

THIS MESSAGE INTENDED ONLY FOR MEMBERS OF THE YSU-OEA



# The Advocate

A Newsletter of the YSU-OEA

Spring 2023

## President's Report

Mark Vopat, YSU-OEA President, [markvopat@gmail.com](mailto:markvopat@gmail.com)

As I end the first term as president of the YSU-OEA, I want to thank all those that have helped me transition into the job. First and foremost I would like to thank first vice-president Susan Clutter who held my hand through the summer and first months of the year in my new role. Any mistakes made were wholly my own and there would have been many more if not for her assistance. I would also like to recognize Gabriel Palmer-Fernandez and Mandy Fehlbaum for all the work they have done on grievances, and the avoidance of grievances when it was in our members best interests. Finally, I would like to thank all members of the executive committee for their wise counsel, planning of events, and representation on various committees at YSU and at the state level. Their work and assistance has helped me settle into my position without being overwhelmed.

### **S.B. 83**

As you are no doubt aware, S.B. 83 is moving its way through committee in the statehouse, and Senator Michael Rulli is a co-sponsor. We have drafted a letter inviting Senator Rulli to come to YSU (either in person or virtually) to discuss the bill with faculty—although we doubt he will take us up on the offer. Although I have made public comments to the media about our “concerns” with the bill as it is currently written, the executive committee believes it best to continue to monitor the bill until we see its final form before engaging in a formal public relations campaign.

## **President Lafferty**

By my account, if there is any bright spot in this past year it is the selection of Helen Lafferty as interim president. I understand the skepticism that accompanies any person appointed by the Board of Trustees. I am also aware of the two main views on her appointment: (1) Lafferty is there to fill a seat and follow the orders of the Board, or (2) Lafferty has 18 months and nothing to lose and can therefore do what she thinks is best for YSU without worrying about keeping her job. While I can only give you my opinion, I believe she is firmly in camp two, and I believe she is someone the union can engage with to improve the working environment at YSU. Her views seem to be both student and faculty-focused— something that was lacking in the previous presidency. Obviously, only time will tell, but I would encourage all faculty to take advantage of her office hours if they have an issue they would like to discuss and judge for yourselves.

## **Negotiations**

I will keep to a minimum my comments on negotiations. I would like to recognize the exceptional work done by our chief negotiator, A. J. Sumell, as well as the continued work by the entire negotiating team. Although most of the articles we have tentatively agreed upon have been the “low hanging fruit” (the less controversial articles in the contract), we have also accomplished more these past few months than we did at the same point in our last round of negotiations.

## **Lecturer Dues**

I want to give special recognition to Susan Clutter for the work she has done negotiating a reduction in the union dues of our Lecturers. Beginning in the fall, all Lecturers will see a substantial reduction in their OEA dues without any loss of benefits. Our Lecturers deserve better than they are currently getting, and this reduction in dues is our small way of saying thank you for all you do.

## **Party**

Last, but not least, we are planning an end of year get together. Please keep an eye out in the coming weeks for an email with further details.

I hope you all have a good end of the semester and an enjoyable summer. If you have any questions, comments, or concerns, please feel free to contact me at [markvopat@gmail.com](mailto:markvopat@gmail.com).

## Negotiations Update

AJ Sumell, Chief Negotiator, [ajsumell@gmail.com](mailto:ajsumell@gmail.com)

First, I'd like to express gratitude to the members of our Negotiations team: Gabriel Palmer-Fernandez, Jackie Mercer, Mandy Fehlbaum, Martha Pallante, Mark Vopat, Michael Pontikos, Mike Ekoniak, and our OEA Labor Relations Consultant, Megann Walsh. Second, I'd like to give a special acknowledgement to our Grievance Chair and esteemed colleague, Gabriel Palmer-Fernandez, who is retiring at the end of this summer. If you don't know who Gabriel is, it means you're probably new to YSU and have been fortunate to not have any serious issues with administration. Gabriel is actually the reason I first became involved in the Union about a decade ago, and I am proud to call him a personal friend. In working with Gabriel on the Executive committee for the past ten years, I have witnessed and been inspired by the immeasurable amount of time and energy he has devoted towards fighting for and defending faculty rights. There is no single person who has or could have done more for YSU faculty over the past three decades than Gabriel Palmer-Fernandez, and our faculty Union is much stronger because of his good work. If you see him around town, I'd encourage you to say thank you, and buy him a drink (preferably a strong gin and tonic).

As far as contract negotiations, I am pleased and surprised to report that they have gone relatively well so far. This is relative to the previous contract negotiations I have been involved in, and relative to my own expectations as to how they would go before we began. As of the beginning of April, we have tentatively agreed to 15 Articles out of 31 total Articles in the contract. In comparison, during the 2016-2017 contract negotiations, we had not officially tentatively agreed to even one article by the end of May 2017. Although this relative progress is encouraging, let's not allow it to create a false sense of complacency. We have agreed to the lowest hanging fruit, and have not yet exchanged economic proposals, which have always been the most contentious to negotiate. Our ability to negotiate a fair contract is almost entirely dependent on the solidarity of faculty. So be ready – we will likely need your help at some point this summer. More updates will come as we deal with the more challenging Articles.

Enjoy the summer!

AJ Sumell

## Grievance Report

Gabriel Palmer-Fernandez, Grievance Committee Chair, [gpalmerfernandez@gmail.com](mailto:gpalmerfernandez@gmail.com)

### The Final Advocate Report from Gabe

I do not know whether it's the best or the worst of times, but this is certainly the shortest Grievance Report I have filed in my nearly fifteen years representing our faculty in some 100 formal grievances. But here it is: during the present academic year we have filed only one grievance which, after getting the remedy we sought, has been withdrawn. So, save for that one, no other grievances have been filed for AY 2022-2023!

I will retire this summer and step down as chair of our Grievance Committee effective May Day.

I value the trust our colleagues have extended to me over so many years, and despite my mistakes. It has been an honor to serve you. Thank you!

## Treasurer's Report

Taci Turel, YSU-OEA Treasurer, [tacibaht@gmail.com](mailto:tacibaht@gmail.com)

### Summary of Amounts, current as of April 6th, 2023

Operating Account: \$113,054.32

Scholarships Fund: \$6,845.33

Strike Donation Fund: \$1,077 (located in operating account)

Investment account: \$ 51,623.32 (approximate)

TOTAL Organization Cash and Investments: \$171,522.97

## First VP's Report

Susan Clutter, YSU-OEA 1st VP, [suzclutter@gmail.com](mailto:suzclutter@gmail.com)

### Dues Reduction for Lecturers!

YSU-OEA recognizes that our Lecturers are essential to YSU and to our union. You teach substantial course loads, develop courses, and advise our students, and you do so while working in faculty positions that are less secure in the long term. Moreover, you are provided with less compensation than tenured and tenure-track faculty. Our Executive Committee knows that the cost of union dues can be a burden (particularly in

the current economy!), so I worked with state-level OEA representatives to **reduce the union membership cost for lecturers for the first five years of their employment at YSU.**

Starting this coming academic year (August 2023 paycheck), Lecturers who are active YSU-OEA members, or who become new members, **will pay a reduced dues rate of \$600 (down from \$950). This represents a 37% reduction in costs for union membership.** (Please note that this reduced rate may increase slightly if the OEA increases our dues for the '23-'24 year.)

This dues reduction is only available to Lecturers for the first five years of their employment at the University, and it is not applicable to Senior Lecturers. Lecturers who have been at YSU for five years become eligible for promotion to Senior Lecturer, which provides for both a salary raise as well as a three-year contract. Once lecturers are promoted to Senior Lecturer, or after their fifth year as Lecturer in the event they choose not to go up for promotion, their annual dues will revert back to the full rate.

Still on the fence about joining the Union? WAIT, THERE'S MORE! By filling out a membership form now, you become a member as soon as the form can be processed, and you will have access to all the benefits members get for FREE until the Fall semester begins. **So if you are a Lecturer and have not yet applied for membership in the YSU-OEA Union, please consider doing so for the '23-'24 year.** Your membership enables us to negotiate for and protect all of the rights afforded within the faculty contract. Also, through OEA, members have access to legal assistance / liability protection, member benefits such as price breaks on insurance / purchases, and perhaps most importantly, you have a vote on our employment contract and union priorities at YSU. Dues Reduction for Lecturers! Please contact Taci Turel at [tacibaht@gmail.com](mailto:tacibaht@gmail.com) for an application or any questions about becoming a member. Remember, we stand stronger when we stand together.

## Second VP's Report

Jamal Tartir 2nd VP [tartirjk@yahoo.com](mailto:tartirjk@yahoo.com)

### YSU-OEA Union Scholarship

A great number of exceptional students applied for the scholarship this year. As a result, the Executive Committee elected to award a runner-up prize of \$500 in addition to the \$1000 scholarship. The students were only recently notified by mail so their names will not appear in this edition of the Advocate.

Next year when the call for applications goes out, please forward it to your students. When students receive an email from their professor with the word “Scholarship” in the subject line, they read it.

There will be a 50/50 raffle at the end-of-semester party to support the scholarship.

## End of Semester Party

All faculty and chairs are invited to the end-of-semester party at Penguin City Brewing Company Friday April 28 from 4:00 to 6:00 p.m. Drinks (up to three) and pizza will be provided.

## College Advocates

Tom Diggins, Lead Advocate, [hootenannyvintage@gmail.com](mailto:hootenannyvintage@gmail.com)

### Our College Advocates

College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences

- Nicole Pettit, [nmpettitt@gmail.com](mailto:nmpettitt@gmail.com)
- Dawna Cerney, [dawna.cerney@gmail.com](mailto:dawna.cerney@gmail.com)

Beeghly College of Education

- Lauren Cummins, [llc4@outlook.com](mailto:llc4@outlook.com)

Bitonte College of Health and Human Services

- Nicolette Powe, [drnpowe@gmail.com](mailto:drnpowe@gmail.com)
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STEM

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Cliffe College of Creative Arts and Communication

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