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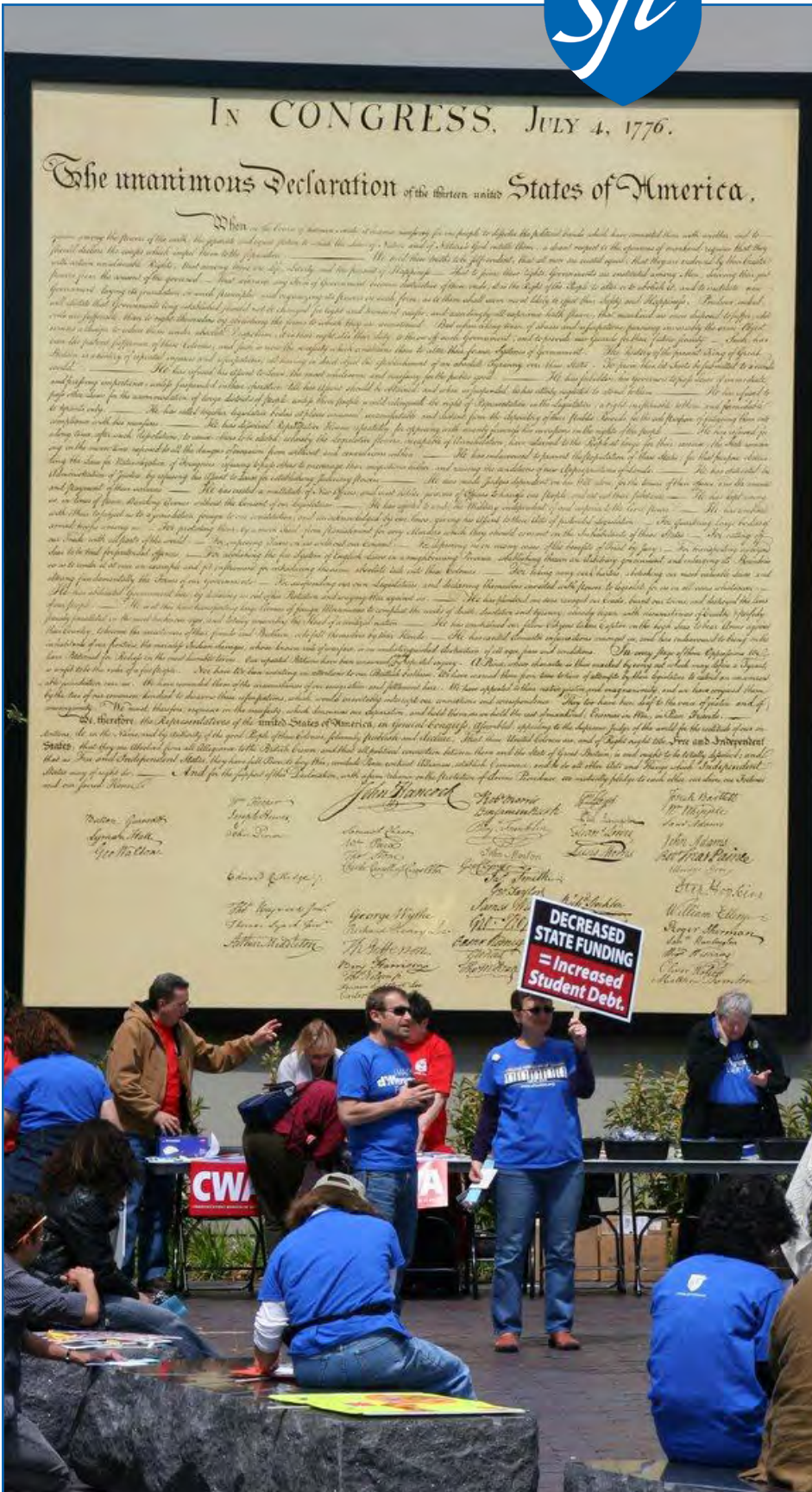
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# SFT's Ongoing Response to COVID-19: Your Union Persists

*President of SFT Local 2275, Emari DiGiorgio, reviews the COVID-19 recommendations presented to the administration by the Union and how they've responded.*

In my pre-pandemic life, I used to draw a picture on each note I packed in my daughter's lunchbox—a cartoon ice cream cone, its scoop shaped like a cat's head: “hope your day's a real treat.” I stopped writing and drawing these when she logged into school from home, and when she finally returned to the classroom, it felt next to impossible to return to the practice, so I settled on a 150 joke card pack with a little blank space to leave a note.

Yesterday's card: “What jokes do people tell during quarantine?” I doubt the authors anticipated this one's slow burn.

## ***“What jokes do people tell during quarantine?”***

As we approach the two-year anniversary of COVID-19 in our region, despite vaccines and boosters and a mask-mandate at the University, the pandemic persists, and many faculty, faculty librarians, and professional staff are barely holding on.

In advance of the spring semester, SFT leadership strongly encouraged management to reconsider its spring 2022 reopening plan. We sent several detailed emails, citing the spike of Omicron, CDC guidance, and how other institutions are modifying their spring 2022 reopening plans. SFT's recommendations to protect the health and safety of the entire Stockton community were met with varying degrees of support:

*...continued on page 3 ->*

| SFT Recommendation  | Management Response   |
|---|---|
| Increased testing availability for all members of campus community  | Testing requirement for returning residential students & COVID testing sites at Stockton's Chris Gaupp Residence Hall in Galloway and Carnegie Center in Atlantic City  |
| Update mask guidance and provide KN95 or other higher-grade masks   | In President Kesselman's welcome back email, he indicated that the University will offer these in the Campus Center; the university is currently seeking a vendor   |
| Update vaccination requirements to align with new CDC recommendations for students and employees to “stay up to date” on their COVID-19 vaccines, which includes booster(s) | No commitment from management at this point, but if the University moved in this direction, the Union would negotiate the terms and conditions of this rollout  |
| Be more flexible in approving requests from staff, who cannot report to campus, to work remotely  | Uneven response from divisional executives; lack of clear policy has led to confusion and inequity. The University insists that we wait for the Presidential Task Force on Flexible Work Arrangements to make recommendations |
| Bring back resources and support for staff who need to work from home to continue meeting operational needs   | Uneven response across divisions. Again, management is waiting for the Presidential Task Force on Flexible Work Arrangements to make recommendations  |
| Permit faculty to teach remotely for the first 1-3 weeks of the semester for any reason   | Individual faculty could submit medical documentation to HR; however, there was no remote option that was not medical (or connected to quarantine)  |
| Clarify flexibility of teaching online in the case of exposure, quarantine, and illness   | Faculty have been asked to notify dean and update syllabus and course schedule if exposure, quarantine, and/or illness prevents them from teaching f2f for a period of time   |
| Clarify new COVID policy regarding employee conference travel   | The language and intent of this policy have not yet been clarified  |

These may seem like small wins, but they are possible because of the strength of our Union. Other universities, including some of our sister schools throughout the state, have not fared as well as we have. Though we can and should acknowledge the progress we've made, your Union leadership will continue to advocate for you and keep pushing to create better conditions for all our members.

It's more important than ever to stand with each other—faculty, faculty librarians, and professional staff—and with the other Union employees across campus to improve the quality of our work lives.

I know you're waiting for the punchline: "Inside jokes."

Here's to more laughter, a little joy, and some reprieve as we do our best, or just enough, to get by.

In solidarity,

*Emari DiGiorgio, MFA*  
Stockton University  
President SFT Local 2275



## Health Insurance Covering At-Home COVID Tests

*The Council of State College Locals shares important information for at-home testing kits available through OptumRX!*

Good news for Union members: our health insurance is now covering the cost of up to eight in-home COVID tests per month for everyone who has OptumRx prescription drug coverage under the State Health Benefits Program (SHBP). Family members covered by our insurance are also eligible, so a family of four covered under OptumRX would be eligible for up to 32 tests per month.

You can purchase the tests at any pharmacy, other store, or online retailer. If you present your OptumRX card at a Rite Aid Pharmacy, Sam's Club Pharmacy, or Walmart

Pharmacy (OptumRX considers these participating in-network providers), the tests will be free of charge. If you buy them anywhere else, OptumRX will reimburse you up to \$12 per test. To request reimbursement, [fill out this online form](#). Be sure to save your receipts and be prepared to upload them when you fill out the form. We're hopeful that other pharmacies will soon be added to the list of participating in-network providers, so [check back at this webpage](#) for updates.

The individual monthly limit of eight tests per month resets on the

first day of each month. **So if you can find tests in the next week before the end of January, you will be eligible for eight more per insured family member on February 1.**

[Click here to read an FAQ](#) prepared by the State of New Jersey Division of Pensions and Benefits if you have questions. The FAQ lists nine eligible FDA-authorized over-the-counter in-home COVID tests. **Only these tests are covered by OptumRX.**

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*Council of State College Locals*

## New Year, New You: Benefits for Members

*Stacey Rose, Treasurer and geriatric cat-lover, presents a laundry list of benefits that you receive for being a member. Don't miss out!*

New year, new you! If you are looking for new ways to maximize your union membership, I have some suggestions for you. As your Treasurer, I am always looking for ways to be more thoughtful with how we spend and invest our money. I want the same for you! As a member of the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), you have access to some cool programs and discounts. Let's take a look!

First, make sure you register for your Member Benefits at [www.aft.org/member-benefits](http://www.aft.org/member-benefits). You'll need your member number, they have an easy look up if you don't have it handy ([or Sue can get it for you!](#)). If you aren't sure if you are an AFT member, check your pay stub to see if there is an AFT Union Dues deduction ([or Sue can help you!](#)).

Second, browse. Are you traveling? Me neither! However, as an AFT

member you can save 3-8% on airfare through Southwest when you are traveling again. I can't wait to use this discount. You also receive access to discounted car rentals if road trips are more your speed. Were you wondering if there's more? There is! Discounted theme park tickets, hotels, and tours are also part of your union membership. I love to tour.

Do you have a pet? AFT members receive a discount on pet insurance through Pets Best. My pets ARE the best but are so elderly that they cannot be covered by insurance. The Affordable Care Act reform did not extend to geriatric cats.

Your AFT membership connects you to discounts through Union Plus. Feel free to visit [www.unionplus.org](http://www.unionplus.org) to explore some of the discounts and offers available to you. There is a range of benefits and discounts

you can access including; finance, movies, coupons, and health.

Finally, on a more serious note, AFT provides you access to free trauma counseling. This is a benefit to you in addition to the EAP program offered through Stockton. They can connect you with a provider you can see from the comfort of your own home, for up to three months. As much as I love a great deal, self-care is something else that is incredibly important. The last two years have been especially challenging, please take care of yourself. We love all of you as members and want you to be well.

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*Stacey Rose  
Stockton University  
Treasurer, SFT Local 2275*



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## Professional Staff Training Forthcoming

*Maria Spade, Vice President of Professional Staff, is hard at work with the Professional Staff Advisory Committee planning upcoming training sessions.*

Throughout the fall semester, the Professional Staff Advisory Committee has been working hard on programs and training for professional staff. To ensure that we provide training on the topics that our members want to know more about, we will be collecting information on common questions and concerns so that we can create informative workshops throughout the spring semester.

The first event will be held on

January 10th, 2022 from 12:00pm-2:00pm in the Board of Trustees room. This will not be a formal training, but a meet and greet. Professional Staff will have the opportunity to relax before the spring semester goes into full gear and to meet colleagues across divisions. Oftentimes professional staff are so committed to their workspace that they do not get to network outside of their division. This event will be a chance to get to know each other and speak with members of the

union to learn more about what we do on campus. If you cannot attend this event but have questions, you are invited to email Maria Spade at [maria.spade@sftunion.org](mailto:maria.spade@sftunion.org).

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*Maria Spade  
Stockton University  
Vice President of Professional Staff  
SFT Local 2275*

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## The Uncertain Life of an Adjunct During the Pandemic

*Through flagging enrollment issues and financial stress, Maxine Patroni, Vice President of Adjuncts, reminds you that you are not alone.*

As 2021 comes to a close, I find myself very grateful for another year as Vice President of Adjuncts at Stockton Federation of Teachers (SFT). Every correspondence or chat I've had with our members, whether heartbreaking or inspiring, has left me with a great sense of pride in the work we do as a union.

There is a lot of uncertainty moving into the spring semester of 2022. Many Stockton departments have seen budget cuts putting our most vulnerable faculty at risk, yet again. Just this week, I spoke with an adjunct colleague who had her spring class cancelled, one she has been teaching for many consecutive spring terms. She was left confused, hurt, and angry, and she is not alone in this experience. Low enrollment and financial issues within universities across the state has and will continue to affect us moving forward.

While we cannot predict how quickly or widely this will happen within the institution, in the coming semesters, some of us will be directly impacted. We might have our classes cancelled or reassigned to full-time faculty who need to meet their teaching credit hour minimums. Please know that your Union executives at SFT and statewide are doing all we can to mitigate and prepare for these situations.

Until then, remember the class cancellation payment negotiated in our most recent contract: If your class is cancelled or reassigned less than two weeks before the start date, you are owed 1 teaching credit hour (TCH) of payment, and if your class is cancelled or reassigned after the start date, you are owed 1 and ½ TCH. You may also apply for unemployment insurance, which has been difficult for many adjuncts to secure, but it is worth a try. You can request a letter of employment

status from Dawn Channell in Human Resources to accompany your application, which is a right we also negotiated in our most recent contract.

If you are going through this, I see and hear you and am right there with you. I often ask myself: How can adjuncts be the backbone of institutions yet so often feel deeply undervalued and disposable? How can our classes and the income we rely on so heavily be taken away with the swift mark of a pen? My ask is to please keep me in the loop going forward with how you might be affected by this situation so the Union can do what we can to assist.

Have a safe and happy new year.

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*Maxine Patroni, MFA  
Stockton University  
Vice President of Adjuncts*

# Ongoing Negotiations: An Update

*Negotiations can take a long time, Tina Zappile, Lead Negotiator, provides an update on the progress of several issues that the Union has been persuing on your behalf.*

In Fall 2021, we worked on several issues for both professional staff and faculty. administration's team that is now led by Peter Straub (Dean of NAMS) and Michael Angulo (Vice President for Personnel, Labor & Government Relations). Our team remains the same with Emari DiGiorgio (GENS), Rodger Jackson (ARHU), Tara Luke (NAMS), Anne Pomeroy (ARHU), and Kerri Sowers (HLTH).

## Professional Staff Evaluations

The administration issued a demand to negotiate a new MOA for Staff Evaluations, and in January-February 2022 we will continue to use your input to draft a new agreement to replace the outdated one from 2014. Our goal is to use your survey results (thank you!) to make the process easier to manage, and to make sure that you are aware of how to ask for a longer contract (up to 5 years!). While the Master Agreement limited the standard terms for multi-year contracts, there is a section that allows for management to issue contracts for up to 5 years.

## Summer Institutes/Workshops for Faculty & Professional Staff

We negotiated new terms for this important professional development program that is open to both faculty and professional staff. Changes to Summer Institutes/Workshops MOA starting this year in Summer 2022 include the following:

1. Increased pay for participants: \$400 per day for programs lasting five (5) or more hours and \$200 per day for programs lasting three (3) to four (4) hours.\*
2. Increased pay for facilitators, mentors, and guest speakers to

\$115/hour. For facilitators, this includes pay for prep time in addition to hours spent running the institute. For mentors and guest speakers, they are paid for time spent at the institute.

3. New provisions for professional staff to be participants, facilitators, mentors, and guest speakers in any summer institute/workshop, with clear guidelines on when those roles would be compensated.
4. Updated application/template to make the selection process for facilitators more equitable and transparent.

## Faculty Fellows

We also negotiated new terms for the Faculty Fellows program. The following changes in the new MOA will be implemented next year in Summer 2023:

Clear distinction between Faculty Fellowships and Faculty Administrative Fellowships (FAFs).

Expansion of the program so that any University Center, Institute, and office may request a Faculty Fellow or FAF through an annual process run by the Provost Office, with a new option to add more positions throughout the academic year.

The introduction of a new professional development series using a cohort model. Note: SFT has been advocating to include professional development as part of terms and conditions of your employment, and this is one more agreement where it is explicitly provided.

No minimum # of Faculty Fellows: the administration refused to include

this in the new agreement, though they agreed to commit resources for these professional development opportunities and are in full support of this program. We will monitor any changes to funding this program and keep you informed.

## Faculty Chairs for Institutional Regional Accreditation Processes

We negotiated a new MOA that provides 4 TCH in compensation to any faculty who serves as a chair for the Self-Study/On-Site Evaluation Visit or the Mid-Point Peer Review (MPPR) for institutional accreditation through the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE). It does not expire until 2032, ensuring that the next several faculty chairs continue to be compensated. Please note that compensation for other accreditation processes are built into other agreements, for example program chairs. If you are aware of other accreditation processes that are not covered under this or other MOAs please reach out to discuss.

## Peer Evaluation of Teaching

In December we requested that the Faculty Senate take up the issue of training Peer Evaluators, which is currently known as SIPET which stands for the Summer Institute for the Peer Evaluation of Teaching. You may be wondering why we made this move, and where we go from here. When we were renegotiating the terms for SIPET in the fall, we reached an impasse when it was clear that the administration is interested in changing the structure of the training program for peer evaluators. We are in full support of a rigorous training program for peer evaluators of teaching, in whatever form that takes. We asked the

...continued on page 7 ->

Faculty Senate to take up the issue so they can participate in a shared governance process to revise our system for training peer evaluators. We will step back in to negotiate the terms and conditions of a new system once that process concludes, whether it remains the same or not.

As you know, faculty are required to have a minimum number of peer evaluations for the review process for tenure and promotion (and beyond). For more than a decade, the SIPET program has been run in the format of a 3-day intensive workshop that is open to faculty from across the entire university. This intensive

seminar style of training has been the foundation for the rigorous and consistent peer evaluation process at our institution. Our faculty can confidently rely on peer evaluations as reliable and valid data to support excellence in teaching in their files, in large part due to this training. This is especially critical for faculty of color, faculty with accents, cis-women, LGBTQIA+, and others who face well-documented biases in quantitative teaching evaluations like our IDEA system (check out this source for details and citations). SFT fought for this over a decade ago and will continue to do so. Our commitment to you is that we

will continue to advocate for the following: 1) fair compensation for both facilitators and participants (i.e., faculty learning how to do peer evaluations); 2) a commitment of trained peer evaluators to carry out a certain # of evaluations; and 3) FULL faculty leadership of the training process. These three pillars are critical for our peer evaluation process to remain reliable and valid.

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*Tina Zappile, Ph.D.*  
Stockton University  
Lead Negotiator, SFT Local 2275



## Collective Action and the Grievance Process

*Nazia Kazi, Grievance Officer, lays out the founding precepts of the grievance process and reminds us to stay active and talk to one another.*

The grievance process is how SFT remedies violations of any part of an employment contract, either in a local (at the Stockton-level) or a master (state-wide) agreement. Those who have been through the grievance process can attest to the fact that it is often a lengthy and bureaucratic procedure. In the end, though, it offers members a remedy to a contractual violation that, without the resources of the union to process the grievance, would likely be unavailable to the member.

Labor historians point to another important, and often troubling, feature of the grievance process. Namely, the formal grievance procedure emerged in American unions after World War II.

Grievances were meant to channel labor unrest into a legalistic process, moving workers away from the more forceful activism they would often turn to in the early 20th century. The grievance procedure, they argue, “watered down” the process of demanding workplace justice and channeled it into an overly bureaucratic, legalistic process.

Having said that, many labor organizers have asked that we “reinvigorate” the grievance process, that we refuse to let it be a way to water down workers’ rights. “The important thing,” writes Kevin Prosen, “is to infuse the process with a sense of collective action, the forgotten key to effective unionism.” You are not an individual member

filing a grievance; you are a member of a collective bargaining unit taking action to improve the circumstances of all of your colleagues.

For SFT 2275 to do its work effectively, we rely on all of you. Talk to each other and keep in touch with the SFT executive. Help us identify systemic issues as well as the ones you face individually. As always, you can reach me at [Nazia.Kazi@sftunion.org](mailto:Nazia.Kazi@sftunion.org).

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*Nazia Kazi, Ph.D.*  
Stockton University  
Grievance Officer SFT Local 2275

# G it's Suite: Get on the SFT GMail!

*Brian Tyrrell, COPE Officer, and Justin Maciejewski, Communications Officer, have a special message about SFTUnion.org email addresses.*

Are you aware that free SFTUnion.org GMail accounts are available to all members? You're probably tired of hearing about it at membership meetings and we don't blame you. After all, it's another email account to manage in your already busy and increasingly-virtual lives. However, there are a number of distinct advantages offered by having one of these accounts.

First and foremost, communication is key. We all have Stockton.edu email addresses, but these accounts are managed by the University and are subject to the whim of Administrators. While this is not, in and of itself, an issue, it makes privacy and matters of Union policy a bit less secure.

For example, if you wish to speak to Nazia Kazi, our Grievance Officer, about matters best kept private, it is not in anyone's best interest to

communicate this information via your Stockton email. Issues like this can become adversarial and to keep everyone honest and safe, the best practice would be to use native lines of communication, such as an SFTUnion.org email address.

Secondly, Union action requires coordinated logistics. SFT works as well as it does because we act in a unified manner, from strike actions to policy communications, we act in solidarity. Modern social interactions happen in such a fractured way, utilizing various social media platforms, electronic devices, and sometimes even the ancient face-to-face meeting. A single channel for organization is essential to unified action in an age of multi-faceted connection.

So, hit that button below to get started. Special thanks to Neil Aaronson for designing the Google

form that makes this process a little easier, and Phil Polsinelli for managing the whole GSuite backend. Should you run into any issues, please reach out to Phil and he can get you situated.



*Brian J. Tyrrell, Ph.D.  
Stockton University  
COPE Director SFT Local 2275*

*Justin Maciejewski  
Stockton University  
Comm Officer SFT Local 2275*

## HOW'D WE DO?

The SFT Union Local 2275 Newsletter is a quarterly publication that focuses on the needs and issues that concern its members.

Errors? Omissions? Poor choice of content? Send us your accolades, gripes and suggestions, we'd love to hear from you.

A copy of this newsletter can be found in the inbox of all registered members or on our website:

[www.sftunion.org](http://www.sftunion.org)

You can reach me, Justin Maciejewski, your editor and Communications Officer at:

[justin.maciejewski@sftunion.org](mailto:justin.maciejewski@sftunion.org)



## New Events Manager Lisa Warnock

We would like to welcome Lisa Warnock to the team as the new Events Manager. Lisa will be taking over during the spring semester and will be planning some great events, such as another SFT fun day and the long overdue Retiree Dinner. We look forward to planning these events and offering more opportunities for our SFT family to be together.

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*Maria Spade  
Stockton University  
VP of Professional Staff  
SFT Local 2275*

