# THE FUSA INFORMANT

**Issue 8.1**

**The FUSA Informant Newsletter March 2026**

Your FUSA Officers
FUSA Council President – Sheryl Sippel,
FUSA Council Vice-President – Jeremy Bullian,
FUSA Council Treasurer – Wendy Pogoda
FUSA Council Secretary - Janet Willman
FUSA Council Grievances Chair: Tom Tankersley

FUSA Informant Editors
Ken McCullough
& Jeff Rubinstein

A BIG THANK YOU FOR READING!

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

fusahcc.org

## LOOKING BACK 10 YEARS– Your Union in Action

President Sherry Sippel, Dale Mabry Campus

I recently came across a copy of a FUSA Informant from 2016. The lead article was about the implementation of the STEP pay system and merit-based rank which your union had fought for years to secure. At that time, we had three goals: to end decades of salary compression and create a system that allowed faculty to progress to the top of the pay scale, to establish a merit-based rank system and reward faculty for their exemplary contributions, and to improve the salary ranking for HC faculty within the Florida College System.

**Ten years later, the results speak for themselves.**

1. **Compression and Progression:** In 2015, only 9% of the faculty reached the midpoint of the pay scale, and only a couple were at the top. Today, 55% have surpassed the midpoint, and dozens have reached Step 30, due to negotiated steps for experience, years of service, and merit.

2. **Merit-based Rank:** Since 2018, 138 faculty have earned the rank of Associate Professor or Professor, securing permanent salary increases that far outweigh one-time bonuses.

3. **Ranking in Florida College System:** HC faculty salaries have jumped from the bottom 29th percentile in 2013 to the top 25% in the Florida College System today.

4. **Full-time Temporary Faculty:** Previously, FTT remained at Step 1 with no step increases and could only use one year of service towards tenure. Today, they earn steps for prior experience and years of service and may apply up to three years of service towards tenure.

5. **Increased Flexibility:** Since 2016, faculty have gained greater flexibility in scheduling office hours, now spread out over three days instead of four, an option envied by many of our FCS peers.

6. **Sick Leave Payout:** Beginning in 2025, eligible faculty are paid for unused sick leave, which can reach $30,000+ or more depending on base salary and years of service.

These accomplishments did not come easily. They are the result of countless hours of bargaining, impasse hearings, votes of no confidence, teamwork, and most of all, the strength and solidarity of our membership. But the work isn't finished. New goals lie ahead as we enter the 2026-2027 economics reopener. Join us for the next bargaining session on April 17, YLRC 305, from 1:00 – 4:00 p.m.

### FROM A MEMBER LIKE YOU

"I just appreciate the support Sherry and Janet and all FUSA has offered me. You have been a stalwart in terms of just standing up for me, and I appreciate it. And you know I'm glad that I'm a paying member of this organization. If there's anything I can do to support FUSA, let me know."

## HC Dale Mabry and the Rays

President Sherry Sippel, Dale Mabry Campus

Ever since the Tampa Bay Rays began playing at Tropicana Field in 1998, talks of relocation have surfaced year after year with proposals ranging from Montreal, Orlando and Jacksonville to local sites in Ybor City, West Shore, Derby Lane, the Fairgrounds, etc. When our own Dale Mabry campus joined that list last August, many of us scoffed at the idea. Yet, six months later, DM now stands as the lead contender for the Rays's future home. That has raised many questions and concerns on what this could mean for Hillsborough College and for its faculty, staff and students, including how a temporary campus would operate, and more importantly, what the long-term gains would be.

Any faculty who has been around for a while has likely taught in a temporary classroom, whether due to construction, renovations, HVAC failures, storm damage, etc. Every HC campus started in temporary facilities. The **1973 HC Yearbook** shows DM, YB and PC in various stages of development: portables scattered across DM, YB classes at the airport, and PC classes starting in a former Publix. Given the essential tools, faculty have always adapted, continuing to deliver quality instruction regardless of the setting. That said, "temporary" does not mean ideal, and should be as quick and painless as possible. Clear communication is critical, especially in assuring Dale Mabry students that their campus, programs, courses, modalities and faculty will remain right here on Tampa Bay Blvd throughout any transition.

The larger question is what long-term benefits would a HC/Rays partnership bring to the college and DM faculty, staff and students? While few details are yet available, there would be a reconfigured campus and new buildings. Faculty input is essential, particularly with regards to the design of classrooms, labs, and office spaces. In recent projects, Dale Mabry faculty were involved in redesigning math classrooms, and with the overall design of the new Allied Health building, to create environments to better support student learning. Faculty have asked about all discipline faculty having offices in the same area for better collaboration. We need to think about what a redesigned DM campus could be and take this potential opportunity to help shape those outcomes. That is, if and when the HC/Rays deal goes through.

## THE LEGISLATIVE UPDATE, 2026

VP Jeremy Bullian, Ybor Campus

The 2026 Legislative Session has been a frustrating display of a supermajority in dysfunction. This session is shaping up to be the least productive of the DeSantis era and, as of this writing, with no budget in sight. What is almost certain is that the session will either be extended, or it will end as scheduled and a special session will be called. Recall that we are in the midst of an economics reopener, so any delay in getting a finalized budget complicates our bargaining progress. At this point, we don't have any idea how long Tallahassee will take to get its act together.

One thing we do know that motivates our legislators into action, however, is floating legislation to undermine educators and unions in Florida. FUSA thanks all of those who took up the call to make your voice heard by responding to one (or more) of the many actions aimed at stopping these unwarranted and callous attacks on public sector unions (save for "first responders"). FUSA also represented, along with other UFF chapters, FEA, and FL AFL-CIO, to speak against the bill in Tallahassee. But ultimately, the bill passed out of both the Senate and House and will almost certainly be signed by the governor.

What this law will mean for FUSA and HC faculty is simple: if you believe in your contract, and you believe in the benefits and protection it provides you, you can no longer sit on the sidelines. For those who aren't members, you need to join the union. If you are a member, get involved. It is the only way to ensure that we will have a voice in our contract and our working conditions. By ensuring we have the membership density we can safeguard our contract, our union, and send a signal to Tallahassee that we aren't going anywhere. Further, we must vote for elected officials who value our labor as public educators and our higher education system. In short, we must throw the bums out!

"The history of the labor movement needs to be taught in every school in this land. America is a living testimonial to what free men and women, organized in free democratic trade unions can do to make a better life. We ought to be proud of it!"
--Hubert H. Humphrey

# A TEACHER'S SKILL SET

Anthony Buonquisti, Dale Mabry Campus

I recently had a long conversation with an old friend from my time in business. He opened his own manufacturing company in 1979 and was finally looking to step back and pass the reins to a younger version of himself.

He was complaining that he couldn't find a manager who was truly top-quality. He said many managers were content being a small cog in a big machine, but he needed somebody who wanted to build the machine. He was looking for an exceptionally good individual.

I asked him to define terms and, being an engineer, he shared his list. To him a good manager should be:

1) A self-starter who was is able to manage complete programs without the need for frequent direction.
2) A problem solver who is flexible, pragmatic and can make decisions.
3) A delegator who achieves more by trusting and leading others.
4) An individual who takes responsibility for process and outcomes of their work.
5) An individual who treats customers and colleagues with respect, resolving conflict quickly and fairly so that all parties feel heard.
6) An excellent communicator who writes clearly and speaks persuasively.
7) An innovator who is never satisfied with the status quo and continually seeks self-improvement.

I have to ask: do those characteristics seem familiar to you? I was shocked when I saw his list. Shocked because, as we teachers know, he described the skill set of every capable teacher. He thought he was looking for the one in a thousand, when he'd have been better served looking for the one in a classroom.

This is important for our profession. Many people think that educators took an easy path and lucked into an easy job that has traditionally been way overvalued. In today's society of accountability, it's easy to see teachers being squeezed at all levels. It's because politicians and bureaucrats don't know all aspects of what we do. That affects the way they treat us. That affects the way they govern us. That affects the way they pay us.

Many people will claim insight into teaching because they spent years being taught. But if being taught makes you knowledgeable about teaching, then being fed makes you knowledgeable about cooking. Good luck with that!

So, the next time somebody disparages our profession think about explaining what we do and remember my friend's list. We are the one in a thousand. We are machine builders not little cogs.

# The ADA Digital Accessibility Rule: Effective April 24, 2026

By Karen Dufraine, Plant City Campus

On your mark, get set…GO! For the past two years we have been hearing in the winds that the new ADA digital accessibility rule will go into effect in April 2026. Now, with the deadline looming on the horizon, panic is ensuing amongst the faculty about "your Canvas Course Accessibility Score". Are you prepared? Have you even started?

Well, you are not alone. Trying to figure out what the new ADA Digital Accessibility Rule entails is like learning how to drive a stick shift; you master going into third and fourth gear, but shifting into second from first is tricky, the bouncing, jerky movements of the car if the


**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**

**BRANDON REPS**

**Dave Flanigan**
**John Hardin**
**Janet Willman**

**SOUTHSHORE REPS**

**Wendy Pagoda**
**Theresa Scott**

**PLANT CITY REPS**

**Karen Dufraine**
**Pete Sleszynski**

**SENATORS**
**Charlene Bell**
**Denise Bristol**
**Jeremy Bullian**
**Myrah Dijamco**
**Charity Freeman**
**John Hardin**
**Elizabeth Key-Raimer**
**Ken McCullough**
**Wendy Pogoda**
**Sherry Sippel**

transition between clutch and gas pedals is not just right. Headache! But, with practice and persistence, you eventually get the timing right on the transition.
Adapting your courses in Canvas for the new Digital Accessibility Rule takes persistence.
For quick reference about this new rule, visit the Fact Sheet on the ADA.gov website. The main highlight of this rule is:

- Digital content needs to be at the WCAG Version 2.1, Level AA standards
- WCAG means Web Content Accessibility Guidelines
- Recommends how to make web content more accessible, such as color contrast

On the WCAG website, further information about the requirements can be found on a "Quick Reference" page. Items to review on the "Quick Reference" are:

- Audio and Video text alternative
- Audio descriptions
- Color techniques

Hillsborough College's CITT and Online Learning departments have been extremely busy curating resources, training and meeting with faculty to get us 100% Accessible. They have created a Digital Accessibility page in Sharepoint. To access follow this path:

1. Go to MyHCC Dashboard
2. Training and Learning menu option
3. CITT/PDWS
4. Under Training Sites, choose Accessibility Training and Resources.

In the Accessibility Resources section, there are some great recommendations on resources to use.
At the March 13th Digital Accessibility Committee's meeting, Instructional Designer, Emiliana Olavarrieta, gave a very detailed and thorough presentation on how to produce audio descriptions. She showed and recommended the following resources:

- Camtasia
- Voiceover Generator
- You Describe
    - You can sign-in using your Google account
    - Emiliana recommends using Gemini to create Transcripts when using You Describe
- Adobe Express to edit videos – we have access through Company Portal

Collaborate with your discipline and department colleagues, work with CITT and Online Learning. There are resources available to get us through this process. It will just take some time and effort.

## THE ONGOING ASSAULT ON ACADEMIC FREEDOM
## Sociology and History (with Psychology on Deck)

The two recurring themes coming from Tallahassee are continuing to make it more difficult for public sector unions to exist (except for firefighters or police) and the ongoing attacks on academic freedom. This year faculty are dealing with new syllabi posting requirements and a state-modified curriculum and censored open-source textbook for Introduction to Sociology.
UFF President Robert Cassanello recently visited HC and spoke at the FUSA Council meeting in January. If you are a UFF member, be sure to read his excellent weekly email series sent to all members on issues in Higher Education in Florida. In addition to ongoing organizing around Sociology, he warns that the Department of Education and Board of Governors is starting a similar approach to censoring content for AMH 2010 and AMH 2020 American History courses, with psychology very likely to follow.
UFF has formed a state-wide faculty work group to address Sociology and is starting one for American History as well. If you are interested in being involved or have information to contribute, please contact Ken McCullough at kmcullough2@hccfl.edu.

**"Where trade unions are most firmly organized, there the rights of the people are most respected."**
**Samuel Gompers, Founder of the American Federation of Labor**

# *Activate, Save, Enjoy:*
## Make the Most of Your FEA Membership

*Your membership card unlocks travel credits, life insurance, and exclusive local and national discounts.*

Union dues do more than support negotiations and salary increases—they connect you to a world of savings, protections, and resources through your FEA.

Your FEA membership card is a powerful tool, yet many members haven't activated it or explored all their benefits.

### Top Member Benefits

**$1,000 Complimentary Life Insurance**
— *Free for all members: Just log in and list beneficiary*

**FEA/Access Discount Program**
— *Savings at over **850,000** restaurants, stores, hotels, and attractions nationwide*

**FEA MyDeals Mobile App**
— *Quickly locate and redeem discounts wherever you are*

**Student Debt Navigator**
— *Guidance to track loans & reduce debt*

**Travel Savings & Annual Travel Credits**
— *Discounted hotels, rental cars & annual travel credits*

**Theme Park & Attraction Discounts**
— *Special pricing aar Disney World Resort & more*

**AFT+ & NEA Member Programs**
— *Members-only insurance, financial services, and adiitional*

**MemberAssist Concierge Service**

Union dues do more than support negotiations and salary increases—they connect you to a world of savings, protections, and resources through your FEA.

Your FEA membership card is a powerful tool, yet many members haven't activated it or explored all their benefits.

### Activate Your Membership Card

- ✓ **First-year members** get *one free year of **$15,000** term life insurance with no medical qualifiers*
- ✓ **Continue** *coverage at your own cost after the first year*

### Considering FUSA Membership?

- ✓ First-year members get *one free **year** of* **$15,000** *term life insurance with no **medical** qualifiers*

**Activate Your →** **Learn More About Benefits**

*Take a few minutes to active your membership card—you might be surprised at how much value is already included!*