



UNITED FACULTY of UW – Eau Claire

AFT Local 6481

A Union of Professionals

April 9, 2013

To: UF-UWEC (AFT Local #6481) Membership
(cc: All faculty and Academic Staff)

From: Jim Phillips, Professor of Chemistry & UF-UWEC President

Re: 2103 Annual President's Report

Colleagues,

Greetings: Jim Phillips here, Professor of Chemistry and new president of UF-UWEC (AFT local #6481), a job that I earned via a “field promotion” after serving a one-year term as VP. According to the constitution of this organization, the President is to write an annual report to membership, and as such, I will use this opportunity to update you with regard to the status of the organization, note our accomplishments from the past year, and preview our forthcoming agenda. First off, let me express my gratitude to past president Alex Smith, who served UF-UWEC quite effectively in the face of many additional demands on his time.

Furthermore, let me tell you why I am willing to take on this role and why I think membership in AFT Local #6481 is essential at this point in time, even after the passing of WI Act 10. Above all else, I note that the union has not been made “illegal”, we have simply lost the mandate that says the state must bargain with us. Even without such a mandate, we can and *will* be working with shared governance, and *will* engage in a dialogue with the UWEC administration and other entities that affect our workplace (*e.g.*, local legislators). For sure, other locals in the UW system are having impact, improving workplace relations, and at UWSP, the faculty union has even been able to coax an anti-compression pay package out of the administration. The bottom line is simple, the only people who are going to put the needs of faculty and academic staff at the top of the priority list, are faculty and academic staff. If we band together in this organization, the common voice of all professionals who directly interact with students *will* be heard. Throughout history, there has been only one effective way to stand up to exploitation in the workplace, and that is to unite and work collectively toward improvements. Above all else, by joining AFT we are taking a stand for public education, at a time when powerful forces are at work to dismantle it. So, if you are a member, thank you for your commitment, and please consider an expanded service role. If not, please consider joining us: the larger our numbers, the more impact we have, and you will want your input to shape the change we make.

Status: Currently our membership rate is about 15%, which is low. In part this reflects a response to WI Act 10, but on the positive side, our membership pool has expanded to include our academic staff colleagues – both teaching and non-teaching. We have been slow to engage this membership pool, but doing so is a top priority. As such, we need to consider a name change and a redesign of the executive board to ensure these membership constituencies are represented in our leadership structure.

In terms of finances, we are currently very sound, with a balance of \$2,294.26 (as of 4/1/13).

Accomplishments: Throughout the past year, we have been involved with key issues that affect membership, and we have had an impact. Examples of this include:

- We surveyed membership last spring, and the executive board presented results to Provost Kleine at an “Academic Affairs Open House”. At that event we presented the near-unanimous opposition to the proposed breakup of the College of Arts and Sciences. The Provost also expressed verbal support for a tuition waiver/remission benefit for spouses and children during this meeting.



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- The results of that survey also enabled us to ensure that key administrator performance reviews were conducted on schedule.
- We wrote a memo to the Provost clarifying our priorities for the “Remedy of Group Equity” plan, most of which were overlooked, but those shortcomings may be addressed in a follow-up plan. I do note that this year’s play plan, though perhaps meager in scale, is addressing overlooked merit ratings and equity.
- Just recently, we wrote Chancellor Bousquet a letter opposing the process that would ultimately “outsource” Student Health Services. This letter was noted in his decision to slow the process.

Things to look forward to:

- A new survey: Members will receive an email with a link to an issue & communications survey. Please fill that out and feel free to share the link with your colleagues. We encourage even non-members to take the survey – our role is to support all faculty and academic staff. Also sharing the survey link is a way to inform your non-member colleagues as to what we are working on, and encourage their membership.
- A revitalized “Organizing Committee”: in the very near term, you will see AFT members visiting you and your colleagues. We are not only seeking new (and “renewed”) members, but are also soliciting feedback as to what our priorities should be for the coming year – our role is to support all faculty and academic staff. They will also be looking for people to fill open officer positions (*see below*).
- Constitutional changes: We will need to make changes to the constitution in the very near term to accommodate representatives from non-teaching academic staff on the executive council, and make our election process a bit less cumbersome (especially for replacing executive board members to do not complete their terms). We hope to approve these by the end of the term.
- Membership meeting: We will have a meeting near the end of the term (and we will feed attendees), to above all else, get to know each other better, but also collect feedback on issues/agenda, and approve those constitutional changes. I look forward to seeing you I face-to-face.
- The future: We will spend summer and fall working on many issues, such as meeting with HR to discuss uniform health insurance deductions for 9-month employees, formulating and stating a case for a family tuition waiver benefit, and continuing to work toward a long-term goal of a compensation package to address pay inequity and compression. The goal here is to establish *our* collective priorities, and relay these to the compensation committee as well as the UWEC administration through a constructive dialog.

What you can do: The biggest challenge at this point is going to be finding the individuals willing to put a bit of extra effort towards this organization by serving as an executive board member. We need people willing to serve as: Vice President, Secretary, and Library Representative, as well as yet-to-be-determined representatives from non-teaching academic staff. In meantime, talk to your colleagues about AFT, encourage membership and service on the executive council, and send any ideas you have to me or other executive board members (my personal e-mail is: jim.jpmusic@gmail.com).

In Solidarity,