



# The Advocate

December 2019

## MARK YOUR CALENDAR Events, Meetings and Workshops

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January 13	9:30 a.m.	<b>Coffee at Montague</b> 814 Oakland Drive
January 24	5:00 p.m.	<b>Holiday Happy Hour</b> Saugatuck Brewing

## Receiving a Concern from an Administrator

Steve Durbin, WMU-AAUP Grievance Officer

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There are multiple instances in which an administrator might contact a bargaining unit member regarding a concern. In all such instances, there are three important things to remember:

1. You are always welcome and encouraged to contact WMU-AAUP before responding to such a request, especially if it is transmitted to you in writing. A number of people here can provide advice regarding your rights and options; we do not get involved in your situation directly without your explicit permission.
2. Article 22 covers many of these types of situations. Please note that if the intent is to informally resolve an issue, that tends to be in everyone's best interest, and is typically straightforward. However, if there is the possibility that discipline can result, the administration must follow the procedures as spelled out in that article.
3. When in doubt, see point number 1.

## Chapter Communications

Mark St. Martin, WMU-AAUP Vice-President

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As the semester winds down and the weather turns colder, it signals a new year is just around the corner. In that new year of 2020 we will be engaged in the important endeavor of contract negotiations. Our strength, of course, lies in our members and our ability to provide a united front. Thus, it will be important in the upcoming months to ensure we are communicating effectively with you and you with us. Thanks to our communications officer Cathryn Bailey, we have a number of ways that we are already transmitting information on a consistent basis. For example, the WMU-AAUP chapter blog is a must visit (especially if you haven't done so already!) at [www.thewmuaaup.com](http://www.thewmuaaup.com). We also have Facebook and twitter accounts if you engage in those platforms. Of course, the staff will continue to send schedules and important information via email as well. Additionally, there are opportunities to chat with others in the union as well as officers at our monthly Coffee at Montague and 4<sup>th</sup> Friday get togethers (look to your email or AAUP webpage for reminders on those events). Overall, we are hoping to keep you informed and connected to your union. We hope the reverse will be true as well so that we can understand your thoughts and concerns as we approach negotiations.

## On Travel Funds and Research Productivity (Article 34)

Natalio Ohanna, WMU-AAUP Contract Administrator

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In many disciplines across campus, research activity often begins with a proposal to present at a professional conference. Once accepted, there is a commitment, our name appears in the program, a panel awaits us, and there will be an audience. Thus, with a conference as the deadline, we are determined to draft a paper and to finish it. On the basis of this presentation, the project continues to be elaborated upon, expanded and deepened with scholarship, argumentation and theoretical analysis, until it eventually becomes a publishable article, a book chapter or part of a larger project that could lead to external funding and to a major contribution to our field. Traveling functions as an important research engine. There is no question that supporting scholarly work with travel funds can increase productivity. For us, presenting at a conference does not mean merely disseminating the results of our work. Travel gives a powerful boost to the early stages of research work. It is most often the beginning. This is why WMU should redouble its efforts to encourage participation in professional conferences. Traveling fosters intellectual vitality, innovation, discovery and research productivity.

I recently received my certificate of appreciation in grateful recognition for my 10 years of service at WMU. I am genuinely proud of it. The cream and gold diploma signed by President Montgomery reminded me of my very first days on Western soil back in late Summer 2009. It was during New Faculty Orientation at the John E. Fetzer Center, and I was quite disappointed to learn about our small Faculty Research Travel Fund (FRTF). The irony is that a decade later, that same fund has not been increased, but rather reduced to \$800! For WMU-AAUP members, this means having to cover more professional related expenses out of pocket to do our job, which feels even more punishing when areas of expertise or professional associations take us far away. What is worse,

for some inexplicable reason, FRTF does not distinguish between domestic and international travel. Drive to Chicago or fly to Okinawa: the fund remains the same. And by the way, have you ever experienced any jet lag on those professional trips? No matter. Cross the globe, present your paper, miss most of the conference, and come back as fast as you can, because the maximum allowable lodging will be two nights. Don't even think about unpacking. Enjoy the clouds from your seat on the plane and hold onto those touching memories until next year, for upon landing, you will have exhausted your contractual travel funds. Have you had to spend personal savings on a professional trip? Wasn't there a conference in Michigan? What a perfect formula to discourage both global engagement and research productivity. Do we need to wait another decade to see a change? I hope not. Let's get involved in a conversation on the value of professional travel for a discovery driven WMU.

### Know your contract

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#### Article 23.4.1 Approval of Department Policy Statement

Following ratification of the policy by majority vote of the department faculty, the ratified policy statement is given to the department chair, who shall then review it.

Following review, the chair shall provide written feedback to the committee within fifteen (15) business days of receiving the policy statement. The committee *may* choose to alter the Policy Statement based on this feedback. The committee shall inform the department chair of the Committee's response to the feedback. One (1) copy of the Statement or additions or amendments thereto, together with the comments of the department chair, shall be forwarded to the Chapter, the department chair, the dean, and Western's Director of Academic Labor Relations.

**Check your WMU-AAUP Contract for additional information on this topic.**