

Email sparks controversy as Wright State faculty considers going on strike

FAIRBORN, Ohio (WKEF/WRGT) - While a possible faculty strike looms at Wright State University, a new controversy has sparked over an email sent by the university's Human Resources Department.

The school asked faculty members to tell them if they'll be walking the picket line. The union said that's illegal, and is calling the email "fear mongering".

A Wright State spokesman said the university is sure the email is legal, that it did not break the law.

"This was a sort of union busting move," American Association of University Professors' Noeleen McIlvenna said.

Noeleen McIlvenna is the union spokeswoman. She said the sore spot was asking employees if they intend to work or not during a strike.

"The part of it that was really scary was they said, 'If we don't hear from you, we will assume you will be on strike on January 22, and we'll stop paying you salary and benefits,'" said McIlvenna.

The union then sent its members another email.

"To point out that we had contacted our attorney and that there was absolutely no basis to this threat," she said.

ABC 22/FOX 45 showed the human resource email to a third party, an independent labor attorney.

"In my opinion, I don't think it's legal," attorney John Doll said.

Doll said Wright State can communicate with its employees about proposals during negotiations.

"This is well past the proposal stage, now we're in a situation where the faculty is in the process of taking a strike vote," he said.

He believes that's unlawful interference.

"They're trying to intimidate people by dealing directly with them and that's a further violation," Doll said.

Students said they're the ones caught in the middle.

"Students are definitely worried and I think it's hurt campus morale quite a bit," Wright State Student Body Vice President Adrian Williams said. "I think it's hurt our reputation as a university, but I think that's where it comes on us as students to push through that."

"We're the children in this divorce and that's the sad thing," Wright State

Student Body President Daniel Palmer said. "We've done nothing wrong as students, we've done nothing wrong we have paid our tuition, we're showing up to class, we're members of the campus community and we're the ones being impacted."

Student leaders said the administration told them there is a comprehensive plan for a strike, there will be teachers for every class and students should continue on like normal.

Winter classes start Monday at Wright State. The strike could start the following week.