

THIS MESSAGE INTENDED ONLY FOR MEMBERS OF THE YSU-OEA



The Advocate

A Newsletter of the YSU-OEA

Fall 2020

President and 1st Vice President Joint Report

Rebecca Curnalia YSU-OEA President, and Susan Clutter Chief Negotiator and 1st VP,
rmcurnalia@ysu.edu and swclutter@ysu.edu

Reflecting and Moving Forward After the Strike

Overall, the strike was successful and has had a ripple effect in negotiations at other institutions across Ohio. As Beckey shared in an email earlier this semester, other Ohio colleges reported that our work stoppage helped other faculty negotiating teams put pressure on their administrations to roll back dramatic proposed cuts in their contracts. The struggle for fair contracts at other colleges and universities continues and other colleges and universities have reached out for insights about what worked for us. Susan spoke at the OEA Fall Representative Assembly on December 5 and shared the details of our organization, led by our successful Crisis Committee.

We are very proud of the many talents our faculty used to make this successful: planning picketing during COVID-19 both in-person and online, creating signs for picketing and the headquarters, helping with branding, and communicating our goals to the community. We had a group of faculty use their skills to serve the effort, and it was noticed across the state and can serve as a model for other faculty unions who face similar contract negotiations. We also want to learn from this experience. As Beckey's final project before stepping down as YSU-OEA President, she and Susan are collecting feedback on the negotiations and the strike.

Follow this link to provide
feedback:

<https://forms.gle/jowCWXhHeeVqHHzr6>

As another round of negotiations is behind us, it is important to evaluate where we succeeded and where we faltered so we can emerge stronger for the next round. We invite everyone to participate in this debriefing process by completing the Google Form and sharing your comments and concerns about events over the past year.

Everything, including overall negotiation strategy, strike organization, outward media messaging, our internal communications process, and the online voting system should be reviewed and improved where needed. Please consider taking a few minutes to share your opinions (good and bad), and, more importantly, suggestions for continued and ongoing successful contract negotiations in the future. Once we receive this input, we will draft a white paper to share with faculty. It is critical that we not only listen to our peers, but that we implement these suggestions for future negotiations, which certainly will be as challenging as negotiations in 2020.

We'd like to get the ball rolling by discussing an aspect of negotiations that was successful, and an area where we need continued efforts to improve:

Our negotiating team was a near-perfect makeup of strengths and personalities, and we were able to utilize each other's differences with aplomb. Starting with Julia Gergits as our first Chief negotiator, she set the stage for a more respectful tone overall, versus past years where rude and inflammatory behavior were the norm. The initial team also included Megan List, who excelled at advocating for junior faculty and creating inclusive language throughout the contract. Later Susan became an (albeit-reluctant) Chief, but using her former training with giving testimony in criminal law, she made cogent arguments - forceful when needed, yet calm (at least on the outside). Steve Reale, our past-President and a very important co-leader behind the scenes, possesses one of the finest strategic minds we have ever had the opportunity to witness. Mike Pontikos, who recorded minutes, was instrumental in providing background from the previous negotiations, as well as keeping the team's focus on the rights of relatively-new lecturer and senior lecturer faculty. Karen Larwin also took detailed notes that included not only what was said, but the overall tone of the speaker, and, as a former health care committee member, was critical in our success in the health care battle. Kriss Schueller is not a boisterous guy and said little at the negotiating table, but behind the scenes he was our resident pragmatist, who could sum up in one sentence what the rest of us spent 5 minutes poorly iterating. He also championed for the more senior faculty, who have been getting shafted in the last decade of contracts. Beckey Curnalia, who sat in for much of the negotiation process, was particularly critical in sidebar discussions with Kevin Kralj and Jenn Pintar. She may not know this, but her calm and professional demeanor frequently helped to keep others in check, and prevented some folks from saying very bad words to the other side on more than one occasion. Our team was also incredibly fortunate to have Gabriel Palmer-Fernandez with us, who wore several hats - that of the historian, the philosopher, the ethicist, and the orator. When communications in negotiations came out overly-logical and flat, Gabe inserted the passionate pleas in critical areas such as shared governance, intellectual property, and academic freedom. Last but not least, we were fortunate to have our faithful OEA companion, Herman Pipe, whom

we are in awe of because he deals with this kind of crap every day and never ever gets rattled. Herman was our guru in every way. He never told us what to do, but always helped to steer us in the right direction when we bargained. Herman had an amazing ability to see through all the BS that the Administration (particularly their lawyer, Seth Briskin) hurled across the table and to refocus the team on the elements of concern. Finally, while not on our team, we would be remiss if we did not mention Joe Palardy and Pete Woodlock, who were vital to the negotiations process. From the beginning, we knew that the financials at YSU were not as presented. But without the critical evidence provided by a forensic accounting from Joe and Pete, we never would have been able to convince the fact-finder of the truth - that YSU has plenty of money to pay faculty fair wages, and that they need to spend it on academics. In sum, if you see any of these people on campus, please offer them your heartfelt thanks, because they were vital to achieving your contract!

We humbly offer the following thoughts on an area where we are lacking, which is having direct and meaningful communications with the Board of Trustees. Please understand that we do not harbor any resentment towards any of the respected people on the BoT - in fact, several BoT members have openly tried to bridge the communication divide by attending Senate meetings and keeping up with faculty projects. However, the fact remains that the BoT is practically impenetrable for faculty, which is difficult to fathom considering that we are the 'commodity' that they are so eager to promote for the overall success of YSU. As absurd as this seems, consider that faculty almost never speak directly with the BoT and requests to speak at their meetings can be denied. Moreover, during the negotiations period, the members of the BoT rebuffed attempts to contact them individually. While made up of unique individuals, the BoT is a largely business-focused group that does not prioritize input from faculty. The only faculty member who has an avenue to communicate directly with the BoT is the Chair of the Senate (currently Chet Cooper). Thus, the BoT are receiving summaries from YSU Administration on how things are progressing, but they are not hearing much from faculty. Most concerning is the fact that these summaries, such as the budget that the Administration put forward for this academic year, do not reflect faculty perspectives and experiences. As such, the BoT likely has no idea how problematic the reorganization was and still is, how little shared governance actually is practiced on our campus, and how dysfunctional our relationship is with the Administration. Simply put, until we have a way to communicate with those that run our University, the damaged relationship between faculty and Administration will never be healed.

Negotiations Report

Susan Clutter, Chief Negotiator, swclutter@ysu.edu

Addressing Issues with Workload

As we end one semester and furiously plan for Spring, we wanted to remind faculty to defend the limits of their job responsibilities as vigorously as possible.

As many of you already know, the Administration is continuing to demand more from faculty while simultaneously reducing compensation for our efforts. Specific examples include:

Teaching- Faculty who previously logged certain workload hours for teaching clinicals, studio sessions, labs, and other non-lecture instructional classifications are now receiving less workload for the exact same work performed. Assistant Provost Jenn Pintar has spent several years slowly rolling out these changes across each college so as to avoid the “poison pill” clause in our contract that forbids increasing faculty workload without an across-the-board pay increase. In her latest email to faculty, she stated “I did ask a representative from the union to take a hard look at the document to see if there were any concerns. The feedback was that overall, the policy aligns nicely with what has historically occurred at YSU.” To be clear, the Union did not approve or endorse this new Administrative workload policy; the union understands that we are not able to bargain workload and has no way to counter these plans.

Research- Several faculty have reported that previous research projects, including current projects that were originally promised certain reassignment time, have now been reduced by half (in most cases from 6 SH to 3 SH). Indeed, between the amount of teaching and service responsibilities we already face, it is no wonder that we report IRB reviews are down by at least 50% this calendar year, the lowest numbers we have seen in over 6 years. Despite the assurance by the Provost’s Office that they value scholarship, we have yet to see a plan to increase research and scholarship efforts. In fact, our latest contract saw Administration decrease our ability to apply for research reassignment, forcing our more productive researchers to wait 7 years between sabbaticals.

Service- In what might be the most egregious concern, Administration has announced a dramatic reduction in reassignment time for coordinator duties, cutting many of these hours in half, or eliminating them altogether. For example, the amount of reassignment hours each college receives has been substantially reduced, so many Graduate Coordinators are now receiving half of the reassignment time for the same amount of work. This action threatens to make faculty refuse coordinator positions, thereby cause for revocation of accreditation and/ or the elimination of Graduate programs across campus.

What can be done to slow the tide? Our most important weapon is the Department Governance Document, which is still recognized as a vital tool in how the Board of Trustees and Administration decides how to allocate Departmental workload. As our deadline for revision of Departmental Governance Documents is fast approaching, please consider the following approaches:

1. Describe the workload of coordinators and the reassignment time that should be allocated using authoritative language. Recently a grievance was filed regarding workload, but the Departmental Governance Document stated that reassignment time “may be given”. This language makes it impossible to fight for the faculty member performing the work. Stress that workload “shall” be given.
2. Make sure your Department creates an avenue for research. Scholarship is one third of our job duty, yet the Administration relies on us to perform the work on our own time. One way to ensure that quality research is prioritized in your Department is to incentivize and/or reward efforts in scholarship. This could mean giving out reassignment time for future research, or it can be in the form of reassignment hours per article written, etc.

- Carefully consider whether performing work without compensation is in the best interest of your students or your co-workers. None of us want to see a program fail, because we are very dedicated faculty members. Thus, we have been spreading ourselves incredibly thin while waiting for the Administration to hire/ spend/ provide/ etc. But if we continue undervaluing the work we perform, we not only set precedent for continued abuse of labor, but we shortchange the Department when it comes time to allocate additional personnel.

There are several Departments at YSU right now supporting hundreds of majors and only 3-4 full time faculty members. These faculty bust their butts and work 60-70 hour weeks. Unfortunately, there is no one coming to save them. The amount of full-time faculty hired at YSU has dwindled to almost zero. This is unacceptable, and band-aiding the problem by providing free or greatly reduced labor will not fix the cracks in the foundation.

In addition Susan (STEM), your negotiating team includes:

- Karen Larwin, BCLASSE, khlarwin@gmail.com
- Gabriel Palmer-Fernandez, BCLASSE, gpalmerfernandez@gmail.com
- Michael Pontikos, WCBA, mgp@sokitnopdesign.com
- Kriss Schueller, STEM, kriss.schueller@gmail.com
- AJ Sumell, WCBA, ajsumell@ysu.edu

Treasurer's Report

Taci Turel, YSU-OEA Treasurer, tacibaht@gmail.com

Local organization cash (as of Nov, excluding recent deposits):		\$ 110,278.22
Scholarship Fund:		
Scholarship account ***	\$ 1,256.40	
CD #2331; Maturity date: 04/14/21	\$ 7,844.01	
	Total Scholarships:	\$ 9,100.41
Stifel-Nicolaus (approximate current amount)		\$ 47,196.45
Total local organization cash and investments		\$ 168,575.08

Second VP's Report

Diana Palardy, Second VP and Crisis Committee Chair, dqpalardy@gmail.com

YSU-OEA Scholarship Applications

I would like to request that everyone encourage their students to apply for the YSU-OEA Union Scholarship. We will be sending our further details soon. The deadline is March 1, 2021 and we have modified the requirements so that it is now more inclusive. The award will go to YSU undergraduate students who either write about a personal or family connection to the labor movement *or* create a personal reflection on the importance of unions, which may consist of an essay, a short story, a video, a work of art, or some other creative form of expression. There will be one first-place prize of \$1000 and two runner-up prizes of \$500. Thank you and have a safe and relaxing break.

Grievance Report

Gabriel Palmer-Fernandez, Grievance Chair, gfpalmer@ysu.edu

Reduced or Eliminated, and Fear of Democracy

Some years back one of our colleagues from Accounting in WCBA remarked that when an institution does not have a plan, the budget becomes the plan. And that certainly is true when it comes to YSU's administration, even when budgets they present in negotiations and fact finding are a sham. Employing the budget as the North Star is adversely affecting, undermining and degrading the academic profession insofar as we're able to practice it at YSU. We have become, as HR likes to refer to us, employees. Words matter. Employees are always subordinate and unequal to their superordinate bosses, who with impunity issue orders and directives. But faculty are members of a profession – a venerable one, right? – having its own internal demands, ordering and directing our activities. Autonomy versus heteronomy. The budget-minded administration has it otherwise.

Those remarks are prompted by an Association grievance we are currently presenting on behalf of the entire faculty. Faculty reassigned time for service has been significantly reduced or eliminated in all of our colleges, while expectations for service remain the same. Last year, for example, in a number of departments, faculty performed various activities crucial to student success such as Assessment or PhD Program or Lab or Practicum Coordinators for which they received reassigned time. This year, however, with expectations unchanged, reassigned time has been either reduced or eliminated, and in some departments in violation of its governance document. By reducing or eliminating service reassigned time and scheduling affected faculty to teach more courses without triggering overload, administration cuts back on part-time faculty

expenditures. It's the budget. It's all about the budget (even when it's a sham). Not pedagogy, not mission, not student success (not really). Not service. Budget.

The reduction and elimination of reassigned time for service was done without consultation of faculty, much as a boss would direct an employee and not as professionals would act towards each other. The latter requires that administration subject itself to genuine deliberation, open discussion, and participatory governance on the policies and procedures for the delivery of professional services and the mission of the institution. It would require a commitment to a democratic spirit that is sorely lacking, because it is feared by those, on the second floor of Tod Hall. There they much prefer despotic rule.

College Advocates' Report

Tom Diggins and Birsen Karpak, College Advocates Co-chairs, hootenannyvintage@gmail.com and bkarpak@gmail.com

Thanks to Our College Advocates

On behalf of Birsen and myself, I would like to extend the warmest thanks for the efforts of our individual College Advocates, and to the ad hoc departmental representatives across campus, who facilitated superbly effective communication during the very trying times of negotiations and the work action. This is all the more impressive in light of the administratively-generated trainwreck of "reorganization" to which we were unilaterally subjected. "Reorganization"? Yeah, that's it. So, I guess my house is just "reorganized?"!

Ordinarily, we might consider this more formalized communications structure as a response to the disruptive environment of contract negotiations. However, we feel that our faculty network will continue to be crucial even between contract years, especially in light of the "new normal" of administration's continued disdain for anything resembling shared governance. We have already been seeing concerns among faculty on such issues as workload policy (especially the potential "contracting" of modest-enrollment but valuable courses), unilateral academic calendar revisions, and now the blatant two-faced dealings of the VP for Finances, who – Lord it's a Miracle! – released the budget numbers that were claimed by our faculty all along. It looks like every year is now a contract year!

Have wonderful Holidays, and above all stay safe and healthy.

Your College Advocates:

- Birsen Karpak, Williamson College of Business Administration – bkarpak@gmail.com
- Linda Strom, College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences – stromlindaj@gmail.com
- Lauren Cummins, Beeghly College of Education, llc4@outlook.com
- Nicolette Powe, Bitonte College of Health and Human Services, drnpowe@gmail.com
- Thomas Diggins, STEM, hootenannyvintage@gmail.com

- Ewelina Boczkowska, Cliffe College of Creative Arts and Communication,
emboczkowska@gmail.com