



Representing Wayne State Faculty and Academic Staff

NEWSBRIEFS

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Welcome Back to the Many Challenges Ahead

Charlie Parrish, President

We are beginning a new and challenging academic year. The University faces some serious financial problems and they may get worse. The state government continues to experience a shortfall in revenue, and no one in Lansing is yet willing to speak the unspeakable word “taxes.” In the meantime, the lack of state revenues is being felt everywhere.

On returning to Michigan from some weeks in Chile, I was struck by how really bad our teeth-rattling roads are compared to those in Chile, a technically “Less Developed Country” (LDC).

We are well on the way to making Michigan an “LDC” when it comes to public services. The term-limited Legislature is still in a state of denial and, perhaps, they really believe their own rhetoric about never raising taxes. But after a decade-long orgy of Engler-led tax cuts, the state government is unable to meet the needs of the state for funding services that Michigan citizens once accepted as basic and normal. When you combine the tax cuts with the expanding demands on public funds from rising Medicaid and prison costs, Michigan’s institutions of higher education have been left with few alternatives if they are to maintain their standards.

This year Michigan’s public universities have, once again, levied higher tuition payments on their students. Until someone in Lansing is willing to tell the

people that we must raise taxes (more politely termed “revenue enhancements”) and spend an adequate amount on higher education, our college students will be doomed to higher tuition and poorer instruction as administrators rely on the expanding ranks of low-wage part-time instructors. It would also be helpful if

we stopped the expensive and ineffective policy of putting people in prison for minor drug offenses and used the savings to do something about the rising cost of healthcare.

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We are facing tight restrictions on budgets for each unit as the Administration struggles to deal with the 10% cut in our state funding for the current year. While it appears that enrollments are up this fall, and that tuition revenues will be higher than were contemplated in the current budget, the situation remains tight. Our new Provost, Nancy Barrett, has started well. She is not afraid of consulting with faculty and academic staff members on policy issues, including budgetary matters, before making up her mind. She has already asked the Academic Senate to establish a budget consultation committee to discuss issues with her on an on-going basis. The committee that Professor Seymour Wolfson, President of the Academic Senate, has appointed has ample representation from the

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Arbitrator's Hearing Scheduled for September 24-25 on Fractional-Tenure Grievance in the School of Medicine

An outside Arbitrator will hear oral arguments this month concerning the Administration's practice of giving 25% tenure to non-clinical faculty members in the School of Medicine (SOM). The AAUP-AFT filed Grievance #225 opposing this abuse of fractional tenure in the fall of 2002. The hearing is scheduled for September 24-25 .

Fractional Tenure in the School of Medicine's Clinical Departments

In 1992 negotiations, the AAUP-AFT agreed to amend the collective bargaining agreement to allow the limited use of so-called "fractional tenure" for clinical faculty hired in clinical departments. The Administration argued that physicians who were hired into the practice plan needed to be better integrated into the academic life of the University and that, even though their primary purpose was to generate funds for the SOM, they also did some teaching and research. The union agreed to allow such fractional tenure only in the clinical departments. It was the union's understanding that only physicians providing clinical services were covered by this provision.

The intention of the AAUP-AFT was never to have 25% tenure apply to faculty who were not clinicians. Therefore, as soon as specific examples were brought to our attention of non-clinicians being awarded fractional tenure of just 25%, the AAUP-AFT took up the issue with the Administration. When informal discussion failed to resolve the matter, we filed a written complaint under Step 1 of the contractually-defined grievance procedure. The Administration refused to alter its policy, contending that this practice has continued for some time (although we had no knowledge of it). We have therefore taken the case to a Step 2 arbitration hearing before a mutually acceptable third party. The arbitrator should issue her final judgement this Fall on whether or not the Administration has violated the collective bargaining agreement.

New Language Limits Fractional Tenure Outside Clinical Departments

In the meantime, the only form of fractional tenure that the AAUP-AFT finds acceptable for non-clinicians is

the narrow exception specified in Article XXII (B) of the contract, which has long stated that "In rare and unusual circumstances a fractional-time faculty or academic staff member serving 50% time or more may be granted and hold fractional-time tenure."

In the last round of negotiations, the union and the Administration signed a letter of agreement interpreting the phrase "rare and unusual circumstances" to mean the unique circumstances of the SOM with respect to the recruitment of new faculty. The letter specifies that in non-clinical departments of the SOM, "the departmental faculty may recommend the appointment of faculty with fractional tenure at no less than 50%." Note that this requires the majority support of the faculty in any department. The 50% cutoff is also important, because at 50% or more fractional time, employees receive full benefits, including healthcare and pension contributions.

The DMC Crisis and DMC Care

Allen Goodman, Joint Observer

The recent funding crisis regarding the Detroit Medical Center (DMC) has made front page news. It has also raised concerns about the viability of DMC Care, the PPO plan (Preferred Provider Organization) under which a large number of Wayne State employees receive their medical care. The problems with the DMC, as well as some information glitches during the recent open enrollment period, have led many to question the future of the DMC Care option.

“Managed” healthcare plans require their clients to see only the “preferred providers” within the system’s network, and some require that patients first go to a “gate keeper” for referral to a specialist. HMOs (Health Maintenance Organizations) require both the gatekeeper and the network; PPOs require only the network. This “lighter” form of managed (PPO) care provides many enrollees with a better and more flexible set of choices than HMOs, albeit at a higher price. Under our current arrangements, a substantial number of Wayne State employees have chosen DMC Care for their insured medical care.

At this time, DMC Care appears to be intact and viable. We have received no reports of providers leaving the system, or refusing to take on new DMC Care patients. We have received no reports of patients being refused treatment, or of major inconvenience due to DMC Care membership. It is of course prudent, with DMC Care as well as any other managed care provider, to reaffirm periodically whether

your current providers still accept your insurance coverage.

The ongoing changes in healthcare coverage have reflected a very successful process over the last four years in which the AAUP-AFT and the Administration have worked together in “2N” Committees (joint union-administration committees with equal representation from both sides) to determine benefits. This process resulted in increased orthodontia benefits, improved life insurance, pre-tax deduction of parking fees (implemented last Spring) and of health benefits (to be implemented in October), and better flexible spending accounts. It also allowed us to work together in implementing the higher copayments for office visits and prescription drugs that were necessary in the face of health insurance premiums that were increasing at double digit rates. We had “2N” committees before each of the last two negotiations, and we formed another one after the last contract. That committee met several times in early 2003.

Yet, last spring, we were informed that all meetings would cease “until further notice,” and there have been no meetings since. We have requested that the joint committee be reconvened as soon as possible, and with the changes in the Provost’s Office this year, we expect that the meetings will get back on track soon.

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Senate Policy and Budget Committees. Provost Barrett’s first moves bode well for the effort to find cooperative solutions to fiscal problems. We wish her well.

As we begin the new academic year, your union leadership pledges itself to do its best to insure that the protections of the collective bargaining agreement are enforced for everyone in the bargaining unit, both members and non-members. All of us must recognize that the provisions in the agreement cannot right every wrong or cure every ill that occurs in a large organization like our university. But we will assure that procedures are appropriately followed and that arbitrary actions are discouraged. If you feel you have suffered as a result of a proscribed administrative action, call us to find out where you stand and if something can be done about it. Your inquiries are confidential, unless of course we jointly agree to take action in your case. We work for you.

General Membership Meeting

Updates on contract issues, Fair Share
recruitment, by-law changes, nominating committee report
and ongoing budget issues

Wednesday, September 17
Noon

Undergraduate Library
Community Room (3rd Floor)

Annual Off-Site Planning Meeting

Members are invited to join us in planning
for the next year and thinking through long-term issues

Saturday, October 4
8:30 to 3:00

Continental Breakfast & Box Lunch Provided
(RSVP @ 7-1750)

WSU Oakland Center
33737 W. 12 Mile, Farmington Hills
Rm. 605

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