

NEWS

AAUP members authorize strike, if needed

Nearly 100 members of the AAUP Chapter voted unanimously to authorize the Chapter Executive Committee to file a strike notice, should it become necessary.

The vote took place at the Chapter meeting on Aug. 13.

At the meeting, Faculty Chief Negotiator Geoff Woolf reported to members on the bargaining session that took place Aug. 12.

"Our team tried, more than once, to provide creative solutions to shared problems," Geoff said.

"Our team has been working very hard to develop compromises that would meet the administration's stated needs and also address faculty concerns."

"Each time we have offered a compromise, they have said 'thank you for addressing our concerns, but we're not interested in your compromise,'" Geoff continued. "They don't give us reasons; they just walk away."

Geoff said that a fact-finding hearing has not yet been scheduled, but more information is expected from the SERB soon.

Chapter President Paul Davis said, "We have tried for cooperation and collaboration, and things haven't moved, so now we have to try another way."

"What we're asking for is not unreasonable or unfair," Paul said.

"We need to lock arms, stay unified, and do what it takes to make this College better for students and faculty," Paul added.

In making the motion to authorize a strike, faculty member Peggy Rolfsen encouraged members to "send a message, loud and clear, that we will not be taken advantage of; that we will not settle for less than we deserve, for less than our future colleagues deserve, for less than our families deserve, and for less than our students deserve."

"We will continue to hope for the best," Paul said. "But we need to prepare for the worst."

A view from the table: why tenure matters

-- Geoff Woolf, Faculty Chief Negotiator

This isn't my first time at the bargaining table, so back in May, I thought nothing would shock me this year during negotiations.

As it turns out, what has been a shock this year is my own continuing capacity to be shocked by how out-of-touch and insensitive this administration is to the values of its faculty, the needs of the College, and the importance of maintaining quality in the educational options we provide to the community.

Members of the administration have told me repeatedly how surprised they were by my intense reaction at the table when the administration submitted—on the very first day of bargaining—a proposal almost identical to one they brought three years ago: the wholesale elimination of new tenure-track positions.

Frankly, I was astonished. In a year when the Board of Trustees and administration appeared to be signaling interest in changing the dialogue at Cincinnati State,

see *View from the table* / 2

View from the table / continued from 1

they chose to start bargaining with an all-out attack on the single most fundamental principle of the AAUP.

How out of touch are they?

An experienced member of the administration bargaining team, at that first bargaining session, expressed surprise that the issue of tenure was such a “hot-button” for us.

This administrator claimed to have no idea that the issue of tenure was one that would excite such a strong reaction so early in the bargaining process.

Really?

Three years ago, we gave impassioned speeches at the table and in fact finding about the importance of tenure.

Three years ago, we published letter upon letter from faculty members explaining their reactions to the administration’s attack on tenure.

Are we really to believe the administration’s team did not get it? How out of touch are they?

Another experienced member of the administration team has expressed consternation, both at the table and in conversations with employees around the College, about why the removal of tenure should matter to current faculty. After all, we have our tenure already. Why should we care what happens to future hires?

These questions are most certainly indicators of administration values. Maybe this is truly how little they

respect us. Maybe they actually believe that we are so selfish and short-sighted that the only interests we are looking out for are our own.

Or maybe it’s not that complicated. Maybe the administration has determined that as long as short-term needs are satisfied, there’s no harm in making decisions that could spell the end of quality at this College.

In higher education, tenure is the ballast that allows for a balance between those who wish to provide high-quality learning and those who are primarily concerned with the cost of doing that work.

They won’t be around to see the consequences of their short-sightedness.

Maybe we simply need to do a better job of explaining why tenure matters, even to those of us who already have it.

We stay at this College because, for all of its flaws, we love it.

And we hope, as do all good custodians of something bigger than themselves, to leave the College better than we found it. The College we create will be our legacy.

If we leave it without protecting the tenure process, which ensures that Cincinnati

State can attract and retain the most effective faculty members, we will have been very poor custodians.

Let’s put this into perspective by examining what our own programs and areas might look like a few years into the removal of tenure from the culture:

September 2010: Academic Freedom in Peril.

Imagine a conflict-averse Dean who receives an angry call from the parent of a student.

The parent is furious about a piece of content being taught in a class his daughter is taking. He disagrees with the instructor and believes that his child should not be subjected to concepts so far out of line with his family’s values. He threatens to call the Enquirer.

The Dean approaches the non-tenured faculty member who teaches the course with a request to stop teaching this controversial concept, just for this one term, no matter how important it might be.

How will that faculty member react, knowing that this Dean will decide every April whether her job will continue to be there for her? What will that faculty member do if she lives in constant dread of losing her health benefits?

What happens when the Dean decides that she doesn’t want to risk future problems with parents like this and “encourages” this non-tenured faculty member to NEVER teach an important, though controversial, topic again?

April 2012: Safety Compromised.

Imagine a few years down the road when a financial crisis grips the College. Deans, under

see View from the table / 3

View from the table / continued from 2

pressure to economize, begin to require clinical coordinators and instructors to take on additional students in each section.

A non-tenured faculty member expresses her concerns that with the Dean's suggested number of students, both student and client safety could be compromised.

What happens if the Dean doesn't take the concern seriously and refuses to change the mandate for more students in each clinical section? What happens if the non-tenured faculty member fears the loss of her job enough to accede to the Dean's pressure? What happens if someone is seriously injured or killed?

January 2014: Quality Secondary to FTE's.

Imagine a Dean who becomes convinced that lab instructors are "underloaded" and could teach double the number of students in their laboratories.

The Dean presents the idea to the non-tenured faculty members of the program who explain that they would like to accommodate the Dean's proposed new class caps, but in order to do so, they would have to cut the number of lab activities in half.

What happens if the Dean sees no real harm in this? What happens if the non-tenured faculty members are afraid to tell the Dean that this plan will leave their students hopelessly underprepared when they go into the work world?

What happens when people have to decide between their students' interests and their own job security?

July 2019: Hiring Manipulated.

What happens one day, years in the future, when the godson of a College Vice President applies for a vacant teaching position in your program?

The program's non-tenured screening committee interviews a pool of applicants and finds a couple of outstanding candidates.

Unfortunately, the Vice President's godchild is a complete disaster in the interview, and is clearly unqualified for the position.

What happens when it's time for these poor souls to make their recommendations? What happens if they're good people who care just a little bit more about their ability to put their own children through college than the academic soundness of their program?

October 2020: Selling out the Students.

What happens, years down the road, when a major multi-national textbook publishing company promises the College Foundation a substantial endowment, provided the College does a better job of putting its textbooks into our classrooms?

What if the Deans are incentivized to help the College make this transition? What if the books are terrible? What if they're outrageously expensive?

What if you are the last remaining tenured faculty member in your area and your objections are voted down 4-1 by the fearful non-tenured faculty in your program?

Many, many years in the Future: Bad Leadership Unchecked.

What if one day Cincinnati State gets a President who is just bad for the College? What if that president spends money irresponsibly, has no interest in shared governance, and creates sweetheart deals for his friends while terrorizing people who oppose him? What if he throws the College into dire financial straits?

What happens when a President like this wields non-renewal as a weapon against the faculty? What

if that faculty sees trouble coming, but are afraid to sound the alarm?

In a perfect world, we would not be able to imagine any of the scenarios above.

We would be able to rely on benevolent, collaborative leadership. We could be assured that our managers and their managers would never rule by coercion or intimidation, and would never be vindictive, manipulative, or disrespectful of our deeply held values.

But your Faculty bargaining team is not able to make such assurances.

Therefore, we must do everything in our power to protect the institution of tenure, because tenure makes institutions of higher learning effective.

In the coming days and weeks, critics of tenure might ask you why we should have the protection of tenure when most other people are not so protected in their jobs.

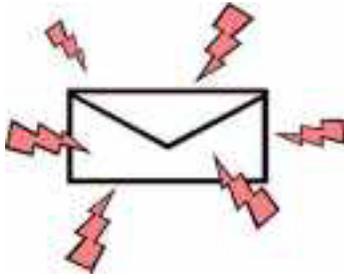
The answer is simple:

Other than education, how many industries demand a productive balance between one group of employees, who are responsibly providing lifetime learning in an environment of safety, honesty, and quality, and another group of employees, who are primarily concerned with the cost of doing that work?

In higher education, tenure is the ballast that allows for that balance.

It's not surprising that our administrators want to get rid of tenure.

But it is surprising that they don't understand why we won't.



Letters

To the Editor:

“Step up to the Plate” is a baseball phrase that’s often used to encourage people to make a contribution to their workplace. I think I’ve stepped up to the plate more times than I can count to help our students.

So when I hear that the administration bargaining team is saying that faculty must not be working hard (evidenced by the fact that faculty have “extra time” for overload), I wish they would review my schedule for the last year.

I had a full workload scheduled and was happily looking forward to a reasonable but busy schedule. I had asked to place my lightest load—“only” 15 units—in the Late Fall term.

Then a situation occurred that required me to “step up to the plate.” The nursing clinical instructor who was supposed to be provided by Cincinnati Children’s Hospital Medical Center was suddenly unavailable.

To keep a group of students on track in the Nursing program, I took on the clinical...not because I wanted the overload, but because I wanted our students to keep moving toward their goals.

I got through the Winter term with my scheduled full workload, but then Spring term came and I had to “step up to the plate” again to help our students.

The instructor who had been scheduled to teach our evening

LPN to RN course was no longer available. I took on the class, and the associated clinical coordination, so these students could complete the course that had been guaranteed to them.

My students’ evaluations show that I did an excellent job.

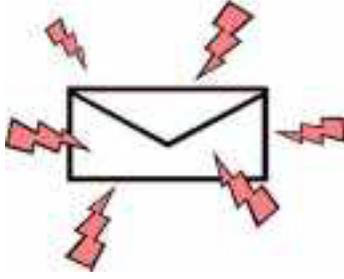
Anyone who wants to tell me that I am not doing my job, and that I’m working overload only because I don’t have enough to do, needs to review the circumstances before they speak so glibly.

Like my faculty colleagues, I’m working very hard for the Cincinnati State team.

Florence Donohue
Nursing
Health & Public Safety
Division

Did you know?

- Three of the current division Deans, who gained tenure while they were faculty members, were asked several years ago to give up their tenure as an indication of loyalty to the College administration. All three refused to do so.
- In the five terms from Summer 2007 through Spring 2008, the 12 Deans and Assistant Deans received overload compensation for teaching a total of 73 course sections.



Letters

To the Editor:

I have on my desk an invitation to Convocation 2008: "Calling Our College Together."

It's hard to get excited about coming together when right now, the administration is doing its best to tear the College apart.

I had hoped for a new tone in bargaining this year. For a change, we actually have a President who seems to like faculty members and respect the work that we do.

But have we had a change in tone at the bargaining table?

Everything I've heard indicates that in many of the negotiation sessions this year—just as in past years—the administration came to the table with proposals that indicate their perceptions of us, including:

- Faculty don't work hard enough, so we should work more.

- Faculty are overpaid, so any raise we get should be far less than the increase in the cost of living.
- Even though it's OK to give faculty a smaller raise than any other category of College employees, the administration still needs to take back more of that raise through an increased contributions to health insurance.

Anyone who knows me knows that money isn't my main motivator. But I do have ever-increasing bills to pay.

Money is one of the ways we show respect in this country, and the administration is showing me they do not respect the job I do.

In good times and bad, the administration has come to the bargaining table with insultingly low pay raises for faculty.

We understand the importance of being fiscally responsible. When times were bad three years ago, we agreed to accept a smaller raise.

The AAUP team always asks for raises that don't make us rich, but keep us from losing ground.

We're not trying to be the highest paid community college faculty in Ohio; we're trying to hold our place in the ratings.

And by the way, what's wrong with wanting to be number one?

If the Board of Trustees and the administration are still interested in moving the College from good to great—for now and for the future—you must recognize the primary contributions of the faculty and you must compensate those contributions appropriately.

Debbie Bogenschutz
Library

**For the most recent bargaining information:
AAUP Office Hotline - 513-569-1888
or online at www.cinstateaaup.org**

Did you know?

- From June 2007 to June 2008, inflation increased 5.6 percent, the largest 12-month jump since the period ending in January 1991. (*Cincinnati Enquirer*, 8/15/08)

Got your new AAUP shirt?

If not, come to the AAUP office.

Monday, 1:30 - 3:00 p.m.

Tuesday, 9:00 - 10:00 a.m.

Thursday, 10:30 - 11:45 a.m.

Additional hours to be announced.

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