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September, 2002

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Welcome To A New Academic Year And A New Contract

Gary Mathews
WMU-AAUP President

The faculty has ratified the tentative *Agreement* with Western by a vote of 285 yes, to 183 no. This is a plurality of 60%. There was vigorous, well-orchestrated opposition to the ratification of this *Agreement*. A vibrant and healthy debate resulted, especially on the controversial issues of one-year compensation and health care articles, and the provision of tenure to faculty specialists. This debate is may continue over the course of the contract. Fortunately, a contract is a living document that can change during each negotiation to reflect our experiences with its implementation. If some of the negative predictions made by the opposition are confirmed by experience, we can change and adjust to address these concerns in 2005.

Thank you to everyone who took the time and effort to vote. Many of you not only voted, but took the time to tell us your thoughts and suggestions in our exit poll. We are having those comments typed and organized by topic, so please be patient and give us time to do a careful analysis of the data before responding.

The beginning of the academic year is always an exciting, hectic, and challenging time for faculty. There is the excitement of new classes, new students, and

renewed acquaintances with colleagues. There is much to do in preparing for tenure and promotion reviews, updating vitas and/or professional activities reports (deadline, October 15), to say nothing of preparing syllabi, revising class notes, and responding to never-ending e-mails.

Welcome back to Western Michigan University. We hope that the rest of the year will be successful and satisfying to you. If you came to the picnic on the lawn of Montague House, we know that you had a good time. If you did not come, you missed a good time. A public thank you to the staff who devoted many hours to arranging the picnic including Gail Nangle, Susan Esman, Dan Wolfe, and the caterers, "Catering by Judy".

*Thank you to
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vote.*

From Your Contract Administrator...

Ariel L.H. Anderson

I'd like to wish a warm welcome to all members of the bargaining unit for the 2002-2003 school year! In particular, warm greetings to all *new* members of the bargaining unit. The Chapter stands ready to assist you with any questions and concerns you may have. Please feel free to stop by Montague House to say hello, have a cup of coffee or a soda, and to discuss whatever issues are on your mind. The WMU-AAUP is here to support the faculty, and to ensure that the collective bargaining *Agreement* between the Chapter and Western is upheld.

I'm sure you are all aware that this has been a "contract year." In other words, the *Agreement* has been renegotiated, and there will be several changes with regard to "hours, wages, and working conditions" that will bear impact on your work lives. A new contract is always controversial to some degree. Some will feel we (meaning the AAUP negotiating team) should have done a better job, gotten more from and given less to the administration. Others will feel quite satisfied with the negotiated *Agreement*. By the time this issue of the *Advocate* is in your hands, the September 12th ratification vote will have taken place. As I write this, I am aware that there is always the possibility that the contract will "go down" at the ratification. I also believe that this is an unlikely outcome. I truly believe that members of the AAUP's negotiating team did the best job they possibly could in negotiations, and that the team could *not* have done better in terms of making gains

for the faculty. This is a time of financial difficulty in the State of Michigan, and therefore at Western. While we are not in a state of financial exigency, the institution does face serious budget shortfalls and expense overruns. One way or another, books will need to be balanced. One can always argue about the *priorities* that govern the institution's spending patterns, but there is no doubt about the fact that the size of the pie is simply too small to meet all of the needs we face. I believe that the past summer's negotiations were conducted in a fair and collegial manner, and that Western did as much as is feasible to meet the financial demands of the Chapter.

The Union is not just about money. Many of us recognize that we could make a more lucrative living outside the university. Our differential rates of compensation mirror what might be available to us should we choose to make a living outside the walls of the "ivory tower." Presumably, we have our reasons for choosing to make the University our home. One reason that some individuals choose the life of a faculty member over employment in private businesses and industry has to do with job security. Every day we hear of folks who are losing their jobs "out there" due to downsizing, or "right sizing," as is often said. University life, among many other benefits, provides at least a modicum of employment security that is generally greater than "at will" employment. At the heart of the matter is the issue of tenure.

From my perspective, I see that there are relatively few who understand what tenure is truly all about. Certainly the general public tends to equate tenure with permanent employment. This simply is not reality. A tenured individual can be let go for just cause. And "just cause" covers a lot of ground! Illegal acts, discriminatory behavior, unprofessional con-

duct, incompetence...these are *all* grounds for discipline up to and including the possibility of discharge. This is true whether one is a tenured public school teacher or a tenured faculty member at an institution of higher learning. Tenure is designed to provide the assurance of due process and procedural fair play. The Chapter's job is exactly that: to ensure due process and procedural fair play. Our job is *not* to protect an individual's employment status regardless of circumstance. I have worked in the WMU-AAUP leadership for nearly ten years. During this time, numerous faculty members have been disciplined, and a few have faced termination of employment at the University. I repeat: The purpose of tenure is *not* to guarantee employment. At the heart of tenure is the protection of academic freedom. And academic freedom is inextricably coupled with academic responsibility. What does this mean? What is academic freedom? Let me quote from the contract (see Article 13: Academic Freedom and Responsibility).

The faculty member is entitled to full freedom in research and in the publication of the results, subject to the adequate performance of his/her other academic duties, but research for pecuniary return must be

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based upon an understanding with Western. The faculty member is entitled to freedom in the classroom in discussing his/her subject, but he/she shall not introduce into his/her teaching controversial matter that has no relation to his/her subject.

And...

As members of the community, the faculty have the rights and obligations of any citizen. When they speak or write as citizens, they should be free from institutional censorship or discipline, but their special positions in the community impose special obligations which should be evaluated in the light of their responsibilities to their disciplines, to their students, to their profession, and to the University. As citizens engaged in a profession that depends upon freedom for its health and integrity, faculty have a particular obligation to promote conditions of free inquiry and to further public understanding of academic freedom. Both the protection of academic freedom and the requirements of academic responsibility apply to all persons associated with the University who exercise teaching and/or other professional responsibilities.

Thus, academic freedom is essential for *all* members of the bargaining unit, and the primary and essential protection for academic freedom, in both research and teaching, is tenure. Remember, tenure is *not* to be equated with permanent job security. Tenure exists to protect academic freedom.

On September 5th, a Chapter meeting was held for the purpose of put-

ting before the membership the proposed 2002-2005 *Agreement*, and to provide a forum for inquiry and input regarding the new contract. This meeting, two hours in duration, was quite feisty and for many who were present, quite painful. Approximately 75 members of the bargaining unit were in attendance. A good number of those who attended were there to object vociferously to the notion of granting tenure to faculty specialists (formerly referred to as academic career specialists). Emotions and tempers were running high. A very vocal minority of the membership voiced strong objections to extend-



ing the earned award of tenure to faculty specialists. Statements were made to the effect that without a Ph.D. and engagement in significant research it is impossible to do good teaching. Voices were raised over the issue of second class citizenry. Some proclaimed that to extend tenure to faculty specialists would serve to lower the quality of the institution overall. Others voiced certainty that without a cap on the number of faculty specialists permitted in the bargaining unit, Western's administration would move to do away with all "traditionally-ranked faculty," and to simply staff the institution with faculty specialist types. It was asserted that to approve this contract would make "us" vulnerable to the admini-

stration essentially turning the institution into a community college. As I listened to what was being said, I was sadly impressed by the ugliness of it all. I was aware that there were a few faculty specialists in attendance at the Chapter meeting. A couple of these individuals were brave enough to, at one point or another, identify themselves as faculty specialists and to add their voices to the discussion. Others revealed to me later that they were there, but remained silent and hoped no one would know their status...they expressed strong feelings of fear, hurt, anger, and resentment. I can only imagine how it must have felt to sit there, as a faculty specialist, listening to what was being said! And I must go on record to seriously disagree with assertions that were made about the inability to teach well without doing research, about the notion that tenuring faculty specialists will lower the quality of the institution overall, and about the administration having some sort of plot to do away with traditionally-ranked faculty, and perhaps the tenure system, overall. I simply don't believe that any of those things are true. I'm either right or wrong, and only time will tell, but I would -- and do -- stake my professional reputation, in large part, on the expression of my views here.

It occurs to me that our children attend public (or private) schools for up to thirteen years before moving on to college. Is it the case that pre-K through 12 educators can't teach because they don't do research? And as my son graduated from high school three months ago, and is now a freshman at Western, is it the case that *now*, three months after high school, he can't get a decent education from one without the terminal degree and who does not engage in research? I just can't buy that. I have a Ph.D., I've done my share of research, and I have published quite a bit. I have earned tenure, and I have

earned promotions up to the rank of full professor. I can honestly say that it is not *my* research that makes me a good enough teacher. My research has enabled me to add dimension to my teaching in certain ways, but I truly believe it has little to do with my success as an educator. What I observe is this. Some of our most outstanding researchers at Western are among our most outstanding teachers. Some of our most outstanding researchers do *not* do well in the classroom. And among our non-researchers -- well, some teach well and some don't. You will agree with me or not on this point, but this is how I see it -- and I see an awful lot from my position at this institution.


Will the administration try to do away with traditionally-ranked faculty? I can't see that happening. Since I first came to Western in 1986, Western's administration and faculty have worked tirelessly to *enhance* the quality of the institution overall. Western's Board of Trustees has endorsed and indeed mandated this course, and the efforts of the faculty and the administration have paid off in spades. Western today hardly resembles the Western I came to over 16 years ago. This is true in terms of the physical plant, the caliber and type of programs we offer, the stature of the faculty, the amount of external funding generated at the hands of the faculty, and on and on. Western simply can not maintain its current stature if the caliber of the faculty is diminished, and I don't believe that the faculty, the administration, or the Board will permit this to happen. Some of you may be familiar with the attack on tenure at the University of Minnesota a few years back. When all was said and done, the Board of Regents was removed and replaced, the tenure system remained intact, and the ability to retain and recruit outstanding faculty was severely crippled, if only for a few years, by even the *attempt* to

undo the tenure system. That institution has recovered, but only because people came to their senses. Without a stellar body of faculty, the quality of an institution declines. I believe that to be any kind of player in the higher education system in this country, an institution must protect its core of traditionally-ranked faculty. And I firmly believe that Western's Board, administration, and faculty are united in at least one regard: we want to be a major player in the field of higher education. As I have said, above, I am either right or wrong about this. Time will tell. But I do believe I have an accurate picture of the situation here at Western. Perhaps we need to hear it *and see it* more prominently from the administration -- that there is no intent to undo the tenure system, no attempt to dilute the quality of our faculty overall, no tolerance for a decline in the stature of the institution overall. One thing I saw quite clearly at the Chapter meeting is a lack of trust in the administration. It was stated several times that granting tenure to faculty specialists and removing the cap on that appointment type will lead to Western's administration doing away with traditionally-ranked faculty hires, and the demise of the caliber of the institution such that we become little more than a community college. I just don't buy that.

What I subscribe to is decency. I think it is decent for us to protect the academic freedom of *all* members of the faculty, and faculty specialists are

indeed faculty. I think it is indecent to suggest that those who don't do research can't teach. I think it is decent to provide a modicum of employment security for those who do the good work of the institution. I think it is indecent to provide job security for those who do *not* do good work, and to take the money of hard-working parents who are trying to provide their children with an opportunity for higher learning in order to put their children into college classrooms with faculty who do not want to be there, or who do not know how to teach *well enough*. I support the new provision for classroom visitations for those in the probationary track. After all, the contract stipulates that the faculty member retains control over who observes, and when observations take place. If the faculty member and the chair cannot agree on who is to visit, the situation will be mediated by representatives of the Chapter and the administration. The fact remains, there will be no unapproved observers or unscheduled classroom visitations. I say, if a faculty member can't deal with that, they must have something to hide. I don't *want* poor teachers at Western, even if they are extraordinary researchers! Were it not for the students...we simply wouldn't exist. The students' well-being is first and foremost in my priorities. I believe that our faculty specialists can offer a great deal to our students. It will always be the case that some faculty specialists won't do well enough to earn tenure, just as it will always be the case that some traditionally-ranked faculty will not do well enough to earn tenure. We all have different strengths, as well as areas where we need to continue to grow and develop. But as long as we are all doing the good work of the institution, we deserve a reasonable sense of security...a sense of security we can *only* derive from the protection of academic freedom through the tenure system.

*... it is decent
for us to protect
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faculty ...*



*I applaud the
diversity that our
faculty brings to
Western.*

This month I will assume the position of Chair of the National AAUP's Collective Bargaining Congress. I have worked in the national leadership for about 7 years, and I can tell you this: What we have achieved in the 2002-2005 *Agreement* with regard to tenurability for our formerly non-tenure-track colleagues is *exactly* in sync with the values, goals, direction and beliefs of the National AAUP. Western is a *leader* in this regard, and I applaud both the faculty and the administration for embarking on this path.

There are problems at Western, to be sure. We don't have enough money. We don't have the resources to support the good work of the faculty. We do face issues of discrimination and inequitable treatment on a daily basis. We do suffer under workloads that stress us incredibly. We live in a part of the state that is particularly hard-hit by increasing health care costs. We have had amazing turnover within the administration. We have a student body that far exceeds the capacity of the faculty to serve each student adequately. And on and on. *In spite of all this*, I believe that Western is a wonderful place to be. We have many excellent faculty, we have some truly delightful students, we have a university president who really cares about doing the right thing, we have dedicated union lead-

ers, we have a mature contract that provides a great deal of protection for the faculty, we have an increasingly pleasant physical plant, and....at a time when the world seems to be going rather crazy, we have homes, food, clothing, and more.

A recent email sent out to many campus members by one member of the faculty said, in essence, "We have met the enemy, and it is the union leadership." To that, I say "*hogwash!*" Please understand, I don't take this personally. I know I do good work, and I know I always try to do the right thing. I'm too darn old to play games, and I simply must speak my piece. The Chapter leaders (and in that group I include members of the Executive Committee, and the Association Council) work tirelessly on behalf of the faculty. We do our best to serve. And I am certain that we *always* have the collective well-being of the faculty (and the institution) in mind. We have a devil of a time getting faculty members to serve within the structure of the union. We need more involvement. Some of us are getting very tired indeed. We need support. We need unity. At the Chapter meeting it was said that the new contract sets us up with a two-class system. I disagree. What sets us up for a two-class system is what comes from *within*. If we can look at people as individuals, rather than as a class of people, we can do *just fine*. It takes many, many types to make the world go 'round, and, in my view, many different types to make Western go 'round. We are not all good at doing the same kinds of things. I applaud the diversity that our faculty brings to Western. If anything, we need to *increase* diversity so that we are better able to meet the needs of our students. I guess that is a story for another day.

I believe that every union member should *always* vote his/her conscience when it comes to ratifying

the contract. And if the majority will is that the contract go down, then that is what should happen. For me, this isn't about whether the contract goes up or down. It is about humane and decent treatment of *every* member of the university community. I guess I've just seen too much indecency lately, and I'm finding myself facing the new school year with a heavy heart in that regard. So I will turn my attention now to my students (I am *not* a stellar researcher, but I am an excellent teacher), and to serving those who choose to call on me at the AAUP. If you don't like what I've said here, you most likely didn't make it to the end of the article anyway. If you think I'm the enemy, come and take my job at the AAUP. And if you want to promote peace and harmony...well, look within.

I do consider it an honor to serve.

WMU-AAUP Officers' Hours*

Gary Mathews

President

Tues 1:00—3:00pm

Wed 1:00—3:00pm

Ariel Anderson

Contract Administrator

Wed 9:00—10:30am

Fri 2:00—3:00pm

Elaine Phillips

Grievance Officer

Mon 1:30—3:30pm

Wed 9:00—10:00am

Wed 1:00—3:00pm

*And by appointment

Nominations Are Needed

The Chapter's Nomination/Election Committee is seeking candidates for the 2002 election of **President** and **Vice President**, as well as **Executive Committee Representatives** from the following constituencies:

- Association of Language Specialists
- College of Arts & Sciences — Humanities
- College of Business
- College of Education
- College of Health & Human Services

Please contact the AAUP office (345.0151) if you wish to nominate someone or would like to be a candidate yourself. We would to hear from you by Friday, October 4th. Nominations close officially at the Chapter Meeting scheduled for Thursday, October 10th at 4:00pm in Rooms 157-158, Bernhard Center.



WMU-AAUP Chapter
814 Oakland Drive
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ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED