

Grievance Officer Report

Steven M. Durbin 8/12/2020

I have been working on a number of issues since my last report, all from home, of course, given the current COVID-19 state of affairs. A brief update on the most relevant:

1. I accompanied a member to an investigatory hearing, which was resolved without action being taken against the member. As a union steward, I was able to work behind the scenes in advance of the meeting to help ensure a positive outcome.
2. Executive committee voted to approve arbitration on the grievance filed against Sindecuse and their November 2019 email notice that faculty access to lab services was being restricted to only those ordered by a Sindecuse physician. **A letter of agreement has subsequently been drafted** and is being brought to Executive Committee this week, having been signed already by Western. It avoids arbitration while restoring the benefit in question to the membership, and positions us to discuss that benefit during the next round of contract administration.
3. We have a response to the OIE grievance. We have been advised that **our grievance was upheld**. I am working with the Director of Academic Labor Relations to finalize language in letters that are issued from that office to bargaining unit members to ensure compliance with the contract language. The new letter has been drafted, and is awaiting finalization by both Western's General Counsel and Director of Academic Labor Relations.
4. I continue working on several legacy issues, one of which concerns what was once called the OVPR, and a grievance filed by my predecessor regarding overload. I am still working to initiate the requested mediation hearing, but have been focused on the more contemporary grievances given their timeline. A meeting in August does not appear possible, so my plan is to push for a September (2020) meeting.
5. I have been providing advice regarding how department policy statements and shared governance principles apply to our current situation. I have also been reviewing several university-level policies in the context of our contract.
6. I have provided general advice regarding the contract to several members, resolving one issue where a legacy decision by one department inadvertently disadvantaged a member who was not part of the decision making process.
7. I have been continuously advocating for better direction to chairs and directors regarding faculty workload assignments, and the contractual right for faculty to provide direct input in how to deliver their programs with reduced resources, in collaboration with the other officers. I am pushing for a meaningful, timely response from the Administration which addresses the negative consequences faced by faculty who are experiencing an increase in teaching load and a corresponding reduction in assigned time to research and service.
8. I continue to work directly with the Contract Administrator as we advise faculty from various colleges on workload issues, retirement-related questions, and other contractually related issues. We are more or less alternating during the summer, although the current situation makes that problematic at times – there is plenty of work at the moment, answering emails, and meeting with members.