



21 March 2024

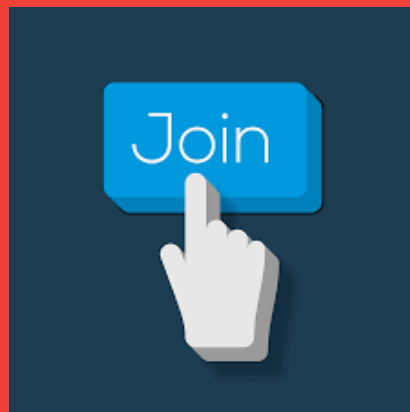
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The Legislature Heads Home (at Last)

- **Legislative Wrap-Up.** This session is being called *a return to normalcy*
- **Diversity / Equity / Inclusion.** Political theatre has a price.
- **An Organizing Culture.** We are reorganizing our membership and publicity - and we need your help.

Chapter Meeting Tomorrow Friday. The USF Chapter of the United Faculty of Florida will meet tomorrow, Friday, March 22nd at 12 pm, in EDU 415, on USF Tampa, and on Zoom. To be on the agenda: *, *, *, and more. And here are [the minutes from the last meeting](#) and [the minutes from the February 23 meeting](#).

All UFF USF employees - members and non-members alike - are invited to attend. But to Zoom in you must have an invitation: contact [the Chapter Secretary](#) to get one. Meetings and events are [posted on the Events Calendar](#) of the [UFF USF Website](#). Come and check us out.



Union Membership

If you are not a union member, please [join today](#) (the form connects automatically to the eDues form, so you will want to have your banking information or checkbook information handy). We are stronger standing together in solidarity.

Chapter Election. The USF Chapter



is holding its annual election. Ballot packets are in the mail to home addresses of UFF members. **All ballots must be received (in our hands) by April 4.**



Showing of Interest Cards

Over the past three months, we have collected 947 *Statement of Interest* cards to present to the Public Employees Relations Commission (PERC) so that they will conduct an election on whether the United Faculty of Florida will continue to represent the employees in the UFF USF Bargaining Unit. Since we have collected cards from 55% of the Bargaining Unit, PERC is required to conduct an election *and all employees in the Bargaining Unit are eligible to vote.*

The USF Board of Trustees may forgo the election and "voluntarily recognize" the United Faculty of Florida as the "collective bargaining agent" for the employees in the UFF USF Bargaining Unit. But if not, PERC will set up an election. Meantime, there's work to be done:



Bargaining the Next Contract

We are *supposed* to have a new contract on August 7, and the current contract says that bargaining should start in April. Our Bargaining Committee is

preparing for bargaining and wants ideas, comments, suggestions, and desiderata from the employees that the union represents (especially, to be honest, from members).



Legislative Wrap-Up

Last year, [the Biweekly reported](#) that legislators were unenthusiastically passing extreme legislation, in part out of fear of the governor. This year's session was different. NPR reported that [Gov. Ron DeSantis' war on 'woke' appears to be losing steam in Florida](#). The Legislature [addressed material issues](#) like health care, homelessness, insurance, although they couldn't resist going after hemp sales and social media. And as President Law Rhea Law noted in her March 5 letter, USF is getting \$50 million increase in recurring funding along with some non-recurring funding (salaries typically come from recurring funding).

One bill directly affects universities. House Bill 1291 says that teacher preparation courses, "[m]ay not distort significant historical events or include a curriculum or instruction that teaches identity politics, violates [s. 1000.05](#) [one of the previous anti-Woke acts], or is based on theories that systemic racism, sexism, oppression, and privilege are inherent in the institutions of the United States and were created to maintain social, political, and economic inequities." Yet next it says that the courses "...must afford

candidates the opportunity to think critically, achieve mastery of academic program content, learn instructional strategies, and demonstrate competence."

[Other bills address K-12 curriculum](#), limiting the number of books that non-parents may seek to ban from schools, mandating courses on the evils of communism ("totalitarianism" is mentioned only once (as, ahem, an "ideology") and "fascism" not at all). And, as Dave Barry would say, I am not making this up, they passed a law deregulating schools.

Two signs that the tide may be turning. First, a [bill regarding pronoun use](#) (!) in private businesses and non-profits doing business with the state failed. Second, a panel of the 11th Circuit Court of Appeals [upheld](#) a federal judge's ruling that a component of the Stop Woke Act (barring some diversity training by private businesses and institutions) was unconstitutional.



Diversity / Equity / Inclusion

Political signals for DEI are mixed. In January, the Chronicle of Higher Education reported that [Amid National Backlash, Colleges Brace for Fresh Wave of Anti-DEI Legislation](#), and yet in this year's session, the Florida Legislature made no anti-DEI waves.

Nevertheless, the political rhetoric has ranged from the extravagant (a [leading think tank](#) complains that DEI, "...

has become the guiding principle and dominant focus of many foundations, corporations, and the federal government. At the heart of these multi-billion-dollar efforts..." to the alarming (DEI is [a threat to our national security](#)) to the hysterical ([Wired magazine](#) reports that a Boeing-related meme has DEI as part of a conspiracy to bring down Western civilization).

On the other hand, Inside Higher Ed reported that [Civil Rights Groups Push Back Against Wave of Anti-DEI Bills](#), with one notable example being that the [NAACP urged student athletes to reconsider attending a predominantly white institution in Florida](#).

And yet, the Chronicle of Higher Education reported that institutions are [responding](#) to the rhetoric and the legislation by closing their DEI offices, ending training programs, and even closing classes.

The conundrum for politicians and administrators is the clamor for immediate action on a political wedge issue versus the likely long-term consequences of that immediate action. The NAACP's advisory to student athletes is only the first warning of the latter.

University of Toronto business professor [Richard Florida](#) proposed that a "[creative class](#)" of STEM, arts / crafts / music, and media workers is critical to economic development in our post-industrial society. In order to attract these workers, a community needs a talented population (i.e., good schools, etc.), tolerance (creative workers tend to be unusually diverse in many ways), and technology.

The state government has long been indifferent to infrastructure problems (i.e., available technology) and by embracing intolerance and sabotaging schools, the state government is making Florida less attractive to the very people Florida needs to move the state from the archaic economy of agriculture / mining / tourism into the Twenty-first century. Florida politicians with long-range career plans are wise to be leery of anti-DEI efforts.

An Organizing Culture

Legally, a union bargains and enforces a contract. But unions arose from mutual aid organizations and pressure

groups, and they work only if the members participate. A union is not something separate from the people it represents - it's not a Hollywood agent on retainer or an insurance company. *A union is its membership.* Union dues allow us to hire a few staff members (and, ahem, have some lawyers on retainer), but the decisions and most of the work is done by members. Someone whose office is down the hall from yours.

We are all in this together.

UFF has announced that we are going into a membership drive, but that's not quite right. Labor experts (yes, Labor Studies is an academic field) increasingly say that in addition to the two legal jobs of a union - bargaining and enforcing a contract - there is also organizing. And by organizing, we mean recruiting new members and also recruiting members to become active. So what the labor experts recommend is building an "organizing culture" that runs year round.



Organizing is critical for the union to carry out its legal mission to represent the employees in its bargaining unit. Members, and in particular activists, provide unions with the resources they need. Dues are nice, but helping hands are nicer. With broad base of activists, the union leadership has a better idea of the needs, desires, and aspirations of the employees that it represents. And a broad base of activists also provides wider expertise and points of view when decisions are made.

Union participation is good for activists, too, especially in a research university. The current reward structure - achieving student evaluation median M for Student Evaluation Question #8 and / or getting X publications in Y-rated journals to generate impact factor Z - encourages faculty to retreat into their plastic bubbles. *Union*

participation means interacting with all sorts of people from all sorts of academic disciplines.

The **Membership Committee** needs activists who want to talk to other faculty and professionals. The **Publicity Committee** needs activists to spread the word. The **Grievance Committee** needs activists who want to help colleagues in trouble. And we even need activists willing to take leadership roles. If you are interested or intrigued, please contact the Chapter Secretary.



Grievances

If you have been the victim of a violation of the [Collective Bargaining Agreement](#), you have **thirty days from the time you knew or should have known of the violation to file a grievance**. If you are, and at the time of the violation were, a dues-paying member of the United Faculty of Florida, you have the right to union representation. To contact the UFF USF Grievance Committee, go to the [Grievances Page](#).

Don't forget: UFF can only represent an employee in a grievance if that employee was a member at the time of the contract violation. *And as of the end of last October, the FEA does not want its lawyers to assist any UFF members who are not on eDues, so if you are a UFF member but did not switch to eDues, that should be fixed TODAY.* And don't forget that if there is a contract violation, the grievance must be filed within thirty days.



Follow us on Social Media && Join us on Social Media

We have a Facebook group: see [United Faculty of Florida at USF](#). This page is a place where UFF members can exchange thoughts and ideas. **The page is "public", but only dues-paying UFF members are eligible to post items on the page. If you are a UFF member, ask to join on the page, and the moderator will invite every UFF member that asks to join.** Non-members are welcome to look (but you need a Facebook account to do that). So check us out ... join the conversation.

- We have a blog: see [The USF Faculty Blog](#). This has news items as they come up.
- We are on Twitter (aka X), so follow us on Twitter / X via [@UffUsf](#).
- We even have a You-Tube channel: [check out our videos](#)

We are revamping our publicity machine, and if you are interested in social media, in membership, or in conversations with you colleagues across campus, *come join the campaign.* Contact [the Communications Committee chair](#).

USF United Support Fund for Food Pantries

Many of our students are struggling during with food insecurity, and the USF Foundation is supporting the [USF Food Pantries](#) to help out. They are accepting non-perishable donations, but one can also make monetary donations for the pantries at all three campuses.

Details, Details

The USF-UFF Chapter website is <http://www.uff.ourusf.org>, and our e-mail address is uff@ourusf.org. About this broadcast: This Newsletter was broadcast from Constant Contact, and is intended for all members of the UFF USF Bargaining unit (USF faculty and professionals at most departments). A (usually identical) version will be broadcast to USF-News and USF-Talk from mccolm@usf.edu.

If you do not want to receive the UFF Biweekly, you can unsubscribe below or contacting [the Chapter Secretary](#). If you do not receive the Biweekly, but want to, contact [the Chapter Secretary](#).

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