

ACSUM
UMA/UCB Chapter Assembly
May 18, 2007

PRESENT IN BANGOR: Shani Barlow, Lisa Feldman, Becky Fielder, Arlene Slade
PRESENT IN AUGUSTA: Cindy Freeman, Laurie Hilton, Peggi Loveless, Tim Pinkham

NOTE: The newly adopted UMA/UCB Chapter Constitution requires us to hold a Chapter Assembly twice yearly, in November and May. This was the inaugural Chapter Assembly of our newly founded chapter. Because we felt the administration would listen in if we conducted the meeting by Polycom, we communicated by speakerphone—hardly the ideal technology.

EXECUTIVE BOARD

We recently elected 7 ACSUM members to our inaugural chapter executive committee. Elected for a one-year term are: Debbie Blythe, Karen Donnell, Cindy Freeman, and Linda Ross. Elected for two-year terms are: Cass Erickson, Evelyn Hickey, and Tim Pinkham. Our two grievance reps, Lisa Feldman and Peggi Loveless will serve on this committee *ex officio*. The chapter constitution reserves certain slots for Bangor campus representatives. Evelyn, Linda, and Lisa fill those slots.

Tim will set up an executive committee meeting some time in June. Elected Executive Committee members (excluding the grievance reps) will elect chapter officers from among their numbers.

CHAPTER STRUCTURE

All NEA/MEA-affiliated locals have one structure, replicated at different geographic levels. An assembly sets general policy and elects an executive to manage affairs between assembly sessions. It's a little like the town meeting/select board model of government. At the most local level is the chapter assembly (of which all dues-paying ACSUM members on campus belong) which elects the chapter executive committee.

At the statewide ACSUM level, there's the annual Delegate Assembly, held in April. Each chapter elects its own representatives to the DA. The number of representatives is based on the number of dues-paying members in the chapter. Each chapter also elects representatives to a statewide Executive Board. The number of Exec. Board reps is also based on the number of dues-paying members in the chapter. Tim Pinkham (Augusta) and Becky Fielder (Bangor) currently represent UMA/UCB on the ACSUM Executive Board.

ACSUM, though a union in its own right (able to negotiate contracts autonomously) is affiliated with the Maine Education Association (MEA). We therefore elect representatives to MEA's Representative Assembly. We are also represented on the MEA Board. (By tradition, ACSUM and UMPSA—the UMS professional union—take turns nominating a candidate for the seat. Our current MEA Board rep is Nancy Fletcher of UMPI. Nancy was an ACSUM member for many years, though her position was upgraded to professional rank several years ago.)

MEA is, in turn, affiliated with the National Education Association (NEA). ACSUM, as a component of MEA, therefore elects representatives to the NEA Representative Assembly.

Some of our union dues go to NEA, MEA, and statewide ACSUM. Now that we have a formal chapter structure, a portion of our dues (until now held in escrow) will go to support chapter activities. Rank-and-file union members (chapter members) receive publications, staff assistance, training opportunities, and other kinds of help from statewide ACSUM, MEA, and NEA. For example, MEA lobbying was crucial in defeating Chancellor Westphal's Strategic Plan, which would have put many of us out of work. The NEA was very helpful in last fall's efforts to defeat TABOR, which would have slashed funds for higher education. This year ACSUM has benefited from a small grant from MEA to improve communications, and a large grant from NEA to increase membership.

If you have questions on ACSUM's structure, contact Lisa Feldman (lisa.feldman@maine.edu).

LOCAL ACTIVITIES

In order to get the local portion of our union dues out of escrow, the chapter must have a treasurer. At its first meeting, our chapter Executive Committee will choose officers from among its elected members. The Executive committee will then be able to sponsor chapter activities, and will have a small budget at its disposal.

Two areas of chapter activity must be membership and communications. This is partly because these are indispensable activities, partly because our chapter has designated slots on ACSUM's statewide membership and communications committees. Laurie Hilton and Lisa Feldman have volunteered to serve on the Communications Committee. They'll be working on improving communication, including a revamp of the ACSUM website. Petra Robbins has volunteered for the Membership Committee, but still needs someone from Augusta to help her. Membership work involves communicating with non-members (particularly new employees), listening to their concerns, and seeing if they'd be interested in joining. If you're interested, contact Lisa Feldman (lisa.feldman@maine.edu).

We can also undertake other activities. Some ideas are: inviting non-members to our November chapter assembly for some contract education, and a position-review support group or class. If you have ideas for chapter activities, contact a member of the chapter Executive Committee (listed above).