Letter to all WSU Bargaining Unit Faculty Members sent October 16, 2014

Bargaining Unit Faculty Members:

The corporatization of Wright State University is marching on. The latest eruption pertains to printing, but even if this particular issue does not impact you directly, the next one likely will. So please read on and respond as we suggest at the end of this message.

On September 22, 2014, Mark Polatajko (WSU’s Vice President for Business and Fiscal Affairs) sent an email updating the campus community on “Managed Print Services.” This email provided a link to a policy on desktop printers. On September 22, that policy stated:

Desktop Printers

Vice President/Dean level and higher, at their discretion, may maintain a desktop output device that is attached to their personal computer.

Faculty and staff may elect to keep their current inkjet devices that are directly connected to their personal computer. Supplies and services for these devices will not be supported or funded by Wright State University. These devices may be subject to a review once the Xerox future state is fully implemented.

I wrote Dr. Polatajko on September 23, asking him to clarify this policy – which was (let us say) disappointing in light of assurances given to AAUP-WSU that administrators and faculty would receive the same treatment with respect to the printing policy, and faculty would not be forced to give up their desktop printers.

Dr. Polatajko never responded to my email. But on September 30, we received another email stating that Dr. Polatajko would “like to give you some additional clarifications”. One of these so-called clarifications stated (my emphasis):

“Employees who wish to retain their desktop printers will be personally responsible for all printing supplies”.

So, the assurance that faculty would not be forced to give up their desktop printers is violated even more egregiously than before, since the “clarification” apparently applies to both inkjet and laser printers even though per-page costs on the latter are notably lower. As to the favored treatment of high-level
administrators, nothing about that now appears on the web page cited above, so maybe it has been reversed – or maybe it is only no longer being made overt.

What’s next? Perhaps next week, the Administration will tell us that faculty must provide their own classroom teaching essentials (markers, erasers), or that we can keep our office phones provided we pay to keep them connected, or that we will be billed for access to the Internet. Perhaps in the next round of CBA negotiations, the Administration will demand that all CBA language addressing such faculty needs be eliminated, e.g., that we will have to provide our own computers and software.

The Administration wants us to believe that the new printing arrangement will be better. If this is true, then why did the original policy exempt high-level administrators? If it would save money, then why do some chairs expect their departments will pay more for printing under “Managed Print Services” rather than less? If it were really better, then faculty and other employees would voluntarily use the new arrangement, and mandates (e.g., you must pay for your own printing supplies) would be unnecessary.

In summary, then, it is less than certain that this will save any money, and even if it does the savings will be at the expense of faculty.

Indeed, this entire episode demonstrates just how tone deaf the Administration is. Moreover, it is one more example of misplaced priorities at WSU. This year, the Administration is spending two million dollars on a new branding campaign. Last year, despite direct institutional support of $7.7 million, intercollegiate athletics ran a deficit of $678,151. In fact, over the last five years, the Administration budgeted $37.5 million from education and general funds to subsidize intercollegiate athletics. But that wasn’t enough, since over the same period intercollegiate athletics ran deficits of over $3 million.

Apparently, the Administration is prepared to burn money by the boatload, paying high priced consultants to develop a branding campaign and giving intercollegiate athletics a blank check, but it can’t find the money to buy paper and toner for faculty desktop printers.

If you don’t have a desktop printer but could benefit from having one, why hasn’t the Administration bought you one? Likewise, if your work for the University would be facilitated by a device or a service that would cost about the same as desktop printing, why should you not have that? Walk into any administrative office and see if you can find anyone without a desktop printer or arms-reach access to a networked printer.
Let’s show the Administration that faculty are not willing to accept this latest eruption of diminishing support for the work of the faculty, of misplaced spending priorities. We are asking all Bargaining Unit Faculty Members to tape a penny to a blank sheet of paper and send it via campus mail to President Hopkins @ Office of the President, 260 University Hall. (If you don’t want to put your name in the “from” column on the campus mail envelop, just put AAUP-WSU in that space.) We’ll be sure he understands that we are just trying to provide the administration with plenty of money for buying toner and plenty of paper to print on. We’ll ask you to repeat these penny-and-paper offerings once a week to the Administration until it gets the message.

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