

# ACSUM ACCENT

Issue 2

[www.acsum.org](http://www.acsum.org)

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## **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 work place conditions, salary and benefits for all COLT employees.

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### **2006-2007**

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## **ACSUM in the Information Age**

It is a well known adage - information is power. Logically, those that control the information also control the power. Our ACSUM '03/'05 and '05/'07 negotiations teams proved this to be true with "Personal Economies" and "Personal Economies II - You Can't Eat Prestige". Along with member-driven pressure through public comment and protest rallies, these documents lead to appreciable gains for ACSUM members. The efforts of those authors are not to be overlooked. Rather, they are to be built upon through improvements in communications and information-handling within ACSUM. The face of ACSUM digital communication has changed from a one-way, display-only web page to a vibrant, interactive community with added control delivered to the members' fingertips, and secure on-demand information distribution.

The ACSUM web site was redesigned to have a fresh look, to create a space that prominently displays the most relevant news of the day, and to organize ACSUM information better. The heart of the improved web site is the link to the ACSUM Community Forums. Here, members not only receive the latest news but also have the opportunity to comment, question, and debate the issues. Registered members have the option to comment state-wide in the ACSUM Public Forum or to comment within their own campus-specific forum. The Public Forums nearly eliminate the geographic and social barriers that exist in a state-wide organization, and promote a broadened exchange of ideas. Registration also allows the member to control the ways in which they view the forum, receive notifications, and present themselves to other registered users.

The benefits of the ACSUM Community Forums have been far reaching, but electronic communication has proven effective even before the public unveiling of the Forums. The unprecedented mobilization of UM members in 2006 when UM members attended first a USM rally and then a larger rally in downtown Bangor shows this. In large part, UM members were energized through UMS First Class, a forum for COLT staff at UM. The ACSUM Community Forums bring this capability under ACSUM purview and extends it to members state-wide.

Other useful features of the redesign are an online calendar, location specific weather delivered on each campus page, photo gallery for sharing ACSUM events; instant access to your local state representative(s) with "Write Your Legislators"; and an RSS news feed to keep an eye on the latest posts in the ACSUM Community Forums.

Visit [www.acsum.org](http://www.acsum.org) and explore. *Keep in mind that some features of the web site are for ACSUM members only.* Although everyone can view the (con't on page 2, column 2)

## Coming Soon—

ACSUM'S 28<sup>th</sup> Annual Delegate Assembly will be convened on Saturday, April 28<sup>th</sup>, 2007. This year, the Assembly will be held at Jeff's Catering in Brewer, ME. A Continental Breakfast will be served at 8:30am and the Assembly will be called to order at 9:00am.

ACSUM is a representative democracy; it is governed by its members. However, only dues-paying members can participate in our governance process. According to ACSUM's constitution, the Delegate Assembly has "the authority to establish Association policies and objectives, to elect officers, to adopt an annual budget and establish dues, and to exercise final authority on all matters of the Association." This year, the Assembly will elect ACSUM's next president and vice president, as well as a new treasurer.

Campus chapter boards are responsible for holding elections for delegates to the annual statewide assembly. For further information, contact your chapter board. A list of campus contacts has been provided on the back page. You may also go to [www.acsum.org](http://www.acsum.org) for further contact information.

### **Your Contract Rights Article 9; Section E**

During the last round of contract negotiations, UMS adamantly rejected ACSUM proposals for an early retirement option for COLT workers. However, the current contract does provide for what could be considered "phased retirement."

Any full-time or otherwise benefits-regular COLT employee who has worked for UMS for five years or the equivalent may request a reduction in hours. The request must be made at least two months before the effective date, and approved by the campus president.

As long as the employee works at least half-time, she or he will pay the same health insurance premium share and co-pays as full-time workers. The employee will also retain life insurance benefits and participation in the Non-Contributory Retirement Plan equivalent to full-time employees.

For more details, contact your campus union representative.

ACSUM Public Forum, registration allows members to post in response. Also, other forums and information are accessible to dues paying ACSUM members registered at [www.acsum.org](http://www.acsum.org). To learn more look for the post "Announcement: About ACSUM Community Forums" in the ACSUM Public Forum and read through the forum FAQs. Today, paying your ACSUM dues means having your voice heard in a whole new way, with the control right at your fingertips.

If you are not an ACSUM member, joining us is easy with the online printable form. Visit [www.acsum.org](http://www.acsum.org) and click "Join Us" and deliver your completed form to your local representative. A list of campus representatives is available by clicking on your respective campus link. The continuing support of ACSUM members is what keeps **your** union strong.

In Solidarity

Dan LaLonde  
State Treasurer/Webmaster

### **Did you know?**

Our 2005-2007 contract was significant in many ways. Here are just a few of them:

- ACSUM successfully prevented UMS from forcing large healthcare premium increases on you and your family. While the premiums did increase, the amount of that increase was considerably less than what UMS wanted.
- ACSUM successfully forced UMS, with the help of research conducted by the MEA, to provide rebates for insurance that you had previously been over charged.
- ACSUM successfully negotiated free dental insurance for you if you are full-time and discounted dental insurance if you are part-time!
- ACSUM successfully negotiated an average of 8% raises for you over the two-year contract.
- ACSUM successfully negotiated 13 hours of wellness release time for you. Remember, this is 13 hours per fiscal year. On July 1, 2007, we will receive an additional 13 hours of release time; however, any unused hours from this year will be lost. The release time must be used for university sponsored wellness activities so start using that time today!
- ACSUM successfully negotiated to have you be eligible for a 6% university paid retirement contribution one year earlier than in previous contracts.
- ACSUM successfully negotiated to let you determine when you want to use comp time, not your supervisor.
- ACSUM successfully negotiated improvements in language for internal hires, use of temporary employees, as well as layoff/seniority rights.

If you are already a member, thank you!

If you are not a member yet, please join today. All of the items we just listed were only made possible because of ACSUM and our members. If you are unsure of whether or not you need to join, or can afford to join, than we ask you to consider if you would be better off without all the gains we won in our last contract!

ACSUM, For The Greater Good!

Greetings Brothers and Sisters,

I hope that everyone enjoyed the holidays and that the Spring semester is going well.

The past few months have been very busy for ACSUM as we successfully negotiated one contract and now prepare to begin negotiations on the next. At the same time we also continue to do the regular business of ACSUM which includes defending and enforcing your rights as employees, rights that have been negotiated into our contract.

Last November members overwhelmingly voted to ratify our 2005-2007 contract. The vote was historic not only for the number of votes cast (80% of membership), but also for the near unanimous approval that resulted (99.4% approved of the contract). The negotiation team had been successful in reaching settlement on one of the strongest contracts ACSUM had seen in quite some time. That contract was only made possible by the dedication and support that you, our members, gave to the negotiation team. It's not merely chance that one of our best contracts was negotiated during one of our most active times for member activism.

Negotiations began to turn in our favor following the large protest at USM in March 2006, which was then followed by another protest at UMPI a short time later. ACSUM then followed those protests by holding the largest demonstration in the history of ACSUM during the Board of Trustees meeting in Bangor. Our members being active made all the difference in the world. Finally, the countless letters that our members sent to legislative leaders and the press helped send the message to UMS that we deserved a fair and just contract and our members would not settle for less.

While the 2005-2007 contract was indeed a terrific win for all us, there is no time for complacency. That contract expires on July 1, 2007 and negotiations will begin shortly for the next contract. We will need all of your support again if we are to keep the gains we fought for in the last contract as well as achieve fair and just compensation in the next contract. If the negotiation team puts out the call for members to be active, whether it is in the form of a protest or letter writing campaign, please be willing to once again stand side-by-side with your coworkers and say in one voice "We will not settle for less than we deserve!"

To those of you who are not currently members of ACSUM, please consider joining today. ACSUM is your voice. ACSUM is your union. ACSUM is You! If you are unsure of whether or not it matters to join ACSUM, I ask you to remember what we achieved for you in our last contract, and then consider what UMS was prepared to give you. Without ACSUM, and our members, almost all of us would have ended up with net pay cuts in the last contract. Low raises coupled with skyrocketing healthcare costs would have hurt every one of us. ACSUM's members are what kept that from happening to you and your family. Again, please consider joining today.

In solidarity,

Jim Bradley,  
State President, ACSUM

## **UMS Creates Task Force to Make Recommendations on Retiree Insurance Benefits**

UMS has formed a new task force to look at retiree health insurance. ACSUM, AFUM, UMPSA and PaTFA presidents, as well as the Teamsters, met with the Chancellor, and UMS HR Director Tracey Bigney to be briefed on this issue. UMS asserts that due to costs, the University needs to revise the retiree health insurance plan. Apparently, changes in accounting rules scheduled to take effect in 2008 have prompted the review of retiree health insurance. UMS must either set aside money to pay for its retiree health benefit or declare the benefit an unfunded liability. At this point the task force is charged with coming up with ideas to address the budgetary issues. The task force will be meeting between now and June and will submit a final report to the Chancellor in mid June.

ACSUM agreed to participate in this task force so that the concerns of our retired members would be part of the discussion. However, regardless of the recommendations that may or may not come from this task force, ACSUM will continue to enforce all contractual rights to bargain for our members. ACSUM has appointed two representatives on this task force, and they Sandi Cayford (UM-retired) and Dianne Perro (UM).

## **UNIONS INVITED TO MEET WITH BOT LABOR RELATIONS COMMITTEE**

ACSUM, AFUM, UMPSA and the Teamsters, have been invited to participate in a discussion with the UMS Board of Trustees Labor relations committee at their March 19th meeting on the UMF campus. Stay tuned for a report on the ACSUM web site!

Greetings Sisters & Brothers,

Let me begin by introducing our new Negotiation Team for the upcoming contract (2007-2009):

Tim Pinkham (UMA Bookstore)  
John Pavliska (UM Bookstore)  
Rose Mahoney (USM College of Graduate Education)  
Gretchen Brissette (UMPI Library)  
Lisa Feldman (UCB Library)  
Rosanna Libby (UM School of Education)  
Jim Bradley (Lewiston-Auburn College) – State President and ex-officio member  
Dina Goodwin-Short (UMF Admission Office)  
John Bracciodieta (MEA UniServe Director)

As you can see, we represent several areas of the UMaine System and we all bring different perspectives to the team.

We have recently sent out a survey to our members and will be using the data gathered from those to make our list of proposals we will be bringing forth to the table.

We have met with the University a couple of times and things seem to be on track. Both sides have agreed to the ground rules that will be followed and we are HOPEFUL that we will have a contract (signed, sealed and delivered) by later summer!!

Please do not hesitate to contact any member of your Team with any questions or concerns.

Stay tuned for updates. They will be posted on our website shortly after each session.

In Solidarity,

Dina Goodwin-Short, Chair

## CAMPUS CONTACTS

County Extension Offices Other Than  
Those at UM & USM  
System Wide Services/UNET  
Mona Lothian (MEA)  
1-888-942-2907 x102

University of Maine  
Larry Corbett 581-1683

UM at Augusta  
Tim Pinkham 621-3124

UMA/UCB  
Lisa Feldman 262-7900

UM at Farmington  
Dina Goodwin-Short 778-7055

UM at Fort Kent  
Tammy Connor 834-7530

UM at Machias  
Jeanne Parker 255-1234  
Naida Pennell 255-1289

UM at Presque Isle  
Cindy Heron 768-9541  
Dan Lalonde 768-9686

University of Southern Maine  
Tammy Berry 780-4505  
John Warren 780-5345  
Jim Bradley (LAC) 753-6618



**Step by step the longest march  
can be won.**

**Many stones can form an arch.**

**Singly, none,**

**Singly, none.**

**And by union what we will**

**Can be accomplished still.**

**Drops of water turn a mill.**

**Singly, none,**

**Singly, none.**

(Words from the preamble to  
the constitution of the  
American Mineworkers  
Association, 1863)