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February, 2004

**Editor:** Jo Wiley

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*WMU-AAUP President*

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the WMU  
AAUP



# Advocate

At Western Michigan University

## Workers of the (Western) World, Unite!

*Gary Mathews, Ph.D.*

With so much to be written about, writing this column almost seems overwhelming. The Chapter is pressing grievances with the administration. Implementation of the agree-to health care plan, in particular, seems to be the source of potential grievances. The recently formed mobilization committee meets for the first time this month, with a long agenda greeting it! We are monitoring the University budget situation and can't help but wonder where that sinking ship will come to rest — on the bottom of a sea of red ink? But for the moment, I am putting this growing list aside. This month I want to talk about the need for all Western employees to ban together.

In times of pressing budgetary cutbacks, it is tempting for friends of the library to point their fingers at the athletic department and say, "Cut there!" It is tempting for the faculty to look at the administration and say, "Cut there!" It is tempting for some of us to look at the custodial and dining staff in the residence halls and say, "Cut there!" In doing so, however, what would be cut is our strength. We must not allow tough times to divide us and make us weaker. Instead, we need to ban together — clerical staff, professional staff, faculty, AFSCME workers, and students.

Leaders of the various campus employee groups have, in the past, met fairly regularly—if infrequently—as members of the Employee Council. However, recognizing this need to ban together, the Council is now meeting on

a regular (monthly) basis. We are committed to supporting and communicating with each other. We are discussing ways to do more together to assist and protect all members of the employee groups. Current members of the Employee Council include Tim Birch, the President of AFSCME; Kevin Hinds, the Fraternal Order of Police; Michele McLaughlin, President of the Administrative and Professional Association; Kathryn Wright, President of the Professional Support Staff Organization; and myself.

Steps taken recently to show our support and solidarity involve letters written to the administration and President Bailey. I authored one letter addressed to the administration in reaction to its consideration of privatizing custodians and dining service workers in the residence halls. The letter reads in part: "The WMU-AAUP objects in the strongest possible terms to this continuing diminution of unionized workers on campus... AFSCME has won the right to represent the workers on this campus, and their employees have demonstrated loyalty, competence, and compliance with policy, year after year."

All members of the Employee Council signed a second letter, addressed to President Bailey, regarding her commitment to convene an employee health and wellness advisory committee. The letter urges her to do so within the following parameters:

1. Permit the committee to elect a chairperson from among the

- committee members.
2. Appoint mostly employees to the committee and limit the number of administrators sitting on the committee.
  3. Allow the committee to decide for itself the frequency of meetings.
  4. Provide the committee with full and direct access to the health care consultant and any and all data that the consultant produces.

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*...we need to ban together — clerical staff, professional staff, faculty, AFSCME work-*

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As leaders of the above employee groups, we believe that these factors are critical in the development of an advisory committee of this kind.

Every employee at Western Michigan University has been affected in some manner by cuts made in response to previous budget decisions. We can only expect to be hit again, possibly even harder, by upcoming pronouncements. We cannot afford to wear blinders, watching out for only ourselves. While the

## Information You Need

*Jo Wiley*  
Information Officer

### WEBSITE NEWS

The re-designed WMU-AAUP website has been “live” for a month. If you accessed it recently in search of needed information, I hope you found it available and easily accessible. (If not, please let me know so that I can make the necessary improvements.) While the goal of any website should be to provide a quick and convenient way to retrieve information in answer to individual questions, an additional goal of our site is to keep our membership up-to-date on developing news, events, activities, and concerns within our Chapter. Several features have been added to the site to assist in achieving this goal.

The most frequent reason people are dissatisfied upon leaving websites is their frustration in trying to find the information they sought. Poking through a site in search new information is begging for such frustration. To save members time and aggravation, the Chapter site now features a “New This Month” page. If you want to know what you need to know—check it out! Previous months’ pages are archived and retrievable, in case you realize you’ve missed a month (or two) of news.

Other continually updated pages include the *Healthcare FAQs* (Frequently Asked Questions), as new questions arise and answers are determined, and *Concerns*. Items posted on the *Concerns* page are issues brought to the attention of Leadership and/or the Executive Committee and merit consideration by all members. Please voice your

concerns so that they can be responded to and shared with the membership. If you are interested in responding to a posted concern by writing or contributing to an Advocate article, please contact me for issue deadlines.

### E-MAIL ALERTS

I sent an e-mail alert to all faculty, in late January, regarding critical health care information. The most frequent complaint members have made about our Chapter involves a lack of or delay in information reaching the membership. I will continue to send e-mail “Alerts” as needed and will soon transmit e-mail “News Bulletins” on a weekly basis.

### COMMUNICATING QUICKLY

While most of the Chapter information starts at the Montague House, successful distribution requires that it pass through the entire membership. Each of us must play a role this communication process. We have to expect that as we struggle with the administration over the implementation of our negotiated healthcare benefits, approach administrative budgetary decisions that will impact our ability to meet the needs of our students, and head

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*...we will be faced with an urgency to pass critical information to all members.*

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into new contract negotiations (it's not that far away!) we will be faced with an urgency to pass critical information to all members. While e-mail is more expeditious than sending out fliers via campus mail, a telephone call allows for the most immediate contact. A Chapter telephone tree is in the final stages of development. Your Association Council representative will soon contact you about the role you will need to play.

### INFORMATION YOU PROVIDE

Response to the fall Ratification Vote Survey was sizeable, informative and very appreciated. Nearly a third of the membership completed and returned the questionnaires, and most responses included additional, useful comments. The purpose of the survey was to help leadership understand participation and lack of participation in the pre-ratification informational sessions and the ratification vote. Additionally, we were looking for feedback on satisfaction levels with the information presented and reasons members did not vote.

Our goal is to use the information gathered to improve both processes to encourage higher member involvement. More than half of the respondents did not attend any of the pre-ratification informational sessions. While there were many reasons given for not attending, approximately half of those who did not attend indicated they were either unaware of the meetings or the meeting times were not convenient. There is no way to guarantee convenience for all; however, with this information and other comments and suggestions made, leadership can work to schedule future informational meetings at times that allow for greater participation.

While less than a quarter of those who returned surveys indicated that

they did not participate in the ratification vote, the responses and comments received from non-voters provided very valuable and helpful information. As was the case with respondents who did not attend meetings, the majority of those not voting cited an inconvenience of time or day as their reason for not

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*...the Chapter provides members with voting options other than completing a*

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participating. While this concern can also be considered when scheduling future voting times, it points out an area where our membership is lacking information.

Recognizing that many members teach and/or live outside of Kalamazoo, leave the area while on sabbatical, are not on campus every day of the week, or are not easily available on a given day during voting hours, the Chapter provides members with voting options other than completing a ballot on-site. Members can cast an absentee ballot via mail, email, fax or at the Montague House up until 4:30pm on the day before the scheduled vote.

The Executive Committee will continue to review all of the feedback provided through this survey and

## Do You Want To Know?

*Dr. A.D. Issa, CFP, CDFA*

- How to clean up your financial clutter.
- How to prioritize your financial goals.
- How to fund the rascals' college education.
- How to leave a meaningful legacy.
- How to disinherit your kids, your Uncle but never disinherit Eduardo (or Lucy).
- Why having a roadmap is the secret to your financial success.
- Why you shouldn't live below your means.
- Why the most important asset you can have is a working spouse.
- Why divorcing your spouse costs you much more than a 50% decline in the Dow.
- Why allocation and location matter.
- Why cost matters.
- Why "sick puppies" are, at times, more enjoyable than "growth puppies."
- Why, at times, small is beautiful.
- Why, at times, bigger is better.
- Why you should not retire early.
- Why your loving spouse and ill-deserving kids don't want you to jump Western ship.

- Why, if single, you should look for a partner more than 10 years younger than you.
- Why annuitization may be detrimental to your health.
- Why the numbers 59½, 70½, and 72 are important.
- Why long-term healthcare is a wealth preserver!
- Why you should move to Hawaii.

If you want to know all that and then some, and you are a member of the **under 50 crowd**, sign up for the Retirement Seminar. Call Gail or Susan at the AAUP office (345.0151) and tell them I sent you!

## WMU-AAUP Officers' Hours\*

### Gary Mathews

President

Wed 1:00—3:00pm

Fri 1:00—3:00pm

### Karen Blaisure

Contract Administrator

Mon 1:30—3:30pm

Wed 9:00am—12:00noon

### Pam Rooney

Grievance Officer

Wed 10:00am—12:30pm

Fri 1:00—3:00pm

### Jo Wiley

Information Officer

Wed 8:30am—1:00pm

\*And by appointment

# Your Healthcare Advocate

*C. Dennis Simpson, Ph.D.*

My article in the January issue of the *Advocate* apparently raised dissonance within Western Michigan University's administration. As some of our fellow faculty have already discovered, the administration is attempting to back away from its commitment for Sindecuse Health Center Pharmacy to issue a 90-day supply of prescription drugs on a single prescription. Be assured that the AAUP leadership is doing, and will continue to do, everything in its power to insure all agreements made during negotiation are enforced.

Meanwhile, the administration has recently put forth, in a four-page letter from the Sindecuse Health Center Director, their new interpretation of how Sindecuse Pharmacy will dispense and assign costs to faculty. Note that this is only the administration's interpretation of the pharmacy benefit, not the AAUP's.

In addition to prescription benefit discrepancies, a number of other issues have arisen during the implementation of the new healthcare plans. First, faculty were informed by BCBSM that they must have a medical diagnosis in order to obtain reimbursement for therapeutic massage or acupuncture. That practice was not consistent with the negotiated contract. Once the AAUP challenged this requirement, the administration directed BCBSM to remove the requirement from our plan. If you have billings or receipts for therapeutic massage or acupuncture that have been refused by BSBSM for lack of a medical diag-

nosis, make an appointment with our BCBSM group representative, Mr. Steve Tomasko (on campus in Human Resources on Thursday mornings), to assist you in obtaining reimbursement.

A second issue of concern is that some pharmacies are telling faculty that their prescriptions cannot be filled because our healthcare contract now contains a formulary excluding coverage on certain drugs. No formulary was negotiated! In fact, the opposite is the case. An agreement was made between the administration and the AAUP there would be "No Formulary." If you experience problems filling prescriptions, contact Mr. Tomasko, Mr. Robert Kakuk (WMU Department of Human Resources), and me (at the AAUP). We all need to know when and where these prob-

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lems are occurring so that we can track them and correct the misunderstandings.

A third problem faculty are encountering is that some Traditional BCBSM providers are refusing services to PPO members. The AAUP and the administration are in total agreement regarding this issue. If a faculty member, who is enrolled in the PPO, is referred to a Traditional BCBSM provider by a BCBSM PPO provider then, for that occasion, the

*...we expect  
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problem*

Traditional BCBSM provider is considered in-network for the PPO. In short, in this type of situation the faculty member would have the same benefits, coverage and costs for all services as they would if seeing an in-network provider. Some faculty members and dependents have had to forego scheduled medical procedures and suffered public humiliation because of BCBSM traditional providers' arrogance and ignorance of their own contracts. The administration is very aware of the AAUP's outrage and that we expect the administration to resolve this problem immediately by having its contract agent (BCBSM) require its contracted providers to abide by their contracts and the provisions of the WMU-AAUP Agreement. Again, contact Mr. Tamasco, Mr. Kakuk and me immediately, if you have an experience like this.

We expect Western Michigan Uni-

## Association Council & Chapter Meetings

### Spring Semester 2004

<b>Association Council</b>	<b>Thursday, February 19<sup>th</sup> 4:00pm 210 Bernhard Center*</b>
<b>Association Council</b>	<b>Thursday, March 18<sup>th</sup> 4:00pm 210 Bernhard Center*</b>
<b>Chapter</b>	<b>Thursday, April 15<sup>th</sup> 4:00pm 210 Bernhard Center*</b>

**\*NOTE: ROOM 210**

### **Announcement:**

**The Chapter leadership wants to hear from you.  
Invite us to a department/unit meeting!**

## **WORKSHOP DATES:**

### **Tenure & Promotion Workshop for Candidates**

**Tuesday, March 9<sup>th</sup>, 3:00 — 5:00pm**  
**Brown & Gold Room, Bernhard Center**

### **Classroom Visitation Workshop for Evaluators**

**Wednesday, March 17<sup>th</sup>, 3:00 — 5:00pm**  
**Brown & Gold Room, Bernhard Center**

### **Retirement Options Workshop**

**Tuesday, March 23<sup>rd</sup>, 3:00 — 5:00pm**  
**208 Bernhard Center**

### **Retirement Options Workshop**

**Wednesday, March 31<sup>st</sup>, 12:00noon — 2:00pm**  
**210 Bernhard Center**

### **Retirement Options Workshop**

**Friday, April 16<sup>th</sup>, 10:00am — 12:00noon**  
**210 Bernhard Center**

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ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED