



2013-2014 FA Board Members

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# FA *Courier*

## Who Are We?

We have, by my lights, a strange way of talking about the Faculty Association. We ask questions like, “Why did the FA do this?” or “Why didn’t the FA do that?” Framing questions this way invites thinking of the FA as something distinct from the tenure-line faculty, coaches, counselors, and librarians. The FA *just is* the tenure-line faculty, coaches, counselors, and librarians. There is nothing over and above that group of individuals that constitutes the FA.

As the list of board members to the left makes perfectly clear, however, we govern ourselves representatively. But that shouldn’t dissuade individuals among us from thinking they ought not, or cannot, contribute.

In the academy, we prize intellectual diversity. Having as many voices as possible contributing to discussions increases the odds of discovering the truth on the topic under discussion. Our assembling as the Faculty Association is no different. While it might be inefficient to try to hear every idea, the more ideas we can consider, the more likely we are to succeed in making CMU the kind of place we want to be, and would like to send our own children.

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## UniServ Director News

For the past three years, Melvina Gillespie has served the Faculty Association exceptionally. She saw us through our last round of bargaining, and has helped numerous faculty in other ways. Melvina has shifted her position and is now serving a set of districts downstate. We wish Melvina the best in her new role, and thank her for the years of service she provide the CMU-FA!

Replacing Melvina is Suzanne Clark, an attorney who has worked with the MEA in an impressive variety of roles, including working as a UniServ Director for six years. We look forward to working with Suzanne. If you run into her on campus or around town, be sure to welcome her!

## Lunch and FA Events

You have been bombarded a bit with reminders about Lunch in the Down Under. Some members of the board and I have been having lunch down there (typically) on Wednesdays from 11am-1pm, and inviting you all for a number of reasons. First, it provides an opportunity for you to get to know those representing you on Association matters. Second, it gives members from across the university a chance to interact with folks they wouldn't normally see. Third, it offers a regular opportunity for members to vent/complain/suggest ideas to their representatives. Fourth, for those who miss having an area where faculty can interact informally, demonstrating the need for such an area is a step toward regaining one. These lunches provide a way to illustrate that there is such a need.

We also had an FA Social at The Cabin, and will be hosting a family friendly event later this semester. The nature of that event is still up in the air. (Will it

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be a cookout at a park? A bowling outing?) If you have ideas, please share them with me, your department rep, or your college rep!

One key point goal of all of these things (the lunches, the social, and the family-friendly event) is that we need to come together. We have a fantastic group of individuals, and the more we interact informally, the more likely we are to recognize that. And the more we recognize that, the easier it will be to understand each other, work constructively on our differences, and solve problems together. Making CMU a great place to be starts with us, and I would like to see us set the example for the rest of the university.

## **Bargaining Update**

Recall that at the end of last semester, we announced our bargaining team. Suzanne Clark, Laura Frey, David Jesuit, Paul Natke, Luis Antonio Perez, Phil Squattrito, and David Whale will be working on our behalf in bargaining!

They've already started taking your thoughts into account. The bargaining survey has been completed (with responses from 365 members), and there have been two bargaining surveys (on January 22nd and February 10th). The third bargaining survey will take place on **Friday, February 28th from 10-11:30am** in the **Lake Michigan Room** of the Bovee UC. Your feedback in these ways will help the bargaining team shape their strategy.

As of now, there is no other news related to bargaining, as we're awaiting the Board of Trustees to empower CMU's administration to begin bargaining with us. Future couriers will contain updates as bargaining proceeds.

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## Why Not CMU's Self-funded Plan?

Some folks have asked why we, as a group, are so wedded to MESSA, especially when CMU's self-funded plan looks good. One key reason (among several) is that it would put our benefits at the whim of CMU. CMU could change things as it sees fit.

You might have seen the stories about AOL recently doing just that. AOL CEO Tim Armstrong claimed that two babies were born to AOL employees that cost their plan a great deal of money. To offset that cost, Armstrong announced a change to AOL employees benefits (which has since been rescinded).

The point of that story is twofold. First, being part of a large group (MESSA members statewide) makes it less likely that catastrophic medical issues with a few of our members will cause problems with our insurance. Whereas with a smaller group, like just CMU employees, it's more likely that catastrophic issues could prompt dramatic changes to the plan. Second, the AOL story highlights the point made above, that employers can change plans at their whim. This kind of uncertainty is, by my lights, unacceptable.

Our bargaining team is working diligently to provide us the best options possible for our benefits, using the information you provided them by responding to the bargaining issues survey. But as they do so, it's important to keep in mind why CMU's self-funded plan is a non-starter.

## Why Stay?

With "Right to Work" legislation set to take effect as our contract expires this summer, you might be wondering why staying in the FA makes good sense. Over the rest of the semester, I'll be setting out some points about why remaining a dues paying member of the Faculty Association makes good sense for *you*.

This courier began with a discussion of who the FA is. How we answer that question strikes me as why it's important to remain **FA Strong**. The FA simply is the tenure-line faculty, coaches, counselors, and librarians. Having a strong association allows us to have the strongest possible position from which to defend the things we think are important (like academic freedom, and workload issues). To put the point metaphorically, it gives us the strongest possible voice. The more

of us there are focused on a singular purpose, the stronger our position is. Thus, the more of us who band together, then more likely we will be to achieve our shared goals.

In the coming months, as more couriers come out, I'll offer more benefits of being an FA member, especially some of the more "practical" benefits.

## Helpful Links/Info

- CMU FA Website: <http://www.cmufa.com/>
- Suzanne Clark, MEA UniServ Director: 989-772-5922; email: [sclark@mea.org](mailto:sclark@mea.org)
- Local MEA Office: 625 N. Main Street, Suite B, Mt. Pleasant, MI 48858
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- MESSA
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- Michigan Education Association: <http://www.mea.org>
- MEA Bill Tracker: <http://www.mea.org/bill-tracker>
- National Education Association: <http://www.nea.org>