

President's Report

Prepared for the PSU-AAUP Members Meeting

Monday, Oct 29, 2018, 3:30-4:30 PM

Dear PSU-AAUP Members:

New CBA!

As you are probably aware, after nearly a year and a half of bargaining, followed by a successful ratification vote on June 27, 2018, our first collective bargaining agreement (CBA) went into effect on July 1, 2018. Thanks to the efforts of many of our members on Contract Research Committees, the Negotiating Team, and the Contract Ratification Team, we now have legally binding clarification and assurance of many policies that will positively affect our work, our careers, our students, and our university!

Our new CBA, which can be accessed at the link below, contains numerous policies, including those on workload, shared governance, the grievance process, and professional development, that I believe are an improvement over previous, often unwritten, unenforced, or inequitable policies. I strongly encourage each of you to bookmark this link, take the time to review the contract, and let me know if you have an questions or thoughts of how to improve it in the next round of negotiations:

<https://plymouthaaupdotorg.files.wordpress.com/2018/06/contract-highlights.pdf>

Changes to Executive Committee

Due to sabbatical leaves and a resignation, the composition of the Executive Committee (EC) has changed in the past few months. I am pleased to announce that Evelyn Stiller accepted an appointment to serve as the vice president and Kristina Lind accepted an appointment to serve as member-at-large until the next round of regular elections. In addition, Evelyn Stiller agreed to serve as the chair of the Communications Committee. The current Executive Committee are:

- President: Jeremiah Duncan
- Vice President: Evelyn Stiller (*also serving as Communications Chair*)
- Treasurer: John Kulig
- Secretary: Anne Jung-Matthews
- Chief Negotiator: Scott Coykendall
- Member-at-Large: Chris Chabot
- Member-at-Large: Kristian Lind
- Past President: Elliott Gruner

The EC meets regularly on the 2nd Wednesday of the month. If you have any questions about the running of the PSU-AAUP, please contact one of the EC members listed above.

AAUP Summer Institute

This past July 19 – 22, Jeremiah Duncan, Scott Coykendall, and Nick Sevigny attended the annual AAUP Summer Institute, which was conveniently hosted at UNH in Durham, NH. The Institute is a fantastic opportunity for union leadership to receive training, learn best practices in running a local AAUP bargaining unit, meet with representatives of the national AAUP, and make connections with other AAUP chapters. I personally attended sessions on recent legal cases involving unions and academic freedom, the undue influences of private donors on public universities, and union leadership. The lessons I learned and connections made at the Institute have already been invaluable to me, and I strongly encourage PSU-AAUP leaders in the future to attend.

NH Public Faculty United

With the opportunity of the AAUP Summer Institute being held in New Hampshire this year, leaders of several of the faculty unions from USNH system schools met during the Institute. From this initial meeting, we decided to develop more formal relationships between our unions for the purpose of supporting one another, sharing resources and information, and working together on common issues. It was also decided that the fledgling “NH Public Faculty United” would hold its first official meeting to coincide with the next USNH Board of Trustees meeting, Oct 26 at Plymouth State University. I am happy to announce that the PSU-AAUP hosted the first meeting of the coalition, and that Scott Coykendall has volunteered to take the initiative on organizing PSU-AAUP’s involvement in the Coalition. Representatives attended from almost every unionized faculty unit from UNH, Keene State College, Plymouth State University, and the community colleges system. We discussed many common issues, including challenges to our faculty governance systems, budgetary issues, impacts of system-wide policies, and collective bargaining processes. We also began brainstorming about actions we could collectively take to advocate for increased state funding for higher education. We agreed to continue working together, setting meeting dates to coincide in both time and place with upcoming BOT meetings: Jan 18, 2019 at Keene State, April 26 at UNH, and June 28 at Granite State College.

Grievance Committee and Grievance Updates

I am pleased to announce that our PSU-AAUP Grievance Committee was officially formed in September, 2018. Appointed members of this committee include:

- Jonathan Santore (co-chair, 2-year appointment)
- Linda Carrier (co-chair, initial 1-year appointment)
- Whitney Howarth (2 year appointment)
- Sam Miller (initial 1-year appointment)

The committee has already begun work to establish the framework by which grievances will be filed and handled. Plans are underway to update our PSU-AAUP website (<https://plymouth-aaup.org/>) to include an FAQ and forms needed to initiate a grievance. For now, if you have any questions about the

grievance process, you believe you may need to file a grievance, or you need any union representation in a potential disciplinary case, please contact one of the members of the Grievance Committee above.

On the subject of grievances, I am sure that many of you are familiar with the disciplinary actions taken against three PSU faculty members in August as part of the fallout from the publicized case of the State of New Hampshire v. Kristie Torbick. With the support of our respective ECs, I and the president of the teaching lecturers union (SEA/SEIU Chapter 30) published a response to the administration's actions in a post to our blog on August 29, 2018 (<https://plymouth-aaup.org/2018/08/29/psu-aaup-sea-seiu-chapter-30-statement-on-academic-freedom-and-discipline-of-faculty-members-in-relation-to-the-case-of-the-state-of-new-hampshire-v-kristie-torbick/>). Whether you agree with the actions and words of these faculty members, I hope you will agree that the administration must abide by our CBA's legally binding provisions, including most pertinently Article 17, outlining the due process by which faculty may be disciplined, and that they must uphold the legal rights of our members, including our rights of academic freedom, as outlined in Article 2 of our CBA. I and the members of the Executive Committee strongly believe the administration violated these provisions of our contract in their handling of the situation and subsequent sanctioning of one of our bargaining unit members. As such, and with respect to the privacy of the member involved, the PSU-AAUP has initiated an informal grievance process on its own behalf, as we believe it is of the utmost importance to hold the administration responsible for keeping their part of our CBA. All we are seeking at this point is an admission that they did not follow the steps of the disciplinary process outlined in the CBA and that they will do so in any and all disciplinary cases in the future. I have had an initial meeting with Provost Dorff, in follow up to my initial request to begin the informal process. The next step is for the Provost Dorff to draft a response. For the time being, we remain hopeful that we can resolve the grievance at the informal stage.

Changes to Constitution and Bylaws

At the members meeting on Oct 29, I, on behalf of the EC, will be presenting motions to amend our constitution and bylaws. To summarize these changes:

- A new, standing Membership Action Committee will be created, whose chair will have a non-voting position on the EC. This action will essentially convert the ad-hoc Contract Action Team into a standing committee that is tasked with administering our membership database, running membership drives, and organizing any membership actions, such as actions in support of contract bargaining.
- The duties of the Grievance Committee (already established in the bylaws) will be clarified, and the chair of the committee shall be given a voting position on the EC.

Please be sure to attend the meeting to vote on these changes, which require a two-thirds vote of those in attendance.

Setting Dues and Membership Drive

At our Oct 29 meeting, I, on behalf of the EC, will be presenting a motion to set our dues and begin collecting them locally. This is the last official step in becoming a full collective bargaining chapter of the AAUP. Up to this point, membership and dues have been handled at the national level, but subsequent to an affirmative vote, we will begin handling these locally. As such, we will immediately begin a drive to officially sign members at the local level and collect dues from them. Dues can be deducted by HR directly from our paychecks, and we strongly encourage everybody to select this option, as it will greatly facilitate the logistics of dues collection and chapter management. Those at the meeting will be asked to sign membership cards and authorizations for dues deduction immediately following the vote. If you are not able to attend or do not sign a card at the meeting, please expect that a member of the Membership Action Committee will be visiting you soon to encourage you to sign!

Overloads and paycheck issues

I have received numerous reports from members that they have not received payroll letters detailing overload or other pay, and thus have subsequently not been paid for anything other than their regular salary. The Office of Administrative Affairs recently sent out an email stating that they are aware of the situation and are working to get the letters out as quickly as they can, and I can attest that some people have begun receiving these letters. Some members have asked whether the delay in getting these letters out might be a grievable violation of our contract. As it seems faculty have begun to receive their letters, I am advising patience on this issue before we head down that path. Nonetheless, I would appreciate hearing from our members, if these letters are still not out within the next couple weeks.

HR Sessions on Benefits

As I forwarded in a recent email, HR has arranged some sessions for members of our bargaining unit to learn more about the changes to our health care benefits. These sessions are being hosted by HR for tenure-track professors specifically, as our health benefits change from last year as a result of our new CBA (other faculty and staff had these medical plans last year). These sessions will take place Monday, October 29, 2:00pm – 3:00pm and Tuesday, November 6, 3:00 - 4:00 pm in HUB 109. Please thank Caryn Ines and her staff in HR for arranging these sessions.

New USNH Policy on “Amorous Relationships”

The USNH Human Resources office has recently announced a new policy on “Consensual Amorous Relationships.” Some information on this can be found at:

<https://www.unh.edu/affirmativeaction/policies-procedures>

However, as of the time of writing this report, the link to the actual policy does not work, but I believe it is/will be the same as outlined in 3.6 here: <https://www.usnh.edu/policy/usy/v-personnel-policies/d-employee-relations>

I was informed by HR that such a policy was forthcoming a few weeks ago, and I requested that the policy be taken to our Faculty Welfare Committee for feedback. This is a new development that PSU-AAUP will be reviewing to ensure the new policy and/or its implementation is not in conflict with our contract. I will update you as I learn more. In the meantime, I welcome your feedback, as we consider what response to make to this new policy.

Creation of a Teaching Award

I have made a request to the Executive Committee that the PSU-AAUP consider the creation of a teaching award to be overseen and awarded by the PSU-AAUP annually. We are still considering how best to do this, but it is initially my intention that this award would be for an outstanding, pre-tenure professor. I hope to formally announce the formation of the award and request for nominations by early Spring semester.

Officer Elections and Your Involvement in the Union

Although still a few months off, I would like to remind everybody that we will be holding elections for officers in the Spring semester, with their terms to begin on July 1, 2019. Please be considering whether you would like to run for an office! In addition, there are always ways for members to become more involved, including serving on the Membership Action Committee or Communications Committee. If you have any interest in serving your union, please let me know.

On a personal note, it has been an extremely busy and rocky start to the semester, but I continue to find hope and solace in the work and community of our union. I am blessed and honored to work with wonderful, dedicated colleagues, and I continue to feel that the efforts we put into our union are among the most useful and effective of anything we do, outside of the time we spend with our students. As always, please feel free to contact me with any questions or concerns.

Finally, I end by saying a huge “congratulations!!” and “best of luck!!” to our members, who recently submitted their applications for tenure and/or promotion, as well as a hearty “welcome!” to our new members.

In solidarity,

--Jeremiah Duncan

President, Plymouth State University Chapter of the American Association of University Professors (PSU-AAUP)