give a shout out to the members of the Professional Staff Advisory Committee, Lauren Fonseca, Dennis Fotia, Donna Hauer, Natalja Manger, Tara Marsh, Brooke Rollman and Barbara Tilelli, who volunteer their time and assist in making these events a reality. Together we have created the

Professionally OURS Workshop Series, with OURS standing for Our Union Representing Staff.

If anyone is interested in becoming a part of the Professional Staff Advisory Committee and/or has any questions or topics that they would like to see a workshop on, please contact me at maria.spade@sftunion.org.

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*Maria Spade
Stockton University
Vice President of Professional Staff
SFT Local 2275*



Exclusive Events, Priceless Memories!

On Friday, February 25th around one hundred SFT members, along with their family and friends, gathered around the fire pits at Renault Winery's Vintner Wonderland. The group enjoyed lively conversations, luscious libations and some even attempted to ice skate! Guests young and old bundled up, braved the crisp weather and never looked back! A wonderful time was had by all. Please mark your

calendars for our next social event, the SFT Retiree Celebration taking place on April 28th at the Carriage House in Galloway. We are looking forward to bringing back our regularly scheduled Pay Day Parties during the 2022-23 academic year!

*Lisa Warnock
Stockton University
Events Manager SFT Local 2275*

HOW'D WE DO?

You can reach me, Justin Maciejewski, your editor and Communications Officer at:

justin.maciejewski@sftunion.org



FINAL ASSIGNMENT: RETIREMENT PARTY!

JOIN US TO CELEBRATE HONORING

SFT RETIREES

JULY 2019 - JUNE 2022

Thursday, April 28th
Carriage House
Galloway, NJ