

Room 122

The Newsletter of the TC3 Adjunct Association (TC3AA), Local 8104, NYSUT/NEA/AFT
the Union for Adjuncts at Tompkins Cortland Community College

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UNION BENEFITS

By Barbara Need

(English adjunct and TC3AA Executive Council member)

When talking about what we want from a union, the most popular answers seem to be better pay, job security, and benefits. By benefits, what is usually meant is health insurance. However, joining NYSUT — which happens automatically with membership in the TC3AA — has many other benefits such as life insurance, and discounts on car or truck rentals. I wish I had known this when I was trying to move. Another benefit that caught my eye at the recent NYSUT meeting for Community Colleges in Cooperstown was help in setting up solar (I have a great southern exposure)! Other programs include discounts for on-line shopping and assistance in financial planning. There is much more to the union than many people think.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

As many of you know, there is a movement to make the minimum wage for fast food workers \$15/hr, and the question came up whether we make \$15/hr. According to TC3's 2015-16 Teaching Manual, compensation for adjuncts is based upon their placement on a salary scale which includes five "levels."

"Level 1" adjuncts are paid \$870/CH, or \$2410 for a three-credit class. Assuming 16 weeks, those employees get about \$150/wk. At \$15/hr, this is 10 hours of work per week for one class.

"Level 5" adjuncts are paid \$1135/CH, or \$3405 for a three-credit class. For 16 weeks, that works out to just over \$200/wk (or 15 hours of work at \$15/hr— \$20/hr for 10 hours of work per week).

What do you think? Do these figures seem high or low to you? Let us know. Email us your thoughts at tc3adjunctassociation@gmail.com.

TC3AA RECOGNIZED WITH PRESTIGIOUS LOCAL AWARD

By Robert Earle

(Philosophy, English, and Environmental Studies Adjunct, TC3 Tutor, and TC3AA Exec. Council Member)

If you have spent much time in the adjunct office on Main campus recently, you have probably noticed the "Mother Jones Award" plaque. It reads:

The Midstate Central Labor Council and the Tompkins County Workers' Center present the Mother Jones Award to Tompkins Cortland Community College Adjunct Association in recognition of initiative, activism and solidarity in the struggle to protect the rights of working men and women, for facing adversity and challenges from those who would deny workers their lawful right to join together against injustice, and for proving once again, in the words of the legendary worker advocate, Mary Harris Jones, 'We must stand together, or there will be no victory for any of us.' Presented this Labor Day, September 7, 2015.

Our executive council was on hand to accept the award at a picnic in Stewart Park attended by more than 400 local residents, and our own Cindy Coleman made a memorable speech about the struggles of our organization, past and future. The occasion and the award should be sources of great pride for TC3 adjuncts and the college as a whole.



TC3AA Executive Council Members at Stewart Park to accept Mother Jones Award. Left to right: Herman Altmann (Biology), Gregg Weatherby (English), Sherry Tacktil (English) Barbara Need (English), Diane Williams-Altmann (Chemistry), Nancy Crane (Spanish), Cindy Coleman (Sociology)

ROOM 122 — A ROOM WITH A VIEW

The view is pretty straightforward: adjuncts and tutors at TC3 want a union for themselves, and the right to negotiate a contract covering pay, benefits, and working conditions, just like every other non-managerial employee at TC3 has long enjoyed.

That's why, in just the first few months of the Fall 2014 semester, a majority of adjuncts and tutors signed "union authorization cards" indicating their desire to be represented by the TC3 Adjunct Association ("TC3AA"), a union affiliated with NY State United Teachers (NYSUT) and the American Federation of Teachers. (AFT). Unfortunately, we're not at the bargaining table right now negotiating our first contract because members of TC3's administration and Board have, thus far, contested TC3AA's right to exist as a union of our own, separate from the Faculty Association. TC3 has spent more than a year purposefully delaying the certification of our union — the crucial first step which would enable us to begin negotiations.

Why? Because — not unlike most employers — TC3 administration would prefer to keep the status quo, the one where they get to unilaterally determine everything about our jobs without having to negotiate. TC3 claims it is simply exercising its legal right to question the formation of our union and, technically speaking, that's right — thus far they have absolutely been within their legal rights. But we believe the more relevant question is are they within their moral rights to spend taxpayer money on lawyers fighting their own employees? And we believe the answer to that question is a firm "NO!"

So as we wait for a judge's decision on the make-up of our Union, we are using the time to build our organization and prepare for the future. Join us!

ADJUNCT SALARY HISTORY

By Cindy Coleman

(Sociology adjunct and TC3AA Executive Council member)

Long term adjuncts at TC3 are the only employees at TC3 whose total compensation has decreased over the past 25 or 30 years, even when you do not factor in inflation.

When I started at TC3 in 1988, the minimum salary for a full time faculty member was approximately \$20,000 per year plus a generous benefit package. The salary range for adjunct instructors, who were limited to two courses per term ranged from approximately \$1675 to \$1950 per course. Since the full time teaching load was about 5 courses, the pay that new full time instructors received for their basic course load and what adjunct instructors received was much closer than it is today.

Salaries for unionized full time instructors and professors have gone up a lot. The current minimum has more than doubled to at least 43,000 and most make 60,000 or more. Adjunct instructors pay scales have increased by about 50 percent, but our total compensation is considerably less per course than it was in 1988 when you factor in health insurance, a benefit that disappeared many years ago.

When you factor in inflation, things look even worse. According to the Dept. of Labor's Inflation calculator http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm \$2000 in 1990 dollars would be the equivalent of \$3627 in 2015. Unionized full time salaries have more than kept up with inflation during the same period, which is certainly to the union's credit.

It seems to me like having a union pays off. Not having one, and not being involved in the collective bargaining process has certainly been detrimental for wages and salary levels for adjunct instructors at TC3.

NEW SCHOLARSHIP FOR TC3 STUDENTS! CALL FOR VOLUNTEERS!

We are pleased to announce our plans to create a new scholarship for TC3 students and are now soliciting volunteers for the TC3AA Scholarship Committee. The Committee's duties will include: determining the parameters of the scholarship (eligibility, the application process, deadlines and other dates), coordinating the fundraising, and choosing recipients. We hope to be able to start making awards by the end of the Spring 2016 semester. We estimate commitment time for the Scholarship Committee will be approximately 3-6 meetings between now and May. For more info email us at tc3adjunctassociation@gmail.com.