

Mission Statement

The Associated COLT staff of the Universities of Maine (ACSUM) is the voice of the clerical, office, laboratory and technical (COLT) staff in the University of Maine System. ACSUM is by law the sole bargaining agent for the COLT unit, and negotiates with the University to establish better workplace conditions, wages and benefits for all COLT employees.



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Reclassification

HECCP. PDQ. Taken together, these two acronyms can determine your future at UMS. The Hourly Employees Classification and Compensation Program is the first comprehensive re-evaluation of the University System's job classifications in more than 20 years. The Position Description Questionnaire will provide all the information on which this reclassification is based.

For more information on the HECCP— how it was developed, how it is administered, how it will be implemented— see Jim Bradley's story on page 3.

The questionnaire is more than 15 pages long. You'll need to keep your wits about you to fill it out both accurately and effectively. And you'll need to do both.

Our current classifications are almost entirely skill-based. The more highly skilled your work, the higher your wage band. The new classification is interested primarily in decision-making. What kinds of decisions do you make on the job? Are they limited in nature and scope? Or do you engage in creative problem-solving in a wide range of contexts?

The PDQ elicits information on your decision-making in a number of ways. For example, you'll be asked about your place in the organizational hierarchy of your immediate work unit and about supervisory duties (including supervising student workers).

You'll also be asked to map the nature and frequency of your contacts with people on and off campus. If you do highly skilled work (for example, web design) but interact only with your supervisor and then only to receive orders, your work environment is quite different from that of a web designer who consults with senior campus administrators and off-campus CEOs.

You'll be asked directly for examples of the kinds of "decisions and judgments you make regularly and independently in the performance of your duties." You'll be asked when you make final decisions, whether you can commit the institution to a course of action (like spending money), and what could go wrong if you make the wrong decision. You'll be asked to describe kinds of problem-solving you do on the job.

However, the questionnaire does include questions on skill as well. Some of these focus on the knowledge and skills your job demands, and the levels of proficiency required in each. You'll also be asked to compare your own education, training and experience with the minimum training and experience required to do your job.

The heart of the PDQ is a detailed list of your major duties—those that take up at least 5% of your time at work. In addition to a brief description of each one, you must indicate the decisions entailed by each, whether you have final authority to make those decisions, the frequency with which you perform the task, and the percentage of your time each task takes. There are handy conversion charts to help with the percentages, but you will need to know on average how long each task takes.

Doing a good job of completing the survey will be a tricky and time-consuming task. ACSUM is committed to giving members the support and assistance they may need in the process. And we'll bargain hard to make sure that implementation is fair and equitable. But the hardest job is yours. Take it seriously. Begin preparing now. Attend your campus HECCP meeting. Ask questions when you have them. And don't sell yourself short.

Dues-paying ACSUM member who are registered to participate in ACSUM's members-only forums have access to a secure, web-based discussion site devoted to the HECCP. To access the site, just click on the "Discuss the HECCP project" link on the ACSUM homepage (www.acsum.org). To register for the ACSUM forums, go to <http://howto.acsum.org/register.php>. For information on joining ACSUM, see page 2.

UMS Budget Crisis

The State budget situation is bad, and getting worse. The Governor has ordered agency budget reductions of 10% for the upcoming fiscal year. This will mean cuts of \$6.5 million at UM, of \$3.2 million at USM, and smaller but equally painful cuts elsewhere. As we went to press, we received news of a rescission—give-backs of money already allocated for the current fiscal year.

ACSUM has responded by resubmitting the early retirement proposal previously rejected by UMS. This would both save money and help avoid further layoffs. Our unit has already been hit hard by hiring freezes, cuts, and lay-offs. Any further personnel cuts should happen at more rarefied levels of administration. Chop from the top!

ACSUM will do all we can to protect COLT positions at UMS. If cuts are proposed, we will ask all of you to join in a public response. We must stand united, or divide and fall.

We'll keep you posted as the situation unfolds.

Negotiations Update

Our current contract expires on June 30, 2009. Your negotiations team has been busy preparing to negotiate the contract for July 1, 2009 – June 30, 2011. We expect bargaining to begin in January or February.

In September, teams from ACSUM and UMPSA attended a joint 2-day training facilitated by the MEA. In October MEA sponsored a “Bargaining Campaign” training for ACSUM, UMPSA, AFUM, and the Community Colleges. The purpose was to help all these unions approach negotiations in ways that let us support one another, while keeping our members involved in the process.

In the very near future, ACSUM will ask members to complete a brief, on-line survey on our secure website. The survey will help us develop bargaining priorities for the upcoming contract negotiations. Participation will be limited to dues-paying members only.

ACSUM Negotiation Team

ACSUM's negotiation team will work on the reclassification study, as well as the next contract. Members are:

Dina Goodwin-Short, Chair, UMF

Jim Bradley, USM

Gretchen Brisette, UMPI

Dale Kuczinski, USM

John Pavliska, UM

Tim Pinkham, UMA

Gail Wartell, USM

Our thanks to all of them for volunteering to serve.

Don't Think You Need To Join ACSUM? Think Again!

Normally this newsletter is only sent to dues-paying members of ACSUM. Because of the important issues covered—budget crisis, reclassification, negotiations—we have decided to send this issue to non-members as well. Future newsletters will once again be sent only to members.

If you are not yet a dues-paying member of ACSUM, here are a few good reasons to join:

- **RECLASSIFICATION:** Only dues-paying ACSUM members have access to a secure web-based forum devoted to reclassification issues. Here they can ask questions and get advice about how to complete the PDQ most advantageously.
- **BARGAINING GOALS & PRIORITIES:** The ACSUM contract governs how much you get paid, how much you pay for insurance, what your work hours and working conditions are. Only dues-paying ACSUM members can participate in the survey that helps us decide what issues to raise, what our goals and priorities will be in bargaining the new contract. Non-members don't get to set negotiations goals.
- **INFORMATION** – ACSUM regularly keeps our members updated on crucial information they need to know regarding their employment at UMS. Non-members may not get this information. They certainly don't get it as quickly as our members do. Only dues-paying members have access to the ACSUM listserv and the secure, members-only sections of our website. Non-members can see information on the ACSUM home page, but miss a wealth of information available to members only.

For more reasons to join, visit: <http://www.acsum.org/brief.php>

To join ACSUM, click on the “Join Us” button (top) on the ACSUM homepage (www.acsum.org). Download an application. Fill it out. Fax it to Mona Lothian at MEA, Bangor (942-0531) or mail it to MEA, 1342 Broadway, Bangor ME 04401.

Greetings! I hope the Fall semester has gone well for everyone and that you have been able to keep your sanity with the ever-continuing “do more with less” mantra from UMS!

ACSUM has been busy over the last few months with several projects. We have been attending trainings and preparing for the next round of contract negotiations. We continue to fight for employee rights by ensuring that UMS abides by the contract. When they don't – we file grievances.

We have also been working with UMS and the Teamsters on the HECCP (Hourly Employees Classification and Compensation Program) study, perhaps the most important project we have undertaken since our original classification system was developed in the mid-'80s.

UMS has created three groups to work on this project. The “Project Team” consists of HR directors from all the campuses, as well as UMS management folks. This team is doing the “hands-on” work of the project.

The second group is the “Steering Committee,” which oversees the project and makes the final recommendation to UMS regarding its outcome.

The third group is the “Joint Labor Management Team” (JLMT), which consists of some UMS folks who also serve on the project team, along with union reps from ACSUM and the Teamsters, as well as some non-represented employees. This group's role is advisory in nature. While having only an advisory role, both ACSUM and the Teamsters have made it very clear that any changes that impact wages, benefits and working conditions will have to be negotiated with the unions before being implemented.

ACSUM is represented on the JLMT by Dina Goodwin-Short, Gail Wartell, Jim Bradley, and MEA UniServ Director John Bracciodieta.

In late October, a group including ACSUM and Teamster members, as well as non-represented classified employees, completed a pilot run of the PDQ (Position Description Questionnaire). ACSUM had twenty members participating and the information we received from them was very helpful in making final revisions to the PDQ. Information sessions have been scheduled at all of the campuses for early December. You can find the complete schedule at www.acsum.org or by contacting your local HR office.

I want to stress that it is vitally important that all employees attend these info sessions and complete the PDQ. You will have approximately three weeks after you attend the info session to complete the questionnaire. Your supervisor will then complete his/her portion of the PDQ and you both will review it together before submitting it to HR in early January.

To start preparing to complete the PDQ, I encourage you to begin now listing all the tasks you do in your job and estimating how often (daily, weekly, monthly,) you do them, and how long (hours) and it takes you to complete each of them. Other things to consider are any supervision you are responsible for (including supervision of student workers), as well as any decisions you make (and the implications of those decisions). Do not underestimate what you do. You will fine-tune all this information before completing the PDQ, but starting to think about it now will make the process easier for you.

Remember that you should complete the PDQ at work, during your work hours. Your supervisor should allow you the time you need, and quiet space if appropriate, to complete it. You should not do it at home or on your own time.

Also remember that you should include **everything** that you do, not just things that are listed on your job description. The new classification system will completely replace the current one and your current job description, so it's important that you accurately report the work you actually do – not simply what is listed on the job description.

Again, please attend one of the information sessions so that you have grasped the process, know how to fill out the PDQ, and understand what happens next. If you do not attend the info session, you may inaccurately complete the PDQ and as a result be classified at a title lower than you should be.

Finally, I want to clear up any confusion about what happens when this process is completed. It's important to remember that any changes in compensation and working conditions **HAVE** to be negotiated with ACSUM. That is why our representatives on the JLMT also serve on our negotiations team, including our negotiations chair.

UMS has agreed that, regardless of the outcome of the study, no current employees will have any reduction in pay. Once the study is completed, then UMS and ACSUM will negotiate specific pay rates for the classifications. That will be a long process no doubt!! As we move forward, we will keep you updated through both public and members-only sections of our website, www.acsum.org.

You can also learn more about the project on UMS's website at: <http://www.maine.edu/system/hr/heccp.php>

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