

Education Minnesota

Claims for back pay for college faculty reaches \$1 million

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ST. PAUL, Minnesota. Oct. 14, 2019 – Instructors at Minnesota’s two-year public colleges have now identified more than \$1 million in claims for lost wages as part of a \$1.9 million settlement reached in May with the Minnesota State system of colleges and universities.

The staff and officers of the Minnesota State College Faculty union have met with 577 faculty members to review the instructors’ work and pay records. Of that group, 202 faculty members have identified claims worth a total of \$1,004,261 when a special software calculator indicated money was owed.

“Reaching \$1 million in claims is a symbolic victory for hundreds of educators who had to work for years through our union to receive a fair return for their work, as defined by our contracts,” said Matt Williams, the president of MSCF. “But we’re not done. We believe there are still more instructors who need to come forward. I urge every faculty member who thinks there’s a chance they’re owed money to review their documents with union staff and file a claim if appropriate.”

While there have been several individual claims for \$15,000 or more, the average value of individual claims has been much lower, about \$5,600.

The underlying wage dispute involved how the college system calculated the pay for faculty members with certain job assignments, such as teaching in flex labs, independent studies and internships, or instructors who performed duties as department chairs and in similar jobs. The union estimates the settlement will directly affect up to 700 instructors.

The settlement agreement created a process for faculty to recover back pay for the 2016-17 and 2017-18 academic years. The settlement also mandated that the system make certain changes to ensure that it correctly compensates its faculty in the future.

Under terms of the agreement, faculty members must file a claim for back pay by Oct. 31, 2019. A referee selected by both parties will review any disputed claims.

The settlement caps the systems’ liability for approved claims at \$1.9 million. If the total value of the

claims exceeds that amount, the individual awards will be proportionally adjusted downward to fit under the cap.

The union began filing grievances for the pay calculations in 2010, asserting that Minnesota State was not following the contract the two sides had negotiated together. In 2016, the union took the grievances to binding arbitration. The arbitrator ruled for the union.

In December 2017, the union filed an unfair labor practices lawsuit in Ramsey County District Court alleging Minnesota State violated the law by refusing to comply with the arbitrator's decision. The settlement signed May 22 resolves that lawsuit.

MSCF officers and staff will continue meeting with faculty through October. Faculty can watch for updates on campus visits at www.mscfmn.org/workload-settlement.

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