

August 2015

DEAR COLLEAGUES,

The Board of the University of Washington Chapter of the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) has taken an important step to advance an objective that has been in our strategic plan for some years now: unionization.

At our board meeting in March 2015 we voted to work with the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), which has offered to provide staff support for a faculty union campaign. Our board adopted a set of principles to guide the relationship with SEIU (see below).

We have not taken this step lightly. While pursuing unionization has been in our strategic plan for at least three years, we debated the pros and cons over several months. In the end, the most compelling reason for our action was our sense of urgency about the chronic underfunding of UW by the Washington State Legislature (state funding is down to 5% of total UW revenues, or 7% after removing medical service revenues).

We believe that organizing to increase the faculty voice both within UW and in the state legislature is needed to ensure that this university is able to provide accessible, high-quality education for our state's citizens. Bill Lyne, from Western Washington University and United Faculty of Washington State, made a compelling argument that if the UW were to unionize we would immediately establish our clout in Olympia and would become legitimate partners with UW administration in making our case with legislators. Currently, faculty are all but absent from the conversation in Olympia.

We also believe that winning a faculty union can strengthen the role of faculty in shared governance, address the rise of contingency and "adjunctification," help reduce the stubborn salary gap between UW and our peer institutions, and stall the increasing corporatization that is negatively impacting our teaching and research priorities. Based on the experiences at other campuses, it also appears that a union contract can go a long way toward rectifying the lack of salary increases and resultant salary compression.

Members of our board, and other faculty members on campus, are seeking meetings with our colleagues on all three campuses. We are inviting colleagues to sign union cards and, if they are willing to be public about their support, add their names to an open "Dear Colleague" letter. At the same time, we want to strengthen AAUP membership as part of this campaign to create a strong faculty voice on employment and other issues (see organizing principles below).

For more information about UW faculty unionization, go to www.uwfacultyforward.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Robert Wood'.

ROBERT WOOD

*President, University of Washington Chapter
of the AAUP*

THE UW-AAUP CHAPTER SUPPORTS A UW FACULTY UNIONIZATION CAMPAIGN BY SEIU (LOCAL 925), WHICH BEGAN IN SPRING QUARTER 2015.

ORGANIZING PRINCIPLES:

1. Faculty, rather than union staff, should govern the strategic decisions taken during the union drive. This includes decisions about campaign appeals, issues and materials.
2. The organizing campaign will uphold the very important AAUP values of academic freedom and tenure.
3. Faculty of a variety of ranks and units across campuses should take leading roles in the organizing committee.
4. The UW-AAUP recognizes the financial and political risks SEIU is taking in this campaign and will seek out opportunities to acknowledge and appreciate this effort. Further, we recognize the need for SEIU organizers to retain autonomy in allocating its resources. We seek to clarify how SEIU 925 staff and organizing committee will interact.
5. While building the union, the UW-AAUP board also seeks to build membership in our advocacy chapter of the national AAUP. Materials should promote AAUP membership as well.
6. The decision of the UW-AAUP to support SEIU's campaign should leave the door open for other unions and organizations to collaborate and support in some form.

AAUP

AMERICAN ASSOCIATION
OF UNIVERSITY PROFESSORS

**University of Washington
Chapter**