

The TUGSA Tribune

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New Contract Being Put in Place

By Scott Deacle, Business Manager

By now we all know that TUGSA won better pay and better health insurance in the new contract with Temple. But you might not have realized we won a lot of other things, too.

Thanks to the efforts of the bargaining team, with the support of the American Federation of Teachers and other union allies, all Temple graduate teaching and research assistants are entitled to voice mail and a 10 percent discount on purchases at the Temple.bookstore. If you haven't heard about these benefits, here's some more information about them and how to take advantage of them.

Voice mail: Even if you don't have an office phone, the new contract requires Temple to give you a voice mail account if you request it. Now you don't have to give your students your cell phone number or ask them to leave messages with your department secretary. Here's how you can set up your own account.

1. Go to the following Web site:
<http://www.temple.edu/cs/telecommunications/forms.htm>
2. Scroll down to "Voice Mail Application" and click on the MS Word or the Adobe icon. You cannot access the information through the Explorer icon.
3. Print out the form.
4. The section of the form in the box labeled "Requesting Department Information" should be filled out by your department head or secretary. You fill out the rest according to the instructions. For the part that says "Please check your applicable classification," check "Other" and write in "Teaching Assistant" or

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Officer Elections in March

A few hours a week is all the time it takes to be a TUGSA officer, but those few hours can make a tremendous impact. If you are interested in joining those who run TUGSA behind the scenes, please contact our office at 215-235-0512 or at union@tugsa.org and let an officer or our staffperson know that you are interested in running for an office - Co-President, Business Manager, Director of Organization, Secretary, or Treasurer - or simply to get more information.

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"Research Assistant." If you don't have a phone extension, leave that line and the part about your port number blank.

5. Mail the completed application to the address at the bottom of the form. The telecommunications office will then send you the final instructions for setting up the account.

Bookstore Discount: Teaching and research assistants in the bargaining unit are entitled to a 10 percent discount at the Temple bookstore. The Temple labor relations department has given the bookstore a list of TAs and RAs. When you go to the cashier to make your purchase, you should identify yourself as a TA or RA, give your name, present your ID if asked for, and they will check it against the list. You should then receive the discount.

And just as a reminder, here's a summary of the improved health care and wages in the new contract:

Health Insurance: Full-time teaching and research assistants will receive free year-round coverage under either the CompSelect or the Keystone plan, a significant improvement over the previous limit of nine months of free single coverage under Keystone. Free year-round coverage is available only to teaching and research assistants, not spouses or children.

Higher Wages: TAs and RAs will receive a 2% cost-of-living adjustment this year and each succeeding year of the contract, as well as a 1% bonus this year and each year of the contract. Temple has chosen to pay the bonus in two installments: 0.5 percent in October and 0.5 percent in February. So you should see the remainder of this year's bonus in your February paycheck.

Particularly with the wage increase, there has been some confusion over who is entitled to these benefits. These benefits go to members of the bargaining unit represented by TUGSA. "Bargaining unit" is a term formally defined in our contract and includes teaching assistants and research assistants who have not signed a Declaration of Academic Benefit form. If you did sign that form, you are not entitled to the pay and benefits required by the contract. You may get some of the same benefits, but Temple is within its rights to withhold those benefits from you.

Please let us know if you encounter any difficulties in receiving your benefits by contacting our office at 215-235-0512 or at union@tugsa.org.