



PSU-KNEA Communicator



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Good Faculty Need PSU-KNEA

By Chuck Killingsworth

I am one of the tenured/tenure earning faculty at PSU and a member of PSU-KNEA. Since joining the PSU-KNEA four years ago I've had colleagues (from a variety of departments) say "I can't afford to join" and "Good teachers don't need a union". I ask, "Can you really afford not to join?" and, "Where would we be without PSU-KNEA?" Let's look at just a few of the reasons all tenured and tenure earning faculty need PSU-KNEA:

Good faculty need a union to fight for intellectual property. This issue is currently being argued in the Kansas court system. Without PSU-KNEA, who would be fighting for our intellectual property rights?

Good faculty need a union to fight for a fair level of compensation for the work that we do. While we are still below our "peer institution" colleagues, the PSU-KNEA has negotiated that we will receive a salary increase at least 1 percent higher than that received by other Kansas regents universities. If you go back over the past few years and compare our salary increases with those of the other regent institutions you will find that we have done better than they with respect to the percent increase in our salaries.

Good faculty need a union to advocate on our behalf with regard to fair employment practices. There were a number of grievances during this past year that worked out favorably for the faculty concerned. If it hadn't been for the PSU-KNEA and the process that has been negotiated into the contract, it is anyone's guess as to what would have happened in these cases. No one wants incompetent or unfit teachers in the classroom. But good teachers/faculty know if they face charges they believe to be unfair, their union will ensure a fair hearing.

Good faculty need a union to help the public understand the importance of academic freedom, and other fundamental concepts that are the foundation of a quality post-secondary education. Like our colleagues in the public school systems, "Our work is affected by previous teachers, by home (and community) support, by class size, by school (university) funding, by how many special needs students we might have. We never want to narrow what it means to teach and simply drill for a test." We must maintain the freedom to teach what we know and believe to be important for our students and how we teach our students.

Good faculty need a union to ensure that teaching evaluation is done for the purpose of improvement of the teaching/learning process and to recognize outstanding teaching. We have all experienced and possibly even know of faculty that have needed to take a good long look at themselves and their teaching practices. Evaluation must be designed and used to assist all of us

to do the best job possible for our students. Evaluation that is used to "keep faculty in line" or for punitive purposes is not acceptable. PSU-KNEA can be and has been our advocate in this area with the PSU administration and the Board of Regents.

Good faculty proudly belong to PSU-KNEA which represents quality education and the united voice of PSU faculty. Good faculty need our union – our union needs good faculty.

Thank you to Gene Neely, KNEA President for his inspirational words and ideas upon which this article is based. (See *KNEA Issues*, August 2000)

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