



TCNJ's Local 2364 is affiliated with the **Council of New Jersey State College Locals**, the bargaining agent for more than 7,000 professional staff, librarians and full-time, part-time and adjunct faculty at the nine state colleges/universities of New Jersey.

Dear TCNJ Campus Community,

Welcome back to the 2019-2020 school year and welcome to our Union local's monthly newsletter. We are hoping to share information about what your Union is doing to further education on campus and positive relations with the greater community.

Meeting Schedule

Our local meets monthly on the third Wednesday of each month at 3:00 pm in Social Sciences 326.

Our first meeting of the semester will be on September 18. Subsequent meeting dates for the fall semester are October 16, November 20 and December 18.

Negotiations Update from our President, Nancy Lasher

John Krimmel, Dave Prenskey and I spent time this summer attending negotiations for the full-time/part-time and adjunct contracts (the June 30 expiration dates for the contracts seem to have become meaningless). I have never served as part of the negotiations team before. Ralph Edelbach, who served as president of our local before John Krimmel, used to regularly invite me to attend negotiations. I used to wonder why Ralph invited me (perhaps because I have a legal background and perhaps because I used to ask Ralph a lot of questions...). I also used to wonder why I would want to spend the time going to negotiations when I had classes to prep for and articles to write.

Having participated in the negotiation process, I now realize how very important this process is and why it's imperative to participate. As public employees, we have the right to organize and bargain collectively (form and join unions) only because the New Jersey state legislature has granted us that right. As we learned eight years ago, what the legislature grants, the legislature can take away. In that case, it was the right to bargain over medical benefits. As I sat in the negotiation sessions, I was repeatedly struck by just how tenuous our bargaining relationship with the state is. While the environment in which we bargained was certainly

friendly this time (unlike during the Christie years), I felt the magnitude of the power the state yields relative to its employees. For example, the union fought hard to change the current rule that a favorable outcome in the grievance process is advisory only. There is nothing to compel the state to agree to this unless our strength as a union makes the state (and really the college presidents for whom the state is bargaining) fear that we will take action to register our collective displeasure over our terms and conditions of employment.

There is no question that unions improve both pay and working conditions for unionized employees as well as for society at large. In their opinion piece published in the August 8, 2018 *New York Times* titled "Why You Should Care About Unions (Even if you are not in one.)," Meagan Day and Bhaskar Sunkara talk about not only the union impact on improving working conditions and pay, but discuss this as the reason why business is fighting so hard to disable unions. On that same day, *The New York Times* also published an editorial that cited a 2015 Economic Policy Institute analysis confirming that wages in so-called "right to work" states are lower than in non "right to work" states. ("The Wind at Labor's Back").

A negotiation is a discussion involving give and take with tradeoffs for both sides. The evidence shows that unions vastly improve employees' negotiation posture even under difficult circumstances. Collective power and the threat of (or actual) collective action strengthen union bargaining. Our willingness to join together to demonstrate our dissatisfaction with the delays in reaching a new agreement for the 2019-2023 academic years will register a powerful protest showing that we are united, concerned about higher education, and expect to be treated like the responsible professionals that we are.

Workers' Rights in the United States

Steven Greenhouse, writing in *The New York Times* on August 4, 2019 (“Yes, America is Rigged Against Workers”), notes that the United States is the only advanced industrial nation not to have national laws guaranteeing paid sick leave, vacation or maternity leave. And the reason why workers in the United States are so much worse off than their counterparts in other wealthy countries? “Labor unions are weaker in the United States than in other industrial nations.” The diminished power of labor unions “has skewed American politics, helping give billionaires and corporations inordinate sway over America’s politics and policymaking.”

Did You Know? Matt Wund

Matt Wund, Community Outreach Chair for the local, is a graduate of TCNJ and returned as a faculty member almost exactly 10 years after he graduated with a B.S. in Biology. Matt is an evolutionary biologist interested in how species adapt to changing environments. His research, teaching courses in the Biology Department and being Coordinator of the Biology Secondary Education Program keep him busy. Matt loves having the opportunity at TCNJ to be both a teacher and a scientist.

In his free time, Matt likes to play the guitar, ride his bike, use his telescope, and in general spend time outdoors. All of these activities are more fun with his family, although Matt says, “my wife would disagree when my electric guitar is involved.” As well as coordinating our local AFT efforts to provide outreach to the community in the form of volunteers and other assistance to the Eastern Service Workers Association and collections for the TCNJ food pantry, Matt is also the treasurer of a non-profit organization that provides financial and other types of assistance to breast cancer patients who are struggling financially. Look out for Matt’s updates on the needs of the food pantry and ESWA.



More on the Benefits of Union Membership

If you are reading this, chances are you are already a member of the AFT. But, if you’ve ever questioned why you are a member, read on. The recent successful Rutgers negotiation which won pay equity and significant raises for faculty illustrates the power of a strong union. Six months before negotiations started, union leaders at Rutgers realized that they had the best chance of achieving a fair contract by increasing membership and engagement. Union members worked hard to recruit their colleagues to join the union and membership rose. The threat of a strike from the energized union was sufficient to get the university to agree to a historic contract that could become a template across the nation.

Contact Us

TCNJ AFT

E: AFT@tcnj.edu

P: 609-771-2694

Office: Social Sciences Building 242

Monday through Friday mornings until noon.