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## **Article 9 update: WMU-AAUP membership and dues**

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For decades the WMU-AAUP has been what is known as an agency shop. This means that all board-appointed faculty members at WMU have been required to pay union dues or service fees to fund the business of the Chapter in support of the faculty. However, when our 2011-14 contract expired on September 6, 2014, the agency shop provision also expired, and pursuant to the new “right to work” (RTW) law recently enacted in Michigan, no such provision is included in the 2014-17 Agreement, which is now in effect as of the September 30 ratification vote by the Board of Trustees.

In order to comply with the new law, the WMU-AAUP and the university administration negotiated new contract language this summer for Article 9 of the Agreement, which governs bargaining-unit membership and dues.

Some things will stay the same. The administration has agreed to honor all existing payroll deduction authorization forms and to continue payroll deduction of Chapter dues and fees. Therefore, faculty members who are now participating in payroll deduction of dues and wish to remain dues-paying members of the WMU-AAUP do not have to take any action. New hires should complete the authorization forms sent to them by the WMU-AAUP staff to activate payroll deduction.

What is new for us is that effective with the ratification of the 2014-17 Agreement, and for as long as the RTW laws remain in effect in Michigan, each member of the board-appointed faculty may choose whether to pay dues. A faculty member who wishes to discontinue paying Chapter dues or service fees must contact the university administration and the Chapter to request in writing cancellation of their existing payroll deduction authorization. Once the request is received by both parties, dues deduction will cease with the appropriate payroll period after the cancellation request has been processed. Additional information about processing is available at [wmich.edu/payroll](http://wmich.edu/payroll).

The WMU-AAUP remains the exclusive bargaining unit at WMU for the board-appointed faculty, and as such, the Chapter retains the right and the intent to continue to represent the board-appointed faculty and to bargain for salaries, benefits, and working conditions. The administration may not negotiate these terms with individual faculty members, regardless of any faculty member’s dues-payment status. (An exception is the right of individual faculty members to request market or merit adjustments and the right of the administration to grant them, in accordance with language carried over from previous contracts into the 2014-17 Agreement.)

The WMU-AAUP respects the legal right of each faculty member to decide whether to continue to pay dues. The Chapter is legally required to administer the contract on behalf of all members of the board-appointed faculty, regardless of dues-payment status.

However, it is important for all faculty colleagues to understand that the services provided by the Chapter are funded entirely through dues payments. For nearly 40 years, with the support of the dues and fees of the membership, the WMU-AAUP has worked successfully to strengthen shared governance, expand academic freedom, and protect the rights and benefits of current and retired faculty. This funding also makes it possible for the WMU-AAUP to negotiate salaries and benefits effectively on behalf of the faculty, to defend the contract, and to protect the due-process rights of our members. Dues payment makes this work possible by funding legal counsel, professional staff, office space, release time for faculty to do union work, support services for negotiations, and other resources.

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## Article 9 update: WMU-AAUP membership and dues (continued)

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Over time, a reduction in funding would affect the ability of the Chapter to represent the faculty as effectively as we have come to expect. On the line are our rights as autonomous professionals, entitled to meaningful participation in developing the university's priorities, as well as the many valuable benefits that we and our families enjoy. Without the support of dues, it would be very difficult, if not impossible, to leverage faculty strength and preserve our rights and benefits. Indeed, that is precisely the goal of RTW legislation: to weaken unions by defunding them.

Our annual salary increases, employer-paid retirement contributions, rights to summer preference, substantial promotion increments, tuition remission, spouse and partner benefits, and due process rights are just a few of the hard-won results of negotiations over the past nearly 40 years. Additionally, our culture of tenure at WMU is contractual, as is our right not to be subject to post-tenure review.

We have all these rights and benefits (and more) because we have a contract. We have a contract because we have a union. And we have a union because for nearly 40 years, the board-appointed faculty has paid its dues. Those who continue to do so will help to preserve faculty rights and strengthen the voice of the faculty on our campus.

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To summarize:

- For current dues-paying members who wish to continue as such, no action is needed. If you are a new hire wishing to join, please complete your payroll-deduction authorization card to activate your membership.
- Dues-paying members enjoy all the rights and privileges the union offers, including the right to vote on all union matters (including contract ratification and elections for Chapter officers and department and college-level representation) and to serve as representatives and in leadership positions.
- To opt out, you must send your written request to the university administration and to the Chapter to cancel your payroll deduction authorization.
- If you opt out, you will retain the benefits of the contract and the same level of representation by the Chapter as dues-paying members. However, you will not retain the right to vote on any union matter, including contract ratification or elections for representatives and officers, nor will you be permitted to serve.
- The goal of RTW is to defund unions. We have a strong faculty union at WMU and look forward to keeping it strong despite RTW through the advocacy and financial support of the board-appointed faculty.

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For more information about the return on investment for your WMU-AAUP dues and about "right to work" at WMU, please see Issue #1, Spring 2014, of the WMU-AAUP *Bulletin*, available online at <http://wmu-aaup.com/bulletins/>.



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