

Wright State University's faculty union has set an Oct. 1 date to strike if its members reject a fact-finder's report due out Sept. 11.

Wright State faculty union threatens to strike in October

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By

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Wright State University's faculty union has set an Oct. 1 date to strike if its members reject a fact-finder's report due out Sept. 11.

Once the report is issued, the Wright State chapter of the American Association of University Professors plans to hold two meetings for members, said president Martin Kich, professor at the WSU Lake Campus in Celina.

Members will then vote for more than a week on the report, which will propose a sort of compromise contract, Kich said. At least 60 percent of the union's membership would have to turn down the fact-finder's proposal to begin initiating a strike.

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"I think it obviously suggests that...we do not expect that a fact-finder is going to be able to produce a report that we find acceptable," Kich told this news organization.

WSU spokesman Seth Bauguess said the university would not comment on the strike date while negotiations are still ongoing.

Earlier this year, the administration offered the union a three-year contract with no raises, reduced health benefits with higher premiums and a new furlough proposal, according to a January email from the AAUP-WSU. The reduction in benefits would amount to a 4 percent pay cut and a furlough, which could last up to two weeks, could amount to a 5 percent pay cut, according to the email.



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That proposed contract would also give the administration more discretion in assigning workloads, parking fees, life and disability insurance and tuition and fee remission, among other things, according to the email.



In a copy of the union's "strike platform" sent to members, AAUP-WSU leaders called the administration's salary and benefits proposals "draconian" and said they would "make it harder to attract faculty." Nearly a dozen or so contract issues remain unresolved but the strike platform does not detail them.



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The administration's proposals are an "extreme reaction to what should be a short-term financial" issue, Kich said.

Wright State is still dealing with a financial crisis that caused its board of trustees to slash \$30 million from the school's budget in June 2017 in an attempt to correct years of overspending that drained reserve funds. This year administrators are projecting another \$10-million decline in revenue, mostly due to enrollment.

"The faculty represented by AAUP-WSU have been making compromises to avoid a strike but the administration's refusal to compromise on a fairly large number of extreme proposals may give us no alternative," the platform document states.

Contract negotiations between Wright State University and its faculty have been stalled since March 2017.

The union's contract expired in June 2017 but it remains in effect until after the fact-finder's report is issued. The most recent three-year contract gave faculty around an annual 3 percent raise, Kich said.

Before November, the WSU faculty union did not even have a formal plan that would allow them to strike if they decided to. The plan caused the administration to respond in a statement that said a strike was not “practically and legally” imminent.

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Around 584 faculty are members of the AAUP-WSU at the university. Wright State employs around 1,774 full-time, part-time and adjunct faculty, according to the school’s website.

Youngstown State University is the only other state school to have ever gone on strike in Ohio. The strike only lasted for a few hours in August 2011, according to [The Vindicator](#).

If Wright State faculty strike, Kich said he thought the administration would likely try to continue staffing classes in the hopes that it would be short-lived.

“Our view is that at some point somebody has to be reasonable here on the other side and work out something that both sides can live with, not necessarily be happy with but live with,” Kich said.

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