

AAUP News

Cleveland State University Chapter

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What Happened to Faculty Governance at CSU?

Faculty Governance is one of the most vital and historically important aspects to the university as an institution. At its best, a university represents a gathering of scholars, students, and staff for the pursuit of scholarship, teaching, and service to the community. Unlike a corporation, those in administrative roles are drawn from the ranks of scholars themselves; they are “first among equals,” who recognize that regular and lively discussions with faculty are vital for ensuring a stable and flourishing university.

Historically, faculty governance has been one of the great strengths of CSU. Indeed, the principle of faculty governance is affirmed within the Collective Bargaining Agreement itself:

The CSU Board of Trustees/Administration and CSU-AAUP recognize the necessity of faculty participation in the making of academic and educational policies not subject to collective bargaining. The Cleveland State University Board of Trustees/Administration and the CSU - AAUP recognize and affirm the Faculty Senate as the appropriate instrumentality for faculty participation in the governance of the University and fully support an independent and effective Faculty Senate. (30.1)

The CSU-AAUP believes that in recent years the governance relationship between the faculty and administration has been a strong one. Last year, the formation of the Budget Task Force to oversee the cutting process, as well as the process of Interest-Based Bargaining leading up to the recently ratified contract, provide compelling evidence of a collaborative and fruitful relationship.

With that said, we believe that that relationship has been quickly eroding in recent months. We have received numerous complaints from faculty that the administration has implemented significant changes at CSU, from broad strategies to technical procedures, without even a minimum of faculty consultation. These changes affect a wide range of members of the university, faculty and students alike. Concerned faculty have reported the following governance concerns to us:

Strategic Planning

- A strategic shift in hiring and funding has emerged, which designates only a select number of departments as eligible to hire tenure track faculty. This permits some departments to sustain research and graduate programs, while limiting others to the role of general education or undergraduate service. (See the “Update on Lecturers” later in the newsletter for more details on this development.)

Faculty Hiring

- A number of departments who had been approved by their college for replacements for tenure-track faculty have had their positions converted to lecturers without consultation.
- A number of departments have had approved tenure track positions returned to them with their choice of field overturned, and a different field chosen *for the department* by the upper administration.

Academic Organization

- A planned reallocation of significant college resources into an inter-disciplinary health and biomedical sciences center (to be built on the site of Viking Hall) has arisen without due consultation or discussion with the departments and programs affected by such a realignment. Faculty learned of this from an article in the *Plain Dealer* rather than from any discussion with the administration.

Budget and Planning

- Related to that center, a plan to incur significant bond debt (\$25 million) for that building in a time of great scarcity and in the wake of budget cuts has emerged. The previous plan for that building, as described to faculty in Faculty Senate and in other discussions of the NEOMED program, was a multi-use space from which CSU could lease or sublet spaces, without incurring total fiscal responsibility for that capital investment. This change in plan will undoubtedly result in more total debt, which imperils both the university's reserves and credit rating.

Academic Standards

- The Faculty Senate Steering Committee has learned of the implementation of a policy of new prerequisites for student enrollment in distance learning classes without prior discussion with the Faculty Senate Academic Standards Committee.

Curriculum and E-Learning

- The Administration has developed a plan to convert a number of Master's degrees into on-line programs without the knowledge or consent of the degree-granting departments (or of Graduate Council), perhaps because such prospective programs may be outsourced to non-CSU faculty. One of these programs is now being advertised online, which is how some faculty have learned of a new program within their own college.

To the best of our knowledge, all of aforementioned plans and policies emerged without any consultation, formal or informal, with the Faculty Senate, the faculty in the relevant units, or other appropriate governance bodies.

We exhort the administration to honor the core commitment of faculty governance: it is a vital part of the history of the University; it was shared in recent negotiations; it is guaranteed by the Collective Bargaining Agreement. The success of our university depends on a fruitful collaboration between faculty and administration, and we call upon the administration to respect and to further that relationship rather than turning away from it.

An Update on College Lecturers

In our November newsletter, we provided an introduction to the College Lecturer, a teaching-intensive non-tenure track position that replaces the category previously known as “term faculty.” The predominance of lecturers in the pool, as well as the fact that the administration is replacing tenure track positions with non-tenure track lecturers, has provoked faculty concerns that college lecturers will replace tenure track faculty as the hiring norm.

New developments have arisen that merit further concerns, and we believe that it is incumbent upon the CSU-AAUP to share them with the faculty. We have learned from multiple administrative sources that college lecturers will become the preferred hiring norm for *some* departments, while *others* will be permitted to hire tenure track faculty. This suggests that the university is undergoing an undisclosed strategic shift, wherein some departments will be permitted to maintain their research and graduate programs, while others will not.

This development is startling for the CSU-AAUP, as the category of college lecturer during negotiations was never discussed as an alternative or replacement for tenure track faculty, but as a complementary category of faculty to enhance undergraduate education. There was also broad agreement that almost every department needed both lecturers and tenure track faculty to advance the multiple missions of the university, particularly to address the wide range of student needs at all levels. Never was there a sense that hiring would occur in an explicitly differential manner, with some departments designated as eligible for tenure track faculty hirers and others as not.

If you feel that your tenure track hiring needs have not been met in the recent hiring pool, or that a lecturer position has replaced a tenure-track faculty member without your department’s consent, please contact the CSU-AAUP (687-4694; aaup@csuohio.edu), as well as your college faculty senators. We will gather this information and use it to make a case to the administration to rescind this new policy of differential hiring. Together, our voices can help the administration recognize the urgent need for both lecturers and tenure track faculty throughout the university.

Workload Assignments Ahead

By now, faculty should have had their workload conferences with department chairs; workload and teaching assignments will be distributed in January.

Changes within the recent contract have caused questions about how workload assignments may differ in the next round of assignments, and we would like to speak to those concerns.

First, there is not a unilateral workload increase in the contract. In previous contracts, the annual teaching load for faculty engaged in research and/or service was 16 credit hours per academic year. Faculty who fell below expected productivity in those areas could be assigned additional courses, up to a maximum of 24 credit hours for academic year. In most departments, workload descriptions thus assigned various credit hours to the duties in teaching, research, and service.

That accounting method is now explicit in this contract, and faculty are expected to sustain a balance of research, service, and teaching as part of their overall workload assignment. The maximum workload has not changed from the previous contracts. It is still 24 credit hours per academic year. The core teaching norm for faculty engaged actively in assessable research has been maintained and may decrease for some faculty. Service continues to count towards workload as well. Here is the relevant contract language from Article 13.1.D.

Faculty who demonstrate significant participation in productive and assessable scholarship/research/creative activity will be assigned fewer than 24 teaching workload hours per academic year (typically ranging between 6 and 16 teaching workload hours per academic year). Service contributions constitute an expected component of all faculty members' workloads and shall be considered in the evaluative factors of Article 13.1.B.

This clarified language about workload was designed not to produce a systematic increase in faculty workload, but to provide chairs and faculty with a flexible system to recognize and to account for the many different kinds of work that faculty complete at CSU.

As in previous contracts, there is potential for abuse of this flexibility, and if this occurs, there are various grievance remedies available. From most reports, however, chairs and deans are taking a fairly conservative approach to assessing workload, respecting these norms and trying to account for faculty workload in a fair and forthright manner. If, however, you feel that you have received a workload assignment that does not accurately reflect your contributions, or that assigns workload in a manner that conflicts with the collective bargaining agreement, please contact the AAUP (687-4694; aaup@csuohio.edu) as soon as possible. Please remember that there is a 25 working day deadline to file a grievance from the time when the problem occurs. In the case of workload, that date would be when the formal assignment is made in January, but if you feel that something problematic is occurring right now, in the wake of workload conferences, we encourage you to contact us.

The CSU-AAUP Needs Your Help!

It has been a productive fall--the Collective Bargaining Agreement has been finalized, and Senate Bill 5 has been repealed—but there is still important work ahead. A fair and forthright implementation of the new contract will require consistent dialogue and communication among faculty members, the CSU-AAUP, and the administration. Towards that end, we are inviting faculty to help in this process in a number of ways:

- Department Representative for the AAUP. Departmental Representatives serve as a liaison between the CSU-AAUP Executive Committee and their colleagues to ensure good communication, to report on developments of concern, and to disseminate information to aid their departments as the new contract is implemented.
- Communications Officer. New developments at CSU are occurring at a record pace these days, and it is vital for faculty to be informed. A Communications Officer assists in developing the newsletter, crafting press releases, and communicating with campus and local media. The AAUP has a course release time available to recompense the officer for his or her time.
- Grievance Panel Representative. When a faculty member's grievance rises to a certain level, a panel of faculty and administrators hears the grievance and makes a recommendation on the case. Service on a grievance panel is a one-time responsibility, but also one of the most important tasks in sustaining faculty rights. We would like to cultivate a pool or "bull pen" of faculty willing to serve of prospective panels, especially with workload assignments emerging in January.

If you feel that you could serve in any of these capacities, or would like to become more involved in some other capacity, please contact the CSU-AAUP (687-4694; aaup@csuohio.edu). An active membership is the best safeguard of faculty rights, so we both need and appreciate your support.

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Cleveland State University

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