

Western's "Good" Old Days: A Look Back at WMU Before the Union

By Sharon Carlson, University Libraries

The good old days were rarely as good as nostalgic memories suggest, especially if we look back at shared governance and issues of compensation and workload on Western's campus as they were in the days before we had a faculty union.

We start with the early years of the institution. With the construction in 1905 of East Hall, what was then the main administration and classroom building, Ernest Burnham, Leslie Wood, and other male faculty members who were considered "handy" were called upon to construct a set of wooden stairs from Davis Street to the building's entrance when the institution was not able to implement the Olmsted Plan on Prospect Hill due to strained finances. This marked the beginning of mandatory faculty participation in a number of activities far outside what would today be considered a normal faculty workload of teaching, committee work, research, and mentoring, including many activities that would be considered strange and even controversial today. For example, during the 1910s and 1920s, faculty members were expected to sell tickets to the various events on campus and attend athletic events.

Despite the good will of the faculty to further the interests of the institution, this did not always result in good will toward faculty on the part of the administration. One telling incident involved a faculty member whose conduct in downtown Kalamazoo was considered "unruly." When President Waldo called the faculty member into his office to discuss these concerns, the faculty member protested and indicated that what he did off campus on his own time was his own business. President Waldo is reputed to have said, "All right, from this minute, consider yourself as permanently off the campus."

For the first quarter century of the life of the institution, faculty had regular meetings with President

Waldo in his office. Waldo was fondly remembered by many as an administrator who cared for deeply for the faculty, but he was also seen as paternalistic and ultimately exercised a great deal of power over the faculty. Leonard Kercher, who joined the faculty in 1928, noted the uncertainty in compensation and other issues on campus during the era:

"[T]here were no contracts, no tenure policy, no bargaining agents, no promotion policy, no grievance procedure, no appeal board . . . Each individual faculty member was dealt with personally . . . by President Waldo. No one knew what his next year's salary would be until the first checks of the new college year appeared."

The first campus-wide governance dates back to 1928, when President Waldo decided he needed a small, formal organization of faculty to advise him on college matters. On April 17, 1928, the Faculty Council was established. It was composed of 12 faculty members elected by their colleagues and included the president and registrar as ex-officio members. They were charged to handle issues and problems delegated to them by the administration, to consider recommendations and suggestions made by the faculty, and to make recommendations to the president.

The next major step in shared governance was the creation of the Faculty Senate. In 1955, the Faculty Council authorized the appointment of a committee to "study and recommend to the Faculty Council ways to participate in the formulation of institutional and, specifically, educational policy, to make a larger portion of the faculty feel responsible for the development of educational policy, to make possible continuous communication between the faculty and the administration, and to facilitate communication and understanding between departments and divisions."

A preliminary progress report on the establishment of the Faculty Senate was completed in 1955. Subsequent reports and recommendations resulted in a Proposed Plan for a Faculty Senate, issued on January 10, 1957. Many of today's standing committees of the Faculty Senate were established at that time. In addition to educational policy, the Faculty Senate established standing committees on fringe benefits, insurance, promotion 'problems', and faculty grievances. Over time, it also established committees to focus on salary and other compensation issues.

The Senate's role formally moved to academic concerns with the adoption of the first AAUP contract in the fall of 1975. At that time, the Senate eliminated a number of its existing standing committees, including Faculty Relations, Insurance and Retirement, Fringe Benefits, Professional Concerns, Salary, and University Sabbatical Leave.

Looking back, it seems clear that the formal processes addressed and agreed upon by faculty and

administration in collective bargaining agreements are far better ways to handle compensation, grievances, and a number of issues pertaining to faculty that fall outside academic concerns. The Agreement insures equitable treatment and due process. In other words, the good old days were not that great.

While we might get a chuckle imagining ourselves and our colleagues hawking tickets to athletic events or helping out with construction work around campus, the non-union campus of the 21st century is no laughing matter. The examples from the early years at WMU seem impossibly quaint now, but a campus without shared governance, due process, and academic freedom, and developments like those that we are seeing at neighboring campuses (such as MSU, where the provost has talked about abolishing tenure) and neighboring states (such as Ohio, where the legislature is trying to write language governing faculty workloads at public universities into the state's budget bill), is unfortunately all too easy to imagine.

Letter to Deans and Chairs on the WMU-AAUP's Position on Gender Equity

The letter below was sent to all WMU deans, chairs, and program directors on February 25, 2013.

As you know, Dr. Sue Caulfield, WMU Director of Academic Collective Bargaining, circulated a set of guidelines to the deans of each college on February 4, 2013, outlining the process for identifying faculty who might be eligible for salary equity adjustments. Since then, several of our colleagues have reported that in explaining the process to their faculty, some of their deans and chairs have expressed surprise that the WMU-AAUP would have agreed to the procedures Dr. Caulfield outlined. Because there seems to be confusion about where the WMU-AAUP stands on this, we have decided to take the step of writing directly to you now.

We believe that it is important for the campus community, including the deans, chairs, and directors who have been charged with overseeing the process, to be informed that there is in fact no agreement between the administration and the WMU-AAUP regarding the procedures outlined in Dr. Caulfield's directive.

In the February 4 email to the deans that accompanied the directive, Dr. Caulfield attributes a greater role to the WMU-AAUP in developing the guidelines than is justified. In accordance with a Letter of Agreement signed in April 2011, several faculty members represented the WMU-AAUP on a Joint Committee for Salary Equity, whose draft report Dr. Caulfield circulated along with the guidelines. However, Dr. Caulfield disbanded the joint committee in April 2012, and its faculty representatives were subsequently excluded from further participation in the development of the equity guidelines.

We feel that we need to make our position clear so that there is no misunderstanding: **The WMU-AAUP wants to see every colleague whose salary is inequitable receive the adjustment she is entitled to. And we will not stand in the way of the process that Dr. Caulfield has directed the deans to follow, despite our serious reservations about it.** Indeed, we hope that the process now underway will result in significant progress toward full salary equity at WMU.

Our reservations begin with the inexplicable lack of any direct communication with the faculty on the part of Dr. Caulfield or others in the Office of Academic Affairs, which Dr. Caulfield's document identifies as the source of funding for equity adjustments. The WMU-AAUP leadership has relayed faculty concerns to Dr. Caulfield and Provost Greene and encouraged them to communicate directly with the faculty on this important issue. We anticipated the possibility that the plan might be presented as if it has the approval of the WMU-AAUP, and at a meeting with Dr. Caulfield and Provost Greene on January 17, we explicitly requested that it be made clear that it does not.

We have further explained that we cannot agree to the summary disqualification of any individual faculty member, nor to the exclusion of entire departments or units within departments, for what appear to be arbitrary and specious reasons. We have also questioned the conflation of equity with merit, which obliges faculty members to prove that they are sufficiently meritorious not to continue to be discriminated against and essentially requires – of female faculty only – something akin to post-tenure review as a condition for redress of ongoing inequity. The WMU-AAUP believes that such exclusions and conditions risk exacerbating discrimination on our campus rather than redressing it in any meaningful way.

In our view, the appropriate and full financial reparations are the immediate priority. But we believe there is also a compelling need for a university-wide commitment to address what College of Arts and Sciences Dean Alex Enyedi has aptly described

as “the long-term issues that give rise to inequity in the first place.”

As you know, the WMU-AAUP comprises WMU's board-appointed faculty in its entirety and is thus inseparable from it and from the institution. This is to say that *the WMU-AAUP is the faculty*, integral to the institution and deeply invested in its success and well-being. In that spirit, we encourage you to think of the WMU-AAUP as your ally in the equity endeavor and in all other university initiatives in the service of academic excellence. We also encourage you to direct faculty members in your respective programs, departments, and colleges to contact us if they have questions that you are not sure how to answer, or if they need any other kind of assistance that we can provide. We also welcome your questions and your feedback, and we invite you to contact us directly if there is any way we might be of help to you in the course of this process, on behalf of your faculty.

Many thanks for your attention and for the opportunity to articulate the WMU-AAUP position on this important issue. We also thank you for the hard work that so many of you are doing to try to do right by your faculty under challenging circumstances.

Sincerely,

Lisa Cohen Minnick
Vice President, WMU-AAUP
Associate Professor of English
Affiliated Faculty, Gender and Women's Studies

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Growing Up Union in Flint, Michigan: From the UAW to the AAUP

By Gwen Athene Tarbox, Associate Professor of English

Like most people from Flint, Michigan, I grew up in a union family. My grandfather was one of the first members of the United Auto Workers and a participant in the 1936-37 Sit-Down Strike. My parents were both union members: At 16, my mom took an after-school job as a telephone operator and joined my grandpa, by then an electrician, at local meetings of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers. As a member of the Michigan Education Association, my dad walked many a picket line, both in support of his own union and in solidarity with other union labor actions.

As a faculty member, I have always worked on union campuses, but I was a graduate student at one of the few public universities in the Midwest that is not unionized, as it is located in a “right to work state” that has a long tradition of anti-union sentiment. In addition to my initial surprise regarding the lack of faculty benefits at my alma mater in comparison with those benefits enjoyed by my father, who worked at a unionized community college in Michigan, I noticed another serious drawback to our lack of a union contract: the time and energy spent by faculty and administrators who had to handle the continual stream of lawsuits associated with tenure and promotion decisions. In fact, there was a room in the department permanently reserved for the storage of legal materials and for the conduct of depositions, a situation that was replicated in most units across the campus.

As someone who ran a graduate program and served on a departmental executive committee here at WMU for four years, I found myself extremely grateful for the WMU-AAUP Agreement as well as the TAU contract, as these documents set out policy in a way that helped program administrators like me handle department business effectively and efficiently. The provisions in the Agreement that are not associated with salaries and benefits are just as important and just as necessary for the functioning of a university. The WMU-AAUP Agreement ensures that policies are stated clearly and specifically, and the negotiation process provides an established venue and set of procedures by way of which the faculty can propose improvements and changes to how we do things at WMU.

Whenever I speak to friends from graduate school who are now professors at non-union campuses, I hear stories that underscore the importance of having a negotiated Agreement whose provisions are legally binding. Imagine going up for tenure without a detailed set of definitions regarding the process itself as well as performance expectations, or advocating for teaching load equity without course caps that are codified and consistent, or defending faculty academic freedom without any codified, guaranteed right to such freedom in the first place.

The WMU-AAUP Agreement for 2011-14 contract is 165 pages long, and even a brief scan of the chapter headings offers a reminder of the many benefits that result from healthy collaboration between the Chapter and the university administration in the negotiation of a good union contract. These include policies that impact every aspect of our professional lives, from Academic Freedom (Article 13), which affirms our rights to “freedom of research and publication, freedom of teaching, freedom of shared governance, and freedom of participation in public debate,” to Progressive Review (Article 22), which guarantees the right of every faculty member to due process. On a non-union campus, many of the benefits and rights that we enjoy here at WMU (and often take for granted) are little more than a pipe dream.

That is why we must fight to keep our Chapter strong. Democratic organizations such as our faculty union operate best and are at their strongest when members are active participants. At a time when powerful lobbying organizations are attempting to weaken the unions, our involvement is even more crucial. That means attending meetings, volunteering for service, being prepared to participate in actions and demonstration, and paying dues. Without our faculty union, the benefits we take for granted today may not be here for us in the future.

Everything You Always Wanted to Know about the Association Council

by Lisa Minnick, Chapter Vice President

What is the Association Council?

Affectionately known as “the AC,” the Association Council is made up of representatives from each department. As in the U.S. House of Representatives, Association Council seats are allocated proportionally, on the basis of each department’s population of bargaining-unit faculty. Each academic unit is entitled to a minimum of one seat on the Council. Departments with 21-40 bargaining-unit members are entitled to two seats on the Council, while departments with 41 or more members are entitled to three.

How often does the AC meet?

The AC meets monthly during the academic year, except in October and April, when the Chapter meets as a whole. AC meetings are on Fridays from 1:30 to 3 p.m. and are held in the Bernhard Center.

What happens at AC meetings?

At the meetings, the AC receives reports from the Chapter president, the executive committee, the grievance officer and the contract administrator. In response to the information in these reports, according to the WMU-AAUP constitution, the AC “may take such actions as it deems appropriate.” That may not sound particularly exciting, but some such actions bring about very interesting – and yes, sometimes even exciting – results.

During contract negotiations, the AC plays a critical role. First, the AC must ratify the appointments of the chief negotiator and the other members of the negotiation team. AC members also help to develop negotiation strategies and make recommendations to facilitate the negotiation process. When negotiations are underway, the team reports to the AC, and once a tentative agreement is reached, the Association Council votes on whether to recommend to the membership to accept it.

Why is the AC so important?

1. The AC is central to communication. Association Council representatives are the key liaisons be-

tween the membership at large and the Chapter leadership, communicating information in both directions. In other words, your AC rep is your best source for the latest Chapter news as well as the Chapter leadership’s best source for information about what’s on the minds of the faculty.

2. AC reps vote on behalf of their department colleagues. Association Council representatives have voting rights as well as considerable influence in setting the direction of the Chapter.

If your department’s AC seat is vacant, you don’t get a vote. If your AC rep misses a meeting and doesn’t send a substitute, you don’t get a vote.

And sometimes, vacancies and absences can even mean that *nobody* gets a vote, simply because there are not enough AC reps present at a meeting even to bring action items to the floor for a vote. It only takes 32 AC reps for a quorum – half the total number of seats on the AC campus-wide – but if you have not served on the AC yourself, you might be surprised to learn that AC meetings often do not have a quorum.

What can you do?

If there is a vacant seat in your department, fill it! Recruit good candidates or even volunteer yourself to serve, hold a department election, and get that position filled so that your department faculty’s voices will be heard.

If your department’s seat is not vacant, help support your AC rep. Offering to attend a meeting as a substitute if your rep has a scheduling conflict and is unable to attend, talking with your colleagues about what’s on their minds, and encouraging them to attend Chapter meetings are all ways you can support your AC rep and help your colleagues (and yourself) in the process.

If you are an AC rep, do everything humanly possible to make it to the meetings. If you must miss a meeting, please send a substitute. And be sure to let the class-scheduling coordinator in your department know that you need to be available for

monthly AC meetings, which are always held on Fridays from 1:30 to 3:00 p.m. in the Bernhard Center.

One last thing:

There is no better way to get in the know about what is going on at WMU than by serving on the Association Council. It is a great opportunity for faculty members at all ranks who are looking for ways to contribute meaningfully to the culture at

WMU and to get to know active and engaged colleagues from every academic discipline.

If you are new to WMU, and even if you are untenured, service on the AC is a great way to learn the ropes. And if you are interested in leadership opportunities, do we ever have them, no matter where your individual interests and talents might lie. Best of all, when you join the AC, you become a vital part of a unique collaboration of colleagues who are making a real difference around here.

We're Looking for a Few Good Men and Women

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RIGHT NOW: The WMU-AAUP has several vacancies on the **Association Council** and the **Executive Committee**. We are also accepting applications for the position of **Information Officer**.

LATER THIS YEAR: The terms of the **Contract Administrator** and **Grievance Officer** will be up in August 2013.

WMU-AAUP Association Council (department representatives)

Please check with our staff to find out if your department has a vacancy on the Association Council (AC) For more information about the AC and its important role in the WMU-AAUP, please see "Everything You Always Wanted to Know about the Association Council" in this issue.

WMU-AAUP Executive Committee (college-wide representatives)

Executive Committee vacancies:

The College of Fine Arts
The Haworth College of Business

The Executive Committee (EC) of the WMU-AAUP includes Chapter officers and representatives from each college at WMU, as well as from the Academic Support Units and the Association of Language Specialists.

The EC meets twice a month (on Fridays at 2:30 p.m. at Montague House) and communicates

frequently via email. It acts as an advisory body for the Chapter officers and takes the lead in acting on behalf of the Chapter and the Association Council in day-to-day activities and in intervals between Chapter and AC meetings. During contract negotiations, the EC is responsible for functioning as the key strategy committee in directing the team. The time commitment is somewhat greater for Executive Committee members than for Association Council representatives, and the level of responsibility is somewhat greater as well.

WMU-AAUP Information Officer

The information officer works with the chapter leadership and assists with the following:

- informing and educating the faculty and the university community about Chapter business, issues, and positions;
- in coordination with the Chapter president, releasing accurate and timely information to the press;
- facilitating effective communication relationships with media;
- developing and issuing press releases;
- management/oversight and regular dissemination of Chapter communications;
- soliciting written contributions for publication or posting in various Chapter media.

Nominations (including self-nominations) are invited. For more information including position descriptions or to submit a nomination, please contact the staff at staff@wmuaaup.net or call 345-0151.