



Representing Wayne State Faculty and Academic Staff

NEWSBRIEFS

Wayne State University 577-1750

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Can We Fix ESS? Can We Improve Subsidy Condition Status?

For many academic staff who are still on probation in the Employment Security System (ESS), and for most of those on subsidy condition, uncertainty is a way of life. Job security is measured by the number of months remaining in their term appointments or subsidy, after which they can be dismissed without cause, no matter how well they have performed.

After five long years on probation, academic staff are finally eligible for ESS status-- a continuing appointment that can only be terminated for just cause, subject to the protections of the grievance procedure. But decisions about who qualifies for ESS status are left solely to administrators, who may or may not follow the rules establishing the relevant criteria.

Academic staff on subsidy condition are even more at risk: if and when the money runs out, they are gone, with only three months notice or less.

With negotiations to begin next spring for a new collective bargaining agreement, the question is: what can we do about it?

What to Do?

We have been collecting ideas from academic staff and debating alternatives, some of which are listed below. **NONE OF THESE PROPOSALS YET QUALIFIES AS AN OFFICIAL PRIORITY FOR BARGAINING.** They are offered here solely as a basis for discussing what is possible.

ANY AND ALL FEEDBACK IS WELCOME (see below for e-mail and phone numbers).

ESS

* Shorten the probationary period.

Five years' probation needlessly prolongs the agony and apprehension. It simply does not take that long to evaluate job performance, and job performance is the primary criterion for evaluating ESS status. Professional achievement is a secondary criterion, and scholarly achievement is not to be evaluated at all, unless the candidate wishes to include it.

The only drawback to shortening the probation period is that some administrators impose scholarly criteria, often by widening "professional achievement" to include publications and other measures of scholarly work. No matter what the length of the probationary period, scholarly achievement is difficult for academic staff who are held to fixed schedules and heavy workloads that leave little time for research. Administrators, therefore, have to be held to the relevant criteria (see "Peer Review" below).

* Shorten the probationary period at the choice of the candidate.

Some may want additional time beyond the shortened period proposed above. This should be the candidate's choice.

* Peer review and recommendation of ESS candidates.

Evaluation of candidates for ESS status should be incorporated into the existing structure

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of promotion and tenure committees. Peer evaluation has the potential for countering the tendency of some administrators to impose their own criteria for ESS status.

* Allow past work experience in setting the ESS probation clock.
If a candidate so chooses, he or she should have the option of counting past service in a different classification towards the probationary clock.
As it now stands, administrators have to approve such credit.

* Eliminate Academic Staff "Renewal Contract" status.
Academic staff hired under this provision can never achieve ESS status. In effect, they are on held in a perpetual probation purgatory. Few people are actually hired into this category, but its existence invites a form of peonage. It should be eliminated.

* In libraries and archives, incumbent academic staff and new hires should have the choice of switching from ESS to tenure track.
For incumbents, past service in the ESS track should be counted towards the tenure clock only if the candidate so chooses.

Subsidy Condition

* When subsidy is discontinued, academic staff should get the same notice of non-renewal as all other academic staff. Currently, academic staff on subsidy condition get only 3 months notice prior the expiration of their appointment "or whenever the subsidy is discontinued, whichever is less" (p. 74). All other academic staff progress to 12 months notice of non-renewal after their first term appointment. If

necessary, the university should budget a contingency reserve from the general fund to cover the notice requirement and allow time for the difficult transition to a new position.

* Academic staff who are not renewed for lack of subsidy should get first call on interviews for subsequent openings to comparable positions.
Academic staff with experience and good evaluations are a resource for the university. They should have the automatic opportunity to seek employment opportunities within the university as they become available.

Other Issues of Concern

Participants at the November meeting on contract proposals for academic staff also indicated their interest in a wide range of other issues.

* Raise salary minimums.

* Reinstate unit selective salary with peer review. Unit selective salary distributed according to peer evaluation should supplement the current exclusive reliance on dean/director selective salary, in which peer evaluation is only consultative.

* Improve retirement benefits.

* Limit use of part-timers and non-professionals doing academic staff work.

* Address issues of work day/workload and related issue of comp time.
This issue becomes more important as evening and weekend schedules become more common. Policies on comp time vary from department to department.

* Martin Luther King Day.
Currently, since there are no classes held on this day, faculty are not required to be on campus, but academic staff must use a vacation day if they wish to participate in the many activities available in their local communities which celebrate the life of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

* Improvement in benefits such as health care, vision coverage, and vacation days.
WSU academic staff should receive benefits at least comparable to those of Michigan social service workers. The latter get full Blue Cross-Blue Shield coverage at essentially no cost to the individual. they also get vision insurance, and their dental coverage has fewer co-pays and deductibles.

* Specify the defining characteristics of academic staff.
Many people seem to think academic staff are glorified clerical workers. There is little understanding of the diversity and professionalism of these classifications, which seems to translate into lower pay scales and other forms of discriminatory treatment.

* Or??? What do you think? Call (577-1750) or contact us via email at WSUAAUP@aol.com.

Possible Box if room:

The Trouble With Term Appointments
A prolonged stretch of term appointments contributes to a climate of fear and apprehension among academic staff. The AAUP's survey in 1994 asked academic staff (N=78) to evaluate the following statement: "Academic Staff who are still on term contracts risk non-

renewal if they draw attention to mismanagement in their departments." Fifty-nine percent agreed with the statement and only 15 percent disagreed. (The remainder were "neutral.")

----- Headers -----

Return-Path: <s.babson@wayne.edu>
Received: from rly-zd02.mx.aol.com (rly-zd02.mail.aol.com [172.31.33.226]) by air-zd05.mail.aol.com (v53.29) with SMTP; Mon, 21 Dec 1998 13:06:59 -0500
Received: from mail3.wayne.edu (mail3.wayne.edu [141.217.1.81])
by rly-zd02.mx.aol.com (8.8.8/8.8.5/AOL-4.0.0)
with ESMTP id NAA12909 for <WSUAAUP@aol.com>;
Mon, 21 Dec 1998 13:06:58 -0500 (EST)
Received: from [141.217.21.168] ([141.217.21.168])
by mail3.wayne.edu (8.8.5/8.8.5) with SMTP id NAA20858
for <WSUAAUP@aol.com>; Mon, 21 Dec 1998 13:06:57 -0500 (EST)
X-Sender: aa4573@wayne.edu (Unverified)
Message-Id: <v01540b00b2a43e8806f3@[141.217.21.168]>
Mime-Version: 1.0
Content-Type: text/plain; charset="us-ascii"
Date: Mon, 21 Dec 1998 13:08:39 -0500
To: WSUAAUP@aol.com
From: s.babson@wayne.edu (Steve Babson)
Subject: Newsletter

48.7%	42.4%		
U. of M.— Dearborn		60.9	60.9
Saginaw Valley State		61.8	62.0
Michigan State University		61.9	58.6
U. of M.— Flint		65.5	63.5
University of Michigan	65.6		48.1
MTU— ?		69.1	63.9
Grand Valley State University	69.3		61.6
Central Michigan University		69.5	90.6
Western Michigan University	71.1		65.9
Oakland University	74.0		61.5
Eastern Michigan University		77.5	69.2
LSSU— ?		80.8	81.0
Northern Michigan University	85.2		89.7
Ferris State University	85.9		82.1

*Full-Time Equivalent Faculty

Source: Submissions by universities to Michigan House
Fiscal Agency, pursuant to P.A. 154

Qs:

- 1) U-M = 65.5% not 69.1
- 2) Unranked = part-time plus GTAs = 50-50 with ranked
- 3) Figure 1 = undergraduate enrollments
- 4) MTU = Michigan Technical U?
- 5) LSSU = ?

