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July/August, 2005

the WMU
AAUP



Advocate

at Western Michigan University

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Jon Neill, Ph.D.

Chief Negotiator

Negotiating sessions have been scheduled for every Tuesday and Thursday through August 25. However, "negotiating session" is a misnomer. In your team's opinion, we have yet to ask for anything which even borders on the unreasonable. Nonetheless, the administration is showing little interest in addressing our concerns about the grievance procedure, professional conduct, department policy statements, tenure and promotion reviews, and family leave. The unwillingness of the administration's chief negotiator to engage in give and take, and his posturing, make negotiations very unproductive. A number of issues could have been settled by now if there was a genuine desire to construct a contract that allays faculty concerns about the aforementioned matters. The administration claims that it is interested in putting a contract together. If so, its chief negotiator must not have gotten the message.

Next week we intend to give the administration our economic proposals (compensation and healthcare), and our proposal on workload. We fully expect that they will be met with the same disdain and pejoration that our other proposals have met. The administration gave us its perspective on the University's financial situation on Tuesday the 19th. They are now predicting a 7% decrease in enrollment and a substantial budget deficit. Certainly a 7% decrease in enrollment is something to be concerned about. But

in forecasting stormy financial weather, they refuse to acknowledge the fact that, since total revenues in 2004 were \$42.8 million greater than operating expenses, the University's budget situation is hardly dire. Rather, they obfuscate with voodoo accounting, claiming that money flowing into the University has restrictions on it, or goes into a fund where it has to stay, and that there are expenses which are not listed in the audit summary. But even if we make some adjustments in revenues and expenses to account for this, even if we remove gifts from total revenues (\$12.4 million) and add the money paid on the principle of the University's debt to expenses (\$4.9 million), there was a surplus of \$25.5 million.

This being said, we have to give the administration's team credit. It's not caving. It's hanging tough. But so is your team. These negotiations will be a test, a test of wills. We, the faculty of this university have to ask ourselves: Do we have the will to stand up to the administration, to fight for a contract which gives us the protection and respect that we deserve and have earned? The day may be approaching when each of you will have to step up, and demonstrate to the administration that you support the proposals that the Chapter has made. These demonstrations, whatever forms they may take, will be crucial to the success of these negotiations. ■

CAGO Update

Michael G. Miller
Contract Administrator
&
Jon Neill
Grievance Officer

There has been some concern about the administration's use of term appointments, and the AAUP's position on this type of appointment. As you may know, term appointments are for one year, and renewable for up to 5 years. That is, by contract, an individual cannot be given a sixth consecutive term appointment. The Chapter's view is that, if it were to allow term appointments to be continued beyond five years, the tenure system could very well collapse. However, after a year's hiatus, an individual can be given another five consecutive, one year term appointments.

On a number of occasions, the administration has abused its contractual right to offer term appointments. There is a department with more than a dozen term appointees. And there are individuals who have worked at the University as term appointees, on and off, for decades. The AAUP is dismayed by these practices, and has strongly urged the administration to convert any term position that has been filled for 5 years to a tenure-track position. Clearly, there is an on-going need for the position if it has been filled for that long. The AAUP also would expect the administration to give preference to the individual who has been in that position when the position converts to a tenure-track position. If you are a term appointee, and are nearing the five-year term limit, please notify us so that we can begin investigating the possibility of getting the administration to convert your position to a tenure-track position.

As for grievances, the Chapter has grieved the administration's failure to make Distinguished Service, Distinguished Scholar, and Teaching Excellence Awards. Each of these awards comes with a \$2,000 increase in the recipient's base salary. These monetary awards come out of the merit pool and total \$14,000. Because the administration felt that no faculty qualified for these awards, the money must go back to the merit pool. The AAUP has requested that all bargaining-unit members who were em-



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ployed during the 2004-2005 academic year and who will be employed for the 2005-2006 academic year be given the same lump sum increase in their base salaries. It may not be a lot of money, but we feel that all faculty are deserving of a merit award. After all, collectively, faculty generated \$60 million more in revenues than they were paid in salaries and fringe benefits. ■

**WMU-AAUP
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Respect for Faculty Expertise

Paul T. Wilson
Vice President

Completing a doctorate or appropriate terminal degree is the crucial step in our professional development. It affirms, through a challenging, essentially adversarial process, conducted by experts in our own fields, that we have earned respect in the community of scholars. Our degrees render us uniquely qualified to make judgments about curriculum, hiring, tenure and promotion in our specific fields.

Our contract with Western recognizes the value to the institution of faculty expertise in Article 23, Faculty Participation in Departmental Governance. The national AAUP Red Book of Policy Documents & Reports (9th edition, p. 221) also speaks to this issue: "In ... matters where the faculty has primary responsibility," it points out, administrators should "concur with the faculty judgment except in rare instances and for compelling reasons which should be stated in detail."

During the last 15 years, many of us exercised our expertise in curriculum design by developing new graduate programs. These new programs sprang into life not by happenstance, but through a rigorous process of research, market analysis, evaluation and revision. Furthermore, this process was directed and supervised by several provosts and two presidents. Without exception, those most heavily involved were the faculty with the greatest curricular expertise.

Those among us who knew the most about our programs made our best case, responding to mandate and challenge; then the key administrators, as is their contractual right, made their best decisions. The review process outlined in the Provost's

July 19, 2005 final draft of the Graduate Program Evaluation (GPE) document abandons this model of direct exchange between faculty and administrators.

The main details of the GPE plan deserve scrutiny: the financial (and enrollment) basis for the arguments it makes, the complexities of the process it lays out, and the significant increase in workload it will entail. But the core of the GPE's problem with respect is found in two points — evaluation team membership, and the appeals process.

Team Membership: “The majority of team members reviewing programs in a college will be from outside the college (or division). An endowed professor, a distinguished faculty scholar, or other very senior faculty colleague external to the college (division) will lead each team.”

The Appeals Process: (between March 15 and April 5) “Programs, departments, or deans may appeal the review team's final recommendation to the Faculty Senate Executive Board, which will act as a committee of the whole in considering the appeal.”

Please note: When your program is on the block, the majority of the peo-

Many faculty have raised concerns about how the Graduate Program Evaluation plan was developed.

ple doing the review and making the recommendation will have no expertise in your field. If you need to appeal, there may be not one single person from your college on the appeals board.

When our new programs were established, we faculty made our cases directly to the most senior administrators. Now that some programs are to be cut, and all programs are being required to justify themselves, the current administration is insulating itself by placing two layers of other faculty, with progressively less expertise in our specific fields, between us and them.

Why does this administration not want to hear directly from us about our programs? Why must all programs be evaluated when most are manifestly not at risk? Why does the GPE plan assume that we, as faculty, will fail to act responsibly, that we will scheme only to preserve our existing programs at all costs?

Surely the expertise we have acquired does not render us shortsighted.

Many faculty have raised concerns about how the GPE plan was developed. Why was there no discussion of the substance of the plan on the floor of the Faculty Senate, one of our traditional venues for protecting — and respecting — academic expertise? Why is the Faculty Senate's curriculum review process not being followed? If that process is inadequate to this task, why was there not a public discussion across the campus to articulate the evaluation criteria and to build faculty support based on trust and respect for our curricular expertise?

This occasion could have enhanced our unity of purpose and mission when we are facing trying times. Instead, it has become another of the trials we must endure. ■

Retired Faculty Form Association With AAUP

Retired Western Michigan University faculty members are forming an adjunct membership in Western's Chapter of the American Association of University Professors, the faculty bargaining unit. Known as the Western Association of Retired Faculty (WARF), the new organization is particularly interested in those features of the contract dealing with retiree benefits, as well as the welfare of active faculty colleagues.

WARF also supports the long-term interests of the University and the AAUP principles which contribute to a high-quality university: academic freedom, tenure to assure due process, and shared governance.

Retired faculty members who have not yet joined WARF may do so by inquiry at the AAUP office at Montague House, (269) 345-0151. ■

**WMU-AAUP
website:**

WMICH.EDU/AAUP

The Ruckus In Your Campus Mailbox

*Arthur Falk
Professor Emeritus*

If you've been on campus this spring and summer, you've noticed many, many flyers originating from a group called A-FACT. In fact, you've received two flyers every week. The name stands, first of all, for "The AAUP Faculty Advocacy Concerns Team." But more to the point, it stands for "a fact," the fact on the flyer, which causes our concern for the faculty. We want you to be aware of the fact and alert to its meaning for you.

The A-FACT team is concerned mainly with the administration's lack of vision for the University. The facts document the vision vacuum and make one wonder why the faculty should continue to place their trust in the administration. The facts also point to the administration's indifference to important matters, distorted priorities, and downright unfairness. (Although negotiations are going on, the A-FACT team has no direct connection with negotiations. The flyers should not be interpreted as reflecting the specifics of what the Chapter is attempting to bargain.)

The A-FACT team meets in Montague House every week to work on the flyers to be distributed. All of its members are concerned faculty. Some of its members are also on the Chapter's Executive Committee.

Sometimes our concern intensifies into irritation, frustration and even outrage. Thus, the ruckus in your mailbox. How do you feel about the facts presented? A-FACT welcomes your feedback. Please provide your feedback by contacting the AAUP by telephone (345.0151), email (wmuaaup@ameritech.net) or through the website (www.wmich.edu/aaup). ■



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