

President's Report

Prepared for the PSU-AAUP Members Meeting

Thursday, October 31, 2019, 3:30 – 5:00 PM

HUB Hage Room

Dear PSU-AAUP Members:

As our CBA went into effect on July 1, 2018 and is set to expire June 30, 2020, we are almost half-way through the life of our current contract. Overwhelmingly, we have found this to be a significant positive step toward ensuring equity and transparency across campus and in ensuring a strong faculty voice in the shared governance of our university. I am frequently contacted by members with questions about various policies, and more often than not, I am able to point to specific articles in our CBA that spell out the policies in black and white. Occasionally we find areas where the contract needs a little more clarity, or we need to push for more favorable policies. Thus, we are already making plans for our next round of bargaining, which you be hearing more about in the near future.

Our contract has not only been incredibly helpful to us, but also to the administration, in setting out clear policies and guidelines. Obviously we have seen situations in which the administration neglected to consider our contract in making certain decisions, but I think it is worth pointing out that we only hear about situations when things have gone wrong; there are, of course, many other situations when things have gone right, and I am very grateful for the many ways in which our CBA has enabled “normal” daily operations.

As I look back over all that has happened since my last update for the April, 2019 Chapter Meeting, I note that we have made some progress on several of the issues I brought in that report, while others are still in process. These are discussed in more detail below.

One exciting thing to report, in case you missed it, our chapter was featured in an article in the May issue of *Academe* magazine, published by the AAUP! You can read it here:

<https://www.aaup.org/article/plymouth-state-university-aaup#.XNTIVkN7nbg>

As always, I must give huge thanks and credit to the members of the Executive Committee for all their work on the part of your union. There have been one or two changes since my last report, so for the record, the members of the Executive Committee are:

- President: Jeremiah Duncan (president@plymouth-aaup.org)
- Vice-President and Communications Chair: Evelyn Stiller
- Secretary: Anne Jung-Mathews
- Treasurer: Alice Pearman
- Executive Committee Members-at-Large: Megan Birch and Sean Collins
- Past president: Elliott Gruner
- Chief Negotiator: Scott Coykendall

- Chairs of Grievance Committee: Jonathan Santore and Linda Carrier (grievance@plymouth-aaup.org)
- Chair of Membership Action Committee: Nick Sevigny (membership@plymouth-aaup.org)

General contact / Communications: PSU-AAUP@plymouth-aaup.org

Planning for next round of bargaining

With our first contract set to end June 2021, we are beginning to make plans for our second round of negotiations for Fall 2020. To this end, we have reappointed Scott Coykendall as our Chief Negotiator, and by the end of this academic year, we anticipate the new Negotiating Team will be appointed, the research and development of proposals by Research Committees will be well underway, and the “Intent to Negotiate” will be filed with the Administration. If you are interested in being a part of the Negotiating Team or a Research Committee, please let me know.

If you have any issues that you would like to see brought up in the next round of negotiations, or if you have noticed any areas of the CBA that may need to be changed / clarified, please contact Scott Coykendall.

Membership

We recently reached the notable milestone of 70.6% of our bargaining unit being members of our union (113 of 160)!! The amount of support this shows is truly empowering and important, as we continue to work with the administration to implement our current CBA, as well as look forward to negotiating our next one. If you have colleagues that are not yet a members, I encourage you to speak with them about why you are a member and invite them to join! For questions about membership, please contact Nick Sevigny (nsevigney@plymouth.edu; membership@plymouth-aaup.org)

Did You Know?

Last semester, the Executive Committee sent out a series of emails entitle “Did You Know?” to all our colleagues in the bargaining unit. Our goal was to help educate our faculty on the many rights and benefits provided to us by our CBA. We would like to continue with these communications, albeit on a less regular schedule over the year. Please let me know if there are any other topics you would like to see us cover in these emails. For your reference, these emails are being archived on our website:

<https://plymouth-aaup.org/did-you-know/>

NHPFC

We have continued communications with the representatives of faculty unions from all of the New Hampshire public institutions of higher education through the New Hampshire Public Faculty Coalition. Most recently, Scott Coykendall and I met with the group at Keene State College on Friday, Oct 25.

Grievance

The Grievance Committee, co-chaired by Jonathan Santore and Linda Carrier, has continued to meet with faculty and attend meetings between faculty and the administration. If you have any questions about the grievance process, believe you may have a grievance, or need to request a PSU-AAUP representative accompany you to a meeting, please refer to the Grievance page of our website and/or the relevant “Did You Know?”:

- <https://plymouth-aaup.org/grievances/>
- <https://plymouthaaupdotorg.files.wordpress.com/2019/04/psu-aaup-dyk-unionrepresentationatmeetingsandweingartenrights.pdf>

If you or a colleague have a situation that may result in a grievance, we ask that you download and complete this form, then send it to the Grievance Committee using the email address grievance@plymouth-aaup.org

As you are no doubt aware, we filed two informal grievances with the Provost on Aug 30 concerned academic policy changes and course cap removals. You can find the texts of these grievances, as well as the responses, on our website:

- <https://plymouth-aaup.org/documents/>

We chose to consider the issue of the course cap removal to be resolved as a result of the Provost’s response. However, we did not feel the response concerning the academic policy changes was sufficient to resolve the informal grievance, so we filed a formal grievance on Sept 23.

- <https://plymouthaaupdotorg.files.wordpress.com/2019/10/formal-grievance-notification-form-academic-policy-changes-8-6-19-with-appendix.pdf>

To date, we have met with the President and received his response to the grievance. This response included the following notable items:

1. The President provided assurance that the “Administration will make every attempt to consult with faculty for areas covered in Article 9 of the CBA...”
2. The President conceded to our demand that members of the Administration should receive training on the contents of our CBA to prevent future violations
3. The President invited the PSU-AAUP to send a representative to the last 30 minutes of every Cabinet meeting to receive a summary update of the meeting

This is a quite recent development in this grievance, and I am still working with the Executive and Grievance Committees to consider whether this fully resolves the grievance. More information will be forthcoming in the near future.

Issues we have been working on

1. *Changes to review of applications for sabbatical*

As I hope you are aware, the Administration has signaled their intent to only fund 6 semester-long sabbaticals next year (AY 2020-21) due to financial restrictions, and to begin rejecting sabbatical applications that do not meet certain standards of quality. Article 14.1 of our CBA covers sabbatical leaves, and in particular, 14.1.1.2 covers the criteria for judging sabbatical applications.

The PSU-AAUP is strongly opposed to the rejection of sabbaticals based on either financial matters or whether the professor selects a semester vs year-long sabbatical. We believe firmly that our CBA does not allow the administration to do this, and we will use whatever resources are available to us to fight any such rejections of sabbatical applications.

On the other hand, we do acknowledge that our contract provides a means for the administration to reject sabbatical applications based on not meeting standards of quality. It is worth pointing out that the language in Article 14.1.1.2 was taken directly from our Faculty Handbook on the principle of codifying previously legally non-binding policies in said Handbook. Although the administration has rarely rejected sabbatical applications, it is in their power to do so.

As I mentioned in my previous President's report, the Administration approached the PSU-AAUP last semester about developing a more detailed list of standards for sabbatical applications. While we support such a notion in principle, and ad-hoc committee appointed to look at this determined that it would not be appropriate for the PSU-AAUP to develop such standards outside the confines of bargaining (<https://plymouthaaupdotorg.files.wordpress.com/2019/07/psu-aaup-sabbaticalcriteriaadhoccommitteereport.pdf>).

As I believe has been pointed out in the Faculty Meeting and in the Faculty Forum on this subject, the funding of sabbaticals is simply one of priority. Does the Administration prioritize the continued professional development, as well as the ability to recruit and retain faculty, or not? It is worth noting that the sabbaticals being applied for now will be funded next year, in next year's budget. Furthermore, by the Administration's own admission, it has never bothered to budget for sabbaticals in the past. This, in my opinion, is a grave error on the part of the Administration, and faculty, who have been planning to take sabbaticals next year, should not be punished as a result. The Administration has until the start of next fiscal year (July 1, 2020) to figure out how to budget for sabbaticals for the first time in our history, and in so doing, demonstrate to faculty the priority they put on us and on the promises they make to us.

2. *Compensation for overseeing research courses*

The unequal compensation for the teaching of credit-bearing research courses was an issue I brought up in my previous report, and one that we have continued to press the Administration on. The crux of the situation is Article 8.3.4.4.2 of the CBA:

Supervising undergraduate research and independent study is voluntary and will not be compensated.

In the past, some professors in some programs received compensation for overseeing research courses, while others in other programs did not. Although the Administration used the above-mentioned article to stop compensating these courses, it turned out that some professors in some programs were in fact compensated since the inception of our CBA.

I have very recently received an email from Associate Provost Ann McClellan stating that, starting with this semester, professors WILL be compensated for overseeing credit-bearing research courses! I would like to take this opportunity to publicly thank Associate Provost McClellan for her work on this matter, as it is my understanding she took the issue all the way up to the USNH legal office and argued on our behalf. I have asked her to send out an official announcement, clarifying a couple of details of this policy.

3. *Summer compensation*

You may remember that last semester I solicited from our members a list of the types of service-related activities they expected to be engaged in over the summer, as Articles 8.3.1.2.2 and 8.3.1.2.3 dictate that faculty should be compensated for work they do beyond their contracted time. This list can be found at the link below:

https://plymouthstate-my.sharepoint.com/:w:/g/personal/jsduncan_plymouth_edu/ERaGsluSSc9Cqk54NUWYULEB5j4Y3kOO1jRBBnpgFnzoLw?e=UpsbGi

This list was shared with the Administration, and it is my understanding that faculty generally were compensated, although I heard a number of complaints that this compensation was often delayed beyond the start of this Fall semester.

In order to get a better understanding of the compensation for summer work, the Executive Committee is putting together a survey. If you participated in any service-related work over the summer, please keep an eye out for the survey and take the time to respond.

4. *Rolling over professional development funds*

You may remember there were some issues relating to rolling over professional development funds at the end of the Spring semester. Particularly at issue was whether amounts less than the full \$800 would be rolled over. In the end, the Provost agreed to roll over partial amounts through his own budget. We have learned that 54 faculty requested their full amount to be rolled over, while only 4 had partial amounts requested. I know anecdotally that some of these requests for partial roll over were honored, although I am awaiting a response to data request to determine whether they all were.

As president of your union, I continue to be honored to serve you. With over 70% of our bargaining unit belonging to the PSU-AAUP, we are a strong and united voice for faculty, as well as the students and university that we serve. Thank you for your membership, and please feel free to contact me any time with feedback, suggestions, or questions. Please also remember that this is very much *your* union—its strength and success rely on members like you being involved and being vigilant. We are always looking for volunteers in areas such as communication, membership, grievance, and negotiations. Please reach out to me or one of the other members of the Executive Committee if you would like to be more involved.

In solidarity,

--Jeremiah Duncan

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