

## The History of the SSA

The Support Staff Association was once part of a large group known as the DFSE (Dearborn Federation of School Employees). That group consisted of over 1,100+ members and covered Support Staff at the College (160 employees) and P12-Dearborn Public Schools (900+ employees). The make-up of the group consisted of but was not limited to Clerical, Paraprofessionals, Bus Drivers, Custodial, Technician, and Food Services employees.

During the years from the mid to late 2000's the DFSE as a group was taking multiple pay cuts and experiencing no pay increases because the P12 system was having financial difficulties. On the other hand, Henry Ford College was financially stable and other unions at the College were receiving pay increases, which was hard and hurtful for us as College employees. Because we were part of that large group, we had to take the cuts even though we had our own financial resources and structure at HFC. College employees went to their union the DFSE to request becoming a division of the group so we would negotiate our wages based on our employers (HFC) budget and not P12's (Dearborn Public Schools). Besides experiencing pay cuts, HFC support employees felt that they were not represented effectively by the DFSE and that concerns at the College were not that same as P12 concerns. Being a small number of 160 members while P12 employees was over 900 members the College employees could not get support even though we were paying union dues.

After several attempts with the DFSE to address concerns, a grass root group of College employees explored the idea of separating from the larger group. The HFC group was informed by the DFSE that it would not allow it, and that it would not happen but the grass roots group was not deterred. Fundraisers were held at the College, employees donated money and time for the hiring of a lawyer to help fight for a fair voice. A lawyer was consulted and then hired to present our case. The grass roots group went to MERC (Michigan Employment Relations Commission) even though they were told that it was unheard of splitting from a union but our lawyer felt our case was an exception and had merit.

MERC held hearings with HFC administration (which was supportive), DFSE legal counsel, and the grass roots group to understand what was being requested and to get the necessary information to make a logical decision. After the hearings, MERC informed the college group that the request was granted and that they were giving us the opportunity to take a vote amongst the DFSE college employees to see if it was the desire of the college employees to split from the larger group. The vote was held with MERC in attendance. After the vote was done and verified, MERC informed the grass roots group on November 22, 2011 that the request to become a new group (separate) was approved and the Henry Ford College Support Staff Association was born.

The association was certified, election were held for officers, and we were now able to negotiate with our employer Henry Ford College.

Since that time we have negotiated twice and each time receiving pay increases and benefits that we have never had. A few of those are the professional development fund, yearly bonus, extra personal business days etc.

SSA Board