

## History

The University of Connecticut Professional Employees Association began in 1971 when Frank Napolitano and others on the professional staff felt the need for an organization to express the desires and concerns of staff members. At that time, the University lacked a coherent personnel policy directed toward professional staff who were not in the faculty ranks.

At first, UCPEA operated as a voluntary association under its own constitution, governed by an elected five-person Executive Committee. Its most notable achievements included the installation of a grievance procedure in 1973 team and the investigation and eventual endorsement of the process of collective bargaining.

To become a member of UCPEA dues of \$2 per year were sent to Phil Booker, who sent a membership card by return mail. In 1973, after gathering and sharing information about working conditions here and at comparable New England colleges and universities, professionals in the Division of Student Personnel drafted a Personnel Policy. It was submitted to the University administration in December, 1974. The purpose of this document was to establish a more clearly defined personnel policy for non-teaching professionals. However, professionals continued to be governed by a loose collection of rules from various supervisory levels.

In January, 1975, the Connecticut General Assembly finally authorized state employee collective bargaining by enacting Public Act 75-566, "An Act Concerning Collective Bargaining For State Employees."

This act specifically authorized the faculty of the University of Connecticut to form a bargaining unit for the purpose of bargaining collectively with the University's Board of Trustees. Non-teaching professional staff were authorized to join the faculty by mutual agreement or to form a separate bargaining unit. The act enumerated conditions to be met in designating an exclusive representative for any group of state employees.

The 1976-77 UCPEA Executive Board, James M. Makuch (President), Paul J. Haskew, Althea J. McLaughlin, Steven J. Smith, and Megan Thomas, endorsed UCPEA-CSFT/AFT as the superior union. AFT, it was felt, could offer the desired autonomy to make decisions as a professional staff on the critical issues involved with collective bargaining. The AFT constitution was more democratic than the AFSCME constitution that empowered its international president to place a local unit under administratorship whereby an AFSCME administrator assumed complete control of the local unit including its funds, properties, and assets, and could suspend any local unit officers. The AFSCME International Executive Board could levy special assessments in addition to dues.

Moreover, because AFSCME sought to represent the classified staff at the University, professionals believed that such an affiliation could limit autonomy and pressure could be applied for participation in any classified job action. AFT sought only to represent.

professionals and had none of the objectionable constitutional provisions that characterized AFSCME.

The American Federation of Teachers, founded in 1916, represented an autonomous national union of educational employees, including almost half-a-million public school teachers, college faculty, non-faculty college staff, para-professionals, and others in more than 2,000 locals, including 270 locals on college or university campuses. In addition, AFT represented more than 50,000 faculty and professional employees in more than 150 bargaining units in higher education.

Due to the eroding status of state and university employees during the mid-1970s and out of concern for poor and inequitable working conditions, UCPEA endorsed collective bargaining. UCPEA was concerned about the neglect of state employees and educators in harsh economic times. UCPEA was also fearful of further erosion of job and financial security. UCPEA believed that if others had won benefits through collective bargaining, professionals should also participate in order to do more than maintain current status or suffer further cutbacks.

Pursuant to the Agreement for Consent Election, dated September 13, 1976, an election by secret ballot was scheduled for Wednesday, November 17, 1976. On November 2, 1976 the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees, Council 16, AFL-CIO withdrew from the election. Under the supervision of the Connecticut State Board of Labor Relations, the election was held at six sites in the state. The result was as follows: 319 ballots were cast; 234 votes were cast for representation by UCPEA-CSFT/AFT; 63 votes were cast for no agent and 22 votes were challenged.

UCPEA-CSFT/AFT was certified to represent the University's professional staff for the purpose of collective bargaining by the Connecticut State Board of Labor Relations on January 24, 1977. In March, 1977 UCPEA officially became Local 3695 affiliated with the Connecticut State Federation of Teachers and the American Federation of Teachers, AFL-CIO.

Fifty-seven staff voluntarily paid dues of \$8 per month in order to officially establish UCPEA before arrangements for payroll deduction of dues and agency fees became effective with the implementation of the first contract.