



Representing Wayne State Faculty and Academic Staff

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Again, and Still: Continuing Mismanagement in Financial Aid

Charles Parrish, President

Dr. Howard Shapiro, the new Associate Vice President for Undergraduate Programs, was brought in to provide leadership for our General Education Program and the Student Affairs Division. I do not wish to speak to his handling of the General Education Program, but in Student Affairs he has aggravated rather than resolved the continuing mismanagement of employee relations in that troubled division.

Again, and still, these problems are especially acute in the Office of Student Financial Aid (OSFA). Financial Aid has always been critical to the recruitment and retention of new students. Now, with the recent cut backs in state aid, the consequent rise in tuition, and the Bush Administration's drastic cuts in federal aid for students, OSFA's role is all the more critical to Wayne State's future.

Appointing New Directors

A first problem is one that Dr. Shapiro inherited, namely, that two current directors in the Student Affairs Division were appointed in violation of the process called for in the collective bargaining agreement. While he is not responsible for the original appointments, Dr. Shapiro has now made this contract violation his own by refusing to even acknowledge the problem. Our only recourse when confronted by administrative stonewalling is to file a grievance. The Union, I should add, offers no comment on

the performance of these two directors; our goal is to uphold the procedures in the contract that protect our members against favoritism and administrative abuse in the selection of new leadership.

Second, Dr. Shapiro is manipulating the search for a new director in OSFA. Together with Susan Zweig,

Director of Undergraduate Admissions (who reports directly to Dr. Shapiro), he has openly favored the candidacy of Interim Director Catherine Kay, and sought to insure her appointment by packing the first search committee with administrators who report to him or to Ms. Zweig and Ms. Kay.

The union's intervention forced the administration to abide by the contract and reconstitute the search committee. Article XVIII of the collective bargaining agreement stipulates that when a new department chair or director is to be appointed, a committee will be formed that includes faculty and academic staff from within and outside of the department. In departments where academic staff predominate, the contract also provides (p. 173) for election of academic staff representatives to serve along with members appointed by management. Under these terms, two Financial Aid Officers (FAOs) were elected to the new committee. Dr. Shapiro appointed the committee's other two members and selected a director from another department to Chair it.

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Continuing Mismanagement in Financial Aid

When the new committee initially refused to include Ms. Kay on the slate of candidates chosen to be interviewed, the Chair unilaterally sent a slate to Dr. Shapiro that appeared to rank Ms. Kay as the committee's number one choice. When the committee objected, Dr. Shapiro and Ms. Zwieg came to a committee meeting to discuss the committee's rationale. The elected members of the committee (both protected by ESS) objected to the presence of top management in the committee's deliberations and asked them to leave. They complied—though not before Vice President Shapiro indicated, among other things, that he would interview whomever he pleased, regardless of the committee's recommended slate.

Under this pressure, the committee eventually decided to reverse its previous decision and include Ms. Kay on the slate, despite their earlier assessment of her. At the same time, however, the committee unanimously asked that representatives from all schools and colleges be included in the interview process. Otherwise, it was noted, the only people interviewing Ms. Kay would be subordinates who report to her, or to Ms. Zwieg and Dr. Shapiro.

Mismanagement in OSFA

The uncertainty in the matter of who is to be the next Director, combined with some questionable managerial practices, has taken a toll on morale in the OSFA. The lack of a coherent policy on Banner AccessIDs has caused considerable confusion. Some OSFA managers have routinely loaned their Banner AccessIDs to non-professional staff, but management holds Financial Aid Officers accountable for the same practice when questions arise about improper access. FAOs also report that they are held to conflicting standards when OSFA policy doesn't comply with public reporting standards.

Those who question these practices are not well received by Ms. Kay. She has taken to harassing our Contract Implementation Officer for both her FAO responsibilities and her union activities, changing her duties without her consent, and giving her other duties to managers.

Ms. Kay has also violated the contract by failing to give several FAOs multi-year term renewals. The collective bargaining agreement calls for multi-year renewals under normal circumstances (p. 67), and the OSFA committee voted to recommend multi-year renewals for all of the FAOs up for review. Instead, Ms. Kay gave the white candidates multi-year contracts, while giving the two African-American candidates one-year renewals.

When the union filed a grievance on this score, Ms. Kay stated erroneously that the committee had reached its

decisions without having the professional records (*curriculum vitae*) of the FAOs. I found that hard to believe since our Contract Implementation Officer was a member of that committee. When Dr. Barbara Price, Associate Provost for Academic Personnel, investigated in the fall and found that there were indeed *vitae* present during the committee's deliberations, Ms. Kay changed her story and claimed that she did not have the *vitae* when she made her decision.

Dr. Price has ordered Ms. Kay to redo the evaluations and to do them correctly this time around. As we go to press the two African-American FAOs are still on one-year contracts.

Top-Down Myopia

The on-going management problems of the OSFA are considerable. In the past seventeen years this department has had eight directors and interim directors, producing a legacy of contradictory policies and pass-the-buck management. It is today undergoing yet another period of crisis.

Dr. Shapiro has apparently accepted two linked ideas that have been repeated in management circles for years: first, that any troubles in OSFA are due to recalcitrant employees, and second, that the solution is to impose more top-down decision making. If Dr. Shapiro thinks that such heavy handed intervention represents something new and positive, he and any others who share this opinion are mistaken. The record indicates that such tactics simply repeat the errors of past administrators.

A last issue should be mentioned as emblematic of the type of professional harassment that FAOs must face. Ms. Kay and Ms. Zwieg have ordered that any academic staff member who wants to present or publish a paper in a professional forum must first have their work approved by them or a supervisor. The stated rationale is to give a uniform look to all documents coming out of Admissions and OSFA. How many faculty would agree to having the chair or dean approve of his/her work before it is allowed to go forward? I would guess that a faculty member so ordered would immediately go to the Academic Senate to protest the abridgement of academic freedom!

It would do a world of good if respect for negotiated contract procedures, consistent policy, and even-handed treatment of professional staff could become the watchwords in a rehabilitated OSFA. We all know that those who do not learn from the past are doomed to repeat it. Let's start learning.

Taking Action

AAUP-AFT Joins Political Action Committee

Last summer Wayne State University scrambled to head off devastating budget cuts in Lansing. Things were not looking good for us or for public higher education in the State. The AAUP-AFT and Charlie Parrish took the lead in contacting legislators from southeast Michigan to tell them what kind of damage these cuts would do to the University as well as to the region. AFT Michigan and Michigan AAUP applied further pressure in Lansing, making the point that these cuts would hurt rather than help Michigan compete in a rapidly changing global economy.

These efforts, along with those of the WSU Administration and, most importantly, the strong stand of Governor Granholm on our behalf, helped defeat the worst-case scenario of massive cutbacks. But there were some sobering lessons: our efforts had started late and we were reacting to events rather than building links to Michigan's legislators.

The result is evident when one considers the case of Grand Valley State University. Compared to Wayne State, GVSU did rather well in the budget battles in Lansing, and a significant factor in their success was the active role of their Political Action Committee (PAC). Instead of reacting to events, their PAC actively supported area legislators who, in turn, looked out for the interests of GVSU's faculty, academic staff, and students.

A Collective Voice

Since then the AAUP-AFT and AFT Michigan have been talking about ways that our local can effectively communicate our needs to Lansing, as well as to the WSU Board of Governors. Individual communication by concerned academics is not enough, just as individual bargaining carries little weight compared to collective bargaining. To get the attention of legislators, we need to develop a collective voice and—equally important—the combined resources that can help legislators who help us.

The American Federation of Teachers has conducted a poll through Peter Hart and Associates that shows that 87 percent of AFT higher education members feel it's important for their union to be involved in politics. Clearly, faculty and academic staff in public universities feel the need for making their voice heard.

By law, our union cannot give dues money to candidates, and even if it were legal, some members would understandably object to such a handout. But for the many faculty and academic staff who want to raise the visibility of WSU in

Lansing and promote an educational agenda that serves students and academics at Wayne State, we are asking for voluntary contributions to the statewide efforts of the AFT's Michigan Political Action Committee.

School for Legislators

PAC money from our union will educate legislators about our University and its unique mission in this state. At the same time it will draw attention to what we, the intellectual workers of the University, contribute to the community and the economy of Michigan. We can educate elected officials about issues of importance to us, including the preservation of academic freedom, keeping tenure strong, employment security, and protecting the right of public employees to engage in collective bargaining.

In contributing this PAC money we will also gain a voice in endorsing and helping to elect candidates who are pro-higher education and pro-labor. Equally important, we can support the statewide campaigns of candidates for the WSU Board of Governors who support our causes.

When Michigan newspapers start attacking tenure or sabbatical leave, or when special interest groups try to weaken academic freedom, we will have a collective voice to counter their misrepresentations and support legislators who defend us.

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The more resources we can put on the table, the more effectively we can lobby for our interests. Like it or not, that's how politics works. We will make every effort, therefore, to encourage contributions from members of the AAUP-AFT who support a progressive agenda for higher education in Lansing. The funds collected through our efforts will be distributed in consultation with our leadership. The first priority will be the Board of Governors' election, followed by contributions to candidates who will represent our interests in Lansing and Washington.

Our voice is only as strong as the contributions of our members. So please take a stand for union rights and educational opportunity for all!

PAC coordinators Dan Golodner (Archives) and Bob Bruner (Math)

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Checks should be made out to AFT Michigan PAC and mailed to WSU AAUP/AFT Office, 5440 Cass Ave, Detroit, MI 48202.

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