



Representing Wayne State Faculty and Academic Staff

NEWSBRIEFS

Telephone: 313.577.1750 ~ Fax: 313.577.8150
unionoffice@aaupaft.org ~ www.aaupaft.org

September 2010

A New Beginning

Charles J. Parrish, *President*

A new academic year, a new president and a new provost. Can this be a new beginning at the University? Let us hope so. We should commit ourselves to doing what we can to make it so.

Both Interim President Allan Gilmour and Provost Ronald Brown have reached out to various constituencies of the University, particularly the Senate and the Union, urging them to be open to consulting with them on the development and implementation of policy. Professor Seymour Wolfson, President of the Senate, and I have met separately with both and they delivered an open-door invitation to each of us. We have been told that if problems come to our attention we should not hesitate to come to them to discuss such matters before they become contentious. The Union leadership welcomes this fresh approach and we will avail ourselves of this opportunity.

The tone for a new approach was set by the Board of Governors who met with the Policy Committee of the Academic Senate, the Vice Presidents, the Deans and representatives of the student body as they considered who to appoint to the interim presidency. After selecting Interim President Gilmour, the Board, led by Chairperson Richard Bernstein, again held meetings with the same groups to introduce the President to them. The entire process was conducted with care and concern for the sensibilities of these constituencies.

While there were concerns about the Board's selection of a non-academic, strong objections have not been raised and most are willing to suspend judgment and wait to see how things go this year. There is no doubt about the executive abilities of President Gilmour. Moreover, he has shown an openness and good humor that should serve him well in carrying out his responsibilities. It would behoove us all to give him the room needed to do his job.

That job is difficult. The University cannot wait until the end of the search process to get started on meeting the imminent challenges that we face. For example, the Detroit News article announcing that Wayne State University had the worst record among comparable universities for graduating African-American students within six years has dealt us a real blow. One can complain about the methodology used by the Education Trust in its analysis, but the underlying facts are

stubborn. Our record in graduating these students is abysmal. There are those of us who have known this and complained about it for some years. There has been some response by the University in the past. Associate Vice President Howard Shapiro has introduced some measures (e.g., learning communities, etc.) that have begun to show some results, but the issue has yet to make it onto the radar of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences and the College of Fine, Performing and Communication Arts where many of our new students are first taught. There is a

continued on page 4

Inside:

**Meet WSU Professor
Jocelyn Benson,
candidate for
Michigan
Secretary of State**
page 2

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**Diane Ravitch on
rethinking school
reform**
page 3

Please Join Us for an Opportunity to *Meet and Support*
WSU Law Professor

JOCELYN BENSON

Nominee for Michigan Secretary of State



Thursday, September 30, 2010
4:00 p.m. - 6:00 p.m.
Union Street Saloon
4145 Woodward Avenue, Detroit

**Bring Some Friends and
Enjoy Refreshments and Appetizers**

Suggested Minimum Contribution
\$25.00

Jocelyn has spent her career advocating for efficient and transparent government that puts people first. As the daughter of two Special Education teachers, she was instilled with a responsibility to ensure that people are treated fairly and that government works well for every citizen.

Jocelyn began her career as an investigator for the Southern Poverty Law Center. From 2002-2004, she served as the Voting Rights Policy Coordinator of the Harvard Civil Rights Project, where she worked on the passage of the *Help America Vote Act*, the federal law that improved election law standards in the wake of the 2000 Presidential recount.

Today, she teaches election law at the WSU Law School, and has written a book on the role of the Secretary of State in enforcing election and campaign finance law.

In 2007, Jocelyn helped block the closing of a Secretary of State branch in Saginaw. In 2008, she called on GOP Secretary of State Terri Lynn Land to ban the use of foreclosure lists to challenge voter's eligibility on Election Day.

COME BY TO HEAR MORE FROM OUR NEXT SECRETARY OF STATE!

Please **RSVP** to **313.577.1750**, or via e-mail to **unionoffice@aaupaft.org**

Sponsored by the AAUP-AFT Local 6075 PAC



A TALK BY DIANE RAVITCH

Author of the Bestseller

*The Death and Life of the
Great American School System:
How Testing and Choice are
Undermining Education*

A Book that Should Make Us Re-Think School Reform

Diane Ravitch is Research Professor of Education at New York University and a Historian of Education.

From 1991 to 1993, she was Assistant Secretary of Education in the administration of President George H.W. Bush. As Assistant Secretary, she led the federal effort to promote the creation of voluntary state and national academic standards. From 1997 to 2004, she was a member of the National Assessment Governing Board, overseeing the federal testing program, the National Assessment of Educational Progress.

Ravitch's latest book is a *tour de force* that points out many of the reform fads that are hurting public education, and what is needed to save our public schools and schools of education.

**Thursday, September 23rd at 6:00 p.m.
Community Arts Auditorium, Wayne State University
(open to the public)**

Wall Street Journal

"Ms. Ravitch [is] the country's soberest, most history-minded education expert."

Christian Science Monitor

"Ravitch's hopeful vision is of a national curriculum - she's had enough of fly-by-night methods and unchallenging requirements. She's impatient with education that is not personally transformative."

Boston Globe

"The book ... is ... a fiercely argued manifesto against fads in education reform and for public schools, and the teachers and students who inhabit them."

Sponsored by **Forum on Contemporary Issues in Society, Dr. Irvin D. Reid, Director**
with support from the **WSU AAUP-AFT** and **AFT Michigan**

continued from page 1

new committee (not the first one) that has been charged with doing something to address retention.

What a university does or does not do academically depends on the politics and policies followed in the departments. Attitudes about retention and related academic issues must change at the departmental level or we are never going to get anywhere on this matter. For the academic side of the University, this is where department chairs, faculty and academic staff decide who does what and how they are to be rewarded for it. In most departments, this process centers on producing research and publications and little else. Change in retention policy will come only when incentives at the departmental level reward accomplishment in undergraduate education. We must look at the bad publicity that we are presently getting as an opportunity to act, and not merely another occasion to send out new public relations statements about how well we are already doing. For a lot of understandable reasons, we are not doing as well as we should be in these matters and we need to pull up our socks and change.

We need President Gilmour to act, and more importantly, to get others to act on issues of concern during this year. This is not to urge a top-down approach. Rather, it is a call for President Gilmour and Provost Brown to lead a cooperative effort to address our serious problems. We cannot afford to tread water while we wait for the next president to be recruited.



FALL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

**Wednesday, October 6, 2010
12:00 -1:30 p.m.
Hilberry A, Student Center**

This meeting is open to all
AAUP-AFT Local 6075
Union Members.

Please be sure to attend!

Wayne State University Chapter, AAUP-AFT Local 6075

5057 Woodward Avenue, Suite 3301, Detroit, MI 48202-4050

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