



Representing Wayne State Faculty and Academic Staff

# NEWSBRIEFS

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## The Politics of Our Funding Crisis

### Changing Priorities in Lansing is Key, and That Begins with Political Action

By Charles Parrish, President

The recent struggle within the Board of Governors over this year's tuition increase reflects the larger issue of how we are going to cope with the continuing failure of state government to fund higher education at levels comparable to other more progressive states. There is much at stake in this debate, for both the quality of education we are able to provide our students and the quality of work life for faculty and academic staff depend in large part on the resources we receive from Lansing.

WSU is going to be under continuing annual pressure to raise tuition to make up for the decline in state funding. The members of the Board of Governors are always torn between their commitment to make Wayne as affordable as possible to our students, many of whom are from low-income families, and their desire to fund quality programs in teaching and research. It is their thankless task to resolve this conflict each year.

#### The Origins of the Fiscal Crisis

The current crisis in higher education funding in Michigan is a direct result of the anti-government policies of former Governor John Engler. The deep cuts he inaugurated in taxes and funding for many state programs were dictated by an ideology which he and many current Republicans hold dear:

if you cannot abolish governmental programs completely, you can at least cut their funding until they are unable to do their jobs.

One of the reasons we faced a scandal in our state foster care program, for example, was because there was not enough money to do background checks to assure that those volunteering to take in foster children did not have criminal records. The result was a public perception that government couldn't handle the job—not unlike the perception that government could not handle emergency storm relief after FEMA's failures in New Orleans. If you starve the public sector of resources and appoint administrators who hate government service, their failure is a convenient justification for privatization.

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#### Prisons or Schools?

There was only one area of public investment that Engler was willing to expand: prisons. Under the Engler Administration, state government followed a retrogressive drug enforcement policy based on "lock 'em up and throw away the key." This policy has largely continued, unfortunately, under the Jennifer Granholm Administration. Other states have adopted much more cost-effective drug prosecution policies based on rehabilitation, but Michigan has lagged behind. **con't on page 2**

We have instead sent huge numbers of people to jail for drug offenses. It is a scandal that Michigan now is far ahead of any other Great Lakes states in the number of prisoners per capita: over 500 per 100,000 in the population compared to 414 in Ohio and 354 in Illinois. We now spend roughly the same amount of the state budget on prisons—nearly \$2 billion—as we do on higher education. On an individual basis, we spend about \$35,000 a year on each prisoner but only \$7,500 per student in higher education. In 1980, only one-in-twenty state civil servants worked for Corrections; today, it is one-in-three.

Many prisoners should remain where they are, but for the extraordinary number of men and women who committed non-violent crimes or who need drug rehabilitation rather than incarceration, we should follow the example of our neighboring states. As we spend more and more on prisons, less and less is available for other state programs, including higher education.

*“...the quality of education we are able to provide our students and the quality of work life for faculty and academic staff depend in large part on the resources we receive from Lansing.”*

### **Making Lansing Listen**

It is important that the members of the Wayne State University community think seriously about the representation of our interests in Lansing. In past years, not only has the funding for higher education been falling, but the share of that diminished total that goes to Wayne State had been shrinking even faster.

Among other things, the formulas used in the higher education budget process usually emphasizes the number of full-time equated students, which for our institution hovers in most years around a figure of 22,000. The actual head count of our students is usually closer to 33,000, and there is little consideration in Lansing for the cost of servicing this large number of individual students who attend WSU on a part-time basis.

Our large number of special needs students should also be considered, as well as the professional schools that represent the largest single source of Michigan's nurses, doctors, engineers, and lawyers.

While we do have a governmental affairs office to represent the University, it is not enough. We have 6,000 people who work at Wayne State. They live all over the Detroit Metropolitan Area and are represented by a wide variety of state legislators. Representatives and senators for suburban districts need to be told that their constituents work and study at the University and that many of their sons and daughters will look to Wayne State as their stepping stone to the future.

When suburban legislators, particularly Republicans, refuse to provide adequate funding for higher education in general, and support cuts to Wayne State in particular, they are hurting their constituents.

Elsewhere in this Newsletter we have a call for support for our Political Action Committee (PAC). Whether one likes it or not, the funding of higher education and the

funding for Wayne State is decided by a political process. Through our PAC we represent the interests of our members and of all those in the University Community, students, academics, other employees, and alumni.

If you support our PAC you support Wayne State. However, even if you do not contribute to our PAC, you can make your voice heard through calls, emails or letters to your state legislative representative. Finally, we can urge our neighbors and especially our students to register to vote. The deadline for registering is October 6, and anyone needing the forms and the easy instructions for doing so should contact our office: 577-1750, or [aaupaft@wayne.edu](mailto:aaupaft@wayne.edu). For more information on our PAC, you can go to our web site: <http://www.aaupaft.org/vote.html>.

# Making Our Voice Heard

By Dan Golodner, AAUP-AFT PAC Coordinator

It seems as if the electioneering will never come to an end, but in just a few weeks we will go to the polls to cast our votes for the President of the United States, representatives to Congress, Lansing, and the WSU Board of Governors, and various ballot initiatives.

Once again it is time for the members of the AAUP-AFT to help support those who support us by donating to the union's Political Action Committee (PAC). You may have already made individual contributions to candidates you favor, but the money you donate to our PAC gives us a collective voice in Lansing that helps raise the visibility of Wayne State and rewards legislators who support our needs.

## Your past donations ensured that our voice was heard:

- Your contributions were put to work on behalf of the state reps who voted for the budget compromise that kept our state government operating, and who thereafter had to face recall campaigns organized by right-wing groups.
- Your donations helped educate legislators about the need for stem cell research in the state of Michigan, and that issue is now a ballot initiative.
- Your dollars helped defeat a so-called "Right To Work" ballot initiative that would have weakened collective bargaining.

This election cycle is especially important. Not only are we electing a new President, we are also voting on two of the eight seats for the WSU Board of Governors. Democrats on the Board have supported us on many key issues of concern to faculty and academic staff, and we need to insure their reelection come November.

Dues money is never used for candidate support, so we must ask you for these voluntary contributions to give our union a real stake in the political process. Our voice is only as strong as the PAC contributions of our members. So please take a stand for union rights and educational opportunity for all!

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## PAC DONATION FORM

### Yes, I can help:

Contribution:     \$25     \$30     \$40     \$50     \$100     Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Volunteer:                     Talk to co-workers about the issues and urge their support  
    Join a delegation to lobby state legislators on behalf of Wayne  
    Join the AAUP-AFT PAC Committee

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Department/School: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_ Occupation: \_\_\_\_\_

Make checks payable to "AFT Michigan PAC" and mail to AAUP-AFT, Wayne State University, 5057 Woodward Ave., Suite 3301, Detroit, MI, 48202-4050

**Contributions are not deductible for federal tax purposes.**

## Time Is Not On Your Side

By Lothar Spang, Grievance Coordinator, Academic Staff

Over the years that I have been grievance coordinator, I've found that the most important issue facing members of the academic staff is time. For every other issue that affects your position, your professional duties, and your career path, timeliness is the key to your rights under the collective bargaining agreement.

The Academic Staff Steering Committee holds workshops every year to educate us on issues of promotion, Employment Security Status, and salary. What is sometimes overlooked in these workshops is that we have only certain windows of time to address problems that may adversely affect the manner in which we perform our professional assignment.

This is the relevant section of Article 24 of the contract, "Professional Duties" (page 118): *"The duties of an academic staff member shall be reasonable and fair and shall reflect professional assignments, professional development/achievement, and services to Wayne State University."*

Unit managers often ignore these words and may change your assignment in ways that do not reflect your unit factors and your perception of your assignment. Article 24 establishes a process for addressing the issues raised in such cases, but it is important to remember that this process carries a

clock with it. Indeed, we have only 10 working days from the time in which we learn of changes in professional duties to begin the review process. If you wait longer to question a redefinition of your role, you may be jeopardizing your rights under Article 24.

When you have a question of interpretation concerning your professional duties, or for that manner, about any issue in the contract, call the AAUP-AFT office as soon as possible. Michelle Fecteau, Executive Director, is your first line of defense. She understands the contract and can help sort out the issues. If she is not available, Diisa Hejka, our Office Manager, can certainly fill in. Whether your question goes to Michelle or Diisa or is forwarded to Barbara Jones, our Contract Implementation Officer for academic staff, all such communication is held in the strictest confidence.

If your situation involves a contract violation by management, you may choose to initiate a grievance or a formal review of professional duties. But recourse to this due process is only possible if you respond in a timely manner. When in doubt, call us. We are here to insure that the contract is followed and that you have every opportunity to develop a professional identity at Wayne State University.

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Go to our new website: [www.aupaft.org](http://www.aupaft.org) for an electronic copy of this newsletter.

