

# WMU-AAUP

Western Michigan University Chapter of  
American Association of University Professors

## Investing in a Faculty, Family & Community Friendly University

*Dominic Nicolai, WMU-AAUP Treasurer*

It comes as no surprise to anyone that major universities have a major economic impact on the community at large. Jobs are created, students come to learn, families visit. Successful universities attract talented students and professors. If there is a reason for people to come to a community, it is the sense that the community takes care of the people in it. Successful universities accomplish this by being friendly to faculty, family and the community.

A quick glance at other universities shows that Western still needs to fully embrace this philosophy. For example, at the University of California, they are designing unique programs and policies "...to promote the recruitment and retention of the best and the brightest, help all members of the university community achieve their fullest potential as scholars and teachers...". The University of Michigan helps its faculty members by helping "...families achieve a family-career balance through connections with campus and community resources...". At Princeton University, faculty members have the opportunity to obtain a mortgage loan up to 1.5% below prevailing interest rates, if they purchase a home within the city of Trenton. These are just a few examples of other major universities. What about Western Michigan University?

Western does not promote itself as being friendly to faculty, family or the community. There are some programs and benefits in place that are friendly, but Western needs to do more if it wants to attract the most talented students and faculty to the Kalamazoo community. Places to start include

- ◇ attracting better students by paying the graduate assistants a more sensible wage
- ◇ fixing the salary inequity among female faculty members (WMU has made a promise but has not kept it so far)
- ◇ maintaining health care coverage at reasonable costs
- ◇ investing in the community through local banks or credit unions

This union is encouraging Western to invest in faculty, family and the community as a means to improve this university. The WMU-AAUP is going to look into switching from a regional bank to a local bank or credit union. Historically, both Western and this union were connected to a local bank, First of America, but a series of mergers has moved our vital funds away from the community. It is time for Western to take care of its people.

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## **Department Meetings for the New Year**

*Norman Hawker, WMU-AAUP Information Officer*

Departmental meetings with members of our union's Executive Committee provide an important way to achieve our goals of transparency and open communication. The exchange of ideas at these meetings helps us set priorities for our union and build a faculty friendly university. Ideally, your department's Association Council Representative should arrange at least one such meeting every year.

These meetings can be set up at the convenience of your department faculty. Typically, the meetings are held immediately preceding or immediately after a regular department meeting, but the timing is completely up to your faculty. Meetings generally last about an hour, but if a shorter or longer time works better for your department, that can easily be arranged. Just contact have your Association Council Representative call (269-345-0151) or email (staff@wmuaaup.net) the WMU-AAUP staff with a date and time.

While there are issues of common concern that the Executive Committee hopes to share at these meetings, the primary purpose of the meetings is to hear the voice of the faculty. Many of the discussions so far this year have been wide ranging and covered topics from the quality of chairs in the classroom to chair evaluations to differences in workload within and among departments. We can also arrange a meeting on specific issue, such as Summer Teaching. If we are to build a faculty, family friendly university at WMU, we need to hear from you what's working and what needs to be fixed.

So have your Association Council Representative call (269-345-0151) or email (staff@wmuaaup.net) the WMU-AAUP staff to set up a date and time for your department to voice your concerns to the Executive Committee.