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May/June, 2004

the WMU
AAUP



Advocate

At Western Michigan University

Editor: Jo Wiley

Being A President During Challenging Times

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The opportunity to serve the faculty as leader of the WMU-AAUP is a privilege and an honor. It is filled with moments of excitement, joy, and satisfaction. The faculty is resplendent with ideas, suggestions for improving the institution, and proposals for solving the many problems we face together. Faculty members are not shy when it comes to participating in their own work life. It is a credit to past leaders of the union that many faculty think of contacting the WMU-AAUP first whenever they have a problem.

It is difficult, however, to be a leader during challenging times. When there is plenty of money, we have fewer hard choices to make. When there is less money, there are problems galore, as illustrated by the following three examples: The elimination of sports; WMU-AAUP participation on budget advisory committees; and support of other unions and employee groups on campus.

I participated in the committee that recommended the elimination of men's cross-country, indoor track, and outdoor track teams. While we did not recommend the elimination of the women's synchronized skating team, I understand and support this decision of Athletic Director Kathy Beauregard and President Judith Bailey. These were highly unpopular decisions, as evidenced by the ongoing criticisms expressed by both University

and Kalamazoo community members. The "Concerns" page of the WMU-AAUP's website includes an article speaking out against these decisions and the people who made them — that would include me. Faculty members who oppose these decisions appear to have good arguments. Recovering budget shortages across-the-board sounds very appealing; however, it is impossible to recover two million dollars by snipping a little here and there. We all feel the loss of the athletes in these sports. We all decry the effect this has on minority enrollment. We all wish that painful decisions like these did not have to be made. But if we ask, "What message is the University sending to current and prospective students, faculty, alumni, the Kalamazoo community and competitive institutions?" I believe the answer is this: We are sending the message that Western Michigan University is willing to make the difficult decisions necessary to ensure the financial integrity of the institution. We are going to balance the budget and avoid the very tempting trap of mortgaging the future in order to avoid present painful choices.

Union participation on advisory committees, which make recommendations about budget cuts, is a highly controversial issue. I participated on the Academic Affairs Budget Advisory Committee (AABAC) appointed by President Bailey. Some faculty are in favor of shared gov-

ernance as long as it does not have to do with budget cutting. Some think that participation provides “political cover” for the administration. But faculty governance is one of the three seminal ideals of the AAUP, along with tenure and academic freedom. To give up our right to participate in decisions because it might help the administration is not a persuasive argument to me. If we do not participate, we lose the opportunity to contribute to finding solutions.

Finally, it is my preference to work closely with other unions and employee groups on campus. AFSCME is experiencing massive losses of membership because of the recent decisions of the administration to privatize the custodians in the residence halls. I believe we need to be there for them, just as they have been there for us during times of strikes and other difficulties in our past. While some faculty believe that this is a mistake, I will continue to promote and pursue this strategy for the remainder of my presidency.

The most important revelation that has come to me over the last four years of my terms in office is that no matter what a president does, there are always opponents and critics. The faculty is a diverse and complicated constituency that is notable for professing. As have all of the presidents of the union before me, I have worked as hard as I can to do the best that I can. I have made mistakes of omission and commission. I have learned to take the criticism and (sometimes) personal attacks with as much humility and openness as I can muster. The challenging times we are currently experiencing will provide vivid and lasting memories for me. I am grateful for the opportunity to have served as president.

A Position Paper and Proposal for Faculty Action

*Barbara Speas Havira
Associate Professor of History
& Women's Studies*

Current economic and political conditions in the state and the nation place both higher education and faculty rights and status as scholars, teachers, and workers in jeopardy. How can we become pro-active and not just reactive to potential threats and damage to our professional and economic status? The greatest resource we faculty have at our disposal is our colleagues and ourselves. Each of us has already invested thousands of dollars and years of our lives to become professors and to become established in our fields. Lest we become mere employees and contract laborers, we must now actively defend our rights to define academic standards and to participate in “shared governance.”

When the AAUP was founded early in the twentieth century, one concern was to protect academic freedom to speak, to teach, and to research, guided only by scholarly standards and not by the political opinions, biases, or comfort/discomfort of non-academic. The AAUP sought due process and tenure as procedural protections for academic freedom. In addition, the AAUP insisted on faculty rights to “shared governance,” formal recognition of faculty rights to define academic programs and academic standards. This is a very broad professional right and duty that goes beyond determining which courses belong in a curriculum and how many hours are in a program. Faculty also define the conditions needed to support faculty scholarship, the skills and knowledge students should acquire, and the conditions and resources

students need to reach defined levels of achievement. Laboratories, individual music classes, access to clinical settings, faculty travel and research materials, computers, audio-visual resources, and libraries are just some of the “conditions” which faculty define.

In its efforts to reduce costs, the WMU Board of Trustees is in a position to bypass faculty prerogatives by cutting resources that are central to

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the academic mission of the university. For example, during this past year the university libraries were vulnerable to cuts that affected WMU's central mission. Staffing, hours, and acquisitions are among the components that are critical to maintaining the level of library service essential to the work of teaching and research. The faculty must insist on maintaining full support for the university libraries, both in terms of meeting the university's mission and of asserting faculty rights and duty to identify the resources that are needed for that mission. Similarly, faculty should oppose unilateral changes to working conditions, including travel, resources, class size, and teaching and laboratory assistance. The faculty should cease to participate in approving cuts anywhere in the university. Making the budget work is not our job. Our job and our interest lie in

defining the standards and components essential to the academic missions of teaching, research, and professional service. Our job is to create lists of resources that can NOT be cut, not to list those that can.

In order to preserve our professional status we must become a union, engaging in education, discussion and joint action with faculty colleagues. We must support our AAUP leadership, but they cannot do what only the membership can do, namely — build strength through the active participation of many. We must get to know, to respect and to trust faculty in other departments and colleges if we are to develop the power we need to preserve the professoriate.

The recently announced AAUP Lunch Table in the Bernhard Center is one step toward this goal. The Association Council as a whole and individual representatives can facilitate faculty networks and help the faculty become informed about the contract, about department policy statements, and about conditions across the university. Layoff, grievance and workload provisions are particularly important at this time. Each department must be vigilant in monitoring, objecting to, and reporting threats to its academic mission. What decisions affect their programs? What rights might the contract and their department policies provide? What threats might confront each department? How could departments respond? How might departments strengthen their policy statements?

Prior to next summer's negotiation, faculty must anticipate administrative actions that could threaten faculty as scholars, teachers, and workers and prepare contingency plans to respond to usurpations of faculty roles. Through discussion, reflection, and formal resolutions the faculty must develop a clear understanding and commitment to "shared governance," even under conditions of financial

retrenchment. This is not a time for "business as usual." If there ever was a time when it was sufficient that only the faculty who "were interested in the union" attended to these issues, that time is gone. All must engage in the process of defining and defending the traditional roles of faculty in higher education.

Lunch Table In Bernhard — Meet Your Colleagues

As we consider the history of the AAUP at Western, it becomes apparent that knowing one another is vital to our collective and individual health as faculty members. It is the strength of faculty bonds that established the AAUP and collective bargaining at Western. Over the past semester, we've heard from many faculty around campus that they often know few faculty beyond those in their own departments. So, based on the recommendation of the Mobilization Committee, past AAUP leaders, and faculty who attended the April Chapter meeting, we are initiating the "faculty lunch table" at the Bernhard Center.

For the rest of Summer I and during Summer II term (through August 12), on Wednesdays and Thursdays from 11:30 am to 1:30 pm, the AAUP will offer the opportunity for faculty to eat together in order to meet one another and build a strong alliance. Bring your lunch or go through the cafeteria line, and then look for the table with the "Faculty" sign. If you find yourself on campus this summer, take a break and come meet colleagues!

Grievance Officer Chronicles

Pam Rooney, Ph.D.

With seemingly few grievances reported throughout the year, do you wonder what the Grievance Officer *actually* does with all of her/his time? The reality is that filing and following up on grievances is a very small part of the job. In fact, the most important role of the Grievance Officer is to work closely and diligently with faculty and appropriate administrators to circumvent the need for filing grievances. This is achieved in large part through constant and on-going interactions with all members of the Chapter leadership as they receive and respond to faculty concerns and queries. In particular, I spend a great deal of time in consultation with Karen Blaisure, and together we spend more time consulting with the Chapter Attorney.

Because the current climate at WMU is just about as unsettled as it has been in my 24 years here and to be characterized by the mounting indifference and seeming disregard for contractual agreements and obligations by the current administration,

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I'd like to share with you some of the activity that goes on "behind closed doors." The following is an eleven-day chronicle of the Grievance Officer's life beyond healthcare (more on that later).

Current critical items include support for faculty in the tenure process who have received negative reviews; support for faculty (tenure-track and tenured) who have been impacted by the recent budget cuts; guidance for faculty who may suddenly find their workload arrangements modified because of budget cuts; doing leg-work for faculty who have received conflicting information regarding their eligibility for social security benefits in conjunction with their retirement package; and, of course, answering questions for faculty who have difficulty with their healthcare benefits or understanding their coverages.

Preamble: It is "summer vacation," yet I am on the job nearly 24/7. An enormous amount of time is spent responding to faculty questions or concerns via phone or e-mail — whether I am at Montague House, my office in Schneider Hall or my office at home. The bulk of these questions has been about healthcare, the retirement incentive, workload, the Agreement, appealing decisions, and approaching a chair or dean about various concerns. When questions are not coming from members, I am either responding to or posing questions to Mike Fayette (Chapter Attorney), Karen Blaisure (Contract Administrator), Dennis Simpson, (Vice President), Gary Mathews (President) or Jay Wood (Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs and Director of Academic Collective Bargaining and Contract Administration).

Day 1: Spent four hours in meetings, first with Diane Anderson (Vice President for Student Affairs), Jay Wood, and Karen trying to resolve a situation before it becomes a problem. In this

case the effort was to ensure faculty in the Counseling Center would be consulted in the delivery of services at Sindecuse that could impact on work of the unit. To prepare for the meeting, Karen and I spent an hour consulting with Counseling Center faculty, prior to which Karen spent a significant amount of time consulting with Mike Fayette and then me in preparation. The second meeting was related to EUP (Extended University Programs) and faculty compensation for development of on-line courses. Dennis and Gary, as well as a cast of characters from EUP, joined Karen and me at this meeting.

We believe the issue has been resolved satisfactorily and will work to the faculty member's benefit.

Day 2: Met for approximately an hour with a faculty member regarding a grant-related issue. Received a heads up that a tenured faculty member was about to receive a layoff notice and that the individual wanted a notification extension. As it turns out, the faculty member did not need an extension since the Agreement is clear that tenured faculty members are entitled to one year's notice or one year's pay if there is not a place to which they may realistically be transferred. A formal meeting will be held on 4 June to try to find a mutually acceptable resolution.

Day 3: Discussed the notification extension request via the phone with Jay Wood and the faculty member, followed by a forty-five minute tele-

phone consultation with Mike Fayette. Notified the dean in writing that a deadline extension would be okay, but also informed him that a formal meeting on this matter was required.

Day 4: Spent two hours walking a faculty member through a strategy to appeal a negative tenure review at the Provost level.

Day 5: Accompanied the faculty member to the appeal.

Day 6: Karen, Dennis and I accompanied a tenure-track faculty member to a meeting to outline the terms of a proposed interdepartmental transfer in lieu of layoff. Prior to this meeting, the three of us spent a great deal of time — covering several hours over several weeks — consulting with both the faculty member and Mike Fayette. Because of everyone's diligence (including Jay Wood's), we believe the issue has been resolved satisfactorily and will work to the faculty member's benefit.

Day 7: Spent a couple of hours finishing my reading of the 2003 negotiations' table notes. This was in addition to the 5 plus hours Dennis, Bill Fenn (Professor and healthcare specialist, Physician Assistant Department) and I spent reading the notes from the 1996 and 1999 negotiations) in preparation for the Step II healthcare grievance.

Day 8: Along with Gary and Karen, met with the tenured faculty threatened with layoff due to budget cuts. Outlined options as identified through prior consultation with Mike Fayette so as to focus us for meetings with appropriate administrators.

Day 9: Spent over two hours sorting and organizing the negotiation table notes into appropriate "piles" for use in presentation of the Step II grievance.

Day 10: Sorted and interpreted Sincuse Pharmacy surveys for over an hour and prepared Executive Committee Grievance Officer's report. Thanks to all of you who took the time to return the surveys or comment on your use of the pharmacy or not. The raffle winners are: Gary Chartrand, Mathematics; William Fenn, Physician Assistant; James Muchmore, Teaching, Learning & Leadership; and Patricia Stringham, Teaching, Learning & Leadership.

Day 11: Met with Karen, Dennis, and Bill Fenn for another three hours in preparation for my meeting with Jay Wood on 1 June and in preparation for Dennis' and my meeting with Mike Fayette on 3 June. The status of the healthcare grievance and the reasons for requesting a Step II follow.

Healthcare Grievance: We will be going to Step II for the general reason that the Administration's response to our concerns, particularly a failure to ensure that the Administration's Agent administer our healthcare plan and be constrained from violating the Agreement, did not specifically address our concerns or our requested remedies. Until we see concrete proofs and specific responses to the remedies, we will persevere. Otherwise, the Administration will continue to accuse us of "nit picking" and think it can drag this process out till we "go away" or until the next negotiations. It is not our intent, however, to back down or "go away."

The process for a Type C Grievance (which is what this one is) may be found on page 19 of your *Agreement*. Jay Wood and the Chapter/Chapter President's designee (yours truly) will be meeting on 1 June to consider the other panel members and the process. In case it has slipped everyone's attention, I am only serving as Grievance Officer while Elaine Phillips is on sabbatical. However, at the re-

quest of the Executive Committee, I will be seeing this particular grievance to its conclusion, though Elaine Phillips will resume responsibility for all other grievances as of 13 August.

Everyday: I continue to be available for faculty who feel they need an explanation, an assist, or a sympathetic ear.

From Your Contract Administrator...

Karen Blaisure, Ph.D.

Many faculty are using their personal time this summer in an attempt to help the administration meet its own timeline regarding the implementation of the new \$10 million Student Information System (SIS).

The Student Information System is being implemented in stages, starting with the College of Education (COE) this summer. The administration chose a deadline of August 15th for the completion of various SIS tasks for the COE. Given the critical role that at least one faculty per department must assume in order to accomplish the tasks associated with meeting the deadline, it appears that the administration expects faculty participation over the summer.

While the administration has said that faculty are volunteering their time to work on SIS, the level to which some faculty must participate is of concern. It certainly is one thing for interested faculty to volunteer some of their summer to work on this new project, but is working upwards of 40 hours just in the month of May (and with plenty of hours ahead before the tasks are accomplished to meet the August deadline) a realistic expectation of a volunteer?



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Some faculty have told the AAUP that they really want to be a part of the SIS work because they are fascinated by it and see the benefits of the project for the whole WMU community. In the face of such a generous attitude, it is a shame if an administration that is willing to pay \$10 million for an information system does not take a small portion of this money to compensate a few key faculty when it becomes apparent that the work goes well beyond a few extra summer hours.

The right answer is for the administration to recognize that faculty contributions are vital to the success of the project and to compensate those few key department faculty accordingly for their time and work.

You can visit the AAUP website (wmich.edu/aaup) to read a copy of the letter the AAUP sent to the Administration outlining these and other concerns related to SIS and a copy of the administration's response received on June 4th. We will press on in our work to protect faculty rights.

Announcements:

- 1. A Retirement Seminar will be offered during the Fall Semester for faculty members. Due to the increase in demand for the seminar, it will be open to faculty 45 years of age and over. Please call the AAUP office (345.0151) to register.**
- 2. The WMU-AAUP 2003-2004 Faculty & Administrative Salary Survey is available on CD. Please call the AAUP office (345.0151) or email (wmuaaup@ameritech.net) to request a copy.**

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