

The Right Flier

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Increased Teaching Loads and the Faculty Gap

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Executive Summary for Regular Chapter Members

Apart from salary and benefits, the two issues addressed in this article are likely to be the most important and contentious during upcoming negotiations, to begin in January, for our next collective bargaining agreement (CBA). The two issues are 1) the number of tenured and tenure track faculty and 2) increased teaching loads. How these issues unfold will, in large measure, determine our university's future: whether we degenerate into an over-priced community college or enjoy the much brighter and attainable future that faculty desire and students deserve. In this article, we show that Wright State University needs over eighty more tenured and tenure track faculty now just to reach the average of our peers; and we present warning signs regarding the administration's intentions with respect to higher teaching loads. We also show how these issues are connected, and what we, the Regular Chapter Members, can do to address them.

If you care about the quality of Wright State University, the education we offer our students, or just the number of classes you must teach, *read this article*.

Ultimately, the Regular Chapter Members will have an opportunity to vote on a new CBA or make other decisions when negotiations end. Our new CBA will determine in large measure whether many Bargaining Unit Faculty will have to teach additional classes, and whether the administration's over-dependence upon non-professorial faculty will grow even worse. For now, please *read this article* and discuss the issues therein with your colleagues and Bargaining Council representatives -- and be prepared to respond to requests for visible actions in support of our negotiating positions when bargaining gets under way next January. Our actions together as a union can determine the quality of our university and the path it takes in the years ahead.

Is the administration serious about the quality of Wright State University? Their responses to two related issues at upcoming negotiations will tell the tale. The two issues are 1) the number of tenured and tenure track faculty and 2) increased teaching loads. This article will explain how these two issues have arisen and how they are related. We will also show how we can protect and even improve the quality of Wright State University in the upcoming round of negotiations -- *if* the Bargaining Unit Faculty are united and determined to make quality an issue.

Issue One: How many faculty does Wright State need? The Faculty Gap

How many faculty does Wright State need? Background

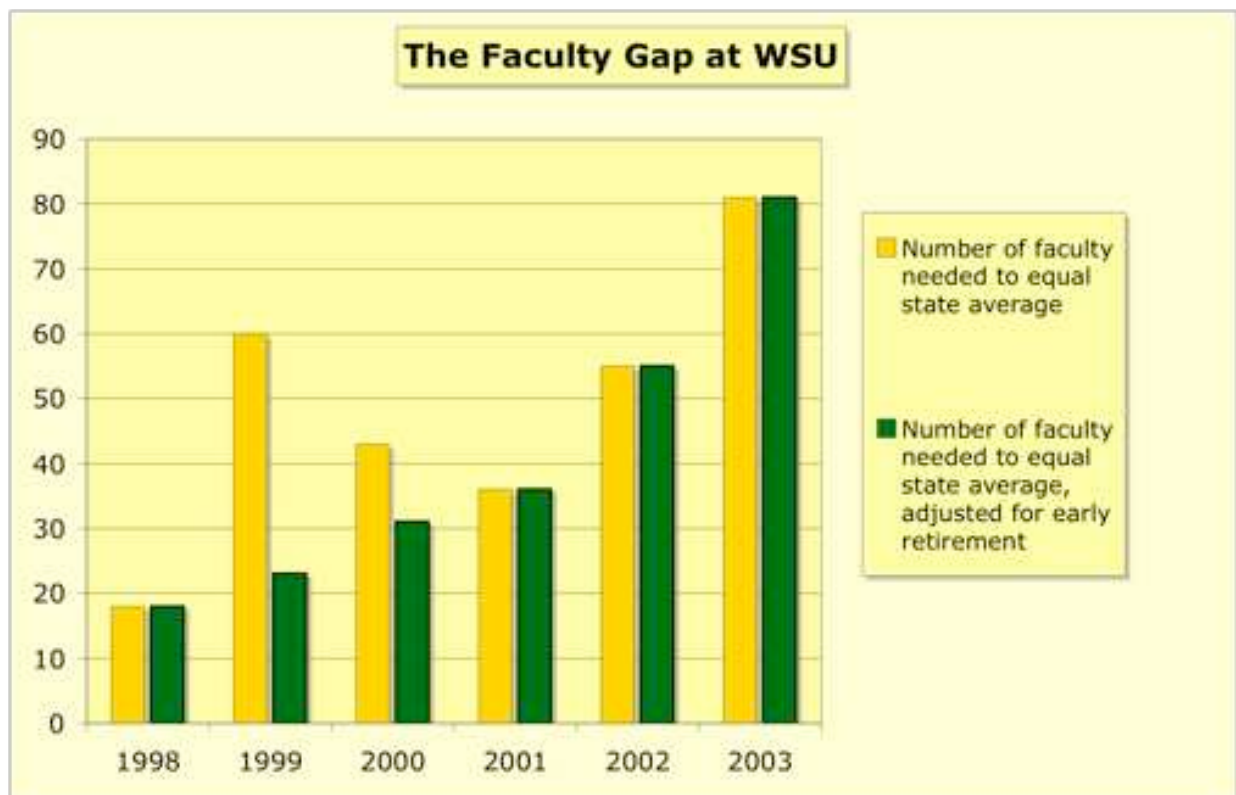
Three years ago, in preparing for negotiations toward our second CBA, we recognized that Wright State University had a significant problem with student-faculty ratios. The administration was relying more and more on adjuncts and other non-professorial faculty to do the teaching work of the university. Thus we

proposed a CBA article to address this issue. In the interest of reaching a settlement, we withdrew that article, having heard and accepted the administration's assertion that they, too, realized that the university needed more Bargaining Unit Faculty and that they would hire faculty accordingly.

How many faculty does Wright State need? How things stand now

How many tenured and tenure-track faculty does Wright State need in light of the size of our student body? One reasonable way to answer that question is to compare ourselves with a peer group, ten other Ohio public universities (all excluding the two special-status institutions, Central State and Shawnee State). By that measure, Wright State is near the bottom. Only the University of Toledo has a worse student-to-faculty ratio than we do.

The graph below shows how many more tenured and tenure-track faculty Wright State would need only to attain the average of the student-to-faculty ratios at these ten peer institutions. We had reason to be concerned three years ago, for even then (2001) Wright State would have needed thirty-six more faculty to reach the average of our peers. Since then matters have worsened dramatically. The latest available data (for 2003) shows that now, our administration would need to hire over eighty more tenured and tenure-track faculty just to raise us to average.



Data sources:

- Number of full-time equivalent (FTE) students at each university from the *Ohio Board of Regents Higher Education Information Enrollment in Ohio's Public Institutions of Higher Education FTE and Student Count Summaries 1998-2003*
- Number of professorial faculty at each university from national AAUP: see *Academe* March/April 1999, 2000 and also Office of Human Resources: *The Ohio State University, Ohio Universities Faculty Salary Survey 2000-2003*

How can Wright State remain competitive in terms of the quality of education we offer to our students if we are near the bottom when it comes to the number of tenured and tenure track faculty per student? If the trend that is evident in the graph continues, Wright State will be rapidly transformed into an over-priced

community college. In the long run, we need to ask ourselves why students would continue to pay thousands of dollars to get taught by the same adjuncts and instructors who teach at Sinclair Community College. There is already an attitude both among some students and parents that there is no difference in the quality of instruction at Wright State and Sinclair -- and sadly if Wright State continues down the current path, this perception will become the reality.

Can the university afford to hire this many additional tenured and tenure track faculty, *and* still provide competitive compensation and benefits for us? The university's financial statements and projections show that the answer is a resounding yes – and we will address that important matter in more detail in a subsequent communication. Thus the real question is, “Can the university afford *not* to?”

How many faculty does Wright State need? Projections into the future

At the most recent meeting of the Finance and Audit Committee of the Board of Trustees, the administration projected that over the next decade Wright State's student body will grow by over ten percent. That will require about fifty more tenured and tenure track faculty, above and beyond the eighty-plus needed now. Incidentally, the same projections show that the administration anticipates having enough money to increase our reserves (unrestricted net assets) by over \$100 million – that's *one hundred million dollars* -- during the upcoming decade.

In summary, Wright State needs eighty-plus more tenured and tenure track faculty now, just to bring us to the average of our peers, and (by the administration's enrollment projections) will need an additional fifty during the upcoming decade.

How many faculty does Wright State need? The cost of having too few

We have already pointed out the obvious: just in terms of basic classroom teaching, Wright State will morph into a glorified community college if the problem of too few tenured and tenure track faculty is not addressed. But of course there is so much more that tenured and tenure track faculty must do that others cannot do or cannot do well. Think of curriculum development; review of academic policies; creating distance learning courses; supervision of students in research, field work, independent study, and student teaching; directing and coordinating academic programs; advising; and above all the research, scholarship, and creative activities that lie at the heart of a real university.

Thus, having too few tenured and tenure-track faculty results not only diminishes the quality of the education our students receive; it also concentrates the other important work of the faculty on too few shoulders.

So -- do you feel that you are working harder than your colleagues at other public universities in Ohio? Is the time available for your scholarship just not enough? If so, it is probably *not* your imagination.

How many faculty does Wright State need: our conclusion

Administrations at our peer universities in Ohio think they need more faculty than our administration does. What's so different about Wright State?

Our administration claims to understand the problem, but their response over the last three years has been to hire a token number of new tenured and tenure track faculty while at the same time hiring a new assistant vice president and more administrators.

Our conclusion: the only way for faculty to insure that students get the quality education they deserve, and to insure that we have a reasonable cadre of colleagues to share the myriad responsibilities of the

professoriate, is to have an article in the CBA that will force the administration to hire more tenured and tenure track faculty.

Issue Two: Are increased teaching loads on the way?

Related to the issue of the number of tenured and tenure track faculty to students is the number of classes each tenured and tenure track faculty member is expected to teach. Five years ago, when we negotiated our first CBA, the administration took an incredible stance, refusing to negotiate with us over workload. We used the State Employee Relations Board (SERB), the fact-finder who settled our first CBA, and the Greene County Court of Common Pleas in attempts to force the administration to change its stance. We were not successful in this attempt. However, the last voice on the matter (the Greene County Court of Common Pleas) stated, "Finally, SERB's Order does not deny AAUP the right to bargain over faculty workload."

(Parenthetically, almost all other state universities with collective bargaining had, and continue to have, language over workload. In fact, the University of Toledo AAUP just won an arbitration case concerning workload. Our administration continues to be virtually alone in the state by taking the position that bargaining over workload is a prohibited topic.)

At the time the court ruled, our union was nearly as strong as we are today. Moreover, during negotiations toward our first CBA, the administration's stance was a categorical statement that they had no intention of increasing faculty workloads. Therefore, when we negotiated our second (current) CBA, we did not attempt to force the issue of workload.

Recently, though, there have been several signs that the administration's stance is changing. Some faculty have been assigned increased teaching loads already, and some department chairs have been asked to consider differential teaching loads for their faculty. Most concretely, one of the deans has recently asked his faculty to adopt a revised workload policy featuring increased teaching loads for some faculty.

Now the administration claims that it is only concerned about faculty who get paid full time but are working part time. While there may be a few faculty who abuse their positions in this way, we are confident that the overwhelming majority of our colleagues at Wright State are working full time -- and in fact harder than our counterparts at our sister institutions as evidenced under "Issue One" above.

Our position can be summarized in two parts. First, AAUP-WSU is certainly *not* interested in defending any faculty there may be who are paid full time but only work part time -- who are "retired on the job" (ROJ). Second, though, we are not willing for the administration to unilaterally say who is ROJ and who is not.

Indeed, in the dean's proposed revision of a college workload policy noted above, any BUFMs who do not have two articles in peer-reviewed publications during the last four years would have their teaching loads ramped up from two courses per term to three. This would happen regardless of books published, scholarly lectures delivered at other universities or academic meetings, grants funded, professional service rendered (e.g., journal editing), and any other valuable contributions that one might provide.

But even if all these obvious flaws were corrected, there would be no guarantee whatever that such flaws would not surface again in other venues (e.g., in revisions of workload policies in other colleges). More importantly, the decision to (so to speak) label certain faculty members ROJ and increase their teaching loads would be at the sole discretion of the administration. With no workload language in our CBA, there would be no contractual recourse for a BUFM unfairly so labeled -- no right to file a grievance, no chance of going to arbitration. Sadly, the long-term history of Wright State indicates that leaving matters like this in the hands of the administration simply invites abuse. Prior to collective bargaining, Wright State

faculty found that in many instances, two people with essentially the same level of performance were treated differently -- one promoted, the other not; one given a sizeable merit raise, the other not. Experiences of these kinds, repeated around the university year after year, were of course a key reason for our collective choice to unionize in the first place. Without workload language in our CBA, we may well find that one faculty member will be labeled ROJ and assigned additional teaching, the other not.

A slippery slope

Allowing the administration to unilaterally increase teaching loads -- whether in an ad-hoc manner (as has already happened for a few faculty members) or systematic (as in the proposed changes in a college workload policy) -- may well prove to be a slippery slope.

Indeed, pressures on administrators to increase teaching loads will come from many directions. Under Issue One, we have already seen that Wright State has too few tenured and tenure-track faculty, and thus is overly dependent on adjuncts, instructors, and other non-professorial faculty. Accrediting bodies often flag academic programs and whole institutions for such over dependence and apply pressure for improvement. NCA (the North Central Association -- the accrediting body for Wright State itself) did exactly that a decade ago. One easy way for administrators to respond to such pressure is to increase teaching loads on BUFMs.

Pressure also comes from the State of Ohio itself. For one example, we are all aware that over the years, state funding for Wright State and our sister universities has steadily and significantly declined. For another, the very excuse used by our administration for refusing to negotiate over workload is founded in old legislation that mandated an increase in undergraduate teaching by tenured and tenure track faculty in Ohio's public universities. (Notably, among the ten peer universities we cited in Issue One, no other administration has used this excuse or any other to avoid negotiations over workload.)

A third form of pressure we have already cited above. Students and their parents, increasingly astute regarding their choices in higher education, will surely ask why they should pay university-level tuition only to get a community college education. Indeed, in formulating its famous (infamous?) college rankings, *U.S. News and World Report* uses such factors as "the proportion of professors with the highest degree in their fields", "the student-faculty ratio", and "the proportion of faculty who are full time".

Such pressures may well lead well-intentioned administrators following appropriately motivated policies to make inappropriate decisions. That scenario is not hypothetical but real. The prime example comes from student evaluations of teaching. Decades ago, these evaluations were introduced at the departmental or college level with the stated intention of providing feedback to faculty so they could improve their teaching. Then, after a change of administrations, the Academic Council (the predecessor of the Faculty Senate) was told that they had to pass a policy mandating the use of a standardized university-wide student evaluation or the Board of Trustees would mandate such a policy. Once this university wide student evaluation was passed, department chairs, deans and promotion and tenure committees were pressured to use this data to make decisions regarding merit raises and promotion and tenure under the pretense of being more "student centered". This led to widespread abuses and misuses of student evaluations. To remedy this situation we negotiated the CBA's Article 12, placing limits on the use of numerical responses on student evaluations.

The two issues combined

Importantly, college workload policies can be changed unilaterally and instantly by the administration, but of course the CBA can not. Thus, without an article on workload in the CBA, these policies will continue to be binding on faculty and this administration (or more likely a future one) will be able to alter them at will. It will be all too simple to require more and more publications, funding, *more* funding, etc.,

thereby declaring ever increasing numbers of faculty to be ROJ and subject to greater teaching loads. This will be an easy and tempting way to increase faculty teaching loads to compensate for the administration's failure to hire enough tenured and tenure track faculty for us to have a high-quality university.

Now it is not the job of our union to protect faculty who are not working full time. But it *is* the job of our union to

- guarantee that Bargaining Unit Faculty have an equal voice with the administration, through collective bargaining, in determining any standards by which one may be declared ROJ, just as is the case now in standards for annual evaluation, promotion, and tenure,
- ensure that Bargaining Unit Faculty who believe they have been treated inequitably in this regard have a contractual recourse through grievance and arbitration, and
- protect Bargaining Unit Faculty who are working full time from paying the price for the administration's refusal to hire adequate numbers of tenured and tenure track faculty.

Of course, it is not just faculty who will pay this price -- students will pay it, too, as their classes are staffed by fewer professorial faculty (or staffed by professorial faculty with community college teaching loads) and the quality of their educational experience diminishes. The quality of the institution itself will decline, for it will surely be more difficult to continue attracting and retaining high-caliber faculty if we are subject to arbitrary increases in our teaching loads or burdened with important duties shared by too few professors.

In summary, our AAUP-WSU Executive Committee asks you to take note of this pair of issues *and* the evident link between them. We will suggest CBA articles to the Bargaining Council that will address these issues. We ask you, our Regular Chapter Members, to **share your views on these issues** with your Bargaining Council representatives and **discuss them with your colleagues**. We further ask you to **visibly support our Negotiating Team** when we take these issues to the bargaining table early in 2005. Will the administration agree to negotiate over workload and the number of tenured and tenure-track faculty? When Dr. David R. Hopkins was interviewing for the position of Provost that he now holds, he was asked about negotiating over workload with us. Although he did not make a firm commitment, his reply indicated that doing so was reasonable, and he certainly did not foreclose the possibility. Now, we need the administration to follow through on that measured response and actually work with us, negotiating over this pair of issues in good faith. If we are united in our determination to have a CBA that addresses these issues, then we will succeed in protecting our collective interests and in particular building a higher-quality university.