



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 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 3:00pm in the Social Sciences Building, Room 326.

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

A Few Words on Health Insurance from our President, Nancy Lasher

Every four years we negotiate a contract with the State of New Jersey. Even though what our members most often ask about while we are in the process of negotiating is salary and medical benefits, our negotiations involve many issues that members have communicated (via a pre-negotiation survey) are important to them. However, because so much time is spent answering questions about medical benefits, I'd like to take this column to discuss the insurance that has been offered to us for the next four years.

As you know, the state offers several plans to us at different price points with different levels of coverage. While our employers self-insure, the plans are administered by either Blue Cross or Aetna (depending on the plan). While we can choose which plan we want as employees, the right to actually negotiate over health benefits was stripped from us by the state legislature during Governor Christie's first term.

When CWA negotiated its most recent contract, CWA managed to submit and have approved a plan it co-designed with the state. The "CWA Plan" contains many characteristics of NJ Direct 15, except that prescription drug co-pays are a few dollars higher, out-of-network costs are reimbursed to members at a lower

rate (30 percent of reasonable and customary instead of 70 percent), and state employee contributions to the cost of monthly premiums will most likely be lower. The state calculates that it will save significant dollars under this plan and is sharing some of that savings with plan participants. Once the CWA Plan is adopted, Direct 15 will no longer be an option for employees.

Given our non-existent raises during the Christie years and the increased cost for health insurance during those same years, it feels as though we are economically losing ground. The union negotiation committee, with your support behind us, has been working very hard to try to restore some of that lost ground. As frustrating as it has been to see any diminishment of our health care benefits, these benefits nonetheless remain comparatively favorable. When I see what my friends who work for other employers are offered in terms of costs, deductibles, and coverage, I'm grateful for the plans that we have. I was reminded of this recently when a visit to the emergency room during an out-of-town trip left my sister with a \$6,000 bill—despite having insurance. And as some of you know, my husband has multiple sclerosis, so I have extensive experience dealing with out-of-network specialists. I don't take the changes to this plan lightly, but I am able to look at both our side and the state's side on this issue. Access to health insurance is part of a bigger national conversation, and until we have that conversation in a meaningful way, the AFT leadership will do its best to protect all of us.

Thank you for your support.

New AFT Benefits

Members can now use an AFT discount at Office Depot/Office Max of up to 55%. Check out all of your AFT benefits at <https://www.aft.org/member-benefits/benefits-aft-members-only>

Did You Know?

Marc Brescia, Professional Staff Representative

Marc Brescia arrived at TCNJ in the fall of 2012 as an adjunct chemistry professor and then in 2016 accepted a second TCNJ position as the chemistry instrumentation specialist. Marc received his BS in Biochemistry from Virginia Tech before completing his PhD in organic chemistry from University of Maryland. Before working at TCNJ, Marc worked in industry as a drug discovery project leader. Marc is also a licensed High School chemistry teacher.

Marc hopes to increase AFT membership for the professional staff and to facilitate the completion of MOAs that address staff promotions, reclassifications and employee performance evaluations.

Outside of TCNJ, Marc spends his time with his wife and two kids at the Delaware shore. He is an avid golfer at Peddie Golf Club and active in coaching and watching his kids' sports teams.

Cartoon Competition

If you've enjoyed our light-hearted political cartoons in previous newsletters—and you have an artistic streak—maybe you'd like to create one for the next newsletter? We'd like to launch a competition to make this a TCNJ cartoon. If you are a current AFT member or student at TCNJ, then please consider submitting a cartoon for next month's newsletter. All you need to do is email a jpg or pdf copy of your cartoon to Susanna Monseau (monseau@tcnj.edu) by November 1. If your cartoon is chosen you will see it published under your name in one issue of this newsletter.

Local News

As many of you know, faculty and staff at the nine State colleges in New Jersey are once again working without a contract—for the third time in 8 years. While step increases are still being honored and President

Foster has agreed, for the moment, to reinstate tuition remission, other union-negotiated benefits (such as CDC awards) have lapsed, probably until we have a new agreement.

Last month many TCNJFT members decided to boycott Lions Day in protest at our lack of a contract. At a well-attended union meeting on September 18 it was agreed that AFT members would wear their blue AFT shirts in protest on September 25. There has been a run on AFT blue t-shirts. If you are a member and want one please contact Helen Tilli (htilli@tcnj.edu). If we remain without a contract other protests will be planned. Please come to the third Wednesday monthly meetings to be involved in these discussions.

The State of Public Higher Education Funding in the State

New Jersey has chronically underfunded the state's public higher education system for years while student numbers increase. In the last 25 years the state has seen a 40 percent drop in state support per student even as enrollment at public institutions grew by 58 percent during this period. Just over the last 10 years, from 2008 to 2018, New Jersey reduced funding per student at public colleges and universities by \$2,387, or 23.5 percent.

The University of Pennsylvania's Institute for Research on Higher Education, in its College Affordability Diagnosis report on New Jersey, concluded that "the financial burden for families at the state's public four-year colleges and universities put the state's future of affordable higher education at risk." Governor Murphy has pledged to reverse this trend. We will soon report on how this change in policy might affect TCNJ.

Contact Us

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