

# APA Newsletter for November / December

## MSU Homecoming Parade Insights



The night of October 20th was unseasonably warm and a perfect night to show off our Spartan pride by walking with our APA banner in the MSU Homecoming Parade. Sharing candy, tattoos and smiles along the way was a bonus; adding to the excitement of the festivities. Thanks to the shout outs from APA members and friends along the way.

Since this was the first time ever that we believe APA has been in the parade, we kept our entry on the small side, but those APA and family members sure had fun. Next year we will be expanding to welcome a much larger group and there is even a proposal on the table to build a float. So if anyone lives fairly close and would like to offer up their garage and/or project manage the float building, please let us know at [msuapa@msu.edu](mailto:msuapa@msu.edu).



Below are some testimonials from some APA members who were in the parade.

“So glad you invited us to walk in the parade, we had a blast, my daughter, granddaughter, nieces and nephew loved every minute of it.

It was wonderful to see friends and family shout out to all of us and made us feel great to be showing our support for our awesome Union. They all want to attend next year if we have an entry, thanks again for the invitation!”

– **Maria Rabi, IT Services Client Services**

“Thank you....APA for giving us the opportunity to walk in the parade.

It was a wonderful memorable experience for us, especially for my daughter Jocelyn who had wished to be part of the ones to hand out candies in MSU Homecoming Parade when she watched the parade in 2016 for the first time. Her wish came true when she walked with the APA Union last Friday.

I was getting a little nervous/self-conscious in the beginning when seeing so many (thousands?... feels like millions) people on the side walk looking at us but when I saw Jocelyn enjoying the experience so much, my nervousness went away.



It was great to meet all of you during the parade and be a part of the APA Union.”

– **Cathy Tran, Controller’s Office**



## Holiday Greetings

The APA Executive Board wishes you happy holidays and a prosperous new year!



(L to R) Leo Sell, Melanie Waltz, Todd Ring, Nicole Proctor-Kanyama, Kandy Slack, Deb Porter, Erica Phillipich, Sue Brandt, Martin McDonough, Carol Graysmith, Dennis Seybert, Patricia Hampton, Laura Wise, Erik Maillard and Maury Koffman. *(Not pictured: Jen Shangraw)*

## MSU Trivia with Prizes for APA Members

We are adding a new feature to the newsletter to give members a chance to show off their knowledge and be entered into a drawing to win prizes. Each month two general members\* who correctly answer the trivia question will be randomly drawn to win.

Question: How many medical schools does MSU have?

Email your answer to Sue Brandt at [brandts@msu.edu](mailto:brandts@msu.edu) by noon December 22, 2017. Limit of one guess per person.

\* Must be an APA member in good standing to win; however, *Board Members, Area Representatives and Communications Committee Members are not eligible to win.*

## Meet a Fellow APA Member – Zachary Constan

### **What is your job title?**

Outreach Coordinator

### **How long have you been at MSU?**

I have been in this job for 11 years. I was also a grad student here for seven years.

### **Have you been a member of the APA the whole time?**

Yes, have been an APA the whole time I have been a full-time employee.

### **What department do you work in, and can you tell me a little bit about what you do?**

I work at the National Superconducting Cyclotron Laboratory. My position is funded by the National Science Foundation (NSF), and the main objective is public education and outreach. I give tours of the lab, and I give talks, present at festivals, and run camps. I also assist faculty who want to do outreach. These are the core things I do.

Side things come up. I made a video game about nuclear science with the Games for Entertainment and Learning (GEL) Lab in Communication Arts and Sciences. We just submitted a grant to the NSF for creating a dance about nuclear science that we have been working on with the Wharton Center and a dance company. We are also working with Impression 5 Science Center and MSU Federal Credit Union to create an exhibit about nuclear science. We have a show at the MSU Planetarium with a virtual tour of the Cyclotron lab on the dome. I also train teachers where possible. I give them tools and information to equip them to teach nuclear science.

### **What brought you to your job at MSU?**

I got a PhD in physics at MSU, and I loved my time here. I went away and taught for a few years somewhere else, but my wife saw this job come up. I didn't know this kind of job existed. I did not know about this lab. I applied, and I got the job. I was done teaching. I loved it, but I knew what it was. I thought, "This opportunity is too strange not to try." So I did, and here we are.

### **What do you love about working at MSU?**

Number one is the people. I keep meeting amazing, interesting people from all over campus with different skill sets and goals. Together we can do what we can't do independently. For example, I knew nothing about educational theory, so I teamed up with people in the College of Education. Also, being able to say we're number one in nuclear science makes it easy to promote what we do. I totally believe in what we're doing. This is awesome. If anyone wants to know more about the lab, please contact me. It is kind of a big deal for the university!

**What do you like to do when you are not at work?**

I have three kids, which keeps me busy. We do a lot of scouting. We like traveling and exploring. I take the family with me whenever possible when I travel for work. We are also big into games—board games, role-playing games, and some video games. I collect and display LEGOs, and you will see some of the science-themed sets in my office: NASA, Ghostbusters, and The Big Bang Theory.

## Questions from the Trenches

For this installment of APA *Questions from The Trenches*, we asked APA President Maury Koffman to answer a series of questions regarding the APA wages.

### **What was the eligible base wage increase amount that was applied in October 2017?**

*For October 2017, the eligible salary increase was 1.9% with 40% of the wage increase provided automatically across-the-board and 60% of the wage increase provided by management's application of the merit pay guidelines.*

### **How is the merit pay portion of the wage increase determined for 2017?**

*The APA contract mandates an objective process for supervisors to use in determining the merit pay portion of the APA annual wage increase. The full details can be found within the APA contract. In short, the criteria must be openly communicated and objectively applied throughout the department. Additionally, the decision on merit pay allocation must have been discussed between you and your immediate supervisor before your October 2017 paycheck if you were not awarded the full amount.*

### **What should an APA member do if their wage did not increase by 1.9% in October?**

*The APA always encourages frequent and transparent conversations between a member and her/his supervisor. If a member did not receive the full 1.9% base wage increase and was not informed 'why' by their supervisor, that member should schedule an opportunity to meet and review the reasons why the full 1.9% was not awarded. Of course, a member should also feel free to contact the APA office at 517.999.4004 to discuss his/her specific case.*

### **What happens if a member makes more than the APA minimum and progression level salary? Does that member still receive the October wage increase?**

*Yes. The APA minimum and progression salary levels work as a floor and there is no ceiling for APA salaries. Therefore, even if a member's salary exceeds those amounts, that individual is still eligible and must have received the October 2017 base wage increase.*

### **Why did some members receive an additional small payment from MSU on December 1?**

*The APA is proud to have negotiated and preserved a longevity pay benefit for APA members. A member becomes eligible for a longevity payment once s/he has completed six years of MSU service and was an active employee for at least 39 weeks during the immediate year prior. The longevity payment amount is a sliding scale based on years of service but ranges from 2% to 8% of the first \$9,500 or, stated differently, \$190 to \$760.*

**Who can I contact for more information or if I have questions or concerns?** *Please feel free to reach the APA office anytime via email at [msuapa@msu.edu](mailto:msuapa@msu.edu) or call us during regular business hours at 517.999.4004.*



## Area Representative (AR) Spotlight – Ezra Brooks

### **What is your job title?**

Information Technologist II

### **What area of campus, building and department do you work in?**

I work on the north area of main campus in the Computer Center.

My department is Analytics and Data Solutions, which is part of IT Services.

### **How long have you been at MSU?**

I have been at MSU for just over 2.5 years.

### **How long have you been an Area Rep?**

I have been an Area Rep for a little over a year.

### **Why is being a member of the Administrative Professional Association important to you?**

The APA provides so much support to employees ranging from guidance in navigating benefits to dispute resolution to collective bargaining. There is a real sense of community and a reminder that there are numerous resources available to employees.

### **What words of advice do you have for the new hires at MSU?**

Go to “More You Know” sessions, attend at least one APA event, and get to know an Area Representative in your area.

### **What do you love about working at MSU?**

I am surrounded by colleagues dedicated to their work and to making MSU a great place. There are also numerous opportunities to develop new skills and continue career-related education.

### **What do you like to do when you are not at work?**

I love to cook, I play guitar, I read mystery stories, and I tinker with computers.

*The AR's are appointed by the Executive Board and their role is to assist with distributing APA and information and to serve as a resource for members. AR's are assigned to a geographic area of campus, so if there is not an AR in your immediate building, you can find one nearby. For a list of AR's go to <http://www.msuapa.org/about/area-representatives-2/>*

## Would you like to be an Area Representative?

The APA has openings for members that would like to be involved in assisting other members. We do this through the Area Representative (AR) program.

The APA trains members to become AR's to be the first line for information in a building. Ideally we would have one or two AR's in each building on campus.

AR's are trained about the contract and labor laws that cover the work life of our members. This way when a member has a question we have someone that can assist the member. If the question/problem is simple, the AR will answer their question. If the question/problem is more complicated or beyond the knowledge of the AR, you would assist them in contacting the office to get assistance from our leadership team.

The training is accomplished through a series of 10 training's during the noon-1:00pm lunch hour for members on main campus. For members in remote campus' (such as Grand Rapids or Flint) we will do the initial training session at your off campus location and the balance of the trainings will be offered using Zoom.

Once you have completed training, with your approval, your name will be submitted for a one-year appointment by the APA Executive Board. Once appointed, you may continue as an AR for as long after the first year as you wish.

The next training series will be starting in March of 2018 and I invite you to join us.

Dennis Seybert

APA Vice President – AR Program Chair

seybert@msu.edu

## Starry Nights

Save the date – Monday evening, February 12th 6:00-8:00pm. Planning is in process for a private APA event at Abrams Planetarium. The evening will begin with a reception in the foyer area followed by a show. This event will be limited to APA members in good standing, plus one guest. More information will be coming out in January once details are finalized.

# The GOP's Attempt to Overhaul the Higher Education Act

*This information was also published on EdVotes.com by NEA's Mary Ellen Flannery*

An aggressive plan to transform higher education was released last week by U.S. Rep. Virginia Foxx (R-NC), chair of the House's education committee. Much of the legislation would be harmful to poor and middle-class students and make it more difficult for Americans to get high-quality, affordable higher education.

Called the Promoting Real Opportunity, Success and Prosperity through Education Reform (PROSPER) Act, the bill represents Foxx's efforts to reauthorize the Higher Education Act (HEA).

Among its provisions are:

- ***Elimination of loan-forgiveness options.*** Critically important to many APA members, the federal Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF) program helps educators, firefighters, and other public-service workers afford a home and send their children to college. Without it, these careers become even less attractive to young people. Our national union, the NEA, is strongly advocating to preserve the PSLF.
- ***Caps on student loan borrowing.*** The bill would limit the amount of money that students and families could borrow from the federal government to pay for college. Instead of solving the student debt crisis, this likely would force borrowers into more expensive private loans, says National Education Association higher-ed policy analyst Mark Smith. "The solution is to invest directly in higher education as the rest of the world does," says Smith.
- ***Roll back regulations on for-profit colleges.*** The regulations put into place by the Obama administration help ensure that students don't end up with overwhelming debt and no prospect of employment.
- ***Create new regulations for HBCUs.*** Even as the House bill eliminates rules for for-profit colleges, it creates new ones for Historically Black Colleges and Universities and Hispanic Serving Institutions. Specifically, it would require them to meet certain graduation rates or lose federal funding.
- ***Repeal the definition of distance education.*** Last year, a federal investigation found that Western Governors University, a "competency-based" institution without faculty, did not meet the federal requirement for distance education and should return millions of dollars in federal aid. The House's answer through this bill is to change the definition of distance education so that real interaction between qualified instructors and students is no longer necessary.

NEA as our national affiliate is deeply involved to advocate regarding this and other federal legislation that would directly impact APA members and students at MSU. If you would like to get more involved with legislative action through the APA, please email us at [msuapa@msu.edu](mailto:msuapa@msu.edu).