



ASAC NEWS

MSU Academic Specialists Newsletter

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Fall Meetings and Events

November

ASAC Meeting-11/13
11:30am

Hannah Admin Building

Third Thursday Social Hour-
11/21 4:00pm

Harrison Roadhouse

December

ASAC Meeting-12/11
11:30am

Hannah Admin Building

Find Us On The Web

academicspecialists.msu.edu

Twitter:
[@AsacMsu](https://twitter.com/AsacMsu)

Facebook:
[@msuasac](https://www.facebook.com/msuasac)

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No matter our designation – advising, research, curriculum, or what have you – it’s likely that we’re each going to spend time with undergraduate students. In those roles, we have the opportunity to support their learning and growth while here at Michigan State University.

TEACHING IN HIGHER ED

One resource that supports our work is the podcast, *Teaching in Higher Ed*. Hosted by Dr. Bonni Stachowiak, the podcast “explores the art and science of being more effective at facilitating learning”. Episodes vary in their subject matter; ranging from digital pedagogy to work/life balance and cultural competency.

In a recent posting, Stachowiak discusses homelessness and housing insecurity in higher education and the effect it may have on our students. Speaking with academics who have just published a book on the topic, the guests offer research-based, practical guidance to help educational leaders develop sustained efforts to support students.

Listeners can download *Teaching in Higher Ed* through platforms, Overcast, Stitcher Radio, Google Play, and more. More than 275 episodes have been produced, coming weekly.

Visit teachinginhighered.com to learn more.

Professional Development and the ASAC Handbook

What does the Academic Specialist Handbook say on Professional Development?

In section 7.6, the handbook notes that specialists are expected to continue to develop their abilities and stature in their areas of specialty, and that the university should promote and facilitate that. While the handbook goes on to describe ways that this can be done and says that a specialist's supervisor must approve of it, the overall expectation is that this is to be encouraged, not deterred. The following excerpts are taken directly from the Handbook.

7.6 Professional Development

The academic specialist, as any other professional employee, is expected to continually develop personal abilities and stature in appropriate areas of endeavor. The University should promote and facilitate such professional development activities at a level consistent with its international status and as a premier land grant University. Those activities in which the academic specialist should participate and receive University support include the following:

7.6.1 Continuing Education

Continuing education provides one mechanism for the professional growth of an individual. Such education may consist of participation in seminars, workshops, short courses, and other short-term training programs. Participation in credit courses involves a longer commitment by the individual. Finally, participation in a degree-granting program typically spans several years. The University may provide substantive support to the continuing education of the academic specialist in two ways: release time from duty assignments for the pursuit of such educational opportunities, and/or the reimbursement of expenses incurred in activities such as seminars, workshops or other non-credit offerings. Such substantive support is not guaranteed but may be granted with approval of the academic specialist's unit administrator. The granting of such support will depend on, among other things, the value that such education will bring not only to the individual but also to the University. The academic specialist will have to submit a written plan in advance requesting support for such activities. For short-term informal course work, a travel authorization will suffice. The appropriateness of a particular plan of formal or informal course work for the academic specialist will be determined by that individual and the administrator involved.

Release time for attending courses or training programs on either a non-degree or degree basis may be granted with approval of the academic specialist's unit administrator. The unit is responsible for any adjustments in staffing that may be necessitated by the release time granted to the individual. If more individuals within a particular unit request release time than can be accommodated by the unit, some of the individuals will have to defer to an alternate time. In any case, an individual may carry no more than an average of four credits a semester requiring release time during any two semesters within a calendar year.

In some cases, reimbursement of some or all expenses such as tuition related to a degree program may be granted. [Internal Revenue Code (IRC) Section 127 allows tax-exemption for graduate-level, degree related courses that are reimbursed by employers up to an annual maximum of \$5,250. To qualify, the individual must submit a written plan for the course of study to the unit administrator. This plan must demonstrate the value of such education to the unit as well as to the individual. An academic specialist may not apply for such educational assistance until the individual has served three years in the position. Reimbursement will require satisfactory performance in the course work. The plan and the individual's progress must be reviewed each term by the unit administrator. The individual and the unit administrator will be responsible for obtaining the funds from appropriate department/school and/or major administrative unit sources to provide the educational reimbursements. The arrangement for any release time associated with the plan of study will be handled independently of the reimbursement considerations. Finally, the individual will be obligated to remain employed at the University for one 9- or 12-month duty assignment, as applicable, after the completion of the last course for which the individual will receive financial assistance.

7.6.2 Participation in Professional and Scholarly Organizations

Attendance at professional meetings and programs requires approval of the unit administrator. Such approval is required for release time, insurance purposes, and reimbursement of expenses.

7.6.3 Extended Release Time, Assignment to Scholarly Duties

Extended release time and temporary reassignment to scholarly duties may be granted to assist academic specialists with continuing appointment status to enhance professional competency and for scholarly pursuit. Such activities are intended for the mutual benefit of the University and the academic specialist. The purpose is to encourage academic and institutional revitalization by providing sustained time for research/creative activities; development of new courses or programs; acquisition of expanded and/or new qualifications and skills; contribution to academic unit plans to improve and/or refocus instructional, research, or public service activities in accordance with the missions of the University.

Extended changes of duty assignment are not granted automatically and must be approved by the appropriate academic administrator. Such activities must be requested in writing by the academic specialist and directed to the appropriate unit administrator. Requests must include a detailed description outlining the purposes, objectives and scholarly and research activities of the proposed duty assignment. The plan should indicate how the objectives and accomplishments of the new assignment will advance the interests and capabilities of the academic specialist for fulfilling the aims, objectives and goals of the department/school, college or University. Changes of duty assigned for more than six months require approval of the dean and the Office of the Provost. Funding for extended release time and assignment to scholarly duties is provided by the unit.

For more information, access the Specialists Handbook at <https://www.hr.msu.edu/policies-procedures/faculty-academic-staff/academic-specialist-handbook/index.html>

