

FACULTY SENATE OPEN FORUM MINUTES

January 22, 2009
2:30 pm

308 Bowen-Thompson Student Union

OPENING REMARKS

Chair Williams opened the meeting, which was organized by the SEC to discuss collective bargaining. The format was that Keith Bernhard and Ben Muego would speak in favor and Michael Buerger would speak against. About forty people attended.

IN FAVOR

Bernhard pointed out that the unionization of faculty was in the tradition of the unionization of other groups of workers and that all faculty have benefitted from the efforts of the early organizers. The AAUP has stood for academic freedom and the security of tenure; these issues are intertwined. Muego pointed out that the faculty at all the state universities except BGSU, Ohio U, OSU and Miami U were organized into collective bargaining units and that efforts to organize faculty are currently underway at BGSU and Ohio U. He said that the nine unionized campuses all have faculty senates and that there is no inherent conflict between a union and a faculty senate. The two can co-exist to better represent the interests of faculty. Unions were empowered by law to negotiate salaries and benefits, and senates can continue to function on other matters.

AGAINST

Buerger acknowledged that there had been a series of complaints by faculty recently but questioned whether a union would really help. Perhaps current governance structures needed to be reviewed. He believed that we do not have enough detailed information to make a decision. He observed that unions were more likely to be effective in good times and that these were not good times. If we got an ineffective union, how could we get rid of it?

REBUTTAL

Bernhard said that collective bargaining was negotiation on the issues; faculty senate is simply advisory. He said that salaries were the largest section of the budget but always the last section to be dealt with. It's not surprising that our all-rank average including nttf places us eleventh out of twelve in faculty salaries in the state system. He said that the current budget was arrived at with limited faculty participation and that we had an ineffective grievance process. Muego said that the current raise in health care costs was done with little meaningful consultation with faculty. He said that studies show that faculty have a 7 to 14% advantage when it comes to salaries. Buerger said that he shared these concerns but remained unconvinced that a union was the way to deal with them.

REMARKS FROM THE FLOOR

Comments concerned the cost of joining a union, another layer of bureaucracy, the resources of a national organization to assist, the ability of union officers to represent their membership, the status of nttf in a bargaining unit and a need to learn more specifics about what a union could do.

ADJOURNMENT

Williams thanked the participants and the audience and adjourned the meeting at 10:20.

Respectfully submitted,

Rich Hebein, Secretary