

## Education Minnesota

### Claims for back pay for college faculty nears \$700,000

For more information, contact:

**Chris Williams**

651-292-4816 (work)

651-247-5539 (cell)

**Matt Williams**

651-767-1271 (work)

651-230-8100 (cell)



*ST. PAUL, Minnesota. Sept. 27, 2019* – Instructors at Minnesota’s two-year public colleges have filed nearly \$700,000 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.

Four hundred college instructors have met face-to-face with staff and officers from the Minnesota State College Faculty union to review the instructors’ work and pay records. Of those 400, 125 faculty members filed claims worth a total of \$698,590 when a special software calculator indicated money was owed.

“I encourage everybody to go and file a claim. The union officers were friendly and extremely helpful,” said Jane Bassuk, a member of the art faculty at North Hennepin Community College in Brooklyn Park, who filed her own claim Thursday. “I thought I was owed a little, but it was actually a lot more.”

While there have been several individual claims for \$15,000 or more, the average value of the claims has been much lower at \$5,634.

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.

“Every member of our union deserves a fair return for their work as defined by the contracts we have come together to negotiate with the system,” said Matt Williams, president of MSCF. “Nearly 10 years ago, our union learned the system wasn’t paying its instructors properly and we have been pushing for this settlement ever since. 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.”

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](http://www.mscfmn.org/workload-settlement).

The Minnesota State College Faculty union is affiliated with Education Minnesota.

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