

MSCF Minute



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Contingent Faculty MSCF (present & future) Members

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by Robert Frame, Committee on Temporary Faculty Chair

Every instructor in the Minnesota State two-year schools, both unlimited and contingent faculty (TFTs, TPTs, adjuncts) enjoys the protections and benefits provided by MSCF's contract with Minnesota State.

Every faculty member and their students benefit from academic freedom protections: while each class must fulfill the learning outcomes of a course's common course outlines, within that we each plan the class we think can really motivate and inform our students. [CCOs are approved by Academic Affairs and Standards Councils on individual campuses, led by faculty and guaranteed by our union-bargained contract.] Many additional provisions make important differences in contingent faculty's work lives:

Pay. All contingent faculty teaching 5 credits or more in fall or spring term (4 credits or more in the summer) are paid on the salary schedule: this benefit (and our pay!) stands out nationally for contingent academic workers. Teaching fewer credits places one at the "adjunct" level: while adjuncts are not paid on the salary schedule, deans frequently commit to paying at the top of the per-credit pay range; we advocate for future

bargaining to push that pay range higher.

A key aspect of our contract marches against the grain nationally, and benefits Minnesota State contingent faculty indirectly: **Potential job security.** Contractually, 70% of Minnesota State faculty must be unlimited faculty (UFTs and UPTs), with contingent faculty making up no more than 30% of the teaching faculty. This 70/30 split is at the system-wide level: some campuses may fall below 70/30, as long as the system as a whole meets the requirement.

Astonishing to many outside our system, this percentage reverses the national proportions, as most colleges rely on the cheap labor by staffing classes with contingent faculty. (FYI: contingent faculty are as committed to students and their learning as our UFT colleagues: many schools also deny basic support for contingent faculty – office space, phones, even email – that makes it hard for students and faculty to work together.) Within Minnesota State, this staffing-level requirement provides greater possibility that contingent faculty (and those outside the Minnesota State system) might move into UFT positions.

Contingent faculty at 5 credits or more per term also receive **benefits**, pro-rated to the level of our appointment: **retirement support** (employee and employer contributions), plus **personal leave and sick leave time** (pro-rated from the UFT levels of 2 personal leave and 10 sick days per year). It is a good practice to check your leave balances (by signing into the employee e-timesheet), and a great reminder of the value of our contract for all faculty.

These are great reasons that contingent faculty recognize the value of being members of MSCF, and why nearly 25% of MSCF members are contingent faculty. It is not for "what they have done for us in the past," but because past gains directly benefit us today. Are there areas for improvement? Indeed: members of the Committee on Temporary Faculty advocate for changes to benefit contingent faculty members and work to build the membership and connections among contingent faculty across the system.

If you are a UFT, be aware how few conversations I have with contingent colleagues end before they raise desire for "respect." Can you carve out precious time to consult with contingent members of your department on how departmental policies and procedures affect them? Do



Click on the picture above to view a legislative update from Mark Grant, MSCF legis. liaison

you remember to include them in social connections made among faculty, with thought given to when they might be able to participate? If you are part of your campus leadership, talk to contingent faculty about what would improve their experiences and their contributions on your campus; raise their issues in shared governance. Consider dedicating a position on your local executive committee for a contingent member.

If you are a contingent faculty member, can you carve out precious time to get involved in your local chapter or governance on your campus? If your interests extend more toward making connections across campus lines with other contingent faculty and working to improve all our situations, please reach out. Thanks, and Welcome!

Importantly: Join your union – Become an MSCF member.