

## ***Summary of Important Academic Staff Council Issues Third Quarter (January-March) 2009–10***

### **Academic Staff Personnel Policies, Chapter 10.06**

A rewritten version of Chapter 10.06 has been signed by Provost and Vice Chancellor Christine Quinn. The new language states that non-renewed fixed-term academic staff with at least four years of full-time equivalent service shall be granted an informal conference on request as well as having recourse to a formal hearing. Next the rewritten version goes to Chancellor David Wilson and, if approved, to the Board of Regents.

### **Appointment Letters**

The Ad Hoc Committee on Chapter 10.06 reported that nowhere in the Academic Staff Personnel Policies is there coverage of the language of fixed-term letters, and that across the divisions letters are used in different ways. The committee is asking HR departments to provide information about the types of letters, numbers of recipients of the different types, and the rationale for differences in language among the letters.

### **Title Progression – Unclassified Personnel Guideline 15**

The ASC has a working draft of a new version of Unclassified Personnel Guideline 15, Policies and Procedures Governing Title Prefix Review for Promotion. The new language establishes criteria for advancement that better reflect the kind of work that Extension academic staff actually do.

### **Definition of Scholarship**

The ASC considered the role it should have in defining scholarship as conducted by academic staff. A representative from Cooperative Extension said that he believed many academic staff in the counties do the same work as faculty, and this should be recognized. Others thought that while academic staff may engage in scholarship, there remain differences in the work of faculty and academic staff.

The representative from Cooperative Extension presented the document “Scholarship in UW-Extension-Cooperative Extension: The Role of Academic Staff,” which was created to help academic staff strengthen the materials presented for title progression and to counter the belief some faculty have that academic staff don’t engage in scholarship. The document adapts faculty’s definition of scholarship to the work that academic staff do, and provides examples and rubrics. The ASC is considering using the document not to formulate a policy about scholarship, but as a starting point to create a similar document that might apply to all Extension academic staff.

### **Union Activities**

Faculty at UW-Superior and UW–Eau Claire are moving forward with the possible formation of unions. Once the signatures have been certified by the Wisconsin Employment Relations Commission (WERC) an election date would be set. There has yet been no union activity with any Academic Staff around the state.

## Unit Clarification

Unit clarification is a legal process used to ensure that membership in an existing collective bargaining unit is properly constituted. It consists of reviews of positions' duties and responsibilities to determine whether they are appropriate to the title given to the job, whether that title is an academic staff title or classified staff title, and whether that title is currently represented by a union.

Peter Davis, general counsel at WERC (Wisconsin Employment Relations Commission), talked to the ASC about unit clarification. WERC is responsible for managing labor contracts in Wisconsin. It is run by three governor-appointed commissioners who also decide whether petitions for unit clarification have merit.

Unions have filed petitions for unit clarification at several UW institutions. Extension is not one of these institutions, but the petitions contain titles identical to some Extension titles. UW System and the Office of State Employment Relations (OSER) have filed motions with WERC arguing that WERC does not have the authority to determine which university positions are academic staff and which are classified. According to UW System and OSER, the matter is determined solely by the Board of Regents.

WERC will likely make a decision soon. If WERC finds in favor of UW System, the unions will probably appeal immediately to circuit court. If WERC finds in favor of the collective bargaining units, UW System will probably wait to see the consequences before appealing.

Davis said that if unit clarification actually begins, WERC will proceed position by position. If a trend develops with WERC overwhelmingly finding that academic staff positions should be changed to classified positions, UW System will likely seek a compromise that expedites the process by working according to titles rather than individual positions. On the other hand, if in most cases WERC is finding that academic staff positions should stay that way, the unions will seek a compromise with UW System. In any case, the process would take years, Davis said.

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