



A Union of Professionals

## UNITED FACULTY and ACADEMIC STAFF of UWEC

AFT Local 6481

United Faculty



# WE ARE IN THIS TOGETHER: A Union Update

I recently welcomed a former SOC 101 student—an Honors student—to my office as a new Sociology major. At our first meeting, after I welcomed her to the department, she confessed that she loved both her major and her minor and wasn't sure which would be a better major for her. I did my best to explain the strengths of each program and suggested she think about which sounded more like what she wanted to do with her future. She thanked me for my time and left; a few weeks later, she switched her Sociology major to a Sociology minor. I was sad for myself because I was looking forward to working with her, and I was sad for my department because we had lost a fantastic student. But I was happy for her because I knew I had helped her make the best decision for her.

**In the corporate world, I would have been fired for this.** In the private market, you can't risk talking about the virtues of a competitor because it could cost you a great client or customer. But our university isn't a private corporation, our students aren't customers, and our colleagues aren't competitors. **Higher education is a public good, not a private good. It works best when we support each other, when we put the best interests of our students ahead of our own.** After all, we're not in this to make a profit; we are in it to help our students achieve to their fullest potential, and thus to build the future of our society. If we ever lose this—if we ever start treating each other as competitors and treating our students like customers—our university will be in great danger of failing those who put their trust in us.

Unfortunately, the danger is very real. Can departments that have received warning letters because of their standing in the Academic Master Plan afford to put their students' best interests ahead of their department's? Can I afford to see my colleagues as anything but competitors when there is only so much merit pay to go around, or when only a fixed percentage of faculty can "exceed expectations" in post-tenure review? Can I afford to encourage students to take courses in other departments when the future of my department depends on getting permission to hire?

This situation stems from recent changes. In the last seven years, the UW System has been transformed:

- In 2011, **the rights of UW System faculty and staff to collectively bargain were eliminated** and our take-home pay was cut by thousands of dollars.
- In 2015, the role of **shared governance was reduced to an "advisory-only" function**, giving Chancellors the power to overturn policies and recommendations unilaterally.
- In 2016, the Board of Regents adopted a **new tenure policy that allows Chancellors to close whole departments and lay off all employees, tenured or not, for the sake of "program prioritization."** The mandated post-tenure review policy gives administrators unprecedented power to overturn the judgments of Department Personnel Committees.

### Union Calendar Spring 2018

**Labor Film Series:** All films free, open to the public, 7:30 p.m., Woodland Theater.

--Feb. 14: *Pride*—UK gay activists in the 1984 mineworkers' strike.

--March 14: *CARE*—Documentary on home elder care.

--April 4: *Wisconsin Uprising*—2011 battle over collective bargaining.

**Spring Membership Meeting:** Thursday, March 29, 4:00-5:30 (location TBA)

**End of Semester Happy Hour:** last week of classes (TBA)



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- In 2017, the Board of Regents **took control of the Chancellor Search and Screen Process** away from local campuses by opening the job to candidates without terminal degrees and limiting the number of campus constituents who could serve on the committee to five (out of ten).

What do all of these changes have in common? **They are designed to minimize workers' voices, to reduce the transparency and accountability of administrators, and to give Chancellors the powers of a corporate CEO.** In addition, intentionally or unintentionally, **they have pitted us against one another in a win-lose battle over scarce resources. More than ever, we are fighting each other for jobs, majors, and raises, which are allocated by spreadsheets, formulas, and "accountability matrixes."**

The United Faculty and Academic Staff of UW-Eau Claire is dedicated to resisting this corporate make-over and working to put students first. **We want to fight for the future of higher education as a public good, and we believe that the human element—students, staff, and faculty—must be cherished and preserved.** We are in this together. This semester, we are going to try to talk to as many of our academic staff and faculty colleagues as we can to find out how best to advocate for the future of UW-Eau Claire. In particular, we want to know about three big issues:

- The academic master plan—What programs on warning need to be saved, and how can we ensure that the plan does not pit departments against each other?
- The UWEC-UWBC restructuring—What concerns do staff and faculty have about the change that is being imposed upon us and how our UWBC colleagues will be affected?
- Post-tenure review—Whose DPC recommendations are being overturned, and how can we ensure that the review process is fair to faculty?

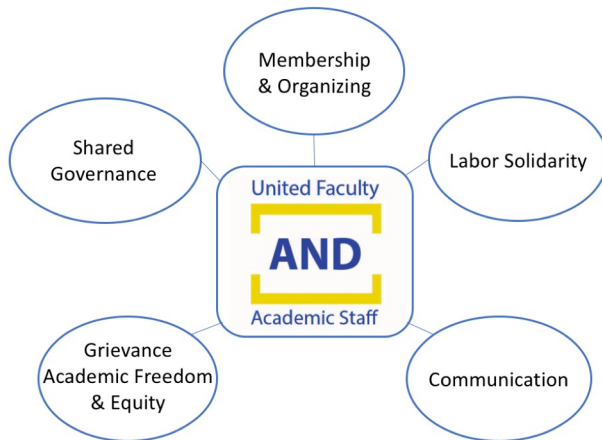
If you don't hear from us soon, we hope to hear from you.

In solidarity,

Peter Hart-Brinson

UFAS-UWEC President

Associate Professor of Sociology & Communication/Journalism



**Yes! I want to join the fight for accountable, democratic, public higher education at UWEC.**

Join as a member: Contribute time and money to restoring shared governance, fighting for students, and joining the national effort to revitalize public higher education.

Join as a friend: Get added to our email list and stay informed about opportunities to get involved.

Join a working group: All members and friends are invited to commit their time and energy to building a stronger university. (working groups at left)

Contact us: [ufasuwec@gmail.com](mailto:ufasuwec@gmail.com)