

SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

FUSA membership costs one percent of your annual base salary (no overload included).

FUSA members have access to benefits not available to non-members.

FUSA represents your best interests at the bargaining table.

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FUSA Informant

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We're converting to

eDues

SAFE | SECURE | EASY

As you may recall, the Florida Legislature intends to outlaw public employer payroll deductions for education union members (not police or firefighters) by July 1, meaning you will no longer be able to pay your union dues through your paycheck. The bills also require 60% union membership or face decertification. We will not let those pushing this bill in Tallahassee deter us from having a strong collective bargaining agreement and a powerful voice for higher education in Florida.

We will control our own fate and do what we need to do to save our union, no matter what politicians throw at us!

UFF has rolled out the eDues system and FUSA members have begun signing up. We need all members to switch over to eDues! As you will learn, the process is fast and straightforward. If you are not a member [now is the perfect time to join](https://fusahcc.org/membership/) (<https://fusahcc.org/membership/>) -- You get 3 months free!

Remember, without the union we have no contract and none of our hard-won rights.

In the meantime, [visit our eDues page](https://fusahcc.org/edues/) (<https://fusahcc.org/edues/>) for more information.

FUSA Membership: It's not expensive.

It's priceless.

Faculty Members Have Spoken. Again.

The last two years have brought much uncertainty for HCC faculty. From not honoring contractually agreed salary steps to bad faith bargaining during the 2023 contract negotiations, Dr. Atwater has proven that he does not value his faculty.

As a result, a vote of confidence in Dr. Atwater was conducted during the period of March 8-10, 2023. Sixty-six percent of the faculty participated in the vote and a resounding 95% voted NO CONFIDENCE in Dr. Atwater. This is a reflection of the faculty's uncertainty in their future at HCC and is the second vote of no confidence during his tenure as HCC president.

Thoughts on Impasse

The process of crafting the 2022 to 2025 three-year faculty contract began with pre-bargaining workshops in October 2021. Formal bargaining for this, the third 3-year Faculty Salary Step contract began in the spring of 2022.

From early days, the faculty who attended the meetings became disheartened because it seemed that the administration team were not bargaining in good faith. After earnest attempts to negotiate with the HCC administration, the union demanded an Impasse hearing. This is a legal mechanism in which a magistrate listens to the bargaining positions of both sides and then independently makes a non-binding recommendation to the college's Board of Trustees. This mechanism has associated financial costs for all parties, but, when faced with a comatose, intransigent bargaining partner, it is unavoidable. FUSA brought 3 issues to impasse:

1) College Year Contracts: FUSA believes that the criteria for the assignment of a College Year Contract (purpose, duties, duration, review), need to be codified so that the system is fair to all and cannot be soiled by the appearance of Presidential favoritism.

FUSA presented language for these criteria, which was rejected by the HCC administration although they had absolutely no proposal of their own. In June 2021, HCC President Ken Atwater agreed to "workshop" this issue with FUSA. In the subsequent November 2021 workshop meeting, the HCC administration claimed it needed input from the college's Deans. Currently, 12 months after bargaining opened, 10 months after agreeing to workshop, and 5 months after the actual workshop, there is absolutely no word on what the Deans think. Maybe nobody really cares what the Deans think! During the Impasse hearing, the HCC administration stated that HCC President Ken Atwater could appoint whomever he wanted for whatever reason he chooses without any explanation.

2) Load Points for Labs and Clinics: FUSA believes that "teaching is teaching" and consequently Lab/Clinic teaching should be paid at the same rate (minute for minute) as lecture teaching. Traditionally, it has not been.

During bargaining, the HCC administration claimed that the college could not afford the proposed change. FUSA, recalling that both administration and staff have enjoyed significant recent pay raises, repeatedly requested to see details of the math used by the administration to reach this conclusion. In response, the HCC administration ignored our requests for all of 2022, and finally, after the Impasse hearing was scheduled, began work on calculating the math during a January 2023 workshop. Still no answer to FUSA, though!

Strangely, during the Impasse hearing, the HCC administration stated that lab teaching is paid at a lower rate than lecture teaching because Lab Assistants help teach labs. They ignore the fact that online labs/clinics make no use of Lab Assistants. In addition, Lab Assistants cannot help to teach labs because they are not recognized as qualified teachers by our accrediting authorities. To be clear, the accrediting agency decides if our degrees are worth anything!

3) Economics: FUSA believes that the Faculty Salary Step system is alarmingly overdue for a Cost-of-Living adjustment (COLA). The salary table has not been adjusted for inflation for 8 years, that is, since our freshmen were in elementary school! This is even though the salary step system that HCC claims to follow, recommends COLA adjustments every 1 to 5 years.

At the start of bargaining, FUSA literally handed the HCC administration an updated version of the Salary Step Table. This table applied a COLA increase that corrected so many years when there had been NONE! In addition, this table put our starting salaries in line with K-12 teachers, after they had fallen behind. Some would say that the job was done! Nevertheless, the administration made absolutely no response to FUSA's economic proposal and made none of their own until the very last bargaining session. They then proposed placing faculty at their 2021-2022 step for the start of the 2022-2023 college year, which results in a permanent loss of a step and year of service to the college. During the Impasse hearing, the HCC administration stated (with a straight face) that they could not possibly negotiate economics until they see next year's state budget. This is despite the fact that the contract should have started last year! They also said that there was no point in doing anything for economics for 2022-2023 because the academic year was almost over.

The Impasse process is still rolling along. FUSA has made many presentations to the HCC's Board of Trustees to ensure that they understand the depth of the college's problems. The truth is that this last year saw a group of professional administrators, working at taxpayer's expense, repeatedly bringing nothing to the bargaining table even though they are required to negotiate. In contrast, a group of faculty volunteers, at no expense to the taxpayer, meeting after serving the college as teachers, librarians, and councilors, brought forth real, tangible, thoughtful proposals.

When a college Administration seems incapable of making basic decisions, when a college administration seems unwilling to make basic financial projections, the college is in desperate need of real leadership.



At the BOT Budget Workshop in late April, BOT Chairperson Nancy Watkins made it clear to Dr. Atwater that she wanted the on-going economics dispute to be settled. In response, Dr. Atwater promised that he would abide by the results of the salary study that the school commissioned and that he had already set aside \$1 million dollars as a starting point to implement it. When the salary study reported that the faculty salary scale should be raised by 12.8%, FUSA was optimistic that this years-long battle would soon be over.

On Tuesday, May 2, FUSA's Bargaining Team—Chief Negotiator Rick Gaspar, FUSA President Sherry Sippel, FUSA VP Jeremy Bullian, Janet Willman, and Denise Bristol—came completely prepared with proposals to settle the ongoing impasse. Administrative Bargaining Team—Chief Negotiator Kristen Smuder, AAVP Rich Senker, Dale Mabry President Paige Niehaus, Dean Leif Penrose, and Dean Nadia Kotula—arrived at bargaining with nothing to offer. Nada. Zilch. To make matters worse, Kristen Smuder advised FUSA that she was not authorized by Dr. Atwater to make any economic decisions, so why were they there?

FUSA remains determined to find a positive resolution to this dispute. It seems like, even after BOT President Nancy Watkins tacitly ordered this problem to be solved, Dr. Atwater and the Administrative Bargaining Team still haven't made an effort to do so. With the school poised to receive a huge increase of between \$7 and \$10 million from the state, FUSA believes that it's time for the Administration to stop dragging their feet and to bring a proposal. FUSA has dedicated significant time and money to find a resolution. It's time for the Administration to do something.



Legislative Update

SB 256 / HB 1445

These companion bills in the Florida legislature are aimed at trying to **bust unions** by prohibiting employer payroll deduction for public sector union dues (excepting police and firefighters). It also creates a 60% membership minimum threshold or risk decertification of the union. SB 256 has passed in the Senate and HB 1445 has passed all committees and is heading for a House floor vote. Stay tuned for a call to action against HB 1445 and a chance to let your voice be heard.

We have been expecting this to pass and become law, so we are prepared to [transition to eDues](https://fusahcc.org/edues/) (<https://fusahcc.org/edues/>) to **save our union**. We will survive this attack on Floridians' constitutional right to organize and collectively bargain their working conditions, salaries, and benefits. And we aim to grow our membership in the process!

HB 999 / SB 266

These companion bills are existential threats to higher education in Florida as we know it and would **curb academic freedom, compel speech, gut tenure provisions, ban majors, and place faculty hiring decisions into the hands of the Boards and administrators**, just to name a handful of the awful items. They are truly horrific attacks on our principles as educators.

Please take a few moments to use the link below to contact legislators and urge them to **vote NO against this horrific attack on academic freedom, tenure, and the constitutional rights of students, faculty, and staff in Florida's colleges and universities**: [Click here to oppose HB 999](#) and [Click here to oppose SB 266](#)! For more details, go to: <https://myuff.org/legislative-updates/>

[More from the Legislature](#)

What's Passed:

- **HB 837 Making it harder to sue insurance companies and businesses**
- **SB 102 Affordable Housing** - \$711 million plan to make housing more affordable for working Floridians.
- **HB 1 School vouchers for all** – School-age children will soon be eligible for vouchers regardless of economic background.
- **HB 543 – Permitless carry** – allows people to carry concealed guns without a permit and without training.

What's Passed in one chamber:

- **SB 300, HB7 Six-week abortion ban** – bans most abortions after six weeks of pregnancy with certain exceptions for rape, incest and human trafficking up to 15 weeks.
- **SB 254, HB 1421 – Transgender health care** – codifies Florida's prohibition against medical care for gender dysphoria in minors – things like puberty blockers, hormone therapies and surgeries.
- **SB 246, HB 121 – Insurance for children** – expands KidCare, the health insurance program for low-income children.
- **SB 1320, HB 1069 – Pronouns in schools** – Requires every K-12 school to have a policy that says it is “false” to ascribe to a person a pronoun that does not correspond to their assigned sex and would bar school employees from calling students by pronouns that differ from those given to them at birth – even in cases when a parent is OK with it.
- **SB 1112, HB 733 – School start times** – Middle schools would begin classes no earlier than 8 a.m., and high schools no earlier than 8:30 a.m. effective July 2026 if passed..

Source: Tampa Bay Times (April 7th, 2023)