

2-1-2007

Right Flier: Newsletter of the AAUP-WSU Volume 7, Number 2, February 2007

American Association of University Professors-Wright State University

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(2007). Right Flier: Newsletter of the AAUP-WSU Volume 7, Number 2, February 2007. , 7(2).
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The Right Flier

Newsletter of the AAUP-WSU

Volume 7, Number 2, February 2007

Editor, Henry Ruminski

Administrative Assistant, Connie Jacobs

The Power of Collective Action

By Anna Bellisari, President AAUP-WSU

They said it would never happen. Not in a thousand years, not in Ohio, not at WSU. But it did, after many, many years of struggling to influence administrators and hoping for a breakthrough. The Wright State University administration has agreed to join a number of other Ohio colleges and universities to offer domestic partner benefits to Bargaining Unit Faculty and other eligible WSU employees. We at AAUP-WSU are, of course, deeply satisfied by this development, not just because it is a major achievement by our union, but especially because all WSU faculty members now have the same opportunity for health insurance coverage and other benefits. So how did it finally happen?

We attempted to get this benefit for faculty members during every past contract negotiation. Unfortunately, the administration did not agree, offering different excuses each time. But we were not willing to give up and were prepared to put the issue on the table again in the forthcoming 2008 negotiations. So, some of the credit goes to our dedicated Bargaining Councils and expert Negotiation Teams. They were determined to confront the administration's negotiators with this issue until a satisfactory resolution was reached.

We featured the need for domestic partner benefits in almost every recent issue of the *Right Flier*. But it was the eloquent and powerful article by Professor Charles Derry in the April 2005 issue that said it best (see www.wright.edu/admin/aaup/rightflier/vol5no5Apr2005.pdf). His description of many years of personal effort and the effects of denial of benefits could not fail to move readers. A group of non-bargaining unit faculty members volunteered to distribute this issue to administrators, WSU Board of Trustees members, and other interested individuals.

Last year, AAUP-WSU appointed a committee to develop action plans in support of domestic partner benefits. Working quietly, the committee prepared a number of creative and persuasive proposals for action, but these were not implemented because we received the good news that the current WSU administration was ready to respond with domestic partner benefits for Bargaining Unit Faculty.

I'm sure that I have overlooked many other sources of encouragement and support that were offered without fanfare and without our knowledge. If you have any information about those, *please contact me*. I've already been invited to several national conferences to present our strategy for success and want to provide a complete picture of the many efforts that culminated in our victory.

It may seem that the result of our attempts to obtain domestic partner benefits for WSU faculty was due simply to a fortunate convergence of various campus interests. But I'm convinced that it was the long-term, combined effort of the academic community that finally brought us to this point. May we never forget that collective action is the most powerful agent of change at Wright State University.

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Committee W Revived to Examine Issues

**By Carol Loranger,
Member-at-Large AAUP-WSU**

Responding to requests from Bargaining Unit Faculty, AAUP-WSU will reconvene the ad hoc Committee on Women in the Academic Profession (Committee W). Professor Marybeth Pringle (English) has agreed to chair the committee which is charged with gathering information and reporting on matters pertaining to the status of women faculty at Wright State University and making policy recommendations to the AAUP-WSU Executive Committee.

According to the National AAUP website, Committee W's purview includes "such issues as equity in pay, work/family balance, sexual harassment and discrimination, affirmative action and the status of female faculty in rank and tenure."

The Executive Committee has solicited Bargaining Unit Faculty volunteers and will be appointing Committee W members and defining its charge in the near future. Anyone interested in serving on the committee should contact a member of the Executive Committee.

Nationally, Committee W came into existence in 1918, three short years after the formation of the American Association of University Professors by Arthur O. Lovejoy and John Dewey. Since its inception Committee W has provided leadership in improving women faculty's status and well-being, and moving academic culture toward fairness, inclusiveness, and diversity. Nonetheless, in its 2006 report "Gender Equity Indicators 2006", the Committee noted that barriers to women's advancement in the profession persist. Tracking data from the 1972 passage of Title XI prohibiting discrimination in education to 2005, the committee noted that while the percentage of doctoral degrees earned by women had increased from 16% to 48%, the percentage women employed as full-time faculty (tenure- and non-tenure line) had risen to only 39%. The gender gap among tenured faculty remains wide, with women making up only 24% of full professors at the time of the study, with comparable percentages throughout the

professorial ranks. Conversely, the study found that women hold the majority of "poorly compensated, insecure" non-tenure track positions at doctoral, masters, baccalaureate and two-year institutions.

WSU's Committee W has lain dormant since faculty organized as a collective bargaining unit. But in the 1992 and 1993, WSU's Committee W, then also under the leadership of Professor Pringle, produced two monumental and effective studies showing the need for systemic change at Wright State University.

The 1992 report paved the way for creation of a cohesive and comprehensive Women's Studies Program. At that time WSU was one of the last three holdouts in the state without such a program. Additional to the curricular developments addressed by the report was the creation of a Women's Center to complement the program and to provide a gathering place for faculty staff and students interested in women's studies and a locus for community activism and intercollegiate cooperation on issues that effect women.

A second, more ambitious study the following year marshaled statistical and anecdotal data to provide a comprehensive overview of institutional barriers to the recruitment and promotion of women faculty at WSU and lack of opportunity for promotion among unclassified women employees. The report also addressed significant salary disparities between male and female faculty. Some recommendations in the report were implemented by the then and subsequent administrations, including increased commitment to gender diversity in faculty recruiting and institutional support for management training for women. Other recommendations, such as stopping the tenure clock for parental and family leave, family leave and partner benefits, languished until collective bargaining, with partner benefits being the most recent achievement.

Whither Merit Pay

By Rudy Fichtenbaum, Chief Negotiator and Jim Vance, Communication Officer

In the latest issue of *Faculty Line*, Faculty President Jim Sayer argued that we should abandon our current merit system because the assessment process is extremely time-consuming and the rewards are very small. With this note, we will join in the conversation about merit pay. This is a good time to think about this issue, not only due to our colleague's comments but also because negotiations for our next collective bargaining agreement (CBA) are not that far off.

There is no doubt that our current "merit" system has fundamental flaws. One of them – a problem that predates collective bargaining – is that "merit" at WSU has always been a zero-sum game.

Specifically, a department receives a fixed pool of money to distribute among faculty; if everyone in the department is extraordinary, all will receive an average raise; and if everyone is adequate, they will all receive an average raise. Thus "merit" pay has never really rewarded performance, only *differences* in performance. Clearly this creates opportunities for inequities because in one department performance may be evenly distributed across the various categories (some faculty rated inadequate, some rated satisfactory, etc.) while in another department everyone may perform at the same level. In the former department there is an opportunity to reward those who have performed at the highest level, but in the latter department no such opportunity exists, even if everyone has performed at the highest level.

A second issue with the current "merit" system pertains to its relation to the minimum salaries provided by our CBA. In a few of the lowest-paid disciplines, these minimums raise the salaries of below-average performers up to the same level of faculty who are better-than-average performers. This may be viewed as a problem, *if* one believes that people respond not to the absolute level of compensation but to the relative level. This view suggests that people with low salaries will feel better as long as there is someone else with an even lower salary around. To take this to its logical conclusion one might argue that if we cut the pay of the lowest performers without raising the pay of the highest performers, the highest performers would feel justly rewarded. The real question that needs to be asked is this: why was the administration ever allowed to hire people with Ph.D.s for starvation wages?

Bringing up the pay of the very lowest paid faculty does absolutely nothing to hurt higher paid faculty unless you feel that watching someone starve will make you feel better knowing that you are only suffering from malnutrition.

Third, one may wonder about the share of the overall raise provided by our CBA devoted to "merit" increases vs. the share for across-the-board increases. Should we not divert some, or all, of the across-the-board increases to merit? There are two important answers to this question.

First, AAUP-WSU has always been guided by democratic principles. We survey our Regular Chapter Members before each round of CBA negotiations, asking in particular about merit raises vs. across-the-board raises.

For example, the 2005 survey showed that our Members viewed across-the-board raises as the top priority economic issue, with health care benefits in second place and merit raises in third (with market and equity raises also receiving considerable support). Our negotiating positions are consistent with survey findings. Second, even with the across-the-board raises in our current CBA, we do not provide all faculty with protection against rises in the cost of living. That is, some faculty who perform well may have falling or stagnant real wages while others receive only modest increases; if all money now devoted to across-the-board raises were diverted to merit, then this problem would be exacerbated.

Third, one of the issues we have wrestled with as a faculty is that while collectively we support the concept of merit raises, merit itself may well be impossible to measure, in which case any "merit" system would be inherently unfair. Indeed, department chairs currently evaluate Bargaining Unit Faculty in three areas: teaching, research and service.

Most faculty and administrators agree that teaching is very important. Yet all who are candid will also agree on two other points. First, we now do not measure teaching performance very well; and second, the additional resources needed to substantially improve our evaluation of teaching – especially the extra *time* spent by faculty and department chairs – would simply not justify the additional benefits that one could reasonably expect. After all, what would we likely learn? That there are a few poor teachers among us; that most of us teach well, *and* that it is difficult to make fine distinctions within this large group; and that a few more of us are exceptional teachers.

Much the same argument could be made about service. Besides, there is certainly a perception among many faculty members that service has rarely been rewarded at this university, either before or after the advent of collective bargaining.

(Continued on Page 4)

Merit pay (continued from P-3)

That leaves scholarship. Many believe that scholarship can be evaluated fairly. We can count publications and grant dollars. We claim to measure scholarship quality through a system of peer review. Indeed, many faculty would agree that we can do a considerably better job evaluating our scholarship than the other two components of our professional lives. But still, nontrivial doubts arise. After all, more than a few of us have had articles returned from referees who clearly had no idea what we were talking about. Others among us must seek external funding to support their research, but many find that though their peers rank their proposals very highly, tight budgets at funding agencies yield not a dollar to support their work. What about faculty in the fine and performing arts, where judgments of one's work may be especially subjective?

So how well does the present merit system work? Surely there are *substantial* questions about how well our teaching and service are evaluated; and, even though we do a better job evaluating scholarship, it is far from perfect.

But there is another problem inherent in our current system: it is based on *annual* evaluations, and the merit raises that follow depend upon the merit raise pool, the size of which depends upon the strength of our union, the priorities of the administration, external economic factors, and the like. Thus two faculty members with essentially identical overall records may receive substantially different merit raises, if one has especially strong performance in years when merit raise levels were especially high. The disparities that can result may be large, especially over the course of a career; and indeed, our Regular Chapter Members recognize that equity problems exist as previously-cited survey results showed.

However, our union's position on merit pay is the position of its members, who have wanted a "merit" component among the raise provisions of the CBA. In fact, we went much farther in our last round of bargaining: we made a proposal that, while not solving all of the aforementioned problems, went a long way toward addressing them.

Specifically, our proposal included across-the-board annual raises and two new features: first, an opportunity for Bargaining Unit Faculty to attain a rank beyond Professor, and second, an increase in the increment for promotion, to be retroactive for all faculty members who had been promoted in previous years. Promotion raises would thus have largely replaced merit raises.

The most appealing feature of our proposal is that it would eliminate the zero-sum game at the foundation of our current "merit" system. Each faculty member who warrants promotion receives a substantial raise, the amount of the raise is a fixed percentage, *and* that raise does not diminish the salary of one's colleagues. Consider the current system, in which one person – a department chair – evaluates every departmental Bargaining

Unit Faculty Member every year, only to apportion a rather small merit pool where one person's gain is another's loss. Compare that to the system we proposed, featuring a much less frequent but much more credible multi-level peer review process that would evaluate a body of work over an extended period of time, that would result in a substantial reward for one's performance, in which a raise for one faculty member would not diminish that for one's colleagues.

Moreover, the availability of a promotion beyond the rank of Professor (shall we say to "Super-Professor"?) would extend the monetary incentive for performance deep into an individual's career.

Unfortunately, the administration rejected our proposal outright, opting instead to tweak the flawed system we have been operating with for years. This brings us to the last question: why did the administration wish to retain the current "merit" system with all its acknowledged shortcomings? While not presuming to speak on behalf of the administration, let us speculate a bit about its reasons for supporting the status quo. First, perhaps the administration likes the fact that faculty members spend much of their time looking at the people immediately above and below them on the salary ladder. If I am busy obsessing that so and so earns \$500 more than I did though my performance is clearly superior, maybe I will forget that the administration is paying all of us too little.

Second, the administration may not really believe that rewards affect performance; perhaps it likes the current system because it can tell the Trustees, politicians, and the public that we have a "merit" system even though the system entails much work and has little consequence.

Now is indeed a good time for us to think about merit pay. Do we want to retain the current merit system? Or, should we move to an alternative system entailing a more credible relationship between performance and reward, one in which the substantial effort needed to adequately assess faculty performance yields more than a trivial increment in salary? You, the Regular Chapter Members of AAUP, will have many opportunities to share your answers to these questions.

Right now, you can contact members of our Executive Committee. **A chapter meeting is scheduled for March 2 at 12:30.** Soon, you will have a survey in your hands whose outcome will guide the CBA negotiations expected to begin less than a year from now. Your union is listening. What do you have to say?

In the coming weeks, you will be able to run for election to represent the Bargaining Unit Faculty in your college on our Bargaining Council. Your union needs your service as well as your ideas, as we move toward CBA negotiations. Will you step forward?

AAUP-WSU News Briefs

Election of AAUP-WSU officers

Regular Chapter Members should have received ballots for the annual AAUP-WSU election of officers. The deadline for returning your ballot to the chapter office is March 2 at 8:30 a.m. Please note that the chapter office is in 123 Allyn Hall.

The positions are all for two year terms except the Member-at-Large of the Nominating Committee who serves for one year. The following candidates have been nominated:

President :

Anna Bellisari

Secretary

Liam Anderson

Audrey McGowin

Communication Officer

Jim Vance

Member-At-Large of the Executive Committee

Martin Kich

Carol Loranger

Member-At-Large of the Nominating Committee

Munsup Seoh

The election results will be announced at the winter chapter meeting.

Professor-at-large University P&T

Larry Prochaska was elected to the Professor-at-large seat on the University Promotion and Tenure Committee. As specified in our Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) AAUP conducted the election and subsequent runoff election for the position. Other candidates were Donna Cole, Ann Wendt, and Hans Sprohge. Prochaska and Cole were the top vote getters and candidates in the run-off election. The professor-at-large must be a tenured member of the Bargaining Unit and have the rank of Professor. The Professor-at-large may also serve on department or college P&T committees but may only vote twice on any candidate.

Family friendly efforts get national attention

Anna Bellisari, AAUP-WSU president served as co-leader with Wendy Roworth of the University of Rhode Island of a workshop on family-friendly policies at the semi-annual meeting of the AAUP Collective Bargaining Congress in Washington, D.C. in December.

Although it was held in the afternoon of the last day of the meetings, the workshop was well-attended, and there was much discussion about this topic of great interest to many AAUP chapters.

Anna said it was gratifying to report on the success of our negotiations for paid parental leave and domestic partner benefits with the WSU administration, and to share copies of our MOUs with representatives of other chapters. Many are still working hard to obtain these benefits, with more or less success. The workshop received excellent evaluations and quite positive responses.

Amendment approved at fall meeting.

Members amended the chapter's constitution at the fall quarter AAUP-WSU chapter meeting to insure that any person in the Bargaining Unit who becomes a Regular Chapter Member would begin paying dues at the same time payroll deduction of fair share fees begin for those who choose not to join AAUP-WSU. This eliminated a potential "penalty" for joining the chapter during the sixty day grace period before fair share fees (which are the same as membership dues) are assessed.

Domestic partner comment

Several faculty members have offered thanks to AAUP-WSU for efforts on domestic partner benefits. Here is what one had to say change:

"For us the benefits impact our lives in two ways, financially and psychologically.

Financially, we were paying thousands each year for insurance for my domestic partner. This included the cost of the insurance itself (\$3000), a higher deductible (\$1000) and higher co-pays. There was also no coverage for dental or optical so we paid that out of pocket. In addition, many preventative procedures were not covered by that insurance.

To me, this translated into me receiving less of a salary than my co-workers. So if a colleague and I made the same amount, I was still paying for benefits for my partner while my married colleague was not. For us, greater financial security means greater emotional security. In addition, I feel better about my job and my employer because I feel like I am being treated equitably."

WSU positioned well in state salaries

The AAUP salary data for Ohio is out. Although data for Toledo is missing, it appears that WSU is third in the state at the rank of professor, fourth in the state at the rank of associate professor and second in the state at the rank of assistant professor. The Executive Committee is working to verify that the WSU data presented are correct.

Another important face is that we are more than 1 percent ahead of the seventh place university so there will be no additional raise money this year. In fact, in each case we are 1 percent above fifth place at each rank. So in relative terms we are doing quite well. Of course as the article on merit pay pointed out, it may simply be that our colleagues at other institutions in Ohio are doing poorly which would not be reason for us to celebrate.

Another interesting statistic is that we now have 119 instructors and lecturers at WSU. Here are some more interesting numbers. We have 604 full-time faculty. Subtract 119 lecturers and instructors and 35 department chairs and you get 450 faculty which is surprisingly close to the number of BUFMs. This means that lecturers and instructors account for 19.7 percent of the full time faculty.

Check your pay advice & W2 for errors

Payroll errors continue to be reported and several W2 mistakes were found by faculty members. The Executive Committee urges everyone to carefully examine the W2 form to make sure it accurately reflects your earnings. Examining your pay advice each month helps catch errors quickly.

The work continues

Other issues which the Executive Committee dealt with or is still monitoring include proposed incentive programs in some colleges, annual evaluation questions, merit and market raise questions, classroom issues, a solution to delays in depositing 403b deductions and other similar issues

Mail To:

Winter Quarter Chapter Meeting

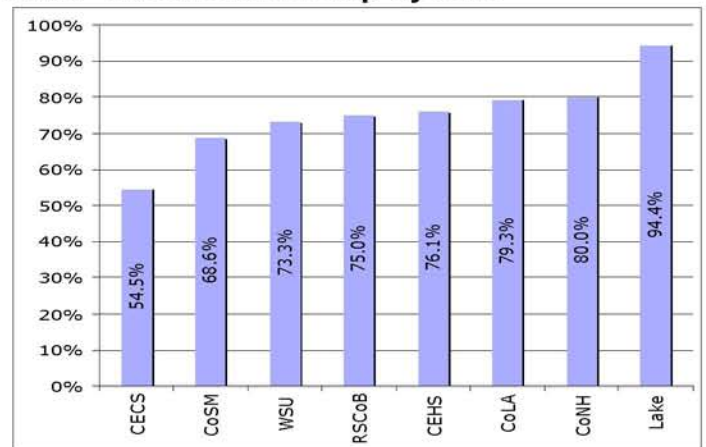
FRIDAY, MARCH 2, 2007 @ 12:30 PM

MAIN CAMPUS--054 RIKE HALL
LAKE CAMPUS—151 DWYER HALL

Because collective bargaining matters will be discussed only BUFMs may attend.

Refreshments will be served.

AAUP-WSU Membership by Unit



The following members serve on the AAUP-WSU Executive Committee.

Anna Bellisari, President	2923
Henry Ruminski, Vice President	2950
Audrey McGowin, Secretary	2791
Travis Doom, Treasurer	5105
Jim Vance, Communication Officer	2206
Maggie MacDonald, Member-at-Large	2470
Carol Loranger, Member-at-Large	2961
Rudy Fichtenbaum, Chief Negotiator	3085
Barry Milligan, Grievance & Contract Admn.	4805