

Here is the unsigned letter to the WSU community, sent the evening of Dec 7. President Edwards told us at Senate that afternoon, she had been working on it all weekend. I bolded and underlined the reprehensible word:

On November 12, Wright State University announced, **in its continuing efforts to preserve its ability to offer an affordable, high-quality public education to the Dayton region, that the university would commence the process for anticipated bargaining unit faculty workforce reductions**, called “retrenchment” under the university’s applicable collective bargaining agreement (“CBA”) with the faculty union.

Wright State is following the process and complying with obligations specifically outlined and mutually agreed to in Article 17 of the CBA: **policy.wright.edu/collective-bargaining-agreements**.

In brief, the retrenchment process proceeds as follows:

1. The university cites the circumstance for anticipating the need to retrench faculty members. In this case, the university’s November 12 notice stated that faculty workforce reductions are anticipated as a result of a significant reduction in enrollment over at least four semesters that is expected to persist.
2. The university and the union form a joint retrenchment committee of administration and union representatives to provide recommendations to President Sue Edwards regarding the retrenchment process. Following the announcement, the university received numerous information requests from AAUP-WSU, to which the university promptly responded with a significant amount of data and information pertaining to the anticipated retrenchment. At this time, the university and AAUP-WSU have identified their three respective representatives who will comprise the six-person committee, which met on Monday, December 7 for the first time. The joint committee has 60 days to develop and submit its recommendations. Concurrently, interim Provost Douglas Leaman is working with the college deans to develop a plan that supports the future direction of the university.
3. Both the joint committee and the interim provost will present retrenchment recommendations to the president for consideration.
4. The president, after considering the recommendations, will present an administration retrenchment plan to the Wright State Board of Trustees for consideration and potential approval.

Though this process has been agreed upon in multiple CBA’s between the university and AAUP-WSU, it has not been invoked previously, and it is important that we, as a university and as a public institution, address it in a professional manner.

Unfortunately, some from our campus community have attempted to unnecessarily create fear and panic within a variety of constituencies, most notably among Wright State’s students and alumni, without even giving the mutually agreed upon process a chance to begin. This is **reprehensible** and, in the end, runs the risk of further exacerbating the university’s already declining enrollment—the very impetus for these anticipated bargaining unit faculty reductions.

The following is being shared in an effort to clarify and correct a few of the more glaring inaccuracies and misinformation we have seen to date:

- Retrenchment has been referred to as an “extreme action.” Rather, it is the mutually agreed-upon process in the CBA recognized and approved by the AAUP membership. Very logically, it outlines a process the university uses to reduce its number of faculty when enrollments decline significantly over an extended period of time and is anticipated to continue. Similar retrenchment clauses exist in collective bargaining agreements at many universities with unionized faculty across the country.
- Some have asserted that one “cannot trust the numbers” offered by the university. However, the **university’s enrollment is publicly tracked and submitted** to the State of Ohio and the federal government.
- Some have suggested that the university is “likely using the Covid-19 pandemic as justification for making cuts to faculty; in other words, like many universities across the nation, they are taking advantage of a public health crisis to justify getting rid of unionized faculty they would not normally be able to fire.” Again, this is false. The university’s enrollment declines long pre-dated COVID-19.
- Statements that “instead of working with faculty to come up with imaginative solutions to recruit and retain students, they [the university leaders] have decided to fire faculty,” and “they have decided that fewer faculty is the only answer” are false. In reality, the university’s previous initiatives have included several rounds of workforce reductions that affected university staff and administrators, and which did not extend at all to the unionized faculty. Additionally, the university has attempted to adjust its faculty size through normal attrition, leaving open positions vacant, and offering voluntary early retirement incentives.
- Assertions that “AAUP-WSU has continuously tried to collaborate with the administration during periods of financial hardship” are inaccurate. The reality is that the union has declined multiple opportunities to work constructively with the university. Last spring and summer, for example, the administration repeatedly asked the AAUP-WSU leadership to meet and negotiate modifications to the CBA. Those requests were repeatedly refused. Subsequent proposals to meet informally to discuss options and alternatives were also rejected.
- Finally, cuts to administrative positions *have* occurred over the past several academic years. Wright State has and is expected to have fewer students and must continue to focus on sizing its academic operations accordingly.

While the above inaccuracies are disappointing in and of themselves, most appalling is an attempt to entangle students in a mutually agreed-upon contractual process in a manner that runs the risk of ultimately driving away current and prospective students. An AAUP-WSU FAQ recently claimed that: *“Even if your program remains in existence, as the administration promises, reduced numbers of faculty will result in substantially fewer available courses, or your required courses may be offered less frequently. This will inevitably increase the cost of your education by lengthening the time required for many of you to complete your programs of study and graduate.”*

This is a **baseless** and **categorically untrue** statement. The university has **always** prioritized, and **will always prioritize, a commitment to our students**, and there is no reason to believe that faculty retrenchment will prolong the time it takes to earn a degree at this institution, or that retrenchment will cause the cost of a degree from this institution to increase.

Wright State University is essential to the success of our region. The significant majority of our graduates remain here in the Miami Valley contributing to the success of the businesses, organizations, and communities in which they live and work. Our commitment to preserving access to a locally available, affordable, high-quality public education remains our utmost priority.