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The Right Flier

The Newsletter of AAUP-WSU

Volume 15, Number 4
2014-2015

Editors: Marty Kich and Linda Farmer

What Would Life Be Like Without a Union

Rudy Fichtenbaum
Chief Negotiator, AAUP-WSU

As many of you know Jim Vance and I will be retiring from Wright State at the end of this academic year. Both of us have served on the AAUP-WSU executive committee since the advent of collective bargaining at Wright State University. Our first contract was in 1999 and since that time we have negotiated five contracts for TET faculty and two for NTE faculty.

The contracts that we have negotiated have been among the best in the state and the contract that we negotiated for our NTE faculty is among the best in the nation when it comes to job security for non-tenure track faculty. When we negotiate, unlike many other faculty unions, we post weekly updates of each negotiating session to keep faculty aware of how negotiations are proceeding and give faculty a chance to weigh-in on what is happening at the negotiating table.

Volunteers have run our union. We have one part-time administrative assistant but the day-to-day work of running our union, as well as preparing for and engaging in negotiations, by a relative small group of people and now two of us are retiring. We have agreed to come back and work for AAUP-WSU to help train the next generation of union leaders on our campus. But for that to happen some of you are going to have to step up and volunteer to run for union office, serve as department liaisons, lend a hand with our webpage, help improve our presence on social media and help maintain our database.

When we send out a call announcing new elections the only volunteers that we typically get are incumbents. When an incumbent member of the EC decides to step aside typically there are no volunteers and in the past one or two of us has had to spend many hours recruiting people to run in

what are generally uncontested elections. When we post updates on negotiations we get almost no questions, comments or suggestions. When we have meetings or sponsor events on campus the turnout is very low.

What this means is that most of you take for granted the benefits of having a union. However, today AAUP-WSU is at a crossroads. So let me take you back to what things were like at WSU before we had a union.

Before we had a union, there were no criteria for promotion and tenure. Decisions about promotion and tenure were in many cases arbitrary and depended in many cases on whether you were liked or disliked. For example, before we had a union, there had never been a woman in the College of Business who had been promoted to the rank of Professor. Women with terminal degrees spent their entire careers at the rank of Assistant Professor and men with masters' degrees became Associate Professors.

Before we had a union, raises when we had raises, were 100% at the discretion of the Chair and Dean. Some chairs and deans were fair, but many rewarded their "friends" and punished their "enemies." There was no connection between your annual evaluation and your raise.

Before we had a union, we had several years in which our real wages went down when we had years with 0%, 1% or 2% with 1% effective in the fall and 1% effective in January (losing out on 6 months of a raise).

Before we had a union, Wright State was the only state university in Ohio that did not offer vision coverage to its faculty.

Before we had a union, there were no domestic partner benefits, no paid parental leave, no adoption assistance and we had fewer opportunities for professional development leaves.

Before we had a union, if you were an instructor or lecturer, you could be dismissed without any due process. Essentially, you had no job security.

Before we had a union, there were no minimum salaries at WSU. In our first CBA for TET, we negotiated minimum salaries of \$35,000; \$45,000 and \$55,000 for Assistant, Associate and Professors respectively (academic year contracts). In today's dollars that meant we had minimum salaries of \$49,000, \$63,000 and \$77,000 and there were a significant number of faculty who earned less than these minimums. Today the minimum salary for Assistant, Associate and Professor (academic year salary) are \$55,604, \$69,004 and \$84,387. It is also the case that virtually every faculty member in the lowest paying disciplines receives more than a 7.5% increase when he or she is promoted due solely to the minimum salary provisions in the CBA.

Before we had a union, there were no minimum salaries for NTE faculty. When we negotiated the first CBA for NTE faculty 30% of the faculty in the bargaining unit received an increase due to minimum salaries.

Before we had a union, there was no guarantee that the administration would hire TET or NTE to teach summer classes.

Before we had a union, the administration had the right to unilaterally change the method for conducting student evaluation of teaching.

Before we had a union the administration could unilaterally change health benefits, something they did to other employees at the University just a year ago.

Before we had a union, there was no preventive dental coverage and no coverage for sealants for children.

Before we had a union, the administration could unilaterally change teaching loads. Without a union TET faculty in most colleges today would be teaching a 3-3 load, except for TET faculty at the Lake Campus who would be teaching a 4-3 load and NTE faculty would be teaching a 4-4 load. Without a union faculty could be compelled to teach distance learning classes and the administration would be free to enroll as many students as they please in these classes.

Before we had a union, faculty had no protection for their intellectual property. Just a couple of years ago the administration signed a deal to license the use of intellectual property created by our faculty to a Saudi university without obtaining permission from faculty and with plans to provide faculty with minimal compensation. Because we have a union, we forced the administration to get the consent of faculty to use their intellectual property and to fairly compensate them for the use of this property.

Before we had a union, the administration could have contracted with McGraw Hill or Pearson, to buy courses and hire adjuncts to teach those courses on our campus. However, because we have a union, only courses developed and approved by Wright State faculty can be offered for credit.

Before we had a union, deans could unilaterally make salary adjustments, again rewarding friends and punishing enemies.

An union is only as strong as its members and if members don't support our union in concrete ways, then eventually, the Board of Trustees will hire a President and give him or her orders to break the union and take back many of the gains we have made over 17 years. If you don't believe me just read *Inside Higher Ed* or the *Chronicle of Higher Education* and you will see what is in your future.