**Why should I complete this membership form?**

There are a number of reasons for completing the membership form. First, completing this form gives you the right to vote on matters relating to how the Association is run, including election of our officers, changes to our By-Laws and increases to our dues. According to our By-Laws, only classified employees who have returned a membership form have a right to vote on these things. Plus if you want to serve as an Association Officer or Area Representative you need to be signed up as a member of the Association. In addition, expressing your desire to be a member in the Association demonstrates to the College that you support the Association’s efforts, in general, to advocate for Classified staff and, specifically, to negotiation a fair contract covering our pay, benefits and working conditions. There have already been occasions during this negotiation term when the College asked if our position on an issue really reflected the desires of the majority of Classified staff. If we can show them that, indeed, the vast majority of Classified employees want to be a member of the Association, then we can be more persuasive advocates for a good contract for all of us.

**Why isn’t Membership in the Association automatic?**

Well, first off, our Constitution states that you need to complete a membership form in order to be a member. More important, this really is most consistent with common sense. It seems wrong for an organization to call someone a member if they haven’t agreed to join the group. It is also consistent with Oregon law that persons must consent in order to be a member of a non-profit corporation.

**Why is the Association doing this now?**

There are a number of reasons for this too. As our elections for Officers and Area Representatives are about to occur, we want to make certain that everyone who wants to vote is able to do so. Again, if you are not a member, you are not eligible to vote in this election. As we are negotiating a contract now, this is also a good time to reaffirm your support for the Association’s work, to show the College we are unified in our desire for a good contract. Also, the Association leaders noted that our membership records have been neglected over the years, so we don’t have great confidence that what is in the College database is really up-to-date. We want to make sure our information and voting are accurate.

**How much is this going to cost me? What happens if I don’t return this form?**

These questions are a bit related, so we are going to answer them together. Currently the amount of our “representation fee” paid by Classified employees who are not members is the same as the membership dues amount, so signing up as a member will not cost you anything at this point. It is theoretically possible that, at some point in the future, the Association could spend money on what are legally called “non-chargeable expenses” which we could not charge against those who are not members. In that case, the Association would need to provide a rebate to those who are not members. However, given that the most common “non-chargeable” expense for most other Associations,” spending on partisan political activity, is prohibited by our Constitution, it would take a vote of the membership to change this. So, there is no current cost savings for not signing up. So, if you don’t return the form what is the down-
side? It is not that you will lose contract protections. The Association has a legal duty to represent you fairly in negotiations and in disciplinary matters regardless of whether you are a member or not. Since we can’t discriminate against you in that regard, you will see the benefit of Association representation regardless of whether you sign the membership form or not. The main down-side of not signing up is what we discussed above – you will not be able to vote in matters regarding the governance of the Association and the College might discount our voice if many Classified staff are not members.

**Why do I have to pay a fee to the Association if I don’t sign-up to be a member?**

As mentioned above, the Association has a duty to represent you fairly regardless of whether you are a member or not. There are expenses relating to negotiating and enforcing a contract and since we all benefit, regardless of our membership status, we are all required to pay. This is set out in Article 9 of our current contract. This contract article is consistent with Oregon law which regulates when a labor Association can charge a “representation fee” to those bargaining unit members who have not signed up as Association members.

**I filled out a form in the past. Why do I need to do it again?**

As mentioned above, Association leaders have noted that the College records regarding the membership status of employees may not be up-to-date. We also want to make sure that the Association retains these records for our purposes, so we don’t have to rely on the College for accurate information on who is one of our members and who is not. We regret the inconvenience but we want to make sure we are following our Constitution and By-Laws as we move forward with Officer elections and contract negotiations.