

# Wright State faculty union to file 10-day strike notice Monday

Updated 1 hour ago By Max Filby, Staff Writer

Wright State University's faculty union could strike in 10 days or so after 18 months of contract negotiations that failed to culminate in a deal Friday.

The Wright State chapter of the American Association of University Professors announced over the weekend that it will file a 10-day strike notice with the Ohio State Employment Relations Board Monday.

The timing of the notice means the union could strike as early as the fourth day of the new semester, Jan. 17, though that date is unlikely, said Noeleen McIlvenna, a WSU history professor and contract administration officer for the union.

Though there is no formal strike date, if the union goes through with one it likely will be before the end of January, McIlvenna said. Before launching a strike, union leaders plan to take a poll of members this week to gauge their support, something McIlvenna said leaders believe they have.

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If approved, the union will plan to picket near entrances of campus. The strike of the AAUP-WSU's close to 500 members will also include faculty at Wright State's Lake Campus in Celina, McIlvenna said. There are around 1,200 or so full-time, part-time and adjunct faculty at WSU, according to the university's website.

“(We’ll strike) as long as it takes to save the university from this reckless board,” McIlvenna said. “The contract that they imposed on us will do serious damage.”

The decision to put the university on notice for a strike comes after the board of trustees on Friday voted unanimously to implement its “last, best offer” on terms and conditions of employment to the school’s faculty union. The new terms moves faculty union members into a “uniform” health care plan, maintains current rules of retrenchment, includes no pay raises and would allow faculty to be furloughed as part of “cost savings days.”

The board’s vote took the union by surprise, McIlvenna said, as the two sides haven’t negotiated since early November. When reached by phone Sunday, WSU spokesman Seth Bauguess said the administration and board would not comment on the possibility of a strike unless a notice was filed with the SERB.

But, on Friday, Board chairman Doug Fecher said the university’s position in negotiations has been focused on reaching an agreement that would help make the university financially sustainable in the long-term and would prevent increased costs to students.

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Wright State reduced its spending last year by around \$53 million, and the school was under federal investigation for more than three years for its misuse of H-1B visas. President Cheryl Schrader recently announced that WSU will avoid being placed on fiscal watch status by the state, and the board reached a \$1 million non-prosecution agreement with the U.S. Attorney’s Office to end the federal probe.

Contract talks first stalled in March 2017 when then-president David Hopkins abruptly resigned just a few months before his retirement. Although the union contract expired in June, an agreement with the administration means the expired contract remained in place until the board vote Friday.

A fact-finder’s report released in October was accepted by the board while

union members overwhelmingly rejected it in a vote of 467-12.

Tensions between the Wright State administration, board and faculty union reached a boiling point in November when some faculty senate members called for a vote of no confidence in Schrader. Despite tensions, union president Martin Kich has long said a strike would be a last resort and though Fecher said on Friday he accepts the fact that the union has the ability to strike he has also said he hoped to avoid one.

“We cant trust these folks to be good managers. They have shown themselves incompetent,” McIlvenna said. “I do hope that the community understands that this is a final straw. We hate to do it.”

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