

WMU-AAUP Chapter Update  
May 14, 2020

Colleagues,

These are uncertain and trying times, of the kind that few people alive can recall. The level of anxiety, frustration, and stress have been palpable and real. This stress has been exacerbated by the recent town hall meeting, as well as the subsequent alarming and inaccurate letters from various deans that have led many members to fear for their departments, programs, colleagues, and their own jobs. Some of you have expressed anger, and shared your impression that the union leadership has been inactive. Others worry about overheated rhetoric and difficult decisions ahead. Still others may be overwhelmed with the challenges of mandated online instruction, or managing care for others during the stay-at-home order. Please rest assured that we are working every single day to defend faculty rights, advocate for transparency by the administration, demand shared governance in decision making, and to identify the best possible paths forward.

We are writing to you today to share an update on actions being taken. Based on the results of the faculty survey that supported pursuing a possible extension to the contract (in lieu of negotiating a new 3-year agreement), over the past couple of weeks we have consulted with legal counsel and initiated conversations with the administration about the possibility of shifting to an extension in lieu of full-blown negotiations. After several weeks of intensive investigation, discussion, analysis and preparatory work by and on behalf of the Chapter, on Wednesday, May 13, the Executive Committee, along with the Negotiation Team, debated how to proceed. The Executive Committee unanimously agreed that the most prudent course of action is to move forward with a process to discuss a contract extension. The Chapter officers, as well as counsel to the Chapter, are now proceeding into conversations with the administration both on changes to the current contract to permit incentivized early retirement (as requested by the administration), as well as a Letter of Agreement to extend our current contract by one year. We anticipate that the administration may propose a zero-percent increase or temporary reductions in compensation as part of this conversation. Our intent is to move quickly in order to aggressively protect our members, and to ensure that the faculty remains whole, and unburdened by special sacrifices that cut to the heart of the ability to fulfill our educational mission. Any proposals for an extension, including all associated details, will be brought to the Executive Committee for their recommendation on whether to bring it to the Chapter for a vote. If the discussions with the administration do not result in an acceptable proposal for a contract extension, the Negotiation Team stands ready to take the baton and proceed with regular, full negotiations.

In the meantime, please keep in mind that the rights and protections offered by our collective bargaining agreement remain in full force. **As of today, there has been no official notification from the administration that they intend to lay off any faculty.** Article 25 of our Agreement requires that a 60-day notice must be provided *before* any layoff action may occur. Our contract states that "Western agrees to consult with the Chapter, upon request, during the sixty-day period, regarding the financial crisis. Western agrees to give serious consideration to recommendations of alternatives." If the administration activates the layoff process, we will absolutely use our contractual right to advocate for alternatives. We very much hope that we will not receive any notification from the administration that they intend to lay off faculty. But if they do serve us that notice, we are prepared to do everything in our power to defend our faculty. We ask that you stand with us.

Finally, the officers and the Executive Committee want to thank all of you for your steadfastness and for your striving to ensure the union leadership stays accountable to its membership. We are always very happy to hear from you, and to ensure that your voices are heard, we encourage you to communicate with your AC rep, your college's EC rep, or send an email directly to [staff@wmuaaup.net](mailto:staff@wmuaaup.net).