



Union of Part-Time Faculty at Wayne State University

UPTF / AFT, AFL-CIO

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March/April 2008

Administration to UPTF: No Job Security! *Bargaining Update*

by Thomas Anderson
Bargaining Comm. Chair

Since the last union newsletter was mailed, the UPTF bargaining committee has continued to meet with the administration. We have yet to receive their counter-proposals on the money issues that we raised last year. This includes a salary increase and access to health, retirement and tuition benefits.

In addition, we have stalled on four job-security-related proposals: Appointment (hiring), Promotion, Lay-off and Seniority. UPTF has proposed that part-timers who have taught at Wayne State for a specific number of semesters would not only receive larger salaries, but also a tangible degree of job security, including severance pay if their classes have been cancelled and the right to be employed in future semesters by order of seniority. The administration bargaining team has said outright that they are not prepared to recognize a seniority system among part-time faculty. While they are certainly reluctant to increase salaries, we know that the real issue for them is control over the workplace and employees—i.e., the right to hire and relieve whom they want, when they want.

Besides the four proposals mentioned above, there are three other work-place related proposals (the easy ones) that have been essentially agreed to, but not yet signed. These include Evaluation, Discontinuance of Programs and Posting (of jobs); indeed, the bargaining committee will not actually sign any of these until we have agreement on all seven.

We have also been discussing four Union related proposals: Union Recognition (who is in the bargaining unit), Union Rights (what rights does the UPTF have on campus), Union Information (what information does the administration have to share with us), Union Security (dues, agency shop, etc.). Of these four proposals, we have only reached agreement on Union Rights, although we may have agreement shortly on Union Rights and Union Recognition.

We have, therefore, only signed one agreement in the last month and only three (including the two signed on February 6) in the last six bargaining sessions over the last month and a half. To this we could add the 3 proposals that are unofficially agreed to.

In terms of the progress of negotiations, the administration has clearly slowed its pace in recent weeks. It

needs to feel pressure from you, the members.

Yesterday (as I write this), March 19 marked the third meeting since the stall over job-security/seniority. We have had an open invitation for our members to show up at bargaining and on March 19, eighteen people altogether showed up to witness the proceedings after we publicized the university's position on job-security for UPTF members. The administration team certainly noticed the increase in numbers. This is the type of visibility of members that we need to demonstrate to the administration: they need to know that we are paying attention.

We are trying to get the administration to agree to additional bargaining days in the week of March 31, at this point, however, we have meetings scheduled for Wednesday, April 2, 12-2 pm and Friday, April 4, 2:30-5 pm. We need shows of support at these meetings, like we had on March 19.

If you want to achieve a salary increase, then come to the April meeting to determine how we can show the administration our resolve to better our conditions.

If you think that adjuncts deserve health, retirement or tuition benefits, then come to the April 2nd and/or April 4th

bargaining sessions and show the administration that you care about a fair and just contract.

We need the active support of the membership, not simply your best wishes. Wear your buttons. Talk to your students. Pass out flyers. Talk to other part-timers in your departments and others in the campus community. Log on our website. Help us call members. Get involved!

Finally, we also have a General Membership meeting scheduled for Sunday, April 13 at 2 pm in room 261 of the Student Center Building. The end of the winter semester is not far off. A month from now we will almost certainly be in one of two situations: either we will be close to submitting a contract to the membership for ratification, OR we will be stalled and looking for ideas from the membership about how to put pressure on the administration. In either event, it is in the interests of all part-time faculty to be at the next union meeting. Solidarity forever!



A Union of Professionals



An Open Letter to the Wayne State University Council of Deans:

On the morning of March 25, UPTF members stood outside Prentiss Hall, site of the Council of Deans meeting, and handed out the following letter.

March 25, 2008

As you know, our 900-member union was certified in May 2007 and has been negotiating our first contract with the WSU bargaining team since November 2007. Our conversations with members and a survey we conducted in fall 2007 revealed widespread discontent with both salary and the lack of raises and benefits provided by the university. In addition, members expressed profound dissatisfaction with the lack of job security for part-time faculty at Wayne State. The UPTF expects that improvements in these areas will be made in our first contract so that WSU can provide its students with the best possible education.

In recent weeks, the UPTF has reached a critical juncture in our negotiations with the university. We have proposed a system of senior-

ity that would provide part-time faculty with a tangible degree of job security that we do not currently have. While our proposal is quite reasonable—giving the university six semesters to re-hire an instructor with no presumption of renewal, and a system to evaluate part-time faculty in a manner chosen by their departments—the administration’s bargaining team has declined it. Rather than recognizing longevity as a contractual basis for future employment, the administration has proposed a nebulous concept—"first consideration"—an inadequate and ill-defined substitute for the simple principle of seniority.

A seniority system providing part-time faculty members with job security is beneficial to the Wayne State community in a number of ways. When instructors are able to rely on their continued employment by Wayne

State, they can make long-term plans for their courses, and develop mentoring relationships with students. When instructors have adequate notice of teaching assignments and schedules, they can better prepare their courses and students can register for additional classes with instructors they have worked well with. In short, job security for instructors means a stable and supportive educational environment for students.

Without job security for part-time faculty members at Wayne State, the education of its students will continue to suffer. Our members frequently hear students complain about the transience of their instructors—scenarios where a student establishes a relationship with an instructor only to have him or her disappear from the institution, or where they are unable to register for a course with an instructor because he

or she doesn’t yet have a course assignment. Such situations mean that Wayne State students face even greater struggles in completing their degrees.

We are distressed by the administration’s refusal to agree to such a modest request that would make such a tremendous positive change in the education provided to its students. We, along with our campus and community allies, are determined to improve the working and educational environment at WSU. Your support of our contract proposals will demonstrate that you care as much as we do about the quality of education that Wayne State University offers.

Sincerely,

The Union of Part-Time Faculty (UPTF) Union Council

Upcoming Bargaining Sessions:

UPTF members encouraged to attend!

Wednesday, April 2, 12-2 pm—location TBA

Friday, April 4, 2:30-5 pm—location TBA

Check the website—www.uptf.org—for locations and updates



Member Profile: Dr. Paul Egbo

17 years at WSU; dismissed without explanation

by Amanda Hiber
Commctns. Comm. Chair

Dr. Paul Egbo stands as a vivid reminder of what can happen to part-time faculty without a contract explicitly granting them job security. Egbo taught Wayne State students in the Anthropology department for 17 years. Yet, in the spring of 2007, his class was abruptly cancelled with no notification. And in fall 2007, the following semester, his class was again cancelled—due to low enrollment, he was told—and then offered to someone else. He has not taught at Wayne State since.

Egbo was assigned an Anthropology 3520 class for the spring semester of 2007. He began his class, on May 7, by distributing to the students the materials he had prepared. To his shock, before the next class meeting, he received several emails from students asking if the class had been cancelled. Since he had not received any notice, he assured students that the course had not been cancelled. He began the second class only to learn he had been wrong. Embarrassed and incensed, he confronted the department. “I asked, why would you tell my students without informing me?” he says. “I went to class two days and I was embarrassed when students said, ‘We heard this class was cancelled.’” In response, the department told

him they did not have contact information for him, which Egbo flatly denies.

In fall 2007, Egbo was again scheduled to teach Anthropology 3520. But on August 20, he was told that his section had been cancelled due to “low enrollment.” However, he was later informed that the section had been offered to a colleague.

When then-new department chair Dr. Andrea Sankar, who had been away during the spring semester, returned, Egbo says, “I tried to speak to her about what had happened in her absence...But she wouldn’t even meet with me.”

Egbo’s dismissal certainly does not appear to stem from a lack of qualifications. He holds two Bachelor’s degrees, in Theatre Arts and Cultural Studies, a Master’s degree in International Telecommunications, and a PhD in Educational Systems Development. He says the department has spoken pointedly of the fact that his doctorate is “not directly in Anthropology,” but he was hired as an Africa specialist, and he feels he is uniquely qualified to teach on this subject, as it is his birthplace.

Egbo came to Wayne State’s Anthropology in 1990 by way of recommendation by the African Studies Center at Michigan State. He had also been working at the Charles H. Wright Mu-

seum of African American History. Throughout his time in the WSU Anthropology department, Egbo says, he was the department’s sole Africa specialist.

In fact, Egbo wonders if his suggestions to the department, about strengthening their course offerings in the area of Africa, played a role in his dismissal. “I suggested that...in the area of Anthropology, Wayne State was way behind in Africa Studies,” says Egbo, citing that the Anthropology department currently offers only *one* course on Africa.

When his fall course was cancelled, one disappointed student asked Egbo if he

could do a directed study on crisis in Sudan. Egbo told the student, “if [you] can get it through the authorization process, I will work with you.” Once it was approved, Dr. Egbo carried out the directed study with the student. However, despite the student having paid tuition, Egbo has not been paid.

Despite being treated, on various occasions, with a lack of professionalism and dignity, Egbo says he is now simply asking the university to compensate him for the work he performed. On March 18, 2008, he submitted a letter to the Board of Governors regarding pay for the directed study. He is still awaiting a reply.

Union of Part-Time Faculty / AFT, AFL-CIO

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An injury to one is an injury to all!

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Membership Meeting

Sunday, April 13, 2 pm

**WSU Student Center
Room 261**

- Beverages provided -