



Academic Staff Professionals Representation Organization

Advocating on Behalf of Academic Staff Since 1989...

10 East Doty Street, Suite 403, Madison, WI 53703
(608) 286-9599

July 30, 2007
www.aspro.net

Leadership Conference Brings Academic Staff Together

By Bill Steffenhagen, ASPRO
President

ASPRO had a strong presence at the "Growth: Professional, Personal and Community" Academic Staff Leadership Conference held in late June at UW-Superior. Our hosts provided wonderful professional development and networking opportunities.

New Regent President Mark Bradley gave the keynote address, "The UW System's Role in Wisconsin's Future." He highlighted the growth agenda, his vision for the UW-System, and recognized the contribution of academic staff members to the mission of their campuses.

ASPRO President Bill Steffenhagen and ASPRO Board Member Dave Carlson participated in a break out session and panel discussion comparing ASPRO and the union TAUWP.

The UW employee collective bargaining provisions included in the Governor's and Senate's versions of the State Budget quickly became the primary concern of academic staff members attending the session.

Both versions of "enabling language" provide 'de facto' decoupling of academic staff and faculty pay plans as the price to be paid for the right to choose to bargain collectively. The Senate language does not prohibit faculty and academic staff bargaining units from combining, but gives the faculty the power to veto any attempt to do so.

It was clear from the discussion that the concern for decoupling academic staff and faculty salaries overshadowed any interest in the right to choose to collectively bargain.

ASPRO thanks the UW-Superior academic staff members for another excellent Leadership Conference.

Ask and You Shall Receive

In the last newsletter your ASPRO Board asked for member input on the new collective bargaining details contained in the Senate (Democratic) version of the budget bill which passed in July.

We were astonished by the flurry of responses that ASPRO received. Within minutes of sending the newsletter, ASPRO heard from you and your colleagues. The number of responses was unprecedented and the ASPRO Board was impressed with the clarity of the arguments and the passion of the responders. Only one of the responders supported the current collective bargaining language (and she has identified herself as a member of the union TAUWP).

We thought we would share the thoughts of some of your ASPRO colleagues:

I would oppose any language that decouples faculty and academic staff. Or that splits up the campuses into separate units. Both seem like ways to divide and conquer . . . rather than ways to give workers a clear and unified voice. It seems antithetical to what unionization is supposed to be about.

- Member from UW-Rock County

It has not been demonstrated to my satisfaction that collective bargaining is necessary or of obvious benefit to academic staff, compared to the present system in which faculty and staff salary and benefits are coupled and determined without collective bargaining. But if collective bargaining in some form would improve our financial situation, why must the tie between faculty and academic staff be severed?

I think that more staff would be in favor of legislation that retains the link between faculty and staff whether or not we elect to bargain collectively. If we did not elect to unionize, the system would continue as it is. But if we did elect to unionize, it would be in concert with the faculty.

- Member from UW-Madison

One bargaining unit with all UW System faculty and academic staff . . . should be the only collective bargaining process acceptable.

- Member from UW-Oshkosh

The scheme still puts the faculty in a superior bargaining position and should be opposed by ASPRO.

- Member from UW-Madison

The "supervisor" language is thoroughly confusing. As I read it, I would be considered a supervisor under part of the language, but maybe not a supervisor under some of the other language. In any event, the language is still a further splitting of academic staff into smaller pieces. This whole thing is freaking dumb.

- Member from UW-Extension

Your voices were heard. The ASPRO Board voted to oppose the collective bargaining language in the Senate version of the budget, and the position has been communicated to all legislators .

As you know, the entire budget bill is now in the hands of a Conference Committee which began meeting on July 25th. ASPRO will actively lobby to have the unacceptable collective bargaining language removed from the budget.