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Central Michigan University Nontenure-Track Faculty Form Union,
FILE WITH LABOR BOARD

Mount Pleasant, MI – A majority of the nontenure-track faculty at Central Michigan University filed for a union representation election with the Michigan Employment Relations Commission (MERC). The Union of Teaching Faculty (UTF) will negotiate job security, salary increases, health insurance, and professional development issues with the university administration. The representation petition and membership cards were filed with MERC on Tuesday, February 23, 2010. UTF is affiliated with the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), a group that represents more than 6,500 higher education faculty across the state.

"We are one of the few groups on campus without collective bargaining rights," said Mary Ann Freling, an English instructor at the university. "As a union, we'll have the right to meet on a more equal footing with the administration and discuss the issues that affect us, our students, and the university as a whole."

Full- and part-time nontenure-track faculty teach close to half of undergraduate credit hours at the university, mostly in introductory courses. These positions are filled by skilled teachers with many years of experience, with degrees from masters to the doctoral, who teach at a fraction of the pay level of their tenure-track colleagues. Moreover, they receive reduced benefits, have little job security, and often don't have input on important departmental decisions.

"Job security is a major issue for nontenure-track instructors," said Tom Stewart, instructor in the Political Science Department. I have taught at CMU for 17 years now, and I'm still uncertain if I'll have a position next semester. We commit ourselves 100% to our students, but the university won't commit to us beyond a semester or year at a time."

"We are looking for fair compensation and simple respect," says Jim Eikrem, instructor in the Communications and Dramatic Arts Department. "Whether full- or part-time, all CMU faculty deserve a fair wage, job security, and the respect that comes with being treated fairly. The university and its students benefit by having more teachers committed to CMU and its educational mission, rather than the rapid turnover that accompanies temporary contracts."

CMU undergraduate Jerad Taber, son of nontenure-track faculty member Cassie Taber, was shocked to find that many instructors were making less than high school teachers: salaries for public school teachers in Michigan start at \$35,000 and average approximately \$50,000.

"This is an issue of fairness and equality," said Taber. "'Temporary' instructors are being taken advantage of, and deserve to have a voice. We as students receive the same quality education whether our instructor is tenured or not. Some of these instructors have been here for decades – calling them 'temporary' faculty is an oxymoron."

The union anticipates meeting with the university administration and a MERC representative in a few

weeks to agree on a date for the election. “We hope to have a positive relationship with the administration since our mutual goal is to make CMU a better place for students and faculty alike. Nontenure-track faculty continue to be a valuable resource to the university in providing quality yet cost effective instruction, and hope to be treated with the respect and the professionalism we deserve,” states Freling, adjunct faculty since 1987.