



AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF UNIVERSITY PROFESSORS

Coastal Carolina University Chapter

A national regional council of the American Federation of Teachers – AFL-CIO

AAUP/AFT is an organization of university faculty that promotes and defends the two fundamental pillars of the academy: academic freedom and shared governance. Academic freedom means that academics should not face recrimination (including pressure, intimidation, denial of tenure or dismissal) because of the subject matter of their research or instruction. Shared governance means that faculty should have a meaningful voice in decisions involving personnel, selection of administrators, budget, and determination of their university's educational policies, among other topics.

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# THE AAUP-CCU UPDATE

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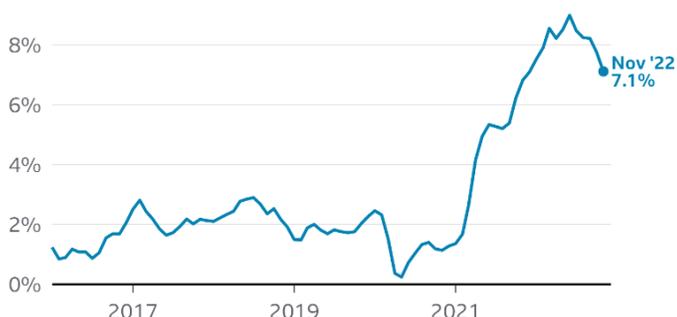
## AAUP/AFT stresses need for higher faculty salary decompression in meeting with President Benson

Salary decompression for faculty is not a luxury. It is an essential tool that is used to keep track of salary discrepancies across colleges and academic departments within our university, and to compare CCU faculty salaries with those at higher education institutions across the nation. Salary decompression helps CCU remain competitive and continue to attract quality faculty.

When CCU launched its salary decompression scheme, nearly a decade ago, it made [national news](#) and was heralded as “a sustainable solution to relieve compressed salaries, especially in a period of budget cuts, shrinking state investment and rising tuition.”

### US inflation at 7.1%

Consumer Price Index for all urban consumers, % change from a year ago (Source: US Bureau of Labor Statistics)



Today, however, there are added reasons why faculty salary decompression must take center stage in CCU's planning. As inflation and cost-of-living indicators are growing rapidly, our faculty

need to be financially supported. There is no better time for the University leadership and the Board of Trustees to show that they value the faculty's contribution CCU's overall financial success.

In 2021, it was determined that the total funds needed to address CCU faculty salary decompression at 100% were \$2,268,393. However, the Board of Trustees only approved \$500,000, which represents just 22% of decompression needs. The AAUP/AFT finds that disappointing, especially in light of the fact that CCU is seeing record numbers of freshmen on its campus, as well as growing student retention rates. The faculty have played a major role in these increases, which enabled our University to grow stronger, despite the pressures of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Executive Committee of the AAUP/AFT raised this issue with President Mike Benson at a meeting on December 8. The central argument put forth by AAUP/AFT was that salary decompression must be felt by all at CCU, including teaching/research associates and graduate assistants. Additionally, the criteria by which the Board of Trustees determines the funding allocated to annual salary decompression should be demystified and explained to the faculty.

In response, President Benson agreed that CCU faculty should be compensated fairly in several ways, including financial. He expressed commitment to the goal of advocating to the Board of Trustees in favor of a sustained level of salary decompression for faculty and staff. The president also suggested that, a month into the spring 2023 semester, the leadership of AAUP/AFT should hold a meeting with him and other University officials who are responsible for the “procedural intricacies” of budgetary issues at CCU.

**FALL SOCIAL**

## *AAUP/AFT-CCU hosts fall social in Market Common*

CCU faculty from numerous colleges and departments came out for a drink and good discussion on Election Day, November 8, during AAUP/AFT-CCU's Fall Social in Market Common. This was AAUP/AFT's first face-to-face social since the COVID-19 pandemic. We were thrilled to be joined by several new members, as well as by new faculty, who took this opportunity to meet some of their colleagues across different disciplines. Later that evening, we rejoiced doubly when we found out that voters once again approved the continuation of the Horry County "[penny sales](#)" tax, which has raised nearly \$1 billion since 2008 to fund capital improvements for public education in our county. Voters [approved](#) the tax over two thirds. Since its establishment over 100 years ago, the AAUP has been a staunch defender of public education in the United States. In 2011, in its [Campaign for the Future of Higher Ed Principles](#), the AAUP noted that "quality higher education in the 21st century will require substantially more public investment over current levels". It also challenged elected officials to "recognize high quality, affordable higher education and increased college attainment as public goods worthy of a public investment."



**MEETING WITH CCU PROVOST**

## *Provost asked to address changes in Edwards College advising*

CCU Provost Dan Ennis has agreed to discuss the recent changes in advising with Edwards College faculty at the College's spring 2023 faculty meeting, following a request from AAUP/AFT-CCU.

On August 22, Edwards College faculty were informed by their Dean, Claudia Bornholdt, that they would be required to advise junior and senior students, starting in October. Previously, all Edwards College students were advised by the College's professional advisers. The move aimed to harmonize the Edwards College advising structure with that of other colleges on campus. However, the feeling among the Edwards College faculty was that the change, which originated from the Office of the Provost, was abrupt and haphazard.

These concerns were relayed to Provost Dan Ennis by AAUP/AFT-CCU President Joseph Fitsanakis on November 2. Fitsanakis assured the provost that the AAUP/AFT-CCU did not object to the principle of establishing equity in advising models across the University. Moreover, the pedagogical reasoning behind increasing out-of-class interaction between faculty and students seemed easily discernible.

However, the manner in which this change was passed down to the

faculty was problematic, Fitsanakis noted. It was announced in a last-minute fashion at the beginning of the semester. The hurried implementation failed to take into account the fact that the faculty tend to carefully plan out their semesters. For some faculty in populous departments and programs, this change means having to suddenly advise dozens of students in a given semester. Since a typical advising session can last in excess of 30 minutes, this means that, for some faculty, two weeks in October must be dedicated wholly to advising. October tends to be a busy conference season, so several faculty had planned to be away.

To add to these concerns, the change in advising was announced just as the University was transitioning to a new advising platform, SelfService, which required extra time by both faculty and students. The bottom line is that faculty should have been consulted and given advance warning about this change, which represents a major change to their work.

Provost Ennis responded by explaining the reasoning behind this change, which was one of establishing equity between the Edwards College and other colleges on campus. Professional advisors had to be transferred to other colleges that have gained students in recent years, and where faculty are already advising junior and senior students. He concluded by vowing to provide clarification about this change at the Edwards College faculty meeting in the spring.

FROM EMU-AAUP

## Eastern Michigan University faculty celebrate salary raise after three-day strike

In late September, members of the Eastern Michigan University chapter of the American Association of University Professors (EMU-AAUP) voted overwhelmingly to ratify a new four-year labor agreement, which includes significant gains in salary and retirement, as well as protections for health care coverage. Ninety-six percent of EMU-AAUP members voted in favor of ratification, with four percent voting against.

“Our negotiating team listened closely to our members throughout this process,” said Matt Kirkpatrick, associate professor of English language and literature at EMU and chair of the EMU-AAUP negotiating team. “Our goal was to bring back an agreement to address concerns we heard about supporting our students, fair compensation and creating a foundation for continued quality education at EMU. I think the results of this ratification vote show that we achieved our goal.”

The new four-year agreement, which will cover more than 500 tenured and tenure track faculty at EMU, was reached after a three-day strike on the EMU campus earlier this month. It includes pay raises of \$4,000 in base pay or four percent in the first of the agreement, whichever is greater, as well as 3.25% base pay increases in the second and third year of the agreement.

The parties agreed on a wage re-opener in the fourth year of the agreement, to protect EMU-AAUP members in the event of continued high inflation. Employer contributions to retirement, at 11% of salary, will increase as a result of the pay increases in the agreement.

The new contract also provides that EMU faculty will receive the same health care options as administrators and other groups on campus, with health care premiums based on an 80/20 cost-sharing model. A zero-cost HMO program could save participating faculty up over \$3,000 a year for family coverage and dental coverage will increase to \$1,500.

This tentative agreement will strengthen EMU’s commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion and also address faculty concerns about shared governance. “It was really impressive to see our members stick together, and all the tremendous support we received from students and the campus community,” said Mohamed El-Sayed, professor of engineering at EMU and president of EMU-AAUP. “Our focus now is working together with our students and the administration, so that everyone has access to the great education they deserve here at EMU.”

INTERVIEW

## Interview with a faculty striker at Eastern Michigan University and former member of AAUP-CCU

*In November, AAUP/AFT-CCU Vice President Allison Faix had the opportunity to interview a former member of the AAUP-CCU chapter who now works at Eastern Michigan University (EMU). She asked them a few questions about what it was like to participate in a strike, and to be a member of a unionized AAUP chapter. Here are their responses.*

**Q: How did the strike begin? What was the backstory?**

**A:** I was a member of our Bargaining Council (BC) for this contract and joined a subcommittee focusing on faculty working conditions. BC met weekly from mid-February through May. We surveyed the members to identify bargaining priorities, which subcommittees then used as the basis for proposals that were submitted to the entire BC to discuss, edit and vote on. These proposals were then used by the Negotiating Team to take to bargaining talks. After several delays, bargaining between the union and the university began in July. There were few points of agreement, and negotiations continued through the rest of the summer.

Our previous contract ended at 11:59 p.m. on Wednesday, August 31<sup>st</sup>, which was the third day of Fall Semester. Union leaders were hopeful that they could come to a resolution soon, so faculty worked without a contract for another week. We did not want to strike. The union had several deal breakers during negotiation: shared governance, salary increases, and health care costs were top concerns.

**Q: What was it like going on strike? How did you participate?**

**A:** I’ll be honest, it was nerve-wracking. Before we made that choice, union members held several events to share with students and the local community what we were trying to accomplish.

Union members held an informational picket during student move-in weekend in late August, and another outside the football stadium before a game on September 2; the union provided “EMU-AAUP Faculty for a Fair Contract” signs for members. There I spoke with others about how the talks were going and how they were communicating with their students about the potential strike. One student approached me and enthusiastically offered his support and asked questions about what we hoped to gain.

Though the BC authorized the negotiators to use the threat of strike, in order to put pressure on the administration to respond to counter proposals, there was still no movement toward a fair contract. A week after our contract expired, 91% of our union members voted to begin to strike the next day. Things began to happen very quickly after that. Faculty joined strike subcommittees and signed up for 3-hour picketing shifts, held in front of the university’s administration building.

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Striking faculty member at EMU

**Continued from page 3** → I joined the hospitality subcommittee and donated food to power the picket line. That first day on the picket line I walked over 14,000 steps, though I spent much of my time handling food donations that came in from union members and supporters and handing out water and Gatorade.

In Michigan, public employees are not legally allowed to strike. The university administration filed an injunction on the first day of the strike to try to force faculty back to work. They also [filed individual lawsuits](#) against all members of the AAUP Executive Committee.

**Q: What kind of reaction did the strike get from the community? How did it go?**

**A:** Students marched with us, honked for us, and baked fresh cookies they carried to the picket lines. Marching band members serenaded the picket line in support. A drumming circle was formed one evening. Members marched in hot sun 8am-8pm Wednesday-Friday. The line would lengthen or contract to accommodate the number of people available. We had bullhorns, coolers, pizza and donuts. Local businesses and franchises stopped by as well, donating food and drinks and requesting signs to put in their window to show their support. News station vans were visible daily on campus, with live noon and evening broadcasts motivating us to make more noise.

We picketed four days in total while negotiations continued; on Saturday morning I brought my 5 and 7 year olds so they could see the support we had. I taught them to fist bump and say "solidarity". They loved the energy and took up signs.

**Q: You moved from being a member of an AAUP advocacy group to a member of an AAUP union group. What was that transition like? Did anything surprise you?**

**A:** The transition was comforting. Before I accepted my offer from EMU, I contacted the union and received supportive answers about negotiating for salary and service credit to be written into my contract. Our union employs a staff member who works for AAUP, not for the university, so the responses focused on supporting me, rather than the university. Faculty membership in the AAUP is voluntary, and not cheap, and we had a high percentage of participation which only grew in the lead up to the strike. Around 92% of our faculty are union members.

Not surprising to me is that there are several unions on campus. While AAUP negotiations were being drawn out over the summer, the university [approved a contract](#) with the Clerical and Secretarial unit, and agreed to wage reopeners with part time and full time lecturers.

I grew up in Michigan during a time of stronger unions, and my parents were both teachers and union members, so this is not foreign to me. With a contract in place I know exactly what my pay is going to be for the next several years. It's good to have that information for planning ahead.

**Q: What was the outcome of the strike? How long did it take to be resolved?**

**A:** We were on strike from Wednesday September 7 through Sunday, September 11. Union members received an email after 11pm Sunday night announcing that a tentative deal had been reached. It was a lovely thing to wake up to on Monday morning, though I had to rethink what to wear for working in my office rather than walking on the line. I was running out of red and red-adjacent shirts to wear.

We won concessions in a lot of areas. [This list](#) does a good job showing it wasn't all about money or healthcare. The new contract protects faculty whose Promotion or Tenure activities were impacted by COVID-19 (under DEI). Previously, all teaching faculty were required to hold a minimum of 10 hours of in person office hours. Ten hours are still required, though 5 are in person and the rest can be in a modality that works for students and faculty, making online office hours a valid option for some of the time.

**Q: Any advice for advocacy chapter members?**

**A:** As far as advocacy, I encourage people to continue to pay attention and offer support when possible. A member of Bowling Green State University's AAUP, Luis Moreno, who came to march with us said something that I'm still mulling over: faculty don't think of ourselves as workers, as laborers. As members of a union, we are part of and connected to other unions and should seek to support each other.