

AAUP-WSU Strike Platform

August, 2018

AAUP-WSU, which represents all full-time teaching faculty in the university's seven undergraduate colleges, has been attempting to negotiate a fair contract since January 2017. Indeed, on a timetable agreed to by both sides, we had exchanged all non-economic articles (the bulk of the contract) by late March 2017. But when Dr. McCray was appointed Interim President, the administration postponed negotiations until President Schrader took office in July and then delayed them indefinitely until the administration/Board could address its largely self-created financial crisis. For the first time ever, the administration hired an outside labor attorney to conduct the negotiations, and two things quickly became clear: the administration wanted us to allow regressive bargaining, or to restart the negotiations from scratch, and their idea of compromise was that they might not get absolutely everything that they wanted. AAUP-WSU finally forced the administration back to the table by filing for fact-finding. With fact-finding looming, tentative agreement was reached on about two-thirds of the contract articles in a series of marathon negotiating sessions in December 2017 and January 2018. What is important to note is that *every* change in those articles represents a concession made by AAUP-WSU.

Our position all along has been that since the base salaries and benefits of the faculty whom we represent account for just 17% of the university budget—or 17 cents of every dollar of tuition and state subsidy—overspending on the faculty who generate almost all of the university's revenue very clearly did not cause the financial crisis, and cutting that part of the budget will not address the crisis in any meaningful way. Therefore, the extreme proposals of the administration on the dozen or so unresolved elements of the contract seem simply to use a largely self-created financial crisis as an opportunity to gut key provisions in our contract. Although the university's financial issues can be addressed in the near term, the administration's proposals will adversely affect the long-term earnings of our members and further erode their working conditions and employment security. Just to be clear, in several instances, the administration is asking for rollbacks of contract provisions that now provide protections which are routine for university faculty throughout Ohio, indeed nationwide, even where faculty are not unionized.

Most Wright State faculty spend their whole careers at this university. They have a vested interest in advancing not only their own careers but in sustaining and boosting the reputation of the university. Likewise, although administrations and Boards of Trustees come and go, students who receive their degrees at Wright State will be alumni/ae for the rest of their lives. Given our students' investment in those degrees, we need to protect and, where possible, to enhance the university's academic programs and reputation in order to safeguard the value of the degrees that they have earned—and that many of them will be paying for well into their working lives. But, since early in 2016, we have had a net loss of 92 full-time teaching positions. As a result, students are facing both restrictions on course offerings in their majors and fewer sections of high-demand core courses. Such changes impair student recruitment, retention, and degree completion, and they diminish the value of the degrees earned.

The administration's draconian proposals on salary and benefits will make it harder to attract faculty. The changes in health coverage imposed on other university employees have made those benefits the most costly at any public university in Ohio. The lack of any

wage increases for the foreseeable future will place Wright State faculty at every rank at or near the bottom among Ohio's public universities within the next two years. These financial considerations, in combination with proposals to undermine radically job security of even tenured faculty, will make it much harder for the university to attract talented faculty and to maintain the morale and the commitment of current faculty.

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 but to strike. Given the degraded conditions under which we have been working for several years, we have earned and demand—

That the Schrader administration and the Board acknowledge our legal right to bargain over healthcare benefits and provide insurance that does not burden the sick and the lowest paid employees, largely to make up for revenue losses elsewhere;

That the Schrader administration and the Board accept the current retrenchment language, which is standard at unionized and non-unionized universities nationwide, and not reduce tenure to an empty promise;

That the Schrader administration and the Board maintain our workload agreement, which has not only been fair but has also led to a marked increase in research and scholarship, enhancing the university's reputation;

That the Schrader administration and the Board maintain the educational quality of courses offered in the summer and not attempt to turn the summer into even more of a revenue generator than it already is—or would be if it were not mismanaged;

That the Schrader administration and the Board maintain a merit pay formula, which insures that faculty productivity is measured and rewarded by some objective measures rather than by administrative whim;

That the Schrader administration and the Board recognize that continuing contracts for NTE faculty have a very positive impact on the education provided by the university and that entrenching the contingency of faculty has exactly the opposite effect;

Finally, that the Schrader administration and the Board recognize that it cannot continue to spend millions on initiatives that have uniformly failed to generate the promised additional revenue streams, that it cannot continue cutting the budgets of the colleges without eroding the quality of education being provided to our students, and it cannot compound these skewed priorities by proposing furloughs, which are simply pay cuts for faculty, on top of its proposals for stagnant salaries and massive increases in benefit costs.