

THE FUSA INFORMANT

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The FUSA
Informant Newsletter
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Your FUSA Officers
FUSA Council President –
Sheryl Sippel,
FUSA Council Vice-President
– Jeremy Bullian,
FUSA Council Treasurer –
Wendy Pogoda
USA Council Secretary -
Janet Willman
FUSA Council Grievances
Chair: Tom Tankersley
UFF-FUSA-HCC Local 7463
WATCH FOR FUTURE ISSUES
TO BE PUBLISHED!
FUSA Informant Editors
Ken McCullough
& Jeff Rubinstein
FUSA Informant Contacts:
813.550.3997
fusainformanthcc@gmail.com

A BIG THANK YOU FOR
READING! JOIN THE UNION
AND GET A \$100.00
REBATE ON YOUR FIRST
YEAR'S DUES!!

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State of the Union, 2025

In Solidarity, President Sherry Sippel, Dale Mabry Campus

Our Union in Action! Faculty know that FUSA bargains their contract and always fights for fair compensation and working conditions. What faculty might not be aware of are the other issues FUSA assists with behind the scenes.

Assistance with Faculty Issues If you are a FUSA member and you have any contractual or potential grievance issues that you have questions about, call your union representative! Last year, FUSA assisted faculty with getting pay grades corrected, getting initial step placements re-done, getting denied rank applications approved, and much more. In addition, FUSA representatives joined members at administrative meetings that were potentially disciplinary, and FUSA assisted and supported two faculty union members who filed grievances, both of which were won. Do not hesitate to give your union rep a call if you have any questions or concerns about your contract or workplace.

Faculty Advocate with Dr. Atwater FUSA has a direct voice with Dr. Atwater to address faculty issues and concerns. The FUSA president sits on Dr. Atwater's Cabinet, and your FUSA Council representatives meet with Dr. Atwater and his leadership team each semester to address any faculty issues that have not been resolved through other means. Past topics have included issues with screening committees, technology, online testing, and the bookstore. You know Workday and the Hawk Book Bundle will be on this year's agenda!

Finally...the Wednesday before Thanksgiving! After repeated years of raising the issue, the Wednesday before Thanksgiving is *finally* not a class day. You can thank FUSA for convincing Dr. Atwater that it was a non-productive teaching day, and the College will be closed!

Legislative Updates, 2025

In Solidarity, VP Jeremy Bullian, Ybor Campus

The run-up to this year's legislative session (spanning Mar. 4 - May 2) was dominated by three special sessions called by the governor to focus on immigration instead of typical committee work focusing on bills for the regular session. This means that FEA's public policy analysts didn't have a good read on higher education related legislation planned for the session. But now that the session has started, there are some areas of concern identified.

Many of us have heard of the bill proposing to rename HCC as a "state" college ([SB 1624](#)). So much for government efficiency! The bill also takes yet another swing at DEI in Higher Ed. Other bills with potential to impact

Higher Ed we are watching (note that more may come) include another union busting bill ([SB1328](#)), a bill with restrictions to aspects of college and university governance ([HB 1321](#)), DEI at higher ed medical institutions ([SB 731](#)), and the zombie bill that won't die: guns on campus ([SB 814](#)). One bright spot is a bill aiming to counteract recent attacks on academic freedom and the freedom to learn ([HB609](#)). In addition, there is the governor's executive order establishing the Florida State department of government efficiency taskforce. Among the items targeted by "FL DOGE," colleges and universities will be reviewed for wasteful spending, and that with the help of AI, "Florida will conduct a deep dive into all facets of college and university operations and spending and make recommendations to the Board of Governors and State Board of Education..."

Our statewide affiliates, UFF and FEA, will be communicating developments during the session, and we will be posting updates as well as ways to [get involved](#) and [take action](#) on the [FUSA website](#).

Professional Development for Independent Learners

In Solidarity, Anthony Buonaquisti, Dale Mabry Campus

Every faculty member who intends to comply with their contract of employment must complete 10 hours of professional development each year. (See section 9.2.A of the 22-25 FUSA/HCC contract at Contract Central on the FUSA website - <https://fusahcc.org/>). Let's not forget that non-tenured faculty also need to complete five TMODs before they apply for tenure.

Some parts of in-service are designated as professional development in the in-service program. In addition, CITT also offers live and on-line training modules through the Bridge Catalogue on the Training and Learning link on the MyHCC web page.

But we are scholars and independent learners. So, let's think outside the box. Is there a work-related book that you want to study? Have you found an insightful blogger or YouTuber who informs and inspires you? Is there a part of your specialty that you never quite mastered? Well, if you work to improve your performance as a teacher, mentor or role model, this work is valid Professional Development.

Worried about your work being accepted? Well, a set of notes is a great documentation of your effort and having a couple of tenured colleagues in a related discipline sign off on your work is a great documentation of its relevance. Heck, why not email your dean describing your planned work, inviting their input? Although you cannot contact the various tenure and promotion committee members that will eventually review your portfolio, they must surely respect that you documented work that was validated by tenured colleagues and recognized by your dean.

There Is Strength in Numbers

In Solidarity, Janet Sibol and Ken McCullough, Dale Mabry Campus

When reflecting on the power and strength of our college's faculty union, FUSA (**F**aculty **U**nited **S**ervice **A**ssociation), one can readily see that it is the embodiment of the old adage, "There is strength in numbers."

For most of the 49 years that FUSA has existed, we have remained either first or second in membership size within the state of Florida. That is quite an impressive enduring accomplishment!

The knowledge that our united voice at the bargaining table represents 75-80% of all full – time faculty, FUSA has pressured administrations throughout the decades to listen and affirmatively

address our concerns and requests. This has resulted in one of the most faculty – focused, robust, and revolutionary contracts in the state. By comparison with other Florida colleges' contracts, it is evident that certain articles appearing first in the FUSA contract – hard fought and won by FUSA – are emulated by others. These include, but are not limited to, the articles including our salary step system, office hours, and our nine-month contract. So, which comes first – a strong contract OR strong membership? Or could it be that they exist symbiotically, and without one the other is soon Prof to wither and become impotent?

Instead, a more important question to be answered is: "How do we maintain a strong contract that protects the rights we deserve throughout our careers? That question is very easy to answer: **JOIN!!** Add your voice to the collective bargaining unit that provides protections and rights. One that supports you to do what you are here to do – teach! And we need everyone. If you know of a retiree that would be interested in helping, encourage them to join our Retired Chapter.

Much in our academic world is changing. We have seen changes to tenure. New technology has changed the classroom dramatically, even to the point of eliminating the room. Your union has been there to negotiate that path forward. A great example in recent years, was as the pandemic hit and we all went into lockdowns, the union negotiated with the administration the MOU (Memorandum of Understanding) that dealt with that emergency.

The greater danger to our profession is the assault on the right to collective bargaining. It is one of the basic rights we, as Americans, possess. Our right to unionize is based in the First Amendment with the phrase, "the right of the people to peaceably assemble." New legal requirements have been put in place to hinder our ability to unionize, and as a result, our ability to represent you. From ending payroll dues to requiring higher membership percentages, the state has made union representation more difficult. We have a campaign to get the Public Employees Relations Commission or PERC ballots mailed, the most recent hoop, that the State created to get us to jump through. And what happens if we don't keep the membership or we don't meet all the tests? The union is decertified, and you lose that "seat at the table." That happened to St. Leo's University chapter a few years back. Membership is not expensive . . . it is priceless!

At the National and State levels, you have the benefit of our affiliations with large organizations like the FEA, the NEA, the UFF, and the AFT. We have great leadership, looking out for you and confronting the difficult issues that face us.

Besides that extremely important benefit that comes with membership, there are many other valuable perks of union membership. There are too many to list here, but they are conveniently accessed through the following links:

- FEA: <https://feaweb.org/member-center/member-benefits/>
- NEA: <https://www.neamb.com/>
- AFT: <https://www.aft.org/member-benefits>

*Members may need their 10-digit member ID (found on their FEA access card) to get access to the various member benefits on the above websites.

At the Spring Senate Meeting, Shayla Ivey, [Communications Assistant at FEA, Member Benefits Specialist, shayla.ivey@floridaea.org] gave a video walk-thru of your many benefits. It is a wonderful presentation that is easy to follow. She led the audience through the three above links. Shayla's

presentation showed the savings in the average day and on other purchases like trips and fine dining. Treat yourself and save money at the same time. And we have a link to her video, we hope you find it as informative as we did.

- Access Member Benefits Video: [Member Benefits Overview.mp4](#)

Finally, what is at the center of our faculty bargaining unit, FUSA? It is **US**. Please do not rely on others to keep our numbers high – FUSA needs YOU to keep US strong.

- <https://fusahcc.org/membership/>

Our labor unions are not narrow, self-seeking groups. They have raised wages, shortened hours, and provided supplemental benefits. Through collective bargaining and grievance procedures, they have brought justice and democracy to the shop floor. --John F. Kennedy

Dues with Representation – Understanding Your Weingarten Rights

In Solidarity, Karen Dufraine, Plant City

As a faculty union member, you are entitled to union representation known as Weingarten Rights.

The National Labor Relations Act (NLRA), Section 7 states union members have the right to union representation during a meeting with administration when disciplinary or “job investigative” issues might arise (Office). As a FUSA Union member you have protection when you are asked to meet with college administrators that might result in performance or disciplinary action against you as a faculty member.

These rights are known as Weingarten Rights. Fifty years ago, November 18, 1974, National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) versus J. Weingarten, Inc. was argued before the U.S. Supreme Court. The plaintiff, NLRB, argued that the employer, J. Weingarten, Inc., denied one of their union member employees union representation at an “investigative interview” where the employee believed disciplinary action might be a result. (N.L.R.B.)

If you find yourself in a similar situation, it is up to you, the union member, to invoke your Weingarten Rights, or ask for union representation to be present during a meeting. See the [UFF brochure](#) for some scenario examples where invoking your Weingarten Rights would be appropriate.

Once you state you want union representation or you state you are exercising your Weingarten Rights in a meeting or even when the meeting is being planned if there is a possibility that meeting might result in disciplinary action, the Florida Education Association (FEA) recommends that if the institution does not honor your request, “DO NOT be insubordinate if denied representation. Attend the meeting. Keep asking for union representation. Take good notes.” (FEA “know your rights”) See the [FEA “Know your rights”](#) website for more information.

What can you do to protect your rights? After the meeting, inform your union council representatives what occurred to seek guidance on what to do next.

Just know, that your FUSA membership gives you the right to union representation by invoking your “Weingarten Rights”.

If I went to work in a factory the first thing I'd do is join a union. --Franklin D. Roosevelt