



THE HARPER

ADJUNCT ADVOCATE

**HARPER COLLEGE ADJUNCT FACULTY ASSOCIATION
NEWSLETTER**

January 2022, Vol. 16, no. 3

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Adjunct Colleagues,

Well, I hope that you and your family avoided the Covid bug. I was not so lucky. My entire family had it over the winter break. I encourage you to do what you can to avoid this very contagious virus. Next week I will be meeting with the college to address the sick day policy, which is two days a semester. If you do find yourself in a position that you do not feel well, I encourage you to talk with your dean. I also encourage you to talk with your chair if you have lost classes. In some cases, they might be willing to open late-start classes. The key is to be positive and proactive in your communication. If you are looking to earn some extra \$\$\$\$ please see the "Help Wanted" section below.

On a more positive note, I have found this first week to be very rewarding, my face-to-face students at another college are super excited about being back in a classroom. Have a great semester and let the HCAFA team know what we can do to support you!

Robert Allare
President – HCAFA

HCAFA THANKS YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!

For membership: Charmian Tashjian at bctashjian@gmail.com

For member engagement: Christy Carter at christyncarter@gmail.com

RECENT ISSUES

Return to campus for Spring 2022 in-person classes

Due to the rise in COVID cases, likely due to the omicron variant, the college placed the first two weeks of the Spring semester online. **On January 31 we will return to the in-person format.**

We cannot stress enough that every adjunct should keep in communication with their department chairs and deans if they are to test positive for COVID. We want to make sure they know each of us are using sick days, canceling classes, or going remote for a short-term period while testing positive.

Retroactive pay for the fall semester

If you taught at Harper College in the fall semester of 2021, we have good news – retroactive pay is coming! Part of the large negotiation package in the new adjunct faculty contract guarantees retroactive pay at the new rates. As a reminder, the new rates are a 4.25% increase for all adjuncts and a one-time increase of an additional 2.5% for active Level II adjuncts. The retroactive pay should arrive on the January 28th pay checks. The pay will either be listed as 'lump sum' or 'additional pay'. The new pay rates are set for the Spring semester.

News from SURS on additional retirement savings options

In a recent State University Retirement System (SURS) newsletter, they spoke of creative supplemental savings options for your retirement. HCAFA recommends at least going onto SURS and looking at the possibilities for your financial future. From the recent SURS email...

“Your employer offers the SURS Deferred Compensation Plan (DCP). While you already have either the SURS Traditional Plan, Portable Plan or Retirement Savings Plan as your core SURS retirement plan, you will likely need additional savings to fund a secure retirement.

Creating supplemental retirement savings is vital, since SURS members do not contribute to Social Security. Many members who are eligible for Social Security through other employment will have their Social Security reduced.

With the SURS DCP, you can build supplemental savings to help close the gap between income from your SURS core retirement plan and your retirement income goal. Your SURS DCP contributions are deducted automatically from your paycheck. You choose the savings rate right for you, up to the IRS maximum annual limits. You can make before-tax or Roth contributions or a combination of both. You are eligible to contribute additional amounts at age 50 and up”

Help Wanted – reaching out to Harper adjuncts

Have you lost a class or hours this semester? Want to make some additional money contacting fellow adjuncts for HCAFA? Please contact Charmian at bctashjian@gmail.com for more information.

An article on Just Cause

Just Cause: ‘This Never Happened to Me’

By Harper College Adjunct Faculty Association

20 January 2022

Thanks to your HCAFA contract negotiation team, the new contract has a provision that will advance compliance with the Core Values of the College and will help develop a trusting, integrity-based relationship to foster effective collaboration between the College and its adjunct instructors.

The new provision, which will help ensure due process for the membership, is a major achievement and is called Just Cause. Its definition [See 1] is:

“Just cause is the standard that management must adhere to when disciplining or discharging an employee. It means that in union settings, the employer must have a reason to act in disciplining an employee and the reason must be just and fair. In non-union workplaces, the employee is an at-will worker and can be disciplined or fired for whatever reason or no reason at all.”

Why is this a big deal and an important addition to our contract? Because it will go a long way in stopping unilateral, bullying, egregious and arbitrary actions. Just Cause has what is commonly called the ‘Seven Tests of Just Cause,’ which make explicit the guidelines or criteria to be applied when a union member is subjected to discipline. [See 2] Let it be said that neither the HCAFA nor the administration is interested in allowing incompetent instructors in the classroom. To date, in the absence of explicit criteria, adjunct faculty members may be subjected to adverse actions for any or no reason at the whim of individual deans.

These actions never happen at Harper College, right? The sad fact is that they do in areas such as evaluations and observations, classroom assignments and Level II.

For instance, in October 2021, one member’s biennial classroom observation was done. The member received an overall evaluation of ‘satisfactory’ {vs. the alternative of ‘unsatisfactory’} as 24 of the 25 categories were deemed as ‘agree’ vs the alternatives of ‘disagree’ or ‘unable to assess.’

Yet, two weeks later, the member is notified that the member is being subjected to ‘disciplinary action’ {read the first step to termination} based on the one ‘disagree’ criterion and despite the Academy for Teaching Excellence having judged the member’s instruction to be ‘really good.’

Fortunately, your HCAFA came to the member’s defense and the threat was withdrawn. Despite the withdrawal, the member still gives a vote of no confidence to the departmental and divisional leadership for this the latest unjust and unfair action.

Thanks to your HCAFA and the Just Cause provision you will be able to say: “This never happened to me.” As Martin Luther King said, “Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.”

[1] <https://www.massnurses.org/labor-action/labor-education-resources/grievances-101/just-cause>

[2] <https://hr.berkeley.edu/hr-network/central-guide-managing-hr/managing-hr/er-labor/disciplinary/just-cause>

Adjuncts are encouraged to know their rights under our contract. If they are concerned that one of their rights is being violated, they should contact HCAFA as soon as possible.

[Problem? HCAFA is here to help!](#)

WHAT ARE MY WEINGARTEN RIGHTS?

If you are ever in a situation that you believe could lead to any kind of disciplinary action, you have the right to have a union representative with you.

In a situation like that, to protect yourself, say, “If this discussion could in any way lead to my being disciplined or terminated, or affect my personal working conditions, I respectfully request that my union representative be present at the meeting. Without representation, I choose not to answer any questions.” Under no circumstances should you lose your cool or walk out of the meeting.

Www.harperadjuncts.org, the HCAFA website, has an in-depth explanation of these very important rights. Go to our site and click on “union representation” under the “documents” tab.

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