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CT news

The voice of the Clerical-Technical Union of Michigan State University

January 2015

Transforming “misery and despair into hope and progress”

Although CTs will *not* enjoy the day off on January 19, 2015, many of us will find ways to participate in activities commemorating the life of Martin Luther King Jr. We will consider it a day “on” rather than a day “off.”

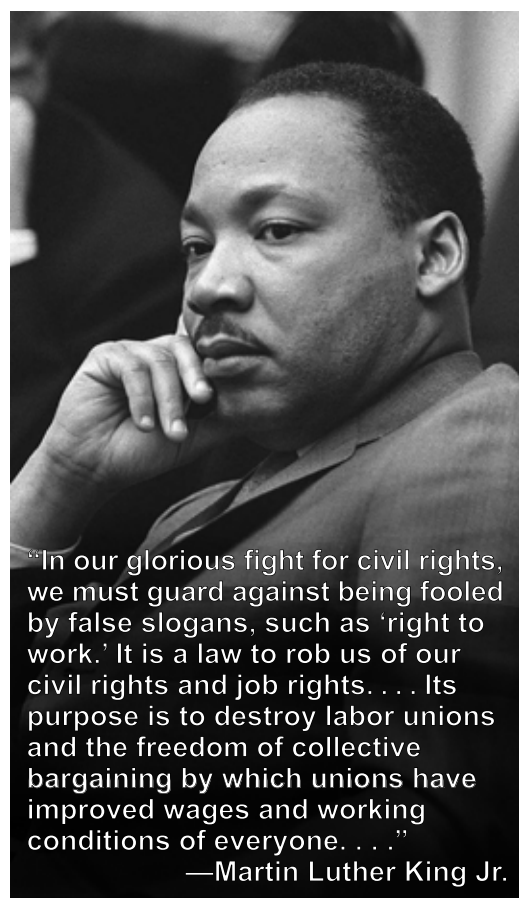
Recognizing King’s status as a great leader who understood the essential role of organized labor in the fight for justice, equality and civil rights, the CTU has fought for decades to have MLK’s birthday recognized as a paid holiday. While we haven’t been successful in that endeavor, we do have a letter of agreement affirming the employer’s and CTU’s mutual commitment to diversity and inclusion

and encouraging supervisors to be flexible in permitting employees to participate in events associated with commemorating Dr. King.

If you are denied a reasonable request to participate in an event associated with MLK Day, contact your union for support in working out a mutually agreeable arrangement.

We honor King’s legacy every year, but the 2015 commemoration will be special for MSU because it wraps up our year-long community conversation on civil and human rights known as Project 60/50. The project was launched on King’s birthday in 2014 to recognize two anniversaries

King continued on p. 5



“In our glorious fight for civil rights, we must guard against being fooled by false slogans, such as ‘right to work.’ It is a law to rob us of our civil rights and job rights. . . . Its purpose is to destroy labor unions and the freedom of collective bargaining by which unions have improved wages and working conditions of everyone. . . .”

—Martin Luther King Jr.

“The labor movement was the principal force that transformed misery and despair into hope and progress. Out of its bold struggles, economic and social reform gave birth to unemployment insurance, old-age pensions, government relief for the destitute and, above all, new wage levels that meant not mere survival but a tolerable life. The captains of industry did not lead this transformation; they resisted it until they were overcome. When in the thirties the wave of union organization crested over the nation, it carried to secure shores not only itself but the whole society.”

—Martin Luther King Jr.

CTnews

The voice of the Clerical-Technical Union
of Michigan State University

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independent
since 1974!

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Editorial Policy:

The CT News is the voice of our union. It is our vehicle for communicating, on a regular basis, the issues that confront us as workers. Through this newsletter we explain union policies, show how dues are spent, and explain the views and actions of the elected leadership for evaluation by the members.

The CT News is the voice of the membership. We welcome articles from members and stories about members.

While contributions are welcome, they should be constructive and contribute positively to the welfare of our union.

We will accept no attacks on any union leader or member. We will accept thoughtful discussion of all related issues in the letters section, and reserve the right to reply to those that seem to reflect a misunderstanding of the union and its policies.

Direct ideas, letters, questions and comments to Cherylee Finney.

Member Tip:

Union Movement = Social Justice Movement

Martin Luther King, Jr. was gunned down in Memphis in 1968, the day after delivering his "I've Been to the Mountaintop" speech. But how many Americans know that what brought Dr. King to Memphis was the melding of a labor union contract fight and the growing force of the civil rights movement? There long has been recognition on the union side, as well, that our fight for improved working conditions is connected to the social justice movement in the larger society.

—Adapted from *The Union Member's Complete Guide*, by Michael Mauer

CTclassifieds

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Lansing Road in East Lansing. Will work to meet your specifications. Contact the CTU, 517-355-1903.

Free:

▼ **CTU Conference Room:** Available free to members (with deposit). For non-members, \$25/hour plus deposit. For questions, reservations, etc., contact the CTU office at 355-1903.

▼ **Advertise** to your colleagues in the CT News. Contact Cherylee Finney at Cheryl@ctumsu.org. The CT News accepts ads from CTU members on items for sale and/or services provided by CTU members and/or their household family members.

[Teryl Hall]

Membership Meetings

CTU Membership Meetings in 2015 will be held Wednesday, January 28; Thursday, April 23; Tuesday, July 14; and Wednesday, October 28. All meetings will be held in 252 Erickson Hall. Membership meetings are for making decisions about the Union, asking questions and receiving updates about Union activities.

Executive Board Meetings

1st & 3rd Tuesdays at 5:15

CTU Office

Members welcome!

Don't you just love a good bargain?

President Deb Bittner

The CTU sent a letter to MSU Employee Relations on December 1, 2014, requesting that we open contract negotiations and establish a bargaining calendar starting at the end of January. Really? It's contract time again!?

Yes and Wow! The time has flown since we ratified our current contract almost four years ago in 2011. Our contract expires March 31, 2015. Ideally, we will have a successor agreement to replace it starting April 1, 2015.

What is the purpose of a contract?

Through our elected representatives, we collectively bargain a contract with "the other side," our employer, that sets the terms and conditions of our employment.

Those terms and conditions include benefits like overtime, vacations, sick pay, wages, discipline, education, and even our ability to stand up for ourselves on the job. Without a contract, employers can discipline or fire any employee without regard to seniority or due process. Without a contract, most of our benefits and working conditions are at the discretion of the employer, including established work schedules, paid holidays, promotions, etc.

But the contract is not simply a book of protections for union members or rules for supervisors. It contains rules, procedures and principles that have been accepted by *both* union members and management. It is our voice on the job.

When we negotiate, we communicate with our employer as equals, rather than as underlings humbly requesting fair treatment and compensation. This negotiation by a union gives us legal rights and a product, our contract, that

provides an outline that we would not otherwise have.

So, how we handle negotiations—what we establish in our contract—is one of the most important things we do as a union.

Timeline

In the final days of our most recent negotiations, we were blindsided by a hastily passed new law—Public Act 54 of 2011—that freezes wages and benefits if an old collective bargaining agreement expires while a new one is still being bargained. Also, the parties are no longer allowed to agree to retroactively make employees whole after a new contract is in place.

For our group, removing this negotiating tool could harm CTs expecting anniversary increases while an agreement is delayed. Although increases would be reinstated under the new contract, they could not be retroactive.

While CTU argues that this new law does not apply to employees at universities with elected trustees, we also believe it is best to avoid complications



"The union rejects your offer of magic beans for our cow and counters with a willingness to accept your head on a platter for even trying such a lame stunt."



by preparing a strong bargaining team and putting in the time and energy to get a timely agreement.

Of course, CTU doesn't control all of the factors, and our team will not allow this new rule to railroad us into accepting an agreement that is unfair or second-rate. Our team will present for ratification the very best agreement that can be achieved.

Health care & wages

As has been true for almost two decades, our health care and general increases are bargained through a coalition of all of MSU's non-academic unions. We ratified our current health care agreement in 2013. Therefore, wages and general health care will not be on the table in our upcoming talks. And, because these items have already been established under a separate contract, they are not subject to Public Act 54.

Dental care, however, will be part of the discussion. As most of us are aware, our employer unilaterally altered the Aetna dental care plan that starts in January 2015. (The Delta dental plan remained the same.) CTU has filed an "unfair labor practice" charge because of our employer's failure to bargain. So, of course, the topic will be on the agenda in negotiations.

"Collective" bargaining

How does CTU establish its team? Our team is made up of the CTU Exec-

Bargain continued on p. 7

Judy Redding

I have worked on campus for 15 years, the last 8 years at the library.

I began to get involved with the CTU by volunteering at the polls for the CTU elections. It was a wonderful opportunity to meet other CTs from around campus, and it gave me the chance to ask questions about the responsibilities of a CTU Union Representative.

Next, I began to attend some of the general membership meetings, usually held at Erickson Hall, which gave me the chance to see how the CTU conducts business. [Dajon Murphy]

I attended our CTU picnic and enjoyed a competitive cake walk.

When the UR position became open at the library, I applied.

During my time as a UR, I have learned a lot about our contract and experienced a great deal of personal growth from attending monthly training sessions, talking with other CTs, and meeting new people in the library. I have also learned a lot about myself and how I can better relate to others. My world has been expanded so much through this experience.

The CTs in the library are making an effort to attend quarterly membership general meetings. When we needed a quorum at one of the meetings, they responded to my earnest request to attend. They are very generous in giving of themselves and their funds when it comes to CT supported fundraisers. We

helped “Stuff the Bus” and donated to the 2014 “Sock It” drive.

I worked on the Elections Committee this fall. As a committee, we were responsible for conducting the Election Forums and making sure the process ran smoothly and according to all the rules. The forums proved to be a great opportunity to ask the candidates candid questions. We also spent the night counting ballots, so we were the first to know who would assist in leading our union through the coming two years and represent us in contract negotiations.

Michigan State University is a big campus. It is nice to know that there are CTs out there to network with and offer support.

One of the things that I learned through union training was that I am a Clerical-Technical Union member who is employed by Michigan State University, not just the MSU Library. When there is a dispute and the Union has been asked to step alongside a CTU member, I am proud to be among that front line group.

The CT logo is an inverted triangle. It does not point to the CTU president, at the top of the pyramid, but it expands upward toward the base of the rank and file members. That is what is most important to the Clerical-Technical Union: The member.



URdistricts

The following members were appointed to Union Representative positions:

▼ **District 23** (Plant and Soil Sciences, Wharton Center): contact **Barbara Christian** at 884-5106 or townsb@msu.edu.

▼ **District 25** (Student Services, Horticulture): **Brenda Bailey** can be contacted at 884-1058 or baileyb@msu.edu.

▼ **District 37** (Clinical Center [A-Wing]): contact **Kimberly Baker** at 432-7055 or bakerk@msu.edu.

The following members have petitioned for appointment to UR positions. If no other CTs from the respective districts express interest in the positions by January 12 at 5 p.m., these individuals will be appointed:

▼ **District 32** (Library): **Judy Redding**.

▼ **District 34** (Agriculture Hall, Cook Hall): **Kelli Kolasa**.

The UR position in **District 15** (Nisbet, Manly Miles, University Printing, Spartan Village Community Center) became open recently when UR **Rosie Garcia** moved to **District 10** (Farrall, Chemistry, Biochemistry, Cyclotron). Now that she has been elected to the Executive Board, both positions are open.

If you are interested in more information about being a UR, or you want to suggest someone from your district who you think would make a good UR, contact Vice President **Kim Smith** at 355-3784 or Kim@ctumsu.org.

CTcomment

Thank you to all who made a contribution to the annual “Sock It...” Drive!

Your generosity is much appreciated, but not more than by those who will be the recipients of the socks, gloves, hats, coats and scarves you provided.

As a CTU member, I am so grateful for my union job and doubly grateful for the additional income we are receiving from the healthcare payout!

My wish is that we all may in some way provide assistance to someone less fortunate than we.

A special thanks to UR Judy Redding and her district of CTs at the library. They made an OUTSTANDING contribution to the cause!

—Willie Paulsen



Sometimes you gotta laugh

Technological improvements

While up in the attic helping with some cleaning, Diane's grandkids uncovered an old manual typewriter and asked, "What's this?"



"Oh, that's a typewriter," she answered, thinking that would satisfy their curiosity.

"Well, what does it do?" they asked.

"I'll show you," Diane said. She found a piece of paper, rolled it into the typewriter and began striking the keys, leaving black letters on the page.

"WOW!" the boys exclaimed, "That's really cool—but how does it work? Where do you plug it in?"

"There is no plug," she answered. "It doesn't need a plug."

"Then where do you put the batteries?" they persisted.

"It doesn't need batteries either," she replied.

"Wow! This is so cool!" the youngsters exclaimed. "Someone should have invented this a long time ago!"

—Union Communications Services
September 8, 2014



King continued from p. 1

involving major legislation that played a significant role in changing the daily lives of everyone in the United States: 1) the Supreme Court's 1954 Brown v. Board of Education decision that ended "separate but equal" laws for public schools 60 years ago, and 2) President Lyndon B. Johnson's signing of the Civil Rights Act 50 years ago in 1964.

The Clerical-Technical Union, celebrating our 40th anniversary in 2014, partnered in the year-long project.

MLK Commemorative March

CTU will join other MSU staff, along with students, faculty and administrators, in the annual MLK Commemorative March on January 19. To march with our union, join us in the second floor ballroom of the MSU Union Building.

The event begins at 3 p.m. with speakers, including Hank Thomas (see background information under Greater Lansing Area Holiday Commission Luncheon below). At 3:25 we will begin our

march to Beaumont Tower.

If you plan to attend, please contact CTU (355-1903 or email President Bittner at Deb@ctumsu.org). We would like a general idea of how many members are attending so that we know if we can use our big banner.

Greater Lansing Area Holiday Commission Luncheon

The 30th Annual Celebration Luncheon in honor of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. will take place in downtown Lansing at the Lansing Center. The January 19 luncheon, sponsored by the Greater Lansing Area Holiday Commission, begins at 11 a.m.

The theme for this year's luncheon is "The Ultimate Measure of a Man Is Not Where He Stands In Moments of Comfort And Convenience, but Where He Stands In Times Of Challenge And Controversy."

The keynote speaker is Henry "Hank" Thomas, a founder of the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee, who nearly lost his life twice as one of the Freedom Riders in the 1960s.

Thomas went on

to become a successful business owner. He is the recipient of the Buffalo Soldier Award from Howard University, the 365Black Award from McDonalds, the Rabbi Perry Nausbaum Civil Justice Award, and in 2011, was inducted into the International Civil Rights Hall of Fame. [Jeremy Boak]

Other events

The 2015 program calendar includes a student leadership conference; jazz concerts that honor and acknowledge the contributions made by Dr. King and others like him to the civil rights movement; a host of college-wide activities; special events at the MSU Museum and Libraries; and the conclusion of "What's Your 110?" sponsored by the Center for Service Learning and Civic Engagement.

If you have questions about this program, please contact the Office for Inclusion at 517-353-3922, Monday through Friday between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m.



For more information, updates and links to MLK commemorative events, click the 60/50+40 tab on the CTU website at CTU@ctumsu.org.

You make the union work

Contract Administrator Dan McNeil

So you and your CT colleagues in your department really enjoy the work you perform for the college/division/school and in the larger sense, MSU. You have chosen these CT positions because you enjoy the work, the wage and the benefits you receive as part of Team MSU.

What you don't enjoy is the ever-present unreasonable expectation of your department's leadership, departmental supervisory employees.

You and your colleagues work hard, are good at what you do, have a good and sincere work ethic with good intentions to produce good work for fair pay and good benefits.

But those qualities don't seem to be enough. The demands to produce, multi-task and tolerate unreasonable amounts of work and pressure are ever increasing.

These constant and increasing demands, combined with little reward or acknowledgment, has caused increased stress in your work day, which carries over to your life outside of work. Reporting to work is not as enjoyable as it once was, and you feel your stress climbing each day as you near campus.

Can you relate to this experience? Do

you wish you could change this circumstance, this negative work environment?

You can!

CTU covers all clerical and technical employees with a strong contract and has done so for more than 40 years.

Specifically, we have Article 4 which states: "The parties are mutually committed to promoting respect, civility, teamwork, and empowerment in the workplace"

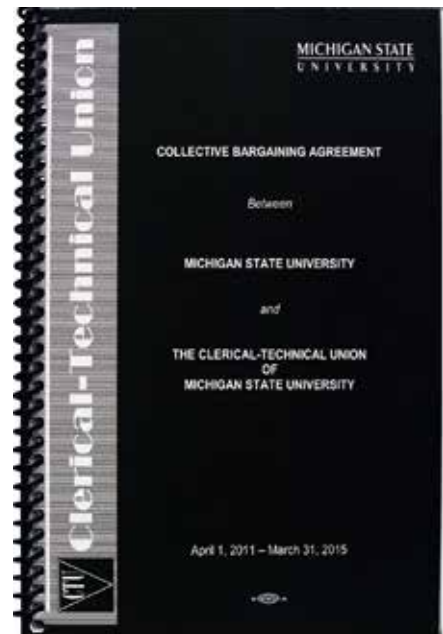
This simple, common sense statement affirming how employees should be treated is agreed to by our employer and the members of CTU.

When you and your colleagues are not provided this fundamental principle of treatment as employees you need to make a statement—a group statement—that the mistreatment, unrelenting pressure, abuse and/or bullying—is unacceptable. Your representatives at CTU need to be informed of patterns of mistreatment in order to be able to assist you. We can file a formal group grievance to alert the employer officially that inappropriate treatment has occurred and is occurring. However, members need to inform the union about the mistreatment; we need examples of behaviors, patterns, statements, and unreasonable demands to effectively help.

Too many CTs who call or write to expose improper treatment complain that nothing can be done or the problem has been going on too long and can't be fixed: I/we are afraid of the consequences if we "get the Union involved" if we file a grievance.

This is an unacceptable justification for putting up with an unacceptable situation. Ask yourself, "Is the justification worth more than taking a risk to challenge the status quo?"

It is your right as employees to challenge an unacceptable, persistently stress-



ful work environment *because* you are part of a union and have a contract that the employer signed and must follow. You know in your gut that the way you are being treated as a group is not right.

Summon the courage, as a group, to say "enough" and ask your union to assist. Stay strong and united on this issue. The process can be difficult, but in the end it will improve your work life, and as a result, enhance your life overall. [Dolene Hernandez]

While management may retain rights to: "exercise customary and regular function, duties, and responsibilities of management, including, but not limited to, the right to hire, establish and change work schedules, set hours of work, establish, eliminate or change classifications, assign, transfer, promote, demote, lay off employees, and for just cause to discipline and discharge employees and otherwise maintain an orderly, effective and efficient operation," Article 28 of the CTU contract prohibits supervisors (the employer) from exercising that right to "unfairly and illegally discriminate against an Employee, Group of Employees or the Union."

CTU has the tools to improve your work situation. Resolve in this New Year to let your union help you improve that experience so you once again enjoy your work day at MSU.

Article 4.

Fair Employment Practices

- I. The Employer and the Union are committed to a policy of non-discrimination on the basis of race, color, sex, religion, creed, national origin, age, political persuasion, sexual orientation, gender identity, marital status, and disability.
- II. The parties are mutually committed to promoting respect, civility, teamwork and empowerment in the work place.

Committees

At its November 18, 2014 meeting, the Executive Board constituted its committees:

FINANCE

Jan Wallace, Chair
Pamela Brock
Rosario Garcia
Walt Peebles
Tracy Rich

GAT

Kim Smith, Chair
Willie Paulsen
Jeanette Robertson
Pam Sloan
Norma Teague

PERSONNEL

Deb Bittner, Chair
Jeanette Robertson
Kim Smith
Jan Wallace

Bargain

continued from p. 3

utive Board, including myself, along with our contract administrator, communications specialist, and our attorneys. One of our attorneys, Nancy Pearce, is our chief negotiator.

This team has been preparing for upcoming negotiations since our current contract was ratified in 2011. The process of representing and advocating for members under this contract has illuminated areas where it might be strengthened. In addition, individuals regularly voice support for current contractual clauses and/or suggest changes for consideration.

To gather more membership input, we will also offer a short bargaining survey and hold town hall meetings. Our January 28 Membership Meeting (252 Erickson Hall, 5:20 p.m.) will provide another great opportunity to discuss issues surrounding negotiations.

As you can imagine, not everyone agrees on every priority. The team needs input and discussion from members affected by our agreement—which means everyone—as it makes decisions about how to proceed.

Also, keep in mind that this is a bargain, not a union shopping list. Everything we get at the bargaining table is *won*, and the best way to maintain what we have and move forward is through

Health care savings

We will receive the final disbursement of savings from the previous health care contract in our January 23, 2015, pay check.

CTs on the payroll as of January 1, 2015, will receive approximately \$950 (pro-rated for part-time employees).

The one-time payment will be taxed separately at the IRS supplemental tax rate (as high as 25%). Other applicable taxes will also be deducted.

Because the number of people who will be on the payroll as of January 1, 2015, is unknown, the disbursement amount is only a close approximation.

This payout results from health care dollars set aside (or saved) during our previous health care contract. Under the 2010-13 MOU, we agreed to keep increases in health care costs below 5%. If we went over, members would pay the difference. If costs went up less than 5%, the difference would be put aside.

It was a risk that paid off. When members ratified our current 2014-17 health care MOU, we agreed to disburse those savings to current employees.

support of the membership in a collective show of strength.

The negotiating process is called “collective bargaining” for a reason. It means all of us, the “collective.” And it means that members need to provide input and participate in solidarity actions, which will be crucial in showing that we are united. During negotiations it is important to let management know that we support the team.

One caveat: the team may not be able to publicize some details about bargaining

We received a disbursement for the first three years of savings in January 2014.

The employer elected to withhold about \$300 of each employee’s 2014 disbursement because a former MSU employee sued for retirees to share in the disbursement. That lawsuit is ongoing. [Simone Jennings]

The employer is withholding money from the upcoming disbursement in case

of another lawsuit. The January 23 payout of \$950 is the amount left *after* the lawsuit money is put aside.

The CTU disagrees with this withholding and is pursuing every legal avenue to ensure that the

health care contract we ratified last summer is faithfully executed.

Our success in keeping costs down, both in our individual health care choices and through the hard work of our union representatives, has made it possible for us to continue enjoying quality, affordable health care along with steady wage increases—and we have done so while contributing to the economic stability of the university.



while talks are ongoing. Prematurely releasing details of any legal negotiations can undermine the process. However, we will be able to discuss bargaining issues in general at town hall meetings, and members will have the opportunity to review *every* proposed change in the new contract before deciding whether or not to ratify it.

So, let’s prepare. Let’s show our unity and team spirit. And let’s make a deal and get that good bargain that will strengthen us and serve us for the next several years.

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CTU OF MSU



CTcalendar

January 6 and 20. Executive Board meeting, C-T Union Hall, 5:15 pm. Members welcome.

January 19. MLK Day. Classes are canceled but support staff must report to work. Several events are scheduled for this day and others to commemorate the legacy of Martin Luther King Jr. Join CTU in participating in the MLK Commemorative March. See the article on page 1.

January 22. "Disciplining the 'Inaccurate Instrument of Intimidation': Organized Labor's Campaign against the Polygraph, 1965–1988." John Baesler, History Department, Saginaw Valley State University. "Our Daily Work/Our Daily Lives" Brown Bag Series, MSU Museum, 12:15–1:30 p.m.

January 26. "At Home along the Picket Line: Company Housing and the 1913 Michigan Copper Strike." Erik Nordberg, Reuther Library, Wayne State

University. "Our Daily Work/Our Daily Lives" Brown Bag Series, MSU Museum, 12:15–1:30 p.m.

January 28. Quarterly Membership Meeting of the Clerical-Technical Union of MSU. 252 Erickson, 5:20 p.m. See announcement on this page.

February 2. "Working for Justice: Legacies of Latina Activism in South-eastern Michigan." Maria Cotera, University of Michigan (co-sponsored by the Center for Gender in Global Context, Chicano/Latino Studies Program, Julian Samora Research Institute and the Women's Resource Center). "Our Daily Work/Our Daily Lives" Brown Bag Series, MSU Museum, 12:15–1:30 p.m.

February 1. Vegan Potluck. Sponsored by VegMichigan and CTU. Bring a vegan dish to pass and a copy (or three) of the recipe to share. First Sunday of every month. C-T Union Hall (2990 E. Lake Lansing Rd.), 6-7:30 p.m.

January Membership Meeting

**Wednesday, January 28
252 Erickson Hall
5:20 p.m.**

Membership meetings are for making decisions about the Union, asking questions and receiving updates about Union activities. Meetings start at 5:20 but the doors open at 5 for socializing. Join us!

WANT A SAY IN BARGAINING?



COME TO THE UNION MEETINGS