

# UIC United Faculty VOICE

Issue 2 | 2018 Winter Edition



Members from UIC Unions United silently protest union busting and demand fair contracts at U of I's Board of Trustees meeting

## UICUF STARTS 2019 STRONGER THAN EVER

By Janet Smith, UICUF President

We began the Fall Semester knowing that potential challenges lay ahead. Chief among them: [The Janus decision](#) and contract negotiations. Looking back, a major takeaway from last year is that we met each challenge head on, and have come out much stronger for the effort. We also discovered that we are not alone in our efforts to improve our working conditions.

Many expected the Janus decision to be a knockout blow to unions, but based on all accounts so far, [that's not what happened](#) nationwide or here at UIC. Instead, a supermajority of our members recommitted and dozens more faculty have joined while only a few have cancelled. Although the financial loss of fair share fees from non-members is real, that is not how we count our power. The commitment and solidarity of our members continues to give us the strength to fight for better working and learning conditions at UIC.

While the Janus decision had little impact on actual membership, it did embolden Labor Relations to violate our contract by cancelling, at their sole discretion, some members' dues paying status. U of I may come to regret this decision, however, because it has brought together four of the university's largest unions. Representing 8,000 faculty, grad workers, office workers, and nurses, the UIC Unions United coalition was born. Our collective effort has gotten the

Labor Relations office to restore virtually every member who was erroneously dropped. We are now focusing our attention on the Board of Trustees, since they are ultimately responsible for how all our labor unions are treated at every campus.

Meanwhile, at the bargaining table this fall, we pushed on critical faculty issues that only our contract can safeguard. This includes real increases for future merit pay and funds to address equity and compression. However, based on concerns raised by our members, the contract also must include protections and assurances to address our workload, how we are evaluated, potential increases in health care and other working conditions.

The response from management's team – so far – has been disappointing. An annual 1.5% merit raise pool for the next few years is unacceptable given the rising cost of living in Chicago, but also insulting to our faculty, many of whom stuck with UIC through the lean years. And the response to our non-economic proposals? After feigning engagement, they have pretty much dismissed all of them entirely.

While many of the faculty attending the last few bargaining sessions expressed disappointment with how management has responded, they have confidence in our bargaining team and resolve that we will get the contract we deserve. To that end, an Organizing Committee has been convened to plan our escalation in the contract campaign. I encourage you to get in touch with your college representative to find out how you can stay informed and get involved.



## FOR A FAIR CONTRACT NOW

By Aaron Krall, UICUF Bargaining Co-Chair

We should be well-positioned to win a fair contract this semester: our bargaining team is strong, our members are organized, our demands are clear, UIC is growing at an unprecedented rate, and we have new political leadership in Springfield.

Despite these favorable conditions, however, the real fight is just beginning. We have spent six months arguing for contract language that will benefit our members in the coming years, and the management team has made it clear that nothing will come easily. This is a familiar script, and we have seen it on it campus before: our union tries to solve problems, increase transparency, strengthen the faculty’s voice in policy decisions, and ensure fair wages for our members; management insists on maintaining unrestrained control over our working conditions and our wages. But we know, and the management team knows, that things are different this year. Unlike the years when we bargained our first two contracts, the state will have a budget, the university is not making cuts, there are construction crews on campus, the administration’s long-term planning is optimistic, and we are working in solidarity with a coalition of campus unions. If our members are going to make gains that compensate for the lean years behind us, this is the time. And we’re going to do it—together.

The fair contract we need includes two things: appropriate salaries for Chicago professionals, including raises that reward our excellence and minimum salaries that create a reasonable floor for every member; and a clear and meaningful role in shaping the policies that constitute our working conditions, from workloads and academic freedom to faculty evaluation and disciplinary procedures. We have brought modest, common-sense proposals on these issues to the bargaining table, and, so far, the answer we have received from administration is that our contract is fine just as it is, with few real improvements being necessary. We disagree. And when the faculty stands up to demand more this semester, we will win the contract we deserve.

## EVERYDAY VICTORIES

By Robert Johnston, UICUF Chief Steward

As chief steward, I believe that in many ways I hold our union’s Portfolio of Respect. Working together with our new grievance committee, my job is to make sure that UICUF is always there to stand up for faculty rights and faculty dignity—no matter how small the cause may appear.

And in my nearly three years on the job, I’ve seen many inspiring everyday victories. “See” is a good verb, because, as the result of the initiative of members such as Yann Robert (French) and Adam Goodman (History/LALS), we have a commitment from the university to finally clean the windows, and the rest of the mess, caused by the years-long construction of University Hall.

Individual faculty kept writing and writing and calling and calling the administration. But it was only when we took collective action that we got results—and the respect we deserved.

Or take the many times that I have attended meetings with powerful and intimidating administrators—administrators who believed that they would simply be able to get their way because of their position. For reasons of confidentiality, I can’t go into details about these cases. Suffice to say that our members have over and over again expressed substantial gratitude for knowing that someone—our union—literally had their back. They couldn’t be pushed around, and they often won gains that surprised even us—and that had substantial benefits for how they felt when they came to the office each morning. Everyday victories, indeed.

UICUF of course wants to make changes—big changes—in how UIC works. That will, however, never mean that we will neglect the consistent and relentless efforts necessary to demand every small change we must in order to preserve, and expand, the respect we all deserve. To me, having a strong union means standing up every day for our rights—and more often than not, winning.

**Need to discuss an issue or concern?**  
Don’t forget that there are elected college representatives you can talk to. Visit our website for a [complete list of reps](#).

# A COMMITTEE ON POLITICAL EDUCATION

By Kate Floros, UICUF COPE Political Education Coordinator

“Want to know why your tuition is so high? It goes to your professors’ salaries.”

“Administrators are part of the faculty union, and it’s in their interest to keep salaries high.”

Every year the Political Science department hosts the National Student Issues Convention at UIC, and every year an ill-informed candidate or political operative tries to convince our students that the faculty are to blame for high tuition because we’re overpaid. This Convention provides an opportunity for students to present candidates and elected officials with their concerns on the issues they determine to be most important to them. Students always bring up the cost of higher education, and the quotes above are the answers they are always given. Each Convention has led to a dangerous spike in my blood pressure, so when I was approached to join the COPE Board of Trustees, I felt like I was being presented with an ideal opportunity to do something about the rampant ignorance I witnessed.

COPE is the Union’s Committee for Political Education, which is basically a political action committee (PAC). PACs can spend money on elections and candidates in ways that the union cannot, but I’ve especially embraced the “education” part of COPE. As the Coordinator for Political Education within the COPE’s Board of Trustees, it is my responsibility to present factual information to our members, our students, Illinois legislators, and the wider community on issues important to our union. Our first meeting was in June 2018, and while our work has just begun, I dream of a future National Student Issues Convention where everyone understands the reality of faculty pay (which will hopefully be much higher than it is now), and other political dimensions of higher education, so emergency personnel do not need to stand by to resuscitate me.

**CONTRIBUTE TO THE UICUF COPE FUND TODAY!**  
To contribute, [download and authorization card](#) for payroll deduction and send the completed form to [UICUnitedFaculty@gmail.com](mailto:UICUnitedFaculty@gmail.com)



## OUR WORKING CONDITIONS ARE THEIR LEARNING CONDITIONS

UIC United Faculty has a tradition of engaging not just with union members, but with members of the entire UIC community. Students are a critical part of that community, and they are particularly affected by changes to the working conditions of the faculty. After all, our working conditions are their learning conditions. That’s why we make a point, every year, to do outreach with students, having real conversations about what it’s like to work in academia, and what challenges we face as individual faculty, and as a union of professionals.

This Fall, we held our annual Ice Cream Giveaway, and talked to students about Administration’s decision to freeze faculty salaries by withholding campus wage increases. You may recall hearing about this back in September, with the Administration claiming, falsely, that they can’t offer a raise while contract bargaining is ongoing. This may not immediately seem to impact students in the classroom, but educator’s salaries account for the vast majority of spending that goes into classroom instruction, and short-changing faculty in this way is as much a signal of how much Administration values our students as it is about how they value us. More long term, strong salaries are critical to recruiting and retaining quality faculty, especially when a growing portion of faculty work without the possibility of Tenure.

We have been working with students in other ways too, including with the YesApplyIL organization, to ban criminal background questions from undergrad applications. UICUF recognizes how interconnected faculty and students are, in all respects, and we look forward to more opportunities to work together.

# UPCOMING EVENTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

## Contract Campaign Planning Meeting

Tuesday, January 22, 2:00-4:00pm  
@UICUF Office, 1016 W. Jackson Blvd

In light of developments at the bargaining table, it appears increasingly likely that faculty will have to take stronger direct actions to win a fair contract. An organizing committee, open to all members who want to participate, will convene to plan and prepare for a campaign to win a fair contract and the respect faculty deserve. Send your RSVPs to [UICUnitedFaculty@gmail.com](mailto:UICUnitedFaculty@gmail.com).



## UICUF Rep Assembly & Exec Board

Wednesday, January 23, 12-2:00pm & 3:30-5:00pm  
@University Hall 2028 & 1016 W. Jackson Blvd

UICUF is committed to open and inclusive participation in governance by our members, and one great way to observe how that governance works is by coming to our meetings of the Representative Assembly and Executive Board. Join us for one or both sessions. All members are welcome! Send your RSVPs to [UICUnitedFaculty@gmail.com](mailto:UICUnitedFaculty@gmail.com).

## U of I Board of Trustees Meeting

Thursday, January 31, 9:30-11:00am  
@Student Center West, 750 S Halsted St

A new governor also means a new board (at least partly), and we will be present to set the tone as they take their seats in the first public meeting of the new year. UICUF members, alongside allies from UIC Unions United will rally starting at 9:30am, to send a clear message that the board cannot ignore its workers or their unions. Send your RSVPs to [UICUnitedFaculty@gmail.com](mailto:UICUnitedFaculty@gmail.com).



## Jane McAlevey Training Workshop and Presentation

Wednesday, April 17, 3:00pm-4:00pm and 4:00pm-5:00pm  
@Stevenson Hall and Jane Adams Hull House

Jane McAlevey, Author of *No Shortcuts: Organizing for Power*, will be at UIC this Spring to offer her expertise in social justice organizing for union members and others in the community. An informative training workshop will be held from 3-4pm, followed by a lecture at Hull House from 4-5pm. Please email RSVP's to [UICUnitedFaculty@gmail.com](mailto:UICUnitedFaculty@gmail.com).

# Help students go to college with union scholarships

**Earliest application deadline is January 31**

As an IFT member, you, your children, and your students may be eligible for scholarships to help defray higher education costs! Several union members-only scholarships are available in 2019.

## **IFT Carl J. Megel Special Education Scholarship**

IFT educators can help special education students pursue higher education or career training by sponsoring them for this scholarship. Two \$1,000 Megel scholarships will be awarded in 2019 to deserving high school seniors who are enrolled in a special education school, class, or program for students with disabilities. Applicants must graduate in 2019.

IFT members who work directly with (or previously worked with) an eligible student must provide a letter of sponsorship for the applicant. (Children of IFT members may also apply.) The application deadline is **March 1**. Learn more and apply [here](#).

## **IFT Robert G. Porter Scholarship**

Honoring the late IFT Secretary-Treasurer Robert G. Porter, each year this scholarship provides two \$10,000 awards (\$2,500 per year for four years) to current high schools seniors with at least a "B" grade average. Successful applicants must plan to attend full-time at an Illinois public university. Applicants must be children of a currently employed, active member in good standing of the IFT, of a member of the IFT retirees chapter, or of a deceased member who was in good standing with the IFT at the time of death.

The application deadline is **March 1**. Information and an application are available [here](#).

## **American Federation of Teachers (AFT) Robert G. Porter Scholars Program**

The AFT also offers a Robert G. Porter Scholars Program, which provides four, 4-year, post-secondary scholarships (\$8,000 each) to students who are dependents of AFT members, as well as 10 one-time \$1,000 grants to AFT members to assist with their continuing education.

The deadline to apply is **March 31**. Visit the [AFT website](#) for details.

## **Chicago Federation of Labor William A. Lee Memorial Scholarship**

Each year, the Chicago Federation of Labor (CFL) awards 10 scholarships (\$2,000 each) to 10 high school seniors. Students or their parents must belong to a union affiliated with the CFL. IFT members and their children are eligible.

Mail-in applications must be postmarked by **Feb. 12**; drop-off applications will be accepted until 4:30 p.m. on February 13. Click [here](#) for more information.

## **Union Plus Scholarship**

Sponsored by the Union Plus Education Foundation, this scholarship is open to members, spouses, and dependent children of participating unions (including the IFT).

Winners are chosen based on academic achievement, financial need, and other factors. The deadline to apply for the [Union Plus Scholarship](#) is **January 31**. Learn more [here](#).

