

AAUP OAKLAND UPDATE

JANUARY 6, 2010

To keep our members better informed, the AAUP is now posting the Executive Committee meeting minutes at our website. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact Scott Barns or any of the members of the Executive Committee.

On-Going Problems Accessing Information

The AAUP Executive Committee is still battling for information from the administration. In stark contrast to Gary Russi's November 19 pledge to provide greater transparency, university lawyers continue to deny access to public documents and fight FOIA requests in court. Upon the advice of our lawyers, we gave notice that we would file an Unfair Labor Practice complaint if certain information were not immediately forthcoming. In response, the administration has promised that requested material will be provided, some as early as the end of the week of January 4. These two controversies involve information critical to understanding the university's budgetary policies.

The LCME accreditation material regarding the School of Medicine (SOM): Despite President Russi's promise to make this available in Kresge Library, the material remains secret. The university's lawyer continues to argue in court that the documentation is private and cannot be released.

Why this is important: Conflicting statements continue to circulate about key issues concerning the SOM; we believe that the administration will be bound by what it promises the LCME and so these statements will be the most accurate. It is critical to know the faculty status of Beaumont doctors, the mechanisms for hiring and review of SOM faculty, the impact of the SOM on funding for other units, and Oakland University's financial responsibility for the day-to-day costs of the SOM. Only when we know the answers to these questions will we understand the impact of the SOM on university planning.

Athletic Department Salaries: During the negotiations last summer, the AAUP sought to verify a rumor that Athletic Department personnel had received pay raises immediately before a salary freeze was imposed on non-represented employees. When we requested salary information, we were denied an explanation. We subsequently filed a FOIA claim. The administration has steadfastly declined to provide the requested information, but has promised that it will be available at the end of this week.

Why this is important: Michigan law requires that the salaries of public employees be made public; refusing to provide information regarding pay increases conflicts with state law and contravenes the administration's commitment to transparency. If the administration did give Athletic Department personnel raises, this would violate the spirit of the salary freeze and demonstrate bad faith during the negotiations with the contract employees.

We believe it is necessary to defend the principle of transparency and shared governance. If we do not act quickly, we will be legally prevented from using the courts to redress these issues. If you would like to comment on this decision, please contact Scott Barns.