Illinois Wesleyan University
Digital Commons @ IWU

Chapter Activities IWU AAUP

2012

Newsletter, March 2012

IWU Chapter of the AAUP, Illinois Wesleyan University

Jim Matthews
Chapter President, Illinois Wesleyan University

Joerg Tiede
Illinois Wesleyan University

Greg Scholtz
National AAUP

Meghan Burke
Illinois Wesleyan University

Recommended Citation
IWU Chapter of the AAUP, Illinois Wesleyan University; Matthews, Jim; Tiede, Joerg; Scholtz, Greg; and Burke, Meghan, "Newsletter, March 2012" (2012). *Chapter Activities.* Paper 11.
http://digitalcommons.iwu.edu/iwuaaup_act/11

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the IWU AAUP at Digital Commons @ IWU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Chapter Activities by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ IWU. For more information, please contact sdaviska@iwu.edu.
©Copyright is owned by the author of this document.

aaup

Illinois Wesleyan Chapter of the AAUP

MARCH 27, 2012 NEWSLETTER VOLUME 1, NUMBER 4

Chapter Executive Committee:

James Matthews (president)

Rebecca Roesner (vice-president)

Joerg Tiede (secretary-treasurer)

In this issue:

From the President: 2011-2012 in Review By James Matthews

On IWU's Health Insurance Premiums By Joerg Tiede

What is Shared Governance Anyway? by Greg Scholtz

Student Forum on Tenure By Meghan Burke

From the President: 2011-2012 in Review

By James Matthews

It has been a busy year for the leadership of the IWU chapter of AAUP and we hope a rewarding one for members. We have hosted two campus speakers, two reading groups, have initiated and led in an important campus conversation about academic freedom and free speech issues, met with student senate to discuss issues of faculty governance and tenure, have had one member appointed to national committees, have had two members at the last AAUP Summer Institute, will send at least two members to the upcoming State Conference, and finally at least one member will attend the upcoming National Conference.

In selecting our speakers, the chapter sought to bring to campus individuals who have long experience in working with AAUP at both a local and national level. Moreover, we were fortunate in being able to bring speakers who addressed issues we thought important to our particular chapter. Irene Mulvey spoke to us in the fall, and provided a concise and well-articulated history of how the AAUP came to be, as well as a brief overview of the foundational documents. Given our influx of new, younger members, we felt this could be beneficial to all. While the topic might sound dry as toast in a short summary such as this, all who attended were captivated by Irene's mastery of detail and her energetic personality. Of course no one was really surprised to find that the issues that precipitated the founding of AAUP are replicated in the headlines of the *Chronicle* of the past year. *Plus ça change…*

AAUP members led the discussion in faculty meetings regarding the rights of students in particular and of university members in general to speak freely in public performances. The precipitating incident led to enlightening conversation with faculty, students, and Student Affairs staff and has resulted in clearer understanding of both what happened and how to avoid such situations in the future. My conclusion from conversations I have held: everyone needs to take greater responsibility to assert academic freedom while remaining sensitive to the expectations of any given audience.

Our spring speaker was Donna Potts who has served for twenty months as the Chair of State Conferences in AAUP. She is particularly interested in reinvigorating local chapters, starting new ones, and bringing renewed energy to state organizations. She is also an expert on sexual assault and harassment policies. She spoke on both the latter as well as current assaults on faculty governance of which she is aware. Donna is very well-spoken and while the information she shared was somewhat depressing, she reminded us of the importance of remaining vigilant, prepared to respond collectively to challenges to faculty governance and academic freedom. After having and extended and semi-liquid lunch with her, I can also say I am very much looking forward to her forthcoming volume of poetry.

Many thanks to Joerg Tiede and to Meghan Burke for having led book discussions in the fall and spring semesters respectively. Joerg led us through a reading of For the Common Good stimulating discussion about how faculty governance came to be important, and of greater significance, why its importance has increased over the course of the twentieth century. Our conclusion: faculty governance is every bit as much at risk today as it was in 1915, and in the greater interest of our students and their future, we must remain involved and careful. Meghan led an animated discussion of *Wannabe U*, an exploration of the increasing corporatization of

American higher education and the consequences thereof. This conversation included faculty and administrators, providing an opportunity to think of our own campus and ways in which we both resist and succumb to corporatizing pressures. The combined effect of both talks was to offer a detailed view of AAUP's past, a consideration of the present situation, and at least one view of where the profession might be headed. It seems to me that in some ways AAUP's work is only just beginning.

The current chapter leadership looks forward to deliberating about a potential recipient of the Dougan award as well as planning for chapter elections next year. It is our desire to involve younger members as much as they believe they can afford the time and we hope to persuade one or two to accept leadership positions next year for the 2013-2014 academic year.

I would like to thank all of our members and especially Joerg and Becky Roesner for having made this an energizing and informative year. As we go our separate ways over the summer to various AAUP conferences, we look forward to another academic year of engagement and vigilance.

Chapter website:

http://www.iwu.edu/~iwuaaup

On Illinois Wesleyan University's Health Insurance Premiums

By Joerg Tiede

For an institution that lists "social justice" in its mission statement, Illinois Wesleyan University's health insurance premiums can hardly be considered a prime example of living up to our mission. The primary problem of our health insurance premium system is the fact that it is so regressive: the premiums are not based on income. Simply put, the lowest paid employee at Illinois Wesleyan University and the highest paid employee both pay the same amount to insure their families even though their incomes may differ by as much as a factor of ten. Furthermore, in the last several years, raises, when we received any, were in the form of percentage raises only, giving larger raises in absolute dollars to those who make the most money. At the same time, health insurance premiums for each of the three tiers were raised by the *same amount* for all employees, which in some years exceeded the amount of raises received by the lowest-paid employees. I, for one, fail to see how such a system is consistent with the university's commitment to social justice.

The Health Care Advocacy Committee (HCAC) considered the premium structure in 2008-09 and sought comparative data on premium structures at peer institutions. Its report noted that "[r]esearch into the structure of health insurance contributions at peer institutions found that the majority of our peers use different categories, sometimes broken down by salary, to determine the cost of health insurance contributions made by employees." Half of the eight peer institutions that were considered by HCAC in 2008-09 either used salary bands to determine health insurance premiums or used a percentage of income as the premium. Both Illinois State University and the University of Illinois base health insurance premiums on income. HCAC reported in 2008-09 that its need to focus on the retiree health insurance issue made it impossible to consider the premium structure at that point. Three years later, the premium structure remains unchanged. It is my understanding that HCAC was informed that changes in federal health care legislation make it difficult to introduce significant changes in health insurance premiums. If such changes are in fact so difficult to make, given the federal legislation, the university should seek out a consultant to help restructure the premium structure to make it fairer. The fact that the university was willing to engage a consultant to find a way to replace our retiree health insurance benefit with "notional funds" makes me wonder why the administration hasn't made a similar commitment to address this failure to live up to the university's stated mission. It is past time to change the premium structure to make it more just.

Since leaving HCAC, I have repeatedly inquired of President Wilson and of the co-chairs of HCAC about the status of the premium structure. While President Wilson has at times expressed support in principle to changing the premium structure based on income, he responded to my most recent inquiry by noting that he had not received any inquiries by staff on the premium structure for a then-upcoming all-staff meeting, and thus, that it perhaps is not a priority for other members of the campus community. I would like to encourage those of you who believe that the premium structure ought to be made more socially just to e-mail the president at president@iwu.edu.

Joining the AAUP:

http://www.aaup.org

What Is Shared Governance Anyway?

By Greg Scholtz, Director, Department of Academic Freedom, Tenure, and Shared Governance, National AAUP.

Shared governance is an ideal to which many seem eager to express allegiance. In fact, shared governance is invoked almost as frequently by administrators and administrator-dominated organizations such as the regional accrediting commissions as it is by faculty and faculty groups such as the AAUP. As with many catchphrases, however, shared governance apparently means different things to different people.

All too often shared governance is used to convey the idea that a lot of conversation ought to take place within and among various campus groups—board, administration, faculty, staff, students, etc.—before the people in power make the final decision. This conception might be labeled the "stakeholder" version of shared governance. All the stakeholders should have a place at the table; everybody, within reason, should be consulted. Once people have talked things over, those in charge make the final decision, presumably after having given serious consideration to the full range of opinions and recommendations. Because "input" is sought and wide communication takes place, governance is said to be shared.

This understanding of shared governance incorporates two suppositions: (1) when it comes to important issues, final decision-making power belongs to the president, and (2) all subordinate campus constituents are pretty much equal, regardless of function and expertise (the insidious implication of the term "stakeholder").

This brand of shared governance, which resembles corporate quality-improvement programs like Total Quality Management (TQM), is certainly preferable to tyranny or dictatorship. In fact, on many campuses—especially those on which presidents routinely make decisions without consulting anybody—the implementation of the stakeholder understanding of shared governance would constitute a great leap forward.

Nevertheless, the stakeholder notion of shared governance falls well short of the classic conception articulated in the 1966 Statement on Government of Colleges and Universities—the urtext of academic governance. (The full statement is available at http://www.aaup.org/AAUP/pubsres/policydocs/governancestatement.htm.) Jointly formulated by the Association of Governing Boards of American Colleges and Universities (AGB), the American Council on Education (ACE), and the AAUP, the Statement on Government conveys a more sophisticated—and collegial—understanding of academic shared governance.

Even though the Statement on Government recognizes that final institutional authority resides ultimately in the governing board and that the board entrusts day-to-day administration to the president, it does not conceive of the college or university in starkly hierarchical terms—as a power pyramid with the president and board situated at the apex. On the contrary, it portrays the well-run institution as one in which board and president delegate decision-making power to the faculty.

What chiefly distinguishes the classic understanding of shared governance from the stakeholder variety is the idea that the faculty not only possess the right to be heard in institutional decision-making; they actually possess "primary responsibility"—or authority—for reaching decisions in their areas of expertise, namely, "curriculum, subject matter and methods of instruction, research, faculty status, and those aspects of student life which relate to the educational process."

The delegation of primary responsibility to faculty in academic matters is founded upon the assumption that faculty are not merely employees, but professionals with special training and knowledge, and thus distinctly qualified to exercise decision-making authority in their areas of expertise. "Decisions not to reappoint, promotions, the granting of tenure, and dismissal," for example, are the "primary responsibility of the faculty" because the faculty's "judgment is central to general educational policy" and because "scholars in a particular field or activity have the chief competence for judging the work of their colleagues."

While the stakeholder conception of shared governance affords equal weight in all realms of decision making to every voice save that of the president, the classic conception of shared governance grants some voices more weight than others, depending on the type of decision. Thus, even though the president and board may possess final authority, the Statement on Government asserts that they should

routinely concur with faculty recommendations made in areas of faculty responsibility and that they should reject faculty decisions in those areas only in "rare instances and for compelling reasons which should be stated in detail." In short, when it comes to academic matters, a faculty decision should normally be the final decision.

Primary responsibility also implies that faculty enjoy a certain degree of decision-making autonomy in their areas of expertise—in other words, that the administration maintains a hands-off policy when the faculty are developing recommendations in the areas of curriculum, academic policy, and appointment, reappointment, tenure, and promotion.

By assigning primary authority in educational matters to the faculty, genuine shared governance, as articulated in the Statement on Government, promotes and sustains academic excellence. It doesn't take a doctorate in higher education to figure out why. In the plain words of one of the twentieth century's great university presidents, "we get the best results in education and research if we leave their management to people who know something about them" (Robert Maynard Hutchins, Higher Learning in America, Yale, 1936, p. 21).

Student Forum on Tenure

By Meghan Burke

On Wednesday, February 29, representatives from our chapter held a Student Forum on Tenure. While the forum was not well attended, the students who did come were engaged with the issues surrounding tenure, and came away with a better understanding of the value of tenure and the realities of university life. I believe it is well worth our time to consider further student outreach on these matters.

The impetus for the session was last spring, when I helped to facilitate a Senior Sound-Off on diversity matters. That session was valuable for informing the work surrounding diversity issues on campus, but I was surprised that tenure came up at all during that session, and that it was so deeply despised by the students in that room. Concerned, and inspired by Cary Nelson's recent visit to campus and some of his writings about communicating the value of tenure for students and parents, I approached our chapter about doing some kind of student outreach. In the fall, representatives from our chapter went to the Student Senate, which seemed eager for a forum on the issue, and voiced many of the same questions and concerns that I heard at the Senior Sound-Off.

The Argus also ran an article prior to the forum, which we hoped would generate interest. Although it contained some inaccuracies and was significantly edited down in scope, it also speaks to student interest in this issue. My hope is that the poor attendance at the forum was a matter of poor timing and waning student energy before spring break. I believe we should consider another similar event in the future.

That said, I believe we should all consider ways beyond event programming that we can communicate the value of tenure to students and educate them about university life. One fantastic opportunity, in my opinion, is during course evaluation time. Students often say that they fear their evaluations mean nothing once a professor has earned tenure. Taking a moment to convey to students the value we place in course evaluations and the ways we use them beyond the process of earning tenure could go a long way toward helping students feel invested in the process. It also provides a fantastic opportunity to educate them the value of tenure in protecting academic freedom, and how that positively impacts both their education and their student life.

Many of us fear that tenure will continue to come under attack in the coming years. Helping student realize the value of tenure at our institution and in their education will be critical in that fight. While student forums may be one avenue to engage students on this issue, I believe we can all find ways to reach students and empower them to be advocates on this issue. If nothing else, I strongly believe that in better understanding this issue, and understanding the value we do place on things like course evaluations, they will become further invested in their own education.