

THE FUSA INFORMANT

Volume 7, Issue 2

**The FUSA
Informant Newsletter
October 2025**

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**A BIG THANK YOU FOR
READING!**

**JOIN THE UNION AND
GET A \$50.00 REBATE ON
YOUR FIRST YEAR'S
DUES!!**

fusahcc.org



THE 2025-28 CONTRACT: FAQ's

President Sherry Sippel, Dale Mabry Campus

We have successfully bargained and ratified another 3-year contract! While faculty were quick to find their new salaries using both the scale and step increase, below are some common questions received about other key items in the contract.

How do I calculate my potential sick leave payout?

Faculty members who separate with at least six years of service (YOS) are eligible for terminal sick leave pay, calculated by multiplying the faculty member's daily rate of pay by the number of eligible unused sick leave days. Daily rate of pay = base salary / 160 for faculty on a basic year contract, and base salary / 220 for faculty on a college-year contract. A percentage of unused sick leave days is paid out based on YOS: 6 YOS: 40%, 7 – 9 YOS: 45%, 10 YOS: 50%, over 10 YOS: 50% + 2.5% for each year over 10 years, up to a maximum of 100%. The maximum payout is for 60 days. (Note: Faculty who have sick leave prior to 1998 will also receive payout for that leave as well)

Is Post-Tenure Review back for FRS faculty in DROP?

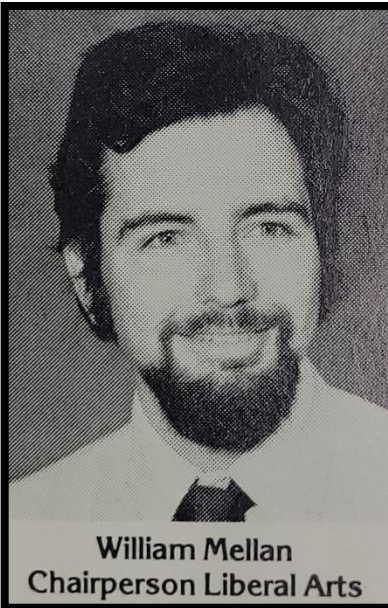
Yes. Per our contract, post-tenure review occurs in five-year increments after the faculty earns tenure. In 2023, the state extended the maximum DROP (Deferred Retirement Option Program) participation period for Florida Retirement System (FRS) members from 5 years to 8 years. As a result, faculty could be in DROP eight years and can no longer be exempt from post-tenure review. (Note: FRS members are encouraged to look at DROP – between increase in the maximum years and APR accrual, it has some strong financial advantages).

What is the difference between release time versus a stipend?

Various activities outside of teaching classes receive compensation in the form of release time or a stipend. Release time counts towards total teaching load, while a stipend is paid in addition to load or overload. In some cases, such as the new discipline chair compensation, faculty may choose between a stipend or release time, depending on which option best suits their needs. Most faculty, including faculty with the max 240-point load, will typically receive a stipend. Faculty who prefer not to teach overload may opt for release time to help meet the minimum 150-point load requirement.

What are the changes to FTT faculty and FTT years of service?

We successfully negotiated several important improvements for our full-time temporary faculty (FTT). FTT faculty will now be placed on the salary schedule according to their prior experience, rather than automatically starting and staying at Step 1, and they are now eligible for annual step increases. Second, the maximum time for a faculty to hold a FTT position has been increased from two to three years. Third, up to three years of FTT service may now be used towards tenure and rank, recognizing the valuable contributions of temporary faculty.



CELEBRATING 50 YEARS OF DEDICATION AND ADVOCACY AT HCC

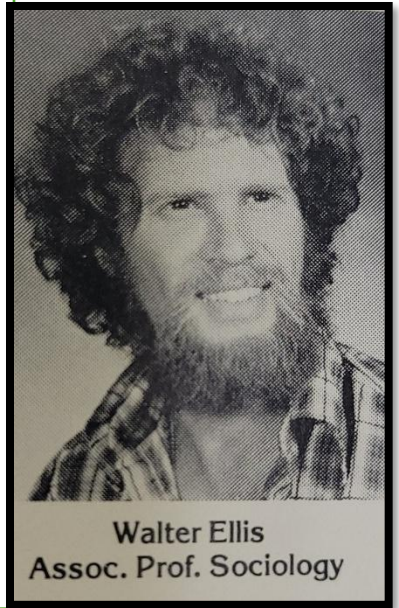
THIS YEAR MARKS TWO EXTRAORDINARY 50-YEAR ANNIVERSARIES AT HCC!

🍌 FIRST, WE HONOR WALT ELLIS (SOCIOLOGY, DALE MABRY) AND BILL MELLAN (PSYCHOLOGY, PLANT CITY) FOR THEIR 50 YEARS OF SERVICE AT HCC. SINCE 1975, THEY HAVE HELPED SHAPE THE MINDS OF THOUSANDS OF STUDENTS. THEIR COMMITMENT TO EDUCATION AND TO HCC IS NOTHING SHORT OF LEGENDARY.

CONGRATULATIONS, WALT AND BILL, ON THIS TREMENDOUS ACHIEVEMENT!

🍌 SECOND, WE CELEBRATE THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF FUSA! CERTIFIED IN 1975 AS THE OFFICIAL BARGAINING AGENT OF THE FACULTY, FUSA HAS SPENT FIVE DECADES PROTECTING THE RIGHTS OF FACULTY AND IMPROVING WORKING CONDITIONS AND SALARIES.

HERE'S TO 50 YEARS OF SOLIDARITY – AND TO MANY MORE AHEAD!



THE LEGISLATIVE UPDATE, 2025

VP Jeremy Bullian, Ybor Campus

While the 2026 legislative session in Tallahassee is still months away (starting Jan. 13-Mar. 13), the UFF Government Relations Committee has been hard at work identifying issues that impact higher education faculty and resonate with legislators. With the aid of FEA public policy advocates, we're focusing our efforts on four bills to take to Tallahassee. The bills will aim to boost employer contributions to Optional Retirement Programs (ORP), strengthen academic freedom at our institutions, create a statewide AI working group to study and recommend ways to safeguard academic integrity, and provide graduate assistants relief with a waiver of onerous fees.

While the Republican supermajority in Florida hasn't been terribly kind to higher education or unions in recent years, UFF operates on a non-partisan basis to advocate for faculty and find common ground with legislators, even those that may not immediately share our perspective.

If you'd like to get involved with government relations work, contact Jeremy Bullian.

We are always looking for help. Another way to participate is through FEA's Power Hour virtual meetings which offer legislative updates and direct advocacy actions and are scheduled leading up to and throughout the legislative session. Sign up at <http://www.feaweb.org/powerhour>.

MEMBER BENEFITS, 2025

VP Jeremy Bullian, Ybor Campus & Wendy Pagoda, Southshore Campus

Have you taken full advantage of the benefits of being a union member?

Chances are, you haven't. Each of our union affiliates provide benefits in addition to the organizational heft and representation they provide at the state and national levels. There are a host of benefits that can help you and your family. Some highlights include:

- Discounts on travel and entertainment, including theme park tickets, hotels, movies, and other purchases.
- Access to member only financial services, such as loans (personal, student, home, etc.), credit cards, retirement plans, etc.
- Various member only insurance options, including a complimentary \$1000 life insurance policy.

The FUSA website links to our affiliate member benefits resources. To find out more, go to:
<https://fusahcc.org/member-benefits>

COMMUNITY

Anthony Buonquisti, Dale Mabry Campus

I shared this story at the recent in-service and a couple of colleagues suggested that I share it more widely through the Informant.

As part of a health issue one of my family members needed a diagnostic process that involved a long slow infusion procedure. We were told it would take three to five hours. The unexpected thing was that the procedure was booked through Moffit even though the issue was not to do with cancer.

We went as a family. Moffit was marvelous. We had free valet parking, an escort to the clinic and free ice-cream, sandwiches, drinks and snacks, with comfy seats in the waiting room. Then came the long wait.

During the wait I realized that many people in the waiting room had loved ones who were facing very difficult medical situations. Moffit is Moffit! Nevertheless, I was struck by the atmosphere of the room. It was calm, considerate, friendly and compassionate.

After a while I was sent out to get treats. I immediately noticed the stress of street traffic, and the snippiness of the barista over the speaker system at the coffee house. Then the stress driving back.

The procedure was slower than expected and we ended up leaving so late that the security guard had my car keys. As I left the parking lot, it dawned on me that at Moffit every single person that I interacted with went out of their way to be kind to me and my family. It really affected me. When seven hours in a Moffit waiting room is preferred to going to get treats, it's got to make you think.

Well, I think we live in a stressed-out community. From Covid on, I think we have all been subjected to significant changes in work, culture and community, and the vast majority of us have been stressed more and more. I'm very aware that I cannot just change the whole world back to 'before', but I now believe that, like those people at Moffit, I can impact my corner of the world by being kind.

This does not mean to say the I cannot say 'no'. This does not mean to say that everybody gets an A. But this does mean that I try to see my loved ones in everybody else.

Let's put 'community' back in Hillsborough (State) College, Let's make it a Community of Kindness and ease the stress of our students and colleagues. If we need a corporate culture, let's emulate the kindness of Moffit, not the insatiable appetite of Big Business.

ACADEMIC FREEDOM

John Whitlock, Dale Mabry Campus

Academic freedom is one of the many rights explicitly guaranteed in the FUSA contract that your union works tirelessly to protect. It is a centuries-old tradition, rooted in the founding of universities, designed to protect scholarly activity from government interference. In the United States, the AAUP codified it in 1915 as a professional standard, alongside the establishment of academic tenure. Together, these two complementary ideas provide employment stability and freedom of research, making college teaching a more attractive career to highly qualified individuals. Unfortunately, both tenure and academic freedom have been under attack.

While the First Amendment of U.S. Constitution and Section Four of the Florida State Constitution both protect freedom of speech, these protections only partially extend to academic freedom depending on the circumstances. Furthermore, recently enacted legislation in Florida attempted to curtail the coverage of certain subjects that the state finds problematic. Don't be surprised if this continues and even expands to additional subjects. Our full-time faculty contract explicitly affirms academic freedom as a faculty right. This supplements our constitutional rights by safeguarding professional freedoms related to research, publication, teaching strategies, and the discussion of subject matter in class.

Whenever you compose a syllabus, prepare lectures (whether on campus or in Canvas), or publish course notes and scholarly works using your professional judgment, you are exercising rights protected by the FUSA

contract. We spend countless hours discussing these issues at our monthly meetings and bargaining with the goal of maintaining the integrity of our profession by preserving and enforcing the contract.

You can find these protections in Article 6.2 of the FUSA contract. Remember: if we lose our union, we lose our contract—and with it, these essential rights. We will not take them for granted.

From the contract- "6.2 Academic Freedom A faculty member, whether tenured or not, is entitled to academic freedom: A. A faculty member is entitled to full freedom in research and in the publication of the results. B. A faculty member is entitled to freedom in the classroom, as defined in Article 2.11, in discussing the subject, in devising and selecting teaching strategies and educational materials, excluding those defined in Article 8.25 and in using them to present the subject. However, faculty should be careful not to introduce a controversial matter that has no relation to the subject. C. A faculty member is a citizen, member of a learned profession, and an employee of an educational institution. When speaking, writing, or acting as a citizen, a faculty member should be free from institutional censorship or discipline. A faculty member will refrain from stating that they are an institutional representative while they speaking, writing, or acting as a citizen."

ASK YOUR REP!

Karen Dufraine, Plant City Campus

Are you a FUSA member but have no idea who your campus union council representatives are? Campus union council representatives are voted in every three years. The FUSA/HCCFL website lists each [council representative](#) per campus. Why is it important to know your FUSA rep?

Remember your Weingarten Rights? You have access to representation for meetings with administrators that might result in disciplinary actions; however, you might also encounter issues that could be potential contract violations.

Knowing your FUSA reps is a step that can save you some headaches and give you peace of mind regarding situations such as:

- Safe and healthy working conditions
- Academic freedom
- Pay and load point issues
- End of year verification
- Tenure, post tenure and rank
- Office security...
- And more Faculty Rights as listed in the FUSA contract

Your campus union council rep is there to confidentially field questions and/or concerns about issues that might be potential contract violations. Visit them at their office or leave/send them a message to schedule a meeting time to discuss your questions or concerns concerning our Faculty Contract. Keep in mind, it is not a bother and it never hurts to ask.



DALE MABRY REPS

Tony Buonaquisti
Walt Ellis
Elizabeth Key-
Raimer
Ken McCullough
April Muchmore-
Vokoun
Jeff Rubinstein
Janet Sibol
Kathryn Smith
John Whitlock

YBOR CITY REPS

Myrah Dijamco
Rick Gaspar
Judy Nolasco
Tom Tankersly

BR REPS

Dave Flanigan
John Hardin
Janet Willman

SS REPS

Wendy Pagoda
Theresa Scott

PC REPS

Karen Dufraine
Pete Sleszynski

**Did you notice that
we have the
Wednesday before
Thanksgiving off?
Thanks, FUSA!**

REPRESENTING YOU AT UFF SENATE IN ORLANDO!

Front, L-R, Myrah Dijamco, Elizabeth Key-
Raimer, Denise Bristol, Sherry Sippel, &
Wendy Pagoda

Back, L-R, Charity Freeman, Ken
McCullough, & Jeremy Bullian