President's Message

By Dr. Lisa Conley
Local 212 President

Hello everyone and welcome to the start of another school year!

As I embark on my second year as your president, I want to thank you for your support, trust and patience as I acclimated to this new role. While the learning curve was steep and at times the challenges and stress great, the importance of the work that we do, the engagement of our members and the power of our collective voices strengthened my resolve. The basis of this empowerment is best summarized in the guiding mantra from July's American Federation of Teachers (AFT) National Convention: We Care. We Fight. We Show Up.

We Care. As a union of education professionals, examples of caring for each other, our students and our community abound. Our members provide individual support for students every day in the classroom, office, lab or shop. Working together, Local 212 members make a difference through our FAST Fund, Three Kings 1stBooks events, food drives and other service projects. We, as affiliates of AFT National, have great impact nationally with AFT’s Operation Agua that provided safe drinking water to families across Puerto Rico following Hurricane Maria and AFT’s Disaster Relief Fund that provided resources and supports for students, teachers, staff and their families affected by gun violence at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Florida. Local 212’s leadership team is working to increase opportunities for member engagement in outreach activities this year through the formation of Issues Action Teams with more information coming soon. If you have ideas for potential activities or initiatives please contact Eric Hagedorn (ehagedorn@local212.org).

We Fight. We are more powerful joined together as we are as individuals when reaching out to supervisors, agencies or legislative representatives. That’s one reason why unions have historically been major targets in movements whose aim it is to concentrate power in the hands of a few and to silence the voice of the majority. That’s why, even today, legislative attempts to limit union activity are spreading (e.g., the US Supreme Court’s Janus ruling) and why employers fight tooth-and-nail to weaken or keep unions out. But, we are pushing back and union membership is growing across the country, even in so-called “right-to-work” states. Supported by its 1.75 million members nationally, AFT continues to be in the fray fighting in Washington and in State Houses for employee’s voice, equitable compensation and fair treatment at work, as well as basic rights such as access to high-quality public education, affordable and high-quality healthcare, and fair representation and access to the voting booth.

The march for public schools and in support of sensible gun safety regulations at the July AFT National Convention is a good example. Closer to home, Local 212’s members repeatedly demonstrate willingness to call out and push back against Handbook violations and other workplace injustices, and to fight for fairness, shared governance and implementation of practices that best serve employee interests and, most importantly, those of our students. MATC’s Guided Pathways initiative is a prime example where member engagement has had positive effect to date and where continued active participation and vigilance is crucial. An updated Local 212 Guided Pathways position statement, and an outline of our recent accomplishments as a union are included elsewhere in this newsletter.

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President’s Message

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We Show Up. Our members are engaged and support each other, our students and our community when called to action. The activism of Local 212’s members is well-known statewide and nationally. Recent activities, highlighted elsewhere in this issue, range from showing up in numbers at MATC Board meetings when colleagues bringing up issues need support to rallying with members of other unions who are protesting or on strike to showing up in support of those speaking out against injustices publicly through press conferences or protests. Since showing up depends upon strong communication channels, please make sure to let Local 212 know ASAP if your contact information changes, respond to requests for information updates, and make every effort to respond to calls for action.

The three stanzas above build into the 4th and final leg of the AFT guiding mantra: We Vote. The most precious gift provided by those who founded this country is our right to voice our opinions at the ballot box.

This fall’s mid-term election is the most important in decades as it will determine the direction of our state and country and how we define ourselves for years to come. To me, it boils down to some basic questions. Who matters more — people or corporations? Do we value democracy, equity and equality, or not? What responsibility do each of us have for the earth and each other? When we cast our ballots in November, we have a say in how these questions are answered.

So, it is vitally important that everyone is engaged in the upcoming election. How? First, educate yourself on the issues and candidate platforms. As always, Local 212’s Committee on Political Education (COPE) will provide members with a roster of and information about endorsed candidates. Second, talk to family, friends and neighbors about the importance of voting and make plans now to cast your ballot on November 6. A team of members is coordinating trainings on how to talk to others about the importance of voting and can connect you to volunteers willing to speak to your students about same (nonpartisan, of course). And third, volunteer. Local 212 COPE is coordinating opportunities to support our endorsed candidates, but opportunities as individuals are also available through specific campaigns. While you do not have to be a COPE member to volunteer, COPE membership gives you a voice in endorsements and other political activities, and provides the funds that support them.

Contact COPE Chairperson, Dave Weingrod dweingrod@local212.org with questions, for more information, or if you would like to join COPE.

In closing and on behalf of Local 212’s Executive Board, your elected representatives, thank you for all that you do for MATC and our students. And, thank you for sticking with your union. Never doubt or forget that we are stronger together!

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Statement on Guided Pathways

By Lisa Conley, Kevin Mulvenna, Felton Benton, Richard Cohn and Steve Johnson

There is little doubt that this initiative is here to stay and that significant change is coming. It is expected that these changes will affect all areas of the college and, therefore, potentially our working conditions and how we work with students. That is why your union’s leaders worked all summer participating in meetings, as well as researching and discussing Guided Pathways and its potential implications for MATC’s educational professionals.

As your elected representatives, we want to make our position clear. On paper and in various reports, the transformation of structures, systems and practices inherent in Guided Pathways appear to enhance student completion and other metrics of student success if certain reforms, such as increased investment in counseling and advising, are applied. Based upon our investigations, including conversations with colleagues at schools involved in the 1st cohort of participating schools, it is clear that MATC will only find desired results if front-line educational professionals - those who work directly with students - are valued and integrally involved at all stages of this process. In other words, if true collaboration with and leadership by front-line educational professionals occur and if changes introduced do not serve any other agenda than improving student success. As is usually the case, the “devil is in the details” and it is those details that we must all closely attend to. Front-line workers must be partners in leading the change and not have it thrust upon us. Rest assured that united we can continue to secure and protect our seat at the table and, therefore, the best interests of our students.

Be sure to educate yourself on Guided Pathways, contribute to discussions, and volunteer for committees, design and work teams, etc. as opportunities arise. Make sure that your voice is heard! As always, do not hesitate to contact your union leadership or advocates, Guided Pathways representatives or college supervisors as appropriate with ideas, questions or concerns.
Summer Counseling Letters. Unexpected waves of “counseling” letters (a progressive discipline step) went out to a number of members this summer, in many cases violating the Handbook process and sometimes in error. Your union, backed by evidence provided by affected members, pushed back with success. We revealed many instances where administrators skipped the first consultation step and identified reporting system flaws that negatively affected grade submission. We are happy to report that progress has been made in addressing system issues (e.g., removal of defunct versions of the online withdrawal form) and that we are assisting the Provost’s Office in making grade reporting and other process improvements. To date, wrongly assigned missing-grade counseling letters are being removed from the personnel files of about two dozen members who worked with me to address this issue.

Communicating Via E-mail. I have noticed a tendency for Local 212 members to use MATC email to respond often and in detail – almost reflexively – to emails on the employer’s system. Therefore, I strongly encourage members to become well versed in MATC’s Acceptable Use Policy and to refrain from using MATC’s email system to communicate with others on issues that are not work-related, especially if detailed, confidential, controversial, sensitive, or political. Why? 1) MATC email is always accessible to the employer and subject to review at any time; 2) Emails are time-stamped allowing the employer to target employees for possible misuse of work time for personal purposes; and 3) As a public institution, MATC’s email system is subject to Wisconsin Open Records Law which means that citizens can request copies of emails that you have sent or received on the MATC system. Remember that there is always some risk in using employer email systems, so thinking before hitting “send” is advised.

Here are some recommendations for communicating with Local 212:

- General communications or inquiries, requests for appointments, etc. to the Local 212 office or union representatives are appropriate when using your MATC e-mail account. Avoid detailed, in-depth conversations, however.
- Calling the Local 212 office or union representatives to schedule a phone call or meeting is encouraged and preferred. More personal means of communication create a better opportunity for a positive and private conversation.
- If there are important documents or emails received by a member directly from MATC that members wish to share with the us, forward those emails to your personal email, and then forward on to Local 212 from there.

Questions or Concerns? Any member who feels that they wrongly received counseling letters for missing grades, or for missed SumTotal training or Peer Coaching reporting deadlines, or who have questions or concerns about using MATC email should contact me, Steve Johnson (414-765-0910 Ext. 15).

Submit articles, photos and condolences to blackwellkim6169@gmail.com
(Please note new email address)

New Local 212 VP for Part-Time Faculty

By Richard Cohn

As we prepare to embrace a new academic year, I am looking for signs that summer really isn’t over. We still have warm sunny days. Evening is starting to come earlier, but it’s still sunny most evenings.

Summer is my favorite season, and I’ll be glad when it returns, but I am also looking forward to the unfolding of the new academic year. I’m looking forward to meeting and working with my students in the English as a Second Language program. I’m also looking forward to serving in my new position as the Vice President-Part-time Faculty for Local 212.

I was a teacher and then a principal in Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS) until my retirement from MPS in 2011. I taught evening classes part-time at MATC during my early years as an MPS teacher. I returned to MATC as a part-time teacher in the fall of 2011.

I have been actively involved in our union, AFT Local 212, since fall of 2013. Most recently I served as the Local 212 director of labor relations from December 2015 through spring of 2018. I had the opportunity to work with Sally Lindner, the previous Vice President for Part-time Faculty for Local 212. I, along with the other leaders of our union, greatly appreciate Sally’s leadership and service during the many years she served in this position.

I look forward to meeting you—if we haven’t already met—and hearing your ideas and concerns. I look forward to working together with you in our ongoing efforts to promote the success of our college, our students, and each other.
Together We Do Great Things!!

Recent Activities & Accomplishments include:

- Successfully recertifying all 3 bargaining units, once again by wide margins.
- Assisting 3 faculty members in obtaining a total of $16,000 in back-pay.
- Protecting the due process rights of members during disciplinary or dismissal proceedings.
- Shepherd the creation of a long-needed Chemical Hygiene Plan through leadership on the MATC Health & Safety Committee.
- Helping over 100 students experiencing unexpected financial emergencies stay in school via our FAST Fund program (most recent fall, spring & summer terms).
- Advising & supporting numerous individuals, departments and programs in speaking out against workplace injustices and Handbook violations related to hiring, work assignments, agreed upon procedures, etc.
- Representing your interests on the Employee Handbook, Faculty Appendix, Benefits and Shared Governance Core Committees, as well as various work groups, task forces and design teams, preventing unilateral changes and advocating for sensible practices, procedures, and policies.
- Hosting/ co-sponsoring multiple forums and initiatives that affect MATC, its employees and our students such as the recent College in Prison Forum, Student Debt Clinic, Families Belong Together Rally, as well as actions to defend professional licensures, to pressure Ascension Healthcare to maintain service levels at St. Joseph’s Hospital and to protect employee investments in the Wisconsin Retirement System (WRS).

Fast Fund Giving Campaign

In early August, Kelly, a Human Services student who works full-time, called the Local 212/MATC FAST (Faculty and Students Together) Fund. She and her two children were homeless, living in her car. The FAST Fund immediately got her food, a gas card and provided her and her children with personal hygiene products. Within days, we had helped her secure an apartment in a stable neighborhood. She will graduate in December.

Over the last year the FAST Fund allocated $36,295.46 helping more than 100 MATC students experiencing economic emergencies stay in school. 45% of those students were homeless.

In addition, we helped:

- Finance eighteen car repairs
- 12 students who were no longer eligible for federal financial aid
- Pay non-tuition costs of attendance for nineteen students

Students can’t focus on their studies when they are hungry and homeless. They can’t meet their academic, work and family responsibilities without reliable transportation.

Last year the FAST Fund helped students were from all divisions of the college and from the following programs: Accounting, Automotive, Aviation, Biotech, Business Management, Chem Tech, Culinary Arts, Culinary Management, Dental Tech, Diesel, Dietetic Tech, Early Childhood Education, Electricity, Human Services, HVAC, IT Networking, Liberal Arts, Legal Administration Professional, Marketing Management, Masonry, Nursing Assistant, Nursing, Paralegal, Plumbing, Police Science, Pre-College, Business, Radiography, Real Estate, TV and Video Production and Welding.

The FAST Fund is supported by contributions from MATC’s faculty, counselors, and professional staff and from contributions from the general public.

You can support YOUR students through the FAST Fund by contributing as part of the MATC Giving Campaign. The FAST Fund is not listed. But, like last year, you can write it in. Just write in the name “Local 212 Believe in Students FAST Fund” and the amount per pay check you want to contribute.

The FAST Fund is a non-profit organization. All contributions are tax deductible.

Please help our students stay in school and achieve their dreams by writing in the Local 212 Believe in Students FAST Fund during the MATC Giving campaign.

July 11 canvass volunteers from Local 212, Citizen Action and Working Families Party shared a moment with endorsed Milwaukee County Sheriff candidate Earnell Lucas on July 11th. Also pictured is candidate for State Treasurer, Sarah Godlewski.

Volunteers from Local 212, Citizen Action and Working Families Party take time for a picture before hitting the streets for endorsed Lieutenant Governor candidate Mandela Barnes on July 11th. State Treasurer candidate, Sarah Godlewski (front row) stopped by to lend her support.
Press Release: Devos Decision Bad for Students

The American Federation of Teachers Local 212, the Milwaukee Area Technical College’s faculty union, strongly condemns the Department of Education’s decision to rescind the Gainful Employment Rule.

This rule was instituted to ensure that colleges taking advantage of government-funded student loan programs could demonstrate that the training they provided actually led to students finding employment that paid enough to cover student loans.

According to Dr. Lisa Conley, a Natural Sciences Instructor and President of AFT Local 212, “This action shows that the Trump administration is more concerned with diploma mill profits than with students’ welfare.”

Conley explained, “These institutions are colleges in name only. They are predatory businesses that manipulate students into taking out huge loans. For-profit executives make multi-million dollar salaries, while students are left jobless, with huge debts, credits that do not transfer, and more deeply impoverished than when they enrolled. It is outrageous that the Trump administration has eliminated a rule designed to protect students and taxpayers and hold colleges accountable.”

The Gainful Employment Rule was enacted after the United States Senate issued a scathing report on the for-profit sector and following six Senate hearings. The Senate report concluded that large numbers of students at for-profits fail to earn credentials, citing a 64 percent dropout rate in Associate Degree programs. It linked those high dropout rates to the small amount of money for-profits spend on instruction, noting that for-profits “...devote tremendous amounts of resources to non-education related spending...” with the sector spending more revenue on both marketing and profit-sharing than on instruction.

More than half (52%) of the students who attend for-profit colleges default on their loans. The amount of debt owed by those attending for-profit colleges grew from $39 billion in 2000 to $229 billion in 2014.

In 2013, retired MATC Economics Instructor and former Local 212 President, Dr. Michael Rosen, testified at a Department of Education hearing in Minneapolis on the fraudulent practices of for-profits schools. He presented the written testimony of twelve MATC students who had been victimized by these diploma mills.

Wendy Soderbeck’s testimony was typical. She wrote: “Sanford Brown are con artists that rip off hard-working people that want and worked their butts off to get a degree. I am a single mom of three children, had a full-time job, and a part-time job and still went to school. I applied for financial aid and was granted it. I still took out loans to get through school. I have been used. I am glad Sanford Brown is closing down. They should never have been allowed to open. They lie and deceive students and then after they get their money push you out the door. They don’t help students in any way. There was no support of any kind at that school. All Sanford Brown wanted from their students was our money.”

Carren Kilpatrick wrote, “Everything they (Everest College) promised was a lie. I could talk all day about how my decision to go to this more college ruined my life. But unfortunately I don’t have enough time in my day because I am working two jobs as a housekeeper and personal aid and have two children to take care of. My intentions were to give my children a better future by bettering myself through education. Everest ripped that dream away from me and is the reason I am struggling today with a $12,000 debt. All I want is to be cleared of the debt because I did not receive a proper or full education to prepare me for work in a dental field.”

Conley noted, “The gainful employment rule was established after lengthy deliberation. It was working to weed out the for-profits like Everest and ITT Tech that were schools in name only. The Trump administration’s decision to eliminate this successful accountability measure is not surprising since Donald Trump paid $25 million to settle fraud claims against Trump University and his Secretary of Education, Betsy DeVos, has filled her department with former for-profit college executives who have clear conflicts of interest.”

“This decision is a license for unscrupulous businesses to prey on students and taxpayers and make huge profits by gaming the federal financial aid system”, Conley concluded.


https://www.courthouselogic.org/2018/05/25/what-conflicts-of-interest/


Local 212 co-sponsored the Families Belong Together Rally on June 30th calling for an end to deportation practices that separated parents from their children. Picture: Lisa Conley.
NEW OPPORTUNITY WITH LOCAL 212 COMMUNICATIONS TEAM

After 7 years as Local 212’s Newsletter Editor, member Kim Blackwell would like to move on to new challenges. A hearty thanks to Kim for sharing her talent and creatively with us. Her unending dedication (and patience) has consistently resulted in newsletters that are second to none.

Consider becoming the next Local 212 Newsletter editor!

Duties: Edits submissions and designs newsletter

Ideal Qualifications: Familiarity with MS Word, Gmail, Adobe InDesign, and the current political environment facing the union

Approximate Time Commitment: 10-15 hours per month on average

Stipend Provided. Applications will be accepted until position is filled.

Contact the Local 212 office for more information or to apply (bha-femann@local212.org).

Retiree Corner

By Barbara Toles, Retiree Chapter President

Welcome back to all the faculty and staff! I hope you had a great summer and are looking forward to the new school year. The retirees were busy gardening, going out to lunches, traveling and chauffeuring grandkids. I want to tell you about one retiree in particular, Nada Bevic.

Nada was Local 212’s Secretary from 1976 – 1990. I am happy to report that Nada just celebrated her 97th birthday (!) and she is doing very well. She lives in an apartment in Madison, near her son, and she enjoys socializing with her neighbors and taking daily walks with her little dog, Schatze.

Nada has very happy memories of her days working for Local 212. She said recently that everyone was always friendly and treated her with respect. She enjoyed working with Local 212 Presidents Ed Heidenreich, Bill Thomas and Ernie Schnook, as well as Mike Milliren, Charlie Dee, Frank Shansky and many others. She also enjoyed walking through the MATC buildings and getting to know faculty, staff and administration.

If any of you would like to send Nada a note or give her a call, please contact Joanne Shansky (jmshansky@yahoo.com, 414-315-0928) for her address and phone number. She would love to hear from you!
2018 AFT National Convention Rewarding for Local 212 Delegates

By Lisa Conley, Eric Hagedorn, Nyia Sallee, Yolanda Smith and Michael Stock

We, Local 212’s elected team of delegates to the 2018 AFT Biennial National Convention – Lisa Conley (full-time faculty and ranking delegate), Eric Hagedorn and Michael Stock (both part-time faculty), as well as Yolanda Smith and Nyia Sallee (full- and part-time paraprofessionals respectively) – came home informed, inspired, exhausted and yet ready to get to work after our time in Pittsburgh. Thank you for selecting us as your representatives to convention.

Each of the 4 days (July 13 through 16) was packed with top-notch speakers, workshops and other informational sessions, opportunities for community service and engagement with union colleagues from across the nation and world, caucus committee work, and parliamentary sessions where the platform, policies and direction of the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) for the coming biennium were drafted, debated, edited and voted upon. AFT as a model of democracy was on full display. How did this work with between 3,000 and 4,000 people involved in real-time? Think classroom management and Robert’s Rules on steroids!

Although our team will be using various avenues to share what we learned with you over the course of the coming months, we thought that we would start by providing some personal reflections from a few of us here. The rest of the team will be featured in the next edition.

Lisa: Most enlightening to me was a seminar provided by Nancy McClean, author of Democracy in Chains (a must-read for union members). Most invigorating to me was marching with thousands of fellow AFT members through the streets of downtown Pittsburgh in support of public schools and sensible gun safety laws. Most moving to me was the supportive, loving response provided by those marching for a student survivor of the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School shootings who froze and began visibly shaking during her speech from atop a flatbed truck when fireworks went off at a nearby baseball stadium. Most memorable to me were the positive vibe and energy obtained from being in a room of thousands of municipal, education and healthcare professionals who support the common good through union membership and their everyday actions at work, as well as the announcement that AFT membership has swelled to over 1.75 million nationwide and is growing, especially in anti-union right-to-work states. Priceless to me was the opportunity to share backgrounds and perspectives, and to learn and grow with the other members of our Local 212 team.

Eric: After 3 days of energetically interacting with fellow AFT delegates from around the United States, I began to feel solidarity at a bone marrow level. I knew that I would come to the aid of any of these three thousand or so colleagues (teachers, paras, nurses, university professors, college instructors, graduate assistants and other types of professionals) if they undertook collective action and I knew they’d do the same for me. That awareness was the most empowering I had felt in my 53 years, and I felt it despite an informed and clear-eyed understanding of serious challenges facing public K-16 education, the undermining of democracy in the United States, and environmental crises facing our planet. It’s been over a month since my national convention experience and the sense of empowerment I felt in Pittsburgh is still motivating me to work harder and smarter on our collective efforts to engage all members. But, I’m not working alone. My union brothers and sisters who shared this convention with me are just as passionate and just as involved. If you’ve made the effort to read this whole paragraph, I ask you to join us. Reach out and talk to one of us; better yet, meet with one of us and bring a friend. We’ve got plans for growth of our organization and they require that all of us get to know each other. That may sound too simple, but that’s the true starting point for together growing Local 212 as a powerhouse of good in our community!

Michael: I’m a part-time English instructor at MATC. After being elected as an advocate for part-time instructors to Local 212’s executive board, I was compelled to embrace opportunities like the AFT convention so that I could effectively serve in my new role. The convention had three highlights. First, the convention resolutions provided not just strongly worded values but also specific actions to be taken, demonstrating that AFT members are professionals who sincerely care about their coworkers, students, and communities. Second, the debates and votes on the committee and delegate floor provided experiential training in AFT’s highly democratic procedures. Third, several affiliated locals reported growth in membership, which suggests that attacks on workers’ rights aren’t hurting their solidarity. Ultimately, the convention experience impacted me by stirring a pride in unionism.

More on the 2018 National Convention can be found at https://www.aft.org/aft-convention. Check it out!

Local 212 President, Lisa Conley, and fellow 2018 AFT National Convention delegates, Nyia Sallee, Eric Hagedorn, Michael Stock and Yolanda Smith show their enthusiasm during a general session. Photo courtesy of AFT National.
Local 212 in Action

Local 212 delegates Nyia Sallee, Eric Hagedorn, Michael Stock and Yolanda Smith enjoying the first day of the AFT National Convention in Pittsburgh. Photo by Lisa Conley

Milwaukee County Supervisor and Local 212 member Steve Shea, Local 212 Retiree Chapter President Barbara Toles, and Local 212 Labor Relations Director Steve Johnson enjoyed the 2018 Milwaukee NAACP Freedom Fund Banquet. Photo by Steve Johnson.

Members Lisa Conley, Helen Miller, Sue Silverstein, and Barbara Toles share a moment with TAS Associate Dean David Polk, MATC Board Vice-Chair Grace Maizonet, and MATC Board Member, Milwaukee Alderman & Common Council President Ashanti Hamilton after the 2018 Apprenticeship Banquet. Photo by Lisa Conley.

Local 212's Richard Cohn, Lynne Milner and Steve Shea "represent" during the spring Milwaukee Teachers' Education Association (MTEA) protests. Photo by Anonymous.

Local 212 President, Lisa Conley and Retiree Chapter member Monroe Lerner, with family members at the Families Belong Together Rally June 30th. Photo by Lisa Conley.

Lynne Milner, Lisa Conley, Phil Blank, Nyia Sallee and Ashante Reed (with daughter), along with Wisconsin Assemblypersons Jonathon Brostoff and Christine Sinicki, shared solidarity at the Pride in Professionals event on July 31. Ashante was a featured speaker at the event which drew attention to the importance of professional standards and licensures. Photo by Lisa Conley.

A sampling of the members and their families who enjoyed food, games and solidarity at the 1st Annual Local 212 Family picnic on June 23, 2018. Photo by Kevin Mulvenna

Main Masri, Asma Masri, Frank Shansky, Barbara Toles and Kevin Mulvenna pause for a picture at the 1st Annual Local 212 Family Picnic held on June 23, 2018. Photo by Kevin Mulvenna.