

Becky Hawbaker  
Fall Faculty Meeting 2019

I was volunteering at the Oktoberfest on College Hill on Saturday, checking IDs and serving beer, and had the strange realization that a baby born on my first day on faculty here at UNI is now old enough to legally drink. Certainly others have been here longer, but this long enough to have seen quite a lot here at UNI, both highs and lows, four of UNI's eleven presidents, six of the ten College of Education's Deans, enrollment highs and lows, the troubles of 2012 and censure by the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) to today when AAUP has invited us to share our collaboration and shared governance successes at its summer institute and featured our chapter and university in its publication, *Academe*.

I am Becky Hawbaker from the Department of Teaching, and this is my second year as President of United Faculty. I serve you with the incredible support and talents of our Vice President extraordinaire, Carissa Froyum, and outstanding team of union leaders in every college. Thank you also to all those who serve on the UF EB and our dedicated department liaisons across campus. UF is currently your certified collective bargaining agent, thanks to your resounding recertification vote last fall. Your overwhelming support allowed us to bargain a fair salary raise for the next two years, but even more importantly it gave us the momentum and power to continue to advocate for you, to help create good policies, to find good solutions for individual faculty in need, and to stand in solidarity with other faculty leaders for the common good.

As I've said before, Carissa and I chose to serve as UF leaders to make UNI a better place for our faculty and their families. Our philosophy is to be problem-solvers. We are partners and collaborators but also fierce advocates for faculty. Our job is to ensure that all remember that faculty working conditions are student learning conditions, that the core mission of this university is rooted in faculty labor, and that the university works because we do.

We appreciate the strong relationship we have built with UNI administration and with other faculty leaders like Barbara and Jim and those who serve with us on important working teams such as Faculty Handbook Committee, University Benefits Committee, University Senate, and other bodies. Together we have accomplished important work which has helped me to see an important truth, and from the sound of the remarks of Barbara, Provost Wohlpart, and President Nook, I am not the only one who sees and embraces this truth. What we have experienced through processes like the Faculty Handbook creation and revision is that shared, participatory governance is not just an important ideal, but a critical precondition to good government and good policy. When we can:

- raise honest objections (even strenuously),
- truly listen to each other and willingly consider other perspectives,
- resist an urge to feel offended or insulted,
- commit to finding consensus whenever possible while also committing to being flexible enough in our stances that **whenever possible is always**,

- then we achieve outcomes that are best for everyone and what is best for the mission of our university.

So yes, compared to 2012, I would certainly consider this one of our higher points in shared governance but still far from perfect. What do I mean by that?

- There are still pockets within the university where I don't see shared governance embraced in the way I've described and experienced. COE: course releases and stipends for additional duties were cut without consultation the day before classes started.
- Processes that were collaboratively determined with what the Provost just called noble intent such as our new evaluation system require new learning, development, and vigilance to ensure that they do not sabotage the intent of a fair and equitable system that supports our work to become better.
- Key issues such as the General Education Revision are now reaching that rubber meets the road, devil in the details stage, that could still put at risk the quality liberal arts education Barbara described, and could still put faculty jobs in jeopardy.
- Finally, we are always just one change in administration away from a return to the lows of shared governance. When Carissa and I go to the AAUP Summer Institute, we talk to union colleagues from all over the nation and hear about institutions and unions that are doing very well, but also some horror stories that remind us that of challenges and threats we could face in the future.

Specifically, we spent time with our union brothers and sisters from Wright State, where faculty learned that "the moral depths our administration will sink has no bottom." Corruption brought millions in fines for a visa scandal and illegal payments to lobbyists and real estate deals, millions lost on a failed presidential debate boondoggle, all followed by a million-dollar failed rebranding campaign. Their administration sought to solve the resulting budget crisis on the backs of faculty, insisting on no raise, the elimination of tenure, cuts to health care, unlimited furlough days, elimination of summer teaching rights, and imposition of a new subjective merit system.

What is the check on that kind of abuse? Solidarity. Just as we found in 2012. Faculty solidarity, solidarity with students, solidarity with the AAUP, and other chapters. Wright State faculty went on strike for twenty days in the middle of last winter's polar vortex. More than 70% of faculty honored the strike, sacrificing more than 2 million in wages. AAUP was with Wright State and chapters from all over the country, including our own contributed financially to their strike fund. Solidarity ultimately won the day at Wright State. We must continue to build our own solidarity here at UNI, and that is why United Faculty is launching a new membership drive. Membership forms are at the tables outside the doors, and our department liaisons and other union leaders will be visiting with you soon about joining. Nearly 90% of you voted yes to choose us as your collective bargaining agent, so we know you support our work. Now we ask you to put your dues behind your beliefs.

## **VOTING RIGHTS**

The United Faculty Executive Board includes eleven members elected by the membership as a whole or by specific colleges, including a representative for contingent faculty (Robert Earle). Last year we unanimously passed a motion to support the expansion of voting rights to contingent faculty. For UF, the status quo on voting rights is not an option, and we respect the work of the voting rights committee and its recommendation concerning how far to expand and with what limits. In 2012 AAUP took the stand that faculty who are contingent should be afforded responsibilities and opportunities in shared governance and that to participate in governance, they must have voting and their academic freedom must be protected.

**I'll end** by congratulating all of those who are being honored with an award today and adding a few United Faculty Award Recipients to the list to honor today.

-Recognize those honored at the April UF Faculty Appreciation Dinner:

UF Members of the Year: Phil Fass (Art) and Craig VanSandt (Management)

UF Emerging Leader Award: Angela Waseskuk (Art)

UF Department Liaison of the Year: Catherine Miller (Mathematics, CHAS)

UF Faculty Administrator of the Year: John Vallentine and Brenda Bass