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AAAP Advocate

Association of Academic Professionals
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
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Campus Parking: Raising Rates, Raising Questions

Parking rates are going up again this year. In contrast to a likely salary program of 2.5 to 3 percent average increases, parking rates are increasing 8 percent this year, on their way to \$700 per year.

Without union representation, academic professionals have no say in either salary or parking increases.

More questions than answers

Why do parking rates continue to increase? To finance the construction of parking decks. Why do we need these monstrous structures? (With recent layoffs, clearly, staff has not increased, so the need for parking spaces should have declined.) The decks are necessary because of new construction that displaces surface lots.

Why should we pay for these decks on the north campus and in the center of campus if we are still parking in the same lot we have always parked in? Because the rates are the same for almost all of us, no matter where we park on campus.

As a University practice, construction costs for buildings that displace surface lots must include \$10,000 per space paid to the Parking Division for the creation of new lots. Why wasn't enough money factored into construction costs of the new buildings in order to finance the decks needed to replace the spaces?

Views vary

Some people think parking should be an employee benefit. Some favor a differential rate schedule based on proximity to one's office or area of campus. (The Faculty Benefits Committee proposed rate differentials based on employee income and garage vs. open lot parking, but that resolution was voted down at the April 25 Faculty Senate meeting.) Some do not understand why staff members in the industrial parks do not have to pay for parking. Some think that there are a lot of "special" employees who use departmental spaces or have hang tags provided by the department and avoid paying rates.

Others feel that the problems of congestion, safety, pollution, and noise are not adequately addressed in University parking policy. Parking decks built close to the center of campus add to congestion and hazards for pedestrians and bikers. Perhaps surface lots should be

A recent court decision at SIU-Carbondale put parking fees on the bargaining table.

Continued next page

The Association of Academic Professionals is a group of academic professional employees at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign that is organizing for the purpose of collective bargaining. The AAP is affiliated with the Illinois Education Association and the National Education Association. We are part of a national movement of academic professionals who seek collective bargaining rights.

In order to maintain and improve on the benefits of working at this great university, we believe that we need to organize so that our voice commands attention when administrators make decisions that affect our jobs.

The AAP seeks to ensure certain rights such as:

- ☆ clear paths for career development and advancement
- ☆ third-party resolution of disputes with supervisors
- ☆ fair, timely, and consistent evaluation procedures
- ☆ safeguards against arbitrary dismissal
- ☆ rewards for good job performance
- ☆ compensation for mandatory overtime
- ☆ paid and unpaid leaves
- ☆ *a meaningful voice in decisions that affect our employment*

AAP Advocate—UIUC Association of Academic Professionals

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IEA Staff: **Gene Vanderport**, **Steve Vaughan**, and **David Vitoff**

While the University Stalls, Visiting APs Get Ready to Bargain

April's election should just be a happy memory for visiting APs now. It looks pretty clear that we chose to unionize. We had our vote. We made a decision. We should be moving to the negotiating table. The University,

The next visiting AP bargaining preparation meeting is June 29

however, seems more interested in stalling our progress toward collective bargaining rights than in letting our democratic choice prevail.

When we first went to the Educational Labor Relations Board and presented our petition, the University could have amicably signed a consent agreement with us regarding the terms of the election. Many employers in higher education do this, recognizing that the decision to unionize is one for their employees to make.

Because the University refused to come to a consent agreement, hearings were held to determine whether we were an appropriate bargaining unit with collective bargaining rights. The Hearing Officer ruled that the answer was yes and directed that an election be held. The University, however, chose not to accept this decision and filed an appeal to the full labor board. In the short term, this meant the ballots of our election were not yet counted. In the long term, it merely means a delay of the inevitable.

While the University wastes time and money trying to stop our vote, the Visiting AP Association is preparing to bargain. On May 18 a group of us had our first talk about bargaining with Gene Vanderport, the IEA staff member who will be our UniServ Director, helping us with contract negotiations, grievances, etc. It is important that as many of us as possible get involved so we are ready to go as soon as the appeals process is over. Join us for our next Bargaining Preparation meeting, June 29 in the Wilson Chapel of the University YMCA at noon (lunch provided). ■

Parking, continued from page 1

constructed on the edge of campus and more frequent and convenient shuttles added to reduce cost, congestion, pollution, and danger on campus as well as parking fees. Perhaps we should keep all cars out of central campus, except for those needed by people with handicaps, and offer incentives to people who bike or ride the bus.

Bottom line: We need a voice

Because these issues affect us, we should be involved in the decision. Parking rates are a cost to APs and are part of our overall compensation/benefits package. As it stands we are out of pocket and out of power.

When bargaining with existing unions on campus the University has always insisted that parking fees are non-negotiable, but a recent court decision concerning negotiations at SIU-Carbondale has changed that.

When AAP is recognized as the bargaining agent for APs, parking rates will be on the table. The University will have to listen to our concerns and not regard us merely as a source of funding for buildings that the state legislature refuses to finance. ■

Higher Ed Unions Rock the Capital *UI President, Legislators Speak at Rally*

AAP members were among several hundred higher education union members from four Illinois unions who rallied in Springfield on April 13 and met with senators and state representatives to argue their case for funding higher education and for preserving their retirement benefits.

State legislators from central and southern Illinois and from the Chicago area spoke at the rally in support of these issues. University of Illinois President Joseph White also spoke, mentioning that his immigrant grandparents saw the importance of labor unions.

At the State Capitol, the higher ed union members were joined by nearly 1,000 other Illinois Education Association members—it was the largest turnout of IEA member-activists in almost 20 years. ■

A Scary Thing Happened on the Way to the Rally

By Jenny Barrett

Late one night the week before the Higher Education Lobby Day (see above), I emailed fellow members of the Council of Academic Professionals from my University email account, urging them to attend the event at which UI President White spoke and to Springfield to lobby on behalf of the University. I also asked them to sign a petition asking our state legislators to protect SURS.

On April 15 Robin Kaler, interim associate chancellor for Public Affairs, sent me an email accusing me of violating the Employees Ethics Act with my message to CAP. She said, “since such activity is considered prohibited by employees during work hours the use of university resources, including e-mail, should not be used to organize such activities.”

She referred me to this site: http://ethics.uillinois.edu/Ethics-Related_Legislation.htm. (Copies of all correspondence cited are on the AAP site.)

I read the Act carefully, but could not see how I violated it. I contacted the Illinois Education Association staff, who quickly got an opinion from their legal counsel that what I did was perfectly within the law. I also sent a copy of my and Ms. Kaler’s email to Professor Mark Leff, the president of the Union of Professional Employees, since this issue also affects faculty. He asked University legal counsel for clarification on the matter.

After weeks of persistent queries by Prof. Leff, he heard from the University ethics officer, who said:

We have received opinions from both the Office of the Executive Inspector General and the Illinois Executive Ethics Commission regarding the use of University email system for communications regarding “lobby day” type of activities by University-related unions in regard to the State Officials and Employees Ethics Act (Ethics Act). Both offices have indicated if the organization/union is not a political organization as defined in Sec. 430/1-5, [...] the organization/union would not be viewed as benefiting inappropriately from the use of the University’s email system, and, hence, use would be allowable under the Ethics Act.

See Ethics, at right

Ask AAP, continued from page 4

We are in the midst of a budget crisis, and the unions are fighting to avoid drastic cuts. We are not happy about the 6 percent cap, but originally the governor was pushing for 3 percent. For more details about the role of IEA in reaching the final version of SB27, please see the IEA Web site at <http://www.ieanea.org/legislative/factsheets/94th/surs.pdf>.

It seems that people who are critical of unions accuse them of being confrontational and refusing to see the employer’s point of view when they are fighting for the people they represent. But when unions accept a compromise proposal, they are accused of being ineffective. My conclusion is that anyone philosophically opposed to the idea of democratically representative organizations will find arguments against them. ■

This month’s answer provided by Jenny Barrett. Send your questions to aap@shout.net.

Ethics, continued

The email went on to say that not just lobbying but also “activities relating to the support or opposition of any executive, legislative or administrative action” would be permissible. I was relieved to find that legal opinions from the state and University concurred with my layman’s interpretation of the Act.

This experience makes me grateful that I am an AAP/IEA member with access to IEA legal counsel as well as legal representation related to my position as a University employee (and \$1 million liability insurance—free.)

I would also like to thank Prof. Leff for pursuing official word from the University that lobbying on issues is not a violation of the State Ethics Act.

Spread the word: it is OK to use University resources, such as your email account, to support or oppose legislative actions. ■



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Ask AAP

Why didn't unions stop the recent pension cuts?

Q: I'm skeptical about the need for a union of academic professionals, especially after the passage of Senate Bill 27 in the Illinois legislature. I didn't hear the unions making a strong protest against it. What good are unions if they cannot protect pensions?

A: Actually, the passage of SB27 occurred with the support of the Illinois Education Association and other organizations representing government employees. It was a compromise in a very bad budget situation, when much worse bills had been proposed.

IEA got the feedback of its members to accept the compromise, but, of course, if you're not a member, you weren't part of this dialogue and IEA didn't get to hear your input.

Highlights of the bill, which becomes effective upon Governor Blagojevich's signature, include:

- End-of-career salary increases stipulated in current contracts will not be affected by the new law.
- The state will count toward the Teachers' Retirement Service and the State Universities Retirement Service pensions salary increases of up to 6 percent without additional employer payments.
- The retirement ages and automatic cost-of-living increases for TRS and SURS retirees remain unchanged.
- All current TRS and SURS members continue to have access to the money purchase program.

As a result of IEA lobbying efforts, the final version of SB27 lacked many punitive measures that were part of the original "pension reform" proposals offered months ago, such as changing the retirement age and the automatic cost-of-living increases for the pensions.

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