

WMU-AAUP Bulletin

Western Michigan University
Chapter of the American
Association of University Professors

WMU Subverting the Contract?

We find it necessary to inform you of recent administration actions that appear to be attempts to undermine the Contract. Such attempts, when we should be coming together to face our economic difficulties with a united front, are reason for alarm. Here are some of the examples that we have witnessed during the last three (3) months.

- **EUP/ATIS Summer I and II Compensation:**
There has been an attempt to “misread” the Contract and interpret EUP/ATIS Summer courses as only to be remunerated at the EUP overload rate. This position has since been withdrawn.
- **Unilateral Imposition of External Reviews:**
There has been an attempt by a dean to impose external reviews unilaterally for promotion and tenure. Although this position was proposed by the administration during the 2008 negotiations, we rejected it and put more control of external review in the hands of the faculty within each department because it is the faculty who know their colleagues and the evaluation of their research. The union supports departments developing policies that make sense in their own particular conditions. Departments, in their policy statements, may require external reviews. Our contract allows for candidates, the chair of the DPC/DTC, and the departmental chair, in departments which do not have policy statements that require external reviews, to call for external reviews in appropriate cases.

It is inappropriate, however, to transform those discretionary calls into blanket support for mandatory reviews when departments have not specified them in their policy statements. The Contract, very clearly, does not allow for deans to have input regarding external reviews. A unilateral attempt to impose such reviews is an end run around the actual conditions that we negotiated last summer, and that both sides agreed to.

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- **Misusing the Contract:**
The administration has scheduled grievance procedures, and demanded that deadlines be met, during University breaks and holidays, during periods when the University is otherwise closed down, when administrators themselves are not required to be available, and when many faculty members are unlikely to be in the Kalamazoo area. This puts added pressure on aggrieved faculty, and our union officials. It gives the appearance of harassment rather than a search for just solutions. A grievance was recently denied based on just such a technicality.
- **Firings and Due Process:**
Are you aware that two (2) faculty members have been fired in recent months? We are deeply distressed by these firings, and by related difficulties with due process. We hope this is not the beginning of a new direction in university policy.
- **Threats to Union Officials:**
There has been a threat to one of our union officials who was engaged in protecting due process during one of the firings. Threats against individual officers for carrying out their duties of protecting our faculty, our contract, and our right to due process are unacceptable. Such threats undermine the ability of a union to defend its members and its conditions. Furthermore, threats against union officials carrying out their union responsibilities constitute direct violations of the National Labor Relations Act and the Public Employees Relations Act, and are subject to an Unfair Labor Practice charge.
- **The Status of the Contract:**
Our contract with Western is a valid legal contract that must be adhered to by both administration and faculty. The clear meaning of conditions agreed to at the table must be respected, not reinterpreted as if the negotiations never happened. Any additional changes must be further negotiated and ratified, not unilaterally imposed by one side or the other.

We believe that both faculty and administration should be working towards unity of purpose and action; towards a partnership based on mutual respect, cooperation and discussion. Given our State's current financial morass, Western's success is even more dependent on building this partnership. We are, and should always be, ready to work together, with our faculty and administration to solve problems.

We hope these recent events are just random frictions which will be solved by consultation, and not a pattern, not a harbinger of things to come.