

AAUP

NEWS



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Fact-finder report expected this weekend; AAUP members unanimously authorize strike if no contract by Sept. 6

On Tuesday, Aug. 23, members of the Faculty Bargaining Team presented information about unresolved contract issues to the fact-finder appointed by the State Employment Relations Board (SERB), Dr. Louis V. Imundo.

Faculty Chief Negotiator John Battistone said the hearing lasted about eight hours.

Faculty and administration representatives presented their positions and the supporting reasons for more than 20 unresolved portions of the contract, including the articles dealing with workload, compensation, benefits, and tenure.

According to John, Dr. Imundo said he would provide on Saturday or Sunday (Aug. 27 or 28) his recommendations for resolving these issues.

AAUP Chapter President Pam Ecker said that a chapter meeting to discuss and vote on the fact-finder's recommendations is tentatively scheduled for Monday, Aug. 29, at 1:00 p.m.

Pam said that assuming the fact-finder delivers the report when promised, the Chapter

Executive Committee is planning to meet this weekend to review the report.

"We might need to make an adjustment to the Chapter meeting schedule, depending on when the fact-finder's report actually arrives," Pam said. "Our Communication Committee will be informing members about the meeting schedule after it is confirmed, and we'll put information on the Chapter Hotline and website also."

Faculty unanimously support strike authorization

At the AAUP chapter meeting held Aug. 23, more than 140 faculty members in attendance unanimously supported a motion authorizing the Chapter Executive Committee to file a "Notice of Intent to Strike" form with the SERB.

The motion to file the form was made by John Buttlerwerth and seconded by Marc Baskind and Diane Stump. Each of these faculty members spoke about the importance of faculty unity and solidarity in achieving a good contract settlement.

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The view from the fact-finding hearing

-- Geoff Woolf, Faculty Bargaining Team Member

I'm going to start with a quote I heard a couple of times during the fact-finding hearing on Tuesday. Roll it around in your mind as you continue reading:

"Can't you just turn your computer off?"

Readers of the *AAUP News* know that the Faculty Bargaining Team has attempted several times to inform the administration's team of the need for significant attention to workload issues.

Faculty members also know that some aspects of our work have changed immensely and irrevocably during the 15 years since the first faculty contract was negotiated. But the contractual formulas for calculating workload have not changed.

During the hearing, I described to the fact-finder a variety of reasons that faculty work has changed, including steady increases to class caps, disparity between big growth in student enrollment growth and very small growth in the number of full-time faculty, and changing

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administration expectations regarding faculty use of technology.

Perhaps the most important change that I described, however, was the changing access that our students have to us.

In 1990, our students expected to be able to contact us during office hours, either in person or on the phone. Today, students and faculty can use a wide range of communication tools including email, instant messaging, text messaging, chat rooms, threaded discussion, and more. They can phone us from their homes, their offices, their cars, and anywhere else they might be when they have a question or concern they want to share.

All the Cincinnati State faculty members I know are using some combination of these communication tools to better serve their students. In this respect, faculty may be doing more than anyone else at the College to improve access to the community.

In the old days, student contact with an instructor was constrained by students' work schedules, family obligations, transportation, and sometimes even social discomfort with face-to-face office visits. Today, technology allows us to serve a wider range of students no matter what their schedule or social restraints might be.

Faculty, as well as students, benefit from the satisfaction of being able to "get the job done," even if that means that we use instant messaging during "virtual office hours" after midnight to assist a student whose only available time to work with us happens to be after a late shift at work.

I don't know about other faculty members, but I relish the

extended access that this sort of technology provides, and I wouldn't change a single one of those late night cyber-meetings.

But what the Faculty Team has been trying to help the administration team understand is that increased access comes at a cost.

Students know how accessible we have become (or how accessible they think we ought to be), and they expect and deserve timely, well-considered communication from faculty.

We've been trying to help the administration team understand that many of us love giving students increased access—but we are running out of time in the day to provide it effectively to an ever-increasing number of students.

What we need, in many cases, is relief in terms of class sizes and course load and/or advising load, so that we can continue to provide quality service to all of our students, and perhaps not have to use quite so many 2:00 a.m. "office hours" to do so.

Twice while I was describing this dilemma to the fact-finder, the administration's attorney, John Herbert, addressed this question to the Faculty Team:

"Can't you just turn your computer off?"

See, now the quote makes sense, doesn't it?

My response to Mr. Herbert on Tuesday was that certainly, I could turn my computer off and ignore the communication from my students. But, I told him, that means I would also have to go to bed every night knowing that I had not done quality work.

Given some time to consider Mr. Herbert's question more deeply, it seems well in line with

everything else we've heard from the administration team during these negotiations.

Once again, at fact-finding, it was clear that the administration does not care to invest in the cost that real educational quality requires, and would go so far as to tell us that we should simply ignore student pleas for help when we've satisfied the most basic requirements of our job descriptions.

But I wonder whether such a policy would really be supported by administrators. For example, when students start complaining to deans that faculty are not answering emails or participating fully in discussion boards, I wonder if the deans will be as understanding as Mr. Herbert. I wonder if they are willing to accept the fact that we have just turned off our computers because "you have to draw the line somewhere."

Still, Mr. Herbert's question might explain some of the difficulties faculty have getting action from College administrators. Perhaps our administrators really believe that it's acceptable to turn the computers off when they feel they've met the basic requirement of their workday. Perhaps they are satisfied to go to bed each night knowing that they could have done better but "you have to draw the line somewhere."

Perhaps that is why our College president can be so cavalier about canceling his appearances at New Student Orientation sessions, which he did for two of the three sessions where he was scheduled to welcome new students and their families.

Perhaps he had already met his weekly work requirements. Perhaps he is satisfied going to bed each night, knowing that he

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"Since the first faculty contract was established in 1990, Cincinnati State faculty have never started an academic year without a contract in place," Pam said.

Pam continued, "The Ohio collective bargaining law says that a strike can begin if the new contract is not resolved before the old contract expires at midnight on September 5--provided that the Notice form has been filed with the SERB at least 10 days in advance."

"Faculty members continue to hope that we can get a new contract settled before the new term starts," Pam said.

"However, it appears to many faculty members that this year the administration and the Board members prefer just going through the motions of bargaining, and waiting to see if a fact-finder's report will be an acceptable alternative to talking with our Faculty Team about how

to resolve our differences," Pam said.

Pam said that she delivered a copy of the Notice of Intent to Strike to Dr. Wright at the conclusion of the Board of Trustees meeting on Tuesday.

"When I gave the Notice to Dr. Wright, I told him that the chapter members are taking this step because the law requires us to do so," Pam said.

"I also told Dr. Wright that AAUP members hope we can reach a reasonable contract agreement before the new term begins, so a strike is not necessary," Pam said.

"Of course, the AAUP chapter members will have the opportunity to vote on the fact-finder's recommendations," Pam said. "But as many faculty members recall, in 1993 and 1996, the real solutions weren't reached until after the members had rejected a fact-finder's recommendations."

Chapter members receive flash drives to protect intellectual property

At the chapter meeting, all members received AAUP "flash drive" storage devices so they can back up their course materials that are saved on College computers.

Chapter members also received a handout on Frequently Asked Questions concerning rumors and threats related to the possibility of a strike.

"The AAUP Executive Committee will be making arrangements to distribute the storage devices and the FAQ information to members who were not able to attend the meeting on Tuesday," Pam said.

"Any faculty member who believes they are being subjected to threats or intimidation in relation to the possibility of a strike should inform an AAUP Executive Committee member immediately, so we can take appropriate corrective action," Pam said.

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could have done better by the students. Perhaps he simply had to draw the line somewhere.

I do not believe that Cincinnati State faculty are willing to sacrifice quality when it comes to providing service to our students. We are not willing to take the administration's callous and cynical attitude when it comes to drawing the line between our work and personal lives.

Providing quality education to our students takes time and dedication.

Cincinnati State faculty have plenty of dedication.

What we are running out of--in our daily work lives, and in our negotiations to establish a new contract--is time.

Cincinnati State AAUP Chapter Meeting

tentatively scheduled for
Monday, Aug. 29, 1:00 p.m.
Main Bldg. Conference Center

Check the Hotline and the Website for updates!

AAUP Hotline: 513.569.1888

AAUP Website:
www.cinstateaaup.org

Letters



To the Editor:

I was one of the many faculty members who attended the 15-minute public meeting held by our Board of Trustees on Tuesday.

I found it interesting that both Dr. Wright and Board Chair Annette Smith Tarver made comments at the meeting about "letting the process work." Dr. Wright said he "respects" the process and Mrs. Smith Tarver said she "has confidence in" the process.

The process they were referring to is called *collective bargaining* or *negotiations*.

But from what I've heard from the Faculty Bargaining Team, and read in the *AAUP News*, there doesn't seem to have been much bargaining so far this year.

I've served on the Faculty Team in the past, and it appears to me that the administration sent a team to the bargaining table this year without empowering them to actually negotiate.

Three times, the teams met for the sole purpose of discussing the faculty workload proposals. But

at no time was the administration team able to negotiate an agreement on workload.

A cynical person might think that the administration's sole purpose in these meetings was to drag the process out, perhaps even in hopes that a fact-finder's report would come in "too late" to act on prior to the expiration of AAUP's current contract.

The *AAUP News* of August 18 (available to administrators and Board members, if not read by them) made it clear that the AAUP Executive Committee would be seeking on Aug. 23 authorization to strike if a new contract is not in place by September 6. The *AAUP News* stated clearly that this authorization was necessary to meet legal deadlines.

Yet, it appeared to me that both Dr. Wright and Mrs. Smith Tarver seemed surprised to receive the legal paperwork from AAUP President Pam Ecker.

I observed Pam in conversation for some time with Dr. Wright and Mrs. Smith Tarver, and have every reason to believe Pam was

as clear in explaining the difference between this authorization paperwork and a decision to commence a strike as she was at our chapter meeting just an hour earlier.

So I was surprised to read in the *Daily News* on Wednesday only that the faculty had approved a strike to commence at 6:30 a.m. on September 6.

It's true that the form Pam handed Dr. Wright said that. But all the rest of the message I'm sure Pam delivered seemed to have disappeared.

No one on Cincinnati State's faculty prefers to strike. We'd all prefer to "coast in" on September 6 and continue to serve our students, with no interruptions.

But if the administration continues to provide only lip service to "the process," and continues to fail to negotiate a new contract, the faculty may have no other choice than to demonstrate that our concern for quality and our respect for the value of the work we perform are genuine.

Debbie Bogenschutz, Library

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