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*Let others know the benefits of being in a union, p. 7.*



# CT news

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

February/March 2015

## Members focus on contract talks

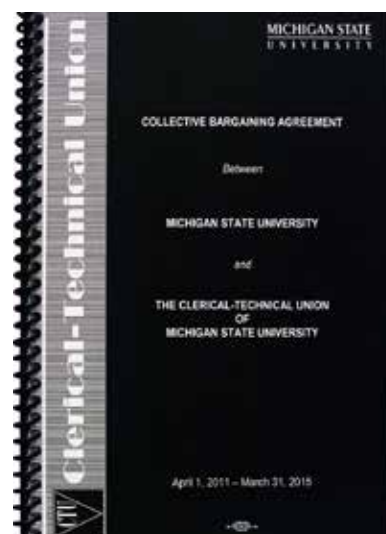
Our contract with our employer expires at the end of March, and CTs are ready. We completed a survey to let the bargaining team know our priorities for the next contract; we discussed our issues at the January 28 membership meeting and the Town Hall meeting two days later; and we are fully prepared to call, email and/or attend upcoming town hall meetings to discuss

developments and provide feedback.

“Our team expects to complete a tentative agreement by the March 31 deadline,” said CTU President Deb Bittner at the January membership meeting.”

With the expiration of our current contract, right to work kicks in for our organization, Bittner reminded the 31 members in attendance. She added that

**Meeting** continued on p. 7



January 19, MSU campus—CTU joined other support staff members, students, faculty and administrators in the Martin Luther King Commemorative March. Left to right: CTs Jeanette Robertson, Deb Bittner, Judy Redding and Martha Bernath.

# CTnews

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

PUBLISHED MONTHLY

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independent  
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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.

# Sometimes you gotta laugh

## Fun things to do in the office.

Photocopy things around the office, such as lamps, potted plants, staplers, etc. If someone asks about it, just say, "You never can be too careful."

Make the office rounds with a roll of aluminum foil. Offer to "improve their

cell phone reception" by wrapping foil around the base of their phone.

Stare into someone's cubicle and pretend to be hypnotized by their screen-saver. [Susan Needler]

Use a hole punch to make holes in all your outgoing mail. Explain that the holes make it more aerodynamic.

Bring a TV remote control to the office and try to "change the channel" on people's computers. When it doesn't work, mumble something about it being too cheap, and you should have gotten the deluxe model.

Proudly show everyone your new calculator and hand out cigars. Tell them your computer just had a baby.

—from the website "A Time to Laugh"



"I see you tried to fix it yourself."

## CTclassifieds Services:

▼ **Ride share:** Capital Area Transportation Authority offers a ride sharing service called Clean Commute that several CTs are using. Options include

carpooling and vanpooling with emergency rides home if needed. Contact Clean Commute at (517-393-RIDE), or get additional information on their web page (under "CATA Services" at <http://www.cata.org/>).

## Membership Meetings

CTU Membership Meetings for the remainder of 2015 will be held Thursday, April 23; Tuesday, July 14; and Wednesday, October 28. All meetings will be held at 5:20 p.m. in 252 Erickson. 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!

## Free:

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

▼ **Advertise** to your colleagues in the CT News. Contact Cherylee Finney at [Cheryl@ctumsu.org](mailto: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. See advertising guidelines at <http://www.ctumsu.org/news/ct-classifieds>.

# Knee deep in negotiations

President Deb Bittner

Considering that the Executive Board, along with CTU's staff, are well focused on negotiations these days (which is also why we are combining the February and March *CT News* issues), I thought it would be a good idea to explain the importance of bargaining a contract.

## What are negotiations?

Negotiating a contract, also known as collective bargaining, is one of the most important tasks—possibly *the* most important task—of the CTU.

It is when we, as workers, band together to negotiate workplace matters, or—in labor jargon—the conditions of employment, with our employer. The end result is a collective bargaining agreement or contract that spells out in black and white all of the terms both parties agree to, from pay rates and benefits, to grievance and layoff procedures, time off and more.

In the case of CTU, our negotiating team consists of the elected Executive Board, our communications specialist, our contract administrator and our legal counsel.

Once the team reaches a tentative agreement with management, the bargaining unit votes for it or against it. This is called the ratification process. The contract only goes into effect if a majority of the employees voting approve the tentative agreement.

It is important to note, in light of right to work, that all CTs are subject to the negotiated agreement, whether or not they choose to be members of the union. However, non-members do not help elect members of the negotiating team, nor do they get a vote in whether or not to accept a contract.

A couple of big things that we won't be bargaining over are health care benefits and wages. They were established

under the Health Care Memorandum of Understanding that we ratified in the summer of 2013. Our current negotiations will cover everything else.

## What's at stake?

Some of the issues being addressed in our current negotiations were proposed by your bargaining team, who have worked with labor issues and the contract throughout the life of the past agreement. Others were identified or highlighted by members through emails, phone calls and, of course, the recent survey.

The employer also has issues it wants to address by changing our contract. Most of the time, we don't believe it is to our benefit! To be fair, we do spend a lot of time discussing issues and trying to solve problems that may have arisen since we last bargained. We always try to understand why the other side is proposing something before we decide to accept or dismiss the proposal.

Although we aren't able to talk about the details of current negotiations here in the newsletter, I will say that it was not a surprise to our team that classification problems and protecting our layoff language were the two bargaining issues identified as most important by members.

## Support the team

There are a number of things members can do to make CTU stronger at the

bargaining table.

The response to the survey, for example, was great. With 600 replies to the survey, we showed that members take negotiations very seriously. We also need you to be ready to attend union rallies and other events if necessary. A high level of participation in union events shows management that our team has the support and input of the members.

In the wake of recent political attacks meant to destroy or weaken unions—including CTU—we also need to be union emissaries (see p. 7). Tell new CTs how our union makes a positive difference in our working lives and how it benefits us and our families. Encourage coworkers to get involved. Tell them how to get assistance if they have a question or problem. Explain that our union is stronger—meaning our contracts are better—when we are active and show a united front.

Another way to be an emissary is to keep your newsletter out in your work site, showing that the CTU is in the workplace.

So stay informed. Continue to read the newsletter and email updates. Visit the website ([www.ctumsu.org](http://www.ctumsu.org)) and “like” our Facebook page ([www.facebook.com/CTUofMSU](http://www.facebook.com/CTUofMSU)).

By standing together, we show both unity and strength in numbers.

And a big turn out for ratification will set the right tone.

Please note that even with our focus on negotiations, the representation of CTs is still a union priority. Case in point, we are asking anyone negatively affected by the February 2 snow event to contact us (p. 5).

A couple of other items to note: I am on the committee that is making recommendations for a tobacco free campus. If you have feedback or an opinion, please send an email to me. Also, I have been

President continued on p. 7







## Board actions

### October through December 2014

**T**he following CTU Executive Board discussions took place October through December 2014. All expenditure decisions are included, but the list does not represent meetings in their entirety. Members can receive copies of complete minutes through the mail or email by contacting the CTU office at 355-1903.

#### October 7

Agreed to transfer \$24,000 from the Operations savings to the Operations checking account.

Agreed to purchase \$75 program ad and two \$125 tickets for the Michigan Women's Hall of Fame Awards Dinner and Ceremony at the Kellogg Center.

Discussed the employer's unilateral changes in Aetna dental benefits.

Discussed excessive cost and difficulty of securing polycom access so that our CTU Election Forums can be shared with off-site CTs. Will investigate skyping and other alternatives.

Announced cancellation of the November 4 Executive Board meeting because several individuals might assist with elections.

#### October 21

Agreed to purchase "Bargaining with the Devil" negotiations techniques CD for \$197. (Michelle Ross)

Decided to recommend to the membership a transfer of \$100,000 from the contingency fund to operations.

Agreed to renew the \$360 annual subscription to the *Lansing State Journal*.

Donated \$50 to the "Making Strides Against Breast Cancer" fundraiser.

Approved sending up to four additional people at \$20 per person to the November Mid-Michigan Labor and Employee Relations Association luncheon.

Reported on MSU unions' concern about new employee orientation.

Received report on the union repre-

sentatives' October "walk-around," in which they visited CTs in the work site. The event was successful and provided a lot of good feedback to the union.

Agreed to request that CTs' hourly rate be shown on their pay statements as is done with employees represented by some other MSU unions.

Discussed CTU's dues deduction cards. Congratulated Tracy Rich on her appointment to the Presidential Advisory Committee on Disability Issues (PACDI).

Accepted Jeanette Robertson's resignation from the All-University Traffic and Transportation Committee (AUTTC).

Appointed Pam Sloan to represent CTU on AUTTC with Pamela Brock to serve as alternate.

#### November 18

Donated \$100 to EVE's Place, a domestic violence shelter.

Agreed to place a \$75 ad in the Greater Lansing Area Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday Commission Program.

Approved \$320 to purchase eight seats at the Greater Lansing Area Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Program.

Agreed to renew the annual subscription of *HR Specialist: Employment Law* for \$139.

Agreed to help sponsor the Old Newsboys "spoof journal" with a donation of \$100. Proceeds help provide local children with shoes and boots.

Donated \$50 to the Ingham County Animal Shelter for their third annual

"Home for the Holidays" event.

Donated \$50 to the Tri-County Office on Aging.

Approved purchase of sixty CTU calendars at 99 cents each.

Constituted the Executive Board committees. **Finance Committee:** Jan Wallace (chair), Pamela Brock, Rosie Garcia, Walt Peebles, Tracy Rich. **Grievance, Appeal and Trial Committee:** Kim Smith (Chair), Willie Paulsen, Jeanette Robertson, Pam Sloan, Norma Teague. **Personnel Committee:** Deb Bittner (chair), Jeanette Robertson, Kim Smith, Jan Wallace.

#### November 25

Decided to buy a \$75 ad in the *Drug and Alcohol Safety Handbook* published by the Capitol City Fraternal Order of Police Lodge 141.

#### December 2

Received annual update on investments from Fred Schaad and Luke Terry of Rehmann Financial.

Agreed to send president and contract administrator to the Labor Law and Labor Arbitration Conference at a cost of \$395 each for registration plus lodging, travel and meals.

Agreed to purchase up to five \$50 tickets to the Links White Rose Gala, which awards scholarships to young people who have provided service to the community.

Tabled a request for a donation to Organization United for Respect at Walmart (OUR Walmart) until more information is submitted.

Donated \$100 to the local Ronald McDonald House.

Agreed to one-time lump sum merit payments to CTU staff: \$1,500 to contract administrator, \$1,000 to communications specialist, \$250 each to the financial manager and organizational manager.

Declined to provide the CTU president with a one-time lump sum merit payment of \$1,000.

Agreed to propose a one-time lump sum merit payment of \$1,000 for the CTU president at the January Membership Meeting.

# What is a “job related” course?

While reviewing the bargaining surveys, the negotiating team noticed that several members have a misunderstanding of what determines “job relatedness” when it comes to taking courses.

Job relatedness does not necessarily refer to the job you have now.

Nor is it determined by your supervisor.

Article 14. B. 2. of our contract clearly defines job relatedness: “Courses, either with or without credit, are considered ‘job-related’ when any of one (1) of the following primary goals is met:

- a. To improve skills and/or update the technology involved in the present work assignment;
- b. To provide knowledge, skills, and understandings which relate to more responsible, higher level University positions to which the employee may reasonably aspire;
- c. To complete the requirements for a high school diploma;

- d. To enhance basic skills in written and/or oral communications and/or mathematics;
- e. To enroll in a college degree program in which the entire curriculum is directly related to the field of the employee’s current job assignment;
- f. To enroll in a college degree program in which the entire curriculum is designed to lead to more responsible University positions to which the employee may reasonably aspire; or
- g. To enroll in individual college courses which are directly related to the field of the employee’s current job assignment, even though such courses might be components of a total degree program which is not related to the current job assignment.” [Lisa Fuentes]

As you can see, it’s a pretty inclusive list. That’s because “The purpose” of educational assistance “is to pro-



vide employees an opportunity to gain knowledge and develop skills which will improve proficiency on the present job *and/or enhance promotability to higher level jobs which are available within the University*” (Article 14. B. 1), and this university is a big place with an incredible diversity of job opportunities.

So, what should you do if your supervisor says your class is not covered by educational assistance because it is not “job related”?

**CONTACT YOUR UNION!** The CTU is very successful in getting educational assistance for members who have been denied. However, you need to let us know when there is a problem. Talk to your UR. Call the office. Do not take “no” for an answer.

Another education issue that arises with some frequency is the difficulty many members have in getting released time for courses (Article 14. C.). Although our contract language gives the supervisor more discretion in this area, your union can help determine if a denial is appropriate given the circumstances. With the assistance of our union, many members have been quite successful in utilizing their released time even when they were initially denied.

Again, it is important to let the union know that there is a problem.

Members elect to have a union in order to establish and secure protections and benefits. But the contract means little if we do not exercise our rights.

## What has my union done for me lately?

### CT defense: Weather update

The CTU disagrees with the way the university handled the severe weather conditions of February 2.

The details of the employer’s updated policy regarding bad weather was not publicly announced or shared with many employees prior to its decision to “modify operations and suspend classes,” leading most CTs to believe that last year’s procedures for taking and reporting time related to severe weather were still in effect.

“The CTU objects to the lack of prior communication to employees or their representatives about any updated

policy regarding bad weather was not publicly announced or shared with many employees prior to its decision to “modify operations and suspend classes,” leading most CTs to believe that last year’s procedures for taking and reporting time related to severe weather were still in effect.

A memorandum advising deans, directors, chairpersons and executive management on how to instruct employees to record and enter time for February 2 was issued by Executive Vice President Satish Udpa and Provost June Youatt on February 4.

The very fact that the administration felt the need, after the event, to issue a memo telling departments how to

report time for February 2 shows that a clear, updated policy was not adequately communicated in advance.

**Weather** continued on p. 7



policy concerning the severe weather response and the very ambiguous, eleventh-hour announcement—at 11:46 p.m. the

# URdistricts

The following members were appointed to Union Representative (UR) positions:

▼ **District 32** (Library): **Judy Redding** can be reached at 484-0811 or [redding5@msu.edu](mailto:redding5@msu.edu).

▼ **District 34** (Agriculture Hall, Cook Hall): Contact **Kelli Kolasa** at 432-7685 or [kolasa@msu.edu](mailto:kolasa@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 March 15 at 5 p.m., these individuals will be appointed:

▼ **District 4** (Biomedical Physical Sciences, Planetarium): **Barbara Christian** (former UR of **District 23**) is requesting appointment to **District 4** due to her recent relocation.

▼ **District 6** (Baker, Geography, Snyder-Phillips, Mason-Abbot, Psychology Building, Kresge, Auditorium): **Julie Detwiler**.

**District 28** (Clinical Center [B, C, D Wings], Engineering Research Complex, Radiology): **Becky Sullivan**.

If you are interested in more information about being a UR, contact Vice President **Kim Smith** at 355-3784 or [Kim@ctumsu.org](mailto:Kim@ctumsu.org).

## New URCC members

UR selected two members to the Union Representative Coordinating Committee at their January 15 meeting.

**Amber Feasal-Bartling** and **Judy Redding** join **Angel Loveall**, **Stephanie Six** and **Wendi Winston** on the committee.

URCC makes sure our network of URs have the tools and support they need to effectively fulfill their responsibilities to the members. One of its main duties is to arrange monthly training for URs, Staff and Executive Board members.

Thank you to departing URCC members **Julie Detwiler** and **Becky Sullivan**, who will continue to serve as URs.

## Featured UR, District 9:

# Stephen Stofflet

I joined the university in December 2006 as editorial support for the MSU Land Policy Institute. Since then, I've had the good fortune to work in both administrative (VP of Finance and Operations) and academic (Pharmacology and Toxicology) departments, encompassing a diverse employment experience.

Historically, my family had always been strong union supporters, but I had never worked in a union environment prior to joining MSU, so I was unfamiliar with the day-to-day effect the union has on our professional lives.

Initially, my involvement in the CTU was limited to paying dues. After moving to the Life Sciences building, an event occurred that directly affected me, and quickly demonstrated the value of union representation.

The CTU came to my immediate support in a very unpleasant situation. The union's quick response and positive resolution inspired me to examine how I might be part of a solution for fellow union members by participating in positive workplace solutions to demonstrate my support (and gratitude).

That was when I discovered the role of Union Representative. (During the uncomfortable event that had occurred, I learned our building did not have one.) I notified the union office of my interest in becoming a UR, and eventually (after an election and finally, an appointment) this became a reality. Since then, I've had the opportunity to expand my role by becoming a mem-

ber of the union's Audit Committee, which oversees the finances of the union.

Through monthly training sessions, I've experienced a wide variety of workplace topics and issues, and the union has also provided me with the opportunity to establish a network of professionals across campus, which has proved invaluable in my career here at MSU. In addition, I've been involved with supporting fellow union members within my building as they deal with challenging work issues.

There is an organized effort to neutralize unions in this country, and it's imperative that we not allow this to happen. Our union's purpose is to ensure that our voices are heard, our needs addressed, and our families protected. We are going to face new challenges—and to be successful, we must face them together. The success of a union is based on its members working together, and it's urgently important to realize that our Clerical-Technical Union represents our collective interests.

.....  
"Our labor unions are not narrow, self-seeking groups. They have raised wages, shortened hours, and provided supplemental benefits. Through collective bargaining and grievance procedures, they have brought justice and democracy to the shop floor." —John F. Kennedy



## Cool labor site: CEO pay and you

Check out the AFL-CIO website that shows how executive pay has been soaring while workers barely get a taste—even though worker productivity is increasing.

In 2013 the CEO-to-worker pay ratio was 331:1. This site asks if America is still a land of opportunity, where hard work and playing by the rules provide working families a middle-class standard of living.

<http://www.aflcio.org/Corporate-Watch/Paywatch-2014>



**President** continued from p. 3  
asked to “test the waters” to see if anyone is interested in forming a CTU Team for the Lansing 5K Color Run on July 11 (and by the way, there is an “app” for training for a 5K!). If you are, let me know and we can start a training team.

On a personal note, to the anonymous CT(s) who sent me the appreciation gift, I want to quote Lilly Adams from the TV commercial: “I very much appreciate your appreciation!”

**Meeting** continued from p. 1  
the union is establishing guidelines for resignations and payroll deduction in order to comply with the new law.

The consensus of the attendees was that CTU should donate \$1,000 to the Greater Lansing Food Bank (<http://greaterlansing-foodbank.org>) and \$500 to the “Race for the Place” event being sponsored by MSU Safe Place (<http://safeplace.msu.edu/>).

Lacking a quorum (50 members), union decisions are left to the Executive Board. However, members attending the meeting can weigh in on issues in order to assist the Board in its deliberations.

A third proposal, to award the CTU President a lump sum merit payment of \$1,000, was discussed. Members did not vote on the proposal and it did not receive consensus.

Bittner talked about the employer’s tobacco-free campus initiative. One of two representatives from the Coalition of Labor Organizations on the Committee, she sees the issue as important but

**Weather** continued from p. 5

According to the memo, CTs:

- who reported to work on February 2—if they were identified as critical, were instructed by their supervisor to report, or reported without discussing it with their supervisor—do not need to claim any time off and will receive equivalent time off at a later date.
- not previously identified as “critical,” who did not report to work under instruction of their supervisor, don’t need to claim any time off.

**Member Tip:**

## Be a Union Emissary

One of your union representative’s responsibilities is to greet new employees and fill them in on the union. But you can supplement this function very effectively by making a point of talking to newly hired workers about your personal experiences with the union, and making sure that they sign up. Having the union talked up by someone who is not a union official of any kind can go a long way toward creating the needed state of mind that when you get right down to it, the union is “us,” not some separate organization. Your role as a union ambassador is perhaps even more critical outside the workplace. There are a lot of popular misconceptions about what unions are and what they do. You don’t have to look far to find people buying into stereotypes that portray unions as consisting of nothing but fat cat bureaucrats living the good life off of hard-earned dues



dollars and cutting shady deals with employers and politicians. Though stereotypes can contain a grain of truth, this negative image is not at all an accurate depiction of the reality of labor unions today.

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

potentially divisive. She talked about the role of the union to represent the rights of all members.

Other topics included the employer’s move toward two-phase authentication and the use of personal cell phones at work and for work.

Tracy Rich, our representative on the President’s Advisory Committee on Disability Issues (PACDI), and Pam Sloan,

our representative on the All University Traffic and Transportation Committee (AUTTC), gave short reports.

Door prizes went to: \$50 each to Hsiang-Ping Cha and Mary Mroz; a CTU jacket to Louis Villafranca; winter goody bags to Tracy Rich, Jeanette Robertson, and Karen Jakus; a CTU laptop bag to Rachel Isley; and a CTU lunch bag to Amber Feasal-Bartling.

- who did not report to work, although instructed to do so by their supervisor or previously identified as critical, must claim the time as vacation, personal or comp.
- not previously identified as “critical,” who did not receive instruction, one way or the other, from their supervisor about whether or not to report, must claim the time as vacation, personal or comp.

The CTU is pursuing several options to defend any CTs harmed by the employer’s new severe weather policy as it was implemented for February 2.

If you did not report to work and were told to use your own vacation, personal or comp time for the morning of February 2—or for any time in which your work site was closed on that day—please talk to your UR or call the CTU. We also want to hear from individuals who were told to report time in a manner that differs from February 4 memo.

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CTU OF MSU



## CTcalendar

**March 3 and 17** (first and third Tuesdays). Executive Board meeting, C-T Union Hall, 5:15 pm. Members welcome. [Priscella Martin]

**March 18.** Olive oil is featured in the March presentation of the Health4U Recipe for Health Cooking Series. Chef Kurt Kwiatkowski demonstrates the recipe. Buy your lunch with cash or meal plan, select your lunch from the vast array of options that Brody Square has to offer, then join the group in the Brody Square Demonstration Kitchen. 12:10–12:50 p.m. The registration form is at <http://health4u.msu.edu/>.

**March 27.** “Labor, Livelihoods and Brazilian Black Gold: Navigating Fair Trade, Coffee Quality, and Environmental Standards,” by Rebecca Meuninck, Ecology Center. 12:15–1:30 p.m., MSU Museum Auditorium. Free. An “Our Daily Work/Our Daily Lives” brown bag luncheon. [Victoria Tryban]

**Until March 28.** MSU competes in RecycleMania, an annual eight-week recycling competition (starting February 1) between more than 400 colleges and universities across North America. Faculty and staff can get involved by scheduling an office clean-out. The Surplus Store and Recycling Center have everything needed to host an office clean-out and offer a variety of containers and methods to fit your needs. Schedule an office clean-out by calling 355-1723, and for more information visit <http://www.bespartangreen.msu.edu/>.

**April 12.** The 21st Annual Race for the Place 5K fundraiser for MSU Safe Place. Individuals register at the lower rate of \$25 on or before **March 31**. Group discounts. Lots of activities for the family, including races for the children. Not racing? Volunteer for the event. For more information or to register, visit the Safe Place website at <http://safeplace.msu.edu>.

**April 15.** “Managing Workplace Personalities.” Do you sometimes feel misunderstood at work? Is there a person in your office that you just don’t “get?” Maybe you’re an introvert in a sea of extroverts, or, vice versa. Our natural personalities are the outward manifestation of our natural preferences, our energy. Dr. Monica Marcelis Fochtman offers tips and strategies for how to manage different personalities in the workplace. Presented by the Women’s Networking Association. Free and open to all. Two sessions: 8:30–10 a.m. or 3:30–5 p.m., E412 Eppley Center. Registration required: Call 353-1635 or email [wrc@msu.edu](mailto:wrc@msu.edu) (with “Networking” in the subject line.) More information under Events at <http://wrc.msu.edu/>.

**April 23.** Save the date for the CTU Membership Meeting. Meetings start at 5:20 but the doors open at 5 for socializing. Room 252 Erickson.