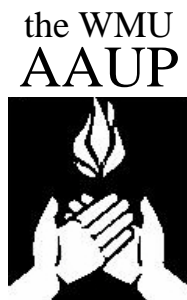


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October, 2004



Advocate

at Western Michigan University

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Paul Wilson

Your Union Needs You!

C. Dennis Simpson, Ed.D.

WMU-AAUP President

Almost 44 years ago I listened to John Kennedy make his inaugural speech and say "Ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country." That statement energized an entire generation.

Today I am asking you "to do" for your union and for the greater good of the entire faculty. At the October 21 Chapter Meeting nominations will close for the offices of President, Vice-President, and numerous Executive Committee positions. As of the publication of this Advocate the lack of nominations for positions

in the Union leadership is disappointing. The WMU-AAUP will be facing intense contract negotiations during 2005. Given our current situation it is essential your union have not only solidarity, but also a team of energized leaders to advocate for you on all fronts: academic freedom, joint governance, tenure, compensation, healthcare and other contractual issues. Throughout the United States attacks upon the academy have been constant from those outside of the academic process and from university administrations whose unenlightened self-interests

continued on page 2, column 1

Healthcare Issues

Bill Fenn, PA-C, Ph.D.

WMU-AAUP Healthcare Advocate

Open enrollment

October is an important month for healthcare coverage – Open Enrollment occurs October 18th through 29th this year. For most faculty, this is the only time during the year when you can make changes in your health plan – changing the plan itself, adding dependents, etc. Note that the October 29th deadline is an absolute one! It also serves as an annual reminder to review your coverages overall. Whether you just review your plan, or elect to make a change, making an informed decision is crucial to ensuring you have the best available option for you (and your family). A summary of the options can be viewed at http://www.wmich.edu/hr/benefits/health/open_enrollment/health_ins_ben_sum.pdf. In making your

decision, there are some myths which might cloud the issue. Just as we expect our students to research the facts, so too must we use facts to make our elections!

Myth #1 – "Health plan XXX is the best one." There is not, and never has been, a single plan which is a "perfect fit" for everybody. Of the two plans available to us, each has pros and cons for any individual's situation. You can NOT simply compare the monthly premium share – you must also compare the coverages provided by each. Each plan has some coverages not present in the other. Which plan is best for you can only be determined by matching up the coverages provided with your anticipated needs for the coming year, and

continued on page 2, column 3

Your Union from page 1

have overshadowed the good of the institutions.

WMU-AAUP needs its members to step up and be counted. Leading an organization as diverse as the WMU-AAUP takes a great deal of energy and time. This is the cost of leadership. In my opinion it is more than balanced by the rewards of serving colleagues well, participating in faculty achieving its goals, maintaining the integrity of the academy, and advocating for the rights of deserving faculty at Western. In a leadership role you will have the

Your benefits... are the result of the efforts invested by your Chapter leadership and negotiation team.

opportunity to address issues for all faculty and to bring your knowledge and skills to bear on the challenges posed by administration with the hope of gaining positive resolutions.

Within the body of the Western faculty reside some of the best minds I have known in my 31 years in higher education. These gifts are surely needed by your union, now more than ever. Since 1975 the WMU-AAUP has worked diligently to protect your rights, through the contract and advocacy. Your ability to work under the three basic tenets of the AAUP – Academic Freedom, Joint Governance and Tenure – is solely the result of constant vigilance and tenacious contract negotiations. Your benefits, including compensation and healthcare, have not accrued to you by the largesse of the University Administra-

tion. Rather, they are the result of the efforts invested by your Chapter leadership and negotiation team in intense bargaining for each and every contract.

At this time I respectfully request that you consider nominating yourself or a colleague for a leadership position. *Your union needs you* now more than ever to participate. If you think you are interested in a leadership position please contact the Chapter office (345-0151). Current officers will be happy to explain the roles and duties of leadership positions. To nominate yourself or a colleague please contact the Nomination/Election Chairperson, Gwen Nagle, via email at: gwendolyn.nagle@wmich.edu.

The positions open for nominations are:

- President
- Vice-President
- Contract Officer
- Grievance Officer
- Executive Committee Representatives for these 5 units:
 - ◊ Association of Language Specialists
 - ◊ College of Arts and Sciences – Humanities
 - ◊ College of Business
 - ◊ College of Education
 - ◊ College of Health and Human Services

I ask you: *what can you do for your Union?*■

nota bene: beginning with next month's *Advocate* a minimum number of hard copies will be produced. Instead, a link to its location on the webpage will be included in the WMU-AAUP Headlines. Faculty and Emeriti who prefer to continue to receive a hard copy may contact us by phone (345-0151) or email: wmuaaup@ameritech.net.

Healthcare Issues from page 1

only by then factoring in ALL of the costs – from premium share to deductibles to co-pays. This can be a bit confusing, and Pam Rooney and I would be happy to help on this – but neither we nor anyone else can tell you which choice to make. Despite what some would have you believe, one size does NOT fit all (and has not in the past either) – and you must assess the fit to your situation.

Myth #2 – “The PPO is managed care.” While there is considerable debate on the definition of managed care, our PPO does NOT fit any such definition. The technical label for a PPO such as ours is “modified indemnity.” Like absolutely all health plans, the PPO has a medical policy that governs coverage in certain situations – for example, excluding coverage for experimental treatments. That is far different from managed care, where in many cases ALL care is subject to case-by-case review. Again, ALL health plans (managed or not) have such medical policies. Calling the PPO managed care does not make it so – and allowing such hyperbole to influence your selection of plans may not always serve your best interests.

Myth #3 – “The indemnity plan covers everything.” Again, each plan covers some things the other does not. And, the indemnity plan does in fact have a medical policy! For some, the indemnity plan may be the best choice, for others the PPO. But no plan anywhere covers everything, and only by matching them up to your individual situation can you make the best choice.

Myth #4 – “The PPO requires referrals and approvals.” NOT TRUE! Referrals are never required, though in some limited circumstances they may be of benefit. (This seems to come up because providers are often a bit lost in the myriad plans out there, and give inaccurate information.)



Open enrollment
occurs
October 18th
through
October 29th
this year.

Myth #5 – “There are different dental and vision plans for each option.” First, the dental and vision coverages are not actually provided by Blue Cross/Blue Shield, which can be confusing to all. Second, these coverages are absolutely identical in both plans, as they are “added on” to each.

These are only a few of the common misconceptions I hear – I’m sure there are others. The bottom line is that you need to make informed decisions. Human Resources staff, or your chapter advocates, Pam Rooney and I, can help you get informed – but the ultimate decision is yours.

Advocacy and Claims Issues

Have you had a claim which was not paid? If you have ANY doubt about it, don't just pay it yourself! Any health plan is subject to some errors (we don't require 100% for a student to pass), and this has been magnified by the addition of a new plan this year. We recommend that your first point of inquiry be WMU's Group Representative from Blue Cross/Blue Shield of Michigan, Mr. Steve Tomasko (steve.tomasko@bcbsm.com), or by appointment, Thursdays, in Human Resources). Our experience in general is that Steve is most helpful in resolving most problems with claims payments. Unfortunately, our experi-

ence with the toll-free 800 number is not so positive. WMU's plan contains several additions or modifications to the “standard” Community Blue PPO plan, and despite assurances that personnel staffing this number are trained appropriately on our plan, in fact we continue to learn of individuals who have received incorrect information when calling that number. It appears that, generally, inquiries are answered from the standard Community Blue PPO template, which is not always correct for WMU faculty (easy example: massage therapy). Thus, at present we recommend Mr. Tomasko as the first point of contact.


That's not your final level of assistance. If you still feel that a claim should have been paid and wasn't, the Chapter will work with you to advocate correct resolution. You may contact Pam Rooney (pam.rooney@wmich.edu) or myself (bill.fenn@wmich.edu) to start this part of the process if needed. We can't get things paid which are in fact excluded, and we are limited in fixing errors originating with the providers – but we have been able to facilitate positive outcomes for the vast majority of people who have contacted us.

For either of these levels, it is important that you provide both the actual bill from the provider AND the Explanation of Benefits received from BCBSM.

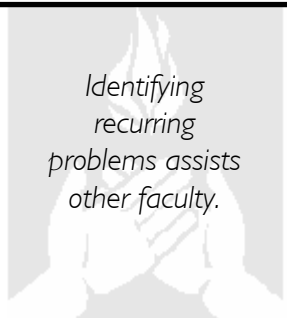
While it may sometimes seem “easier” to just pay such things yourself, you are not doing yourself or other faculty any favor by doing so. Not only is it important to receive your own benefits correctly, but identify recurring problems assists other faculty in similar situations – but we won't know about it if the problem hasn't been brought to us. Bottom line: if in any doubt, check it out fully via BCBSM and/or the Chapter – don't just give up.

Healthcare Grievance

Work continues on the grievance under the direction of your Grievance Officer, Pam Rooney. As this goes to press, another panel meeting on several of the remaining issues is scheduled (and will have taken place by the time you read this). As reported in the last Advocate, progress has been made on many of the original specific issues, but some still remain under discussion. This process is taking a considerable amount of time, for both good and bad reasons. On the “bad” side, there continues to be a willingness on the part of Administration to pass the buck down the line to others, such as BCBSM, and a continuing need to educate Administration on the mechanics of the plan they negotiated! On the “good” side, remember that this is a Type C Grievance in Step 2 – leaving only arbitration as the fallback position if issues cannot be resolved within Step 2. Arbitration is a long, drawn out process (potentially two or more years) over which we would have little control – and outcomes across the country in recent years clearly show that they can produce negative surprises for all parties regardless of the merits of their positions. In such a climate, it is far from a sure thing to take an issue to arbitration and careful consideration of



Any health plan
is subject to
some errors.



Identifying
recurring
problems assists
other faculty.

the potential ramifications (think the law of unintended consequences) must be undertaken. Given this, and given the effect that looming arbitration could have on a negotiation year, every effort is being made to resolve the greatest possible number of issues creatively with the greatest potential benefits to Chapter members in the Step 2 process – even if that means taking more time to do so. We would be happy to answer any questions on this – again, informed members make for a unified, powerful Chapter and accurate information defeats inaccurate rumors.

Your Chapter continues to advocate on the healthcare front for both individuals and the membership as a whole. In the current national environment, we can't promise perfect outcomes (indeed, nobody agrees on what that would look like) but only best efforts. As a health policy analyst, I am of the opinion that healthcare and health plans are too important to politicize. Data suggest that on a national level we have reached paralysis on these issues largely because they *have* become politicized. Extrapolating to our campus community, we could also become similarly paralyzed. On this issue, be informed, be opinionated, be outspoken, be leaders and “profess” – but don't be

dragged into positional politics of any type, regardless of their origin or specific position. YOUR health is too important.

To your health!■

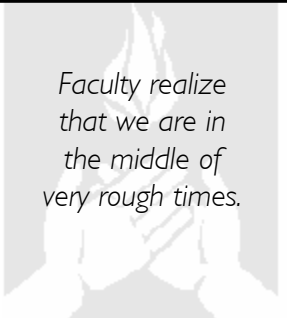
Workload

Karen Blaisure, Ph.D.

WMU-AAUP Contract Administrator

Many faculty have expressed concern over the possibility of being assigned a larger instructional load, beginning in the spring 2005 semester. Faculty in some departments have been called in to meet with their chairs and to justify why they should have anything less than a 12 credit hour teaching load for traditionally ranked faculty or a 15 credit hour teaching load for faculty specialist rank (for articles addressing workload see Articles 20, 42.§6 and 42.§9). Often the meeting is focused solely on professional recognition activities. The stated reason for such a review is that there is less money to pay for part-time instruction, so full-time faculty members are needed to provide more instruction.

Faculty realize that Western is in the middle of very rough times and accordingly are doing more—and the



Faculty realize
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more comes from their own pockets and personal and family time. For example, some faculty are using their own cell phones and land lines to make long distance phone calls to students, while others pay for even more supplies than usual. Many faculty are overloading their classes or are agreeing to teach off campus more than once per year. Meanwhile, as the focus on assessment continues, faculty find themselves on more committees and with more service. It should not be surprising if one of the consequences of more instruction and more service is an eventual reduction in recognition activities and a continued erosion of morale.

According to Article 42.§12, Western's Administration has the final determination of all faculty workloads. Faculty must meet scheduled obligations. If a faculty member does not, she or he can be considered insubordinate.

However, in these challenging times, bargaining unit members are highly encouraged to consult the section of their Department Policy Statement that addresses workload and Article 42 of the current 2002-2005 Agreement.

Specifically, Article 42.§7 of the Agreement allows that “a commensurate adjustment of classroom teaching load shall be available for assignment to faculty who are engaged in: heavy advising responsibilities (see Articles 42.§10.1 [a faculty member may be assigned up to 20 advisees without workload adjustment]); substantial research, creative and/or other scholarly activity; heavy responsibility for supervision of M.A., M.S. theses, specialist projects or doctoral dissertations.”

Additionally, “a commensurate adjustment of classroom teaching may be assigned for faculty who are engaged in: graduate-level instruction; classes with high enrollments; upper

The intention of Article 42 is to prevent serious inequities in workload assignments.

level courses; laboratory supervision; new or multiple preparations; individual student projects (such as independent study and reading); supervision of Honors College courses or theses; mentoring new faculty; course or program development; participation in and service to professional and academic organizations; departmental, University or community service.”

The intention of Article 42 is to prevent serious inequities in assignments of workload. If you perceive that your workload assignment does not follow the department policy statement and the Agreement, you have the right to appeal. The appeal procedure is outlined in Article 42.§11. The steps of the Workload Appeals Process are:

- Faculty member appeals to the department chair who has 10 calendar days to respond.
- If the response is considered unsatisfactory, the faculty member may appeal to the dean who has 15 calendar days to respond.
- If a resolution is not achieved at this point, the faculty member may demand a review by a panel consisting of the chair, the dean, and three faculty members (2 from the department and 1 from a department within the same college). The faculty members

are selected by the WMU/AAUP Contract Administrator. The review panel has 15 calendar days to render its recommendation to the provost.

- The provost has 15 calendar days to render a decision that is final.
- The faculty member retains the right to grieve the provost’s decision.

Please call the AAUP office if you are wondering whether to submit a workload appeal. ■

Rising to the Challenge

Donna Weinreich, Ph.D.
WMU-AAUP Information Officer

At the invitation of WMU/AAUP Past President Gary Matthews, Pat Shaw, Associate Secretary, National AAUP, met with the WMU-AAUP *Task Force on Chapter Concerns* and members of the Executive Committee on July 15, 2004. The focus of the meeting was to discuss revitalizing the Chapter in a visible, systematic way. I want to communicate to you some of Shaw’s observations in relation to Chapter activities, particularly those over the summer and into the fall. Among Shaw’s recommendations are

Your Chapter is using these recommendations to enhance its ability to serve you.

two I would like to highlight here: 1) revive the Association Council, and 2) attract and educate junior faculty. He lauded the establishment of the *Task Force* which was well under way prior to our meeting with him.

Many of you may not be aware of the high level of activity and productivity of the *Task Force*, which is composed of faculty, and assisted by Executive Committee members. To date the *Task Force* has produced an extensive plan to revitalize the Chapter through subcommittees. The subcommittees are: 1) examining the Chapter mission and a vision for the future; 2) updating our internal operations; 3) examining procedures, practices, and principles related to contract negotiations; and 4) developing new services as well as updating current member services. I encourage you to involve yourself with these subcommittees, new faces are always warmly welcomed. After all, this is your Chapter; it will be no more than what you make it.

One of the challenges facing us is serving a diverse constituency. Half of our constituents are young, having been here for 7 years or less. Steps are being taken to revitalizing the Association Council, which will provide Council Representatives with opportunities to garner and transmit the needs of all of their constituents more effectively and increase the participatory nature of their roles in Chapter decision making.

A motion was passed at the September 16, 2004, Association Council charging the Chapter to distribute the DVD, *One Chapter, Many Voices*. Included in the motion was a charge to Council Representatives to show the DVD and discuss three questions posed by the Mission and Vision subcommittee of the *Task Force*. If you have not received your copy of the DVD or been notified of a unit meeting, contact your Council Representative.

*If you have not
received your
DVD ... contact
your Association
Council
Representative.*

As the academic year wears on, I will highlight other recommendations that Shaw made and discuss how your Chapter is using these recommendations to enhance its ability to serve you, and how it is addressing your concerns. ■

**WMU-AAUP
Chapter Meeting
Thursday
October 21, 2004
Rooms 157-158
Bernhard Center**

The agenda includes a request for arbitration and the nomination of candidates for the positions of President, Vice President and Executive Committee members from the Association of Language Specialists and Colleges of Arts & Sciences—Humanities, Business, Education, and Health & Human Services.



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ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED