

# Wright State faculty union files “unfair labor practice” complaint

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The Wright State University faculty union has accused the administration of unfair labor practices as a proposed strike date nears.

The union has filed a complaint with the State Employment Relations Board accusing administrators of breaking collective bargaining rules by negotiating in public, telling the news media about their “last, best offer” before telling the union, and failing to give the union requested information that was needed to continue negotiations.

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The faculty union and university administration have been at odds over contract negotiations.

The union, a 564-member chapter of the American Association of University Professors, is set to strike at 8 a.m. Jan. 22, the second week of the universities winter class schedule.

The board of trustees on Jan. 4 issued a “last, best offer,” which means that was the final offer they plan to give. It would move 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 since the two sides haven't negotiated since early November, a union representative previously said.

The complaint states that prior to the "last, best offer" union leaders had sought more information from the administration related to areas that the union could be willing to make financial concessions, which "indicated clear intent of the (union) AAUP-WSU to negotiate."

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The complaint states a lawyer for the university said Dec. 7 that he would get more information as requested but never responded or answered follow up emails.

Then about a month later, the union states its members learned through the media instead of from the administration that trustees had given a final offer.

A statement from Wright State said, "when the Board of Trustees implemented working conditions for AAUP-WSU members, it did not do so lightly. The university needs structural change to recover from its financial crisis that required it to address a \$30 million budget deficit. All of the university's other employees have already accepted changes to their terms and conditions of employment."

This week, union leaders pushed back against a letter sent from human resources to faculty, which the union said contains some false or misrepresented information.

The letter tells faculty members that they are not obligated to participate in a strike. It asks union employees to tell the school if they intend to work or not during the strike, saying if HR does not get a response that the administration will assume the employee does not intend to work.

The union said that while HR can ask members to say if they plan to work during the strike, they are under no obligation to respond and failing to

answer does not mean Wright State can to assume the employee will be out on strike.

The HR letter to faculty states “the law permits a union to fine its members who work during a strike per its bylaws” and that the university “cannot predict what the AAUP-WSU’s reaction will be” — a claim that the union fired back at.

“We do not have such a provision in our Constitution. They know that. This is blatant fear-mongering on their part,” the union stated in a letter to its members.

In a response to the HR letter, the union said in a letter to members, which was also sent to the Dayton Daily News, that the administration “is having trouble finding the scabs to fulfill their promises to parents and students about class coverage.”

President Cheryl Schrader said in a statement that Wright State’s intent is to stay open and to keep making classes available for students.

“We told the professors in the same communication we’re not going to harm them for participating in a strike. We’re just trying to stay open for the students as a public entity serving the public good,” she stated.

A budget crisis has forced Wright State to reduce spending by around \$53 million in fiscal year 2018. The school also had been under federal investigation for more than three years for its misuse of H-1B visas.

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. In November, some faculty senate members called for a vote of no confidence in Schrader.

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