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AAAP Advocate

Association of Academic Professionals
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
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Budget Crisis Raises Questions—and Fears—for APs

By Jenny Barrett

News of the reported University budget crisis gets more alarming by the day, as the rescission figure has doubled in two months' time.

In January it was announced that the budgets of administrative and service units had to be cut by 2.5 percent and of academic units by 1.25 percent. Faculty and staff would be reduced through attrition.

Then, in a March 16 email, the chancellor and provost said academic units should expect cuts of 4.5 percent and non-academic units 5.5 percent. President James Stukel was quoted in the *News-Gazette* as saying that personnel cuts would be made through both attrition and elimination of some positions. The cuts would include professional and support staff as well as faculty, but "as far as knowing exactly where they will be eliminated, it's just too early to tell. Each campus ... would have the leeway to eliminate positions in lower priority areas and keep faculty in higher priority areas."

What impact will the crisis have for academic professionals? Will we face a pay freeze? Will our benefits be affected? Will some of us lose our jobs? These are among the questions swirling in the minds of APs.

We hear rumors of a pay freeze, perhaps even for soft-money units with sufficient money for raises. In January, the University retracted a proposed SURS improvement that would have meant the University paid a greater share of the contribution to our retirement fund.

Such issues are not in question for University employees who are represented by unions. They have contracts that will guarantee raises for them and negotiate terms and conditions of their employment, including layoffs.

But as "at-will" employees, we APs don't really know what's going to happen. Our future depends on how the University administration handles this budget crisis. We know that the University of Illinois has over \$250 million in discretionary funds in the form of quasi-endowments, funds for a "rainy day." The administration chooses not to use these funds, even though it's pouring outside!

Perhaps it's not a serious crisis for upper administration, since their average raise last year was 12.1 percent. Meanwhile, 600 APs received raises of less than 4 percent.

Despite the budget crisis, the capital budget remains strong. The governor proposed \$200 million in VentureTECH buildings for the University, including on this campus a \$73.5 million Post Genomics Institute, \$18 million Microelectronics Lab, and \$28.8 million NCSA building.

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The Association of Academic Professionals is a group of academic professional employees at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign that is attempting to organize 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

STEERING COMMITTEE:

Jenny Barrett (chair), *Psychology*
 Cheryl Berger, *Psychology*
 Guy Davis, *Career Services Center*
 Mel Farrell, *Ill. Lib. Computer Systems*
 Neal Horner, *McKinley Health Center*
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 Ron Szoke, *CCSO*

IEA STAFF: Peter Miller

Fight for Domestic Partner Benefits Continues

by Lydia Khuri

About 35 students, staff, and faculty from all three University of Illinois campuses, gathered on Friday, February 22nd at UIUC to discuss domestic partner benefits for U of I employees and students. Representatives from the AAP, IEA, and several University offices and groups were present. Since this was the first meeting of its kind, each campus presented background information on its own efforts to achieve benefits. Efforts extend back ten years and include an unsuccessful arbitration, a Faculty/Student Senate resolution passed in 1996 by all three campuses and re-endorsement in 2001 by UIUC, an outright refusal from University President James Stukel in 1998 to act on or present the issue to the Board of Trustees, and a resurgent push for domestic partner benefits in 2001.

Two strategies were agreed on: requesting a meeting with Stukel, and finding out which employees want to file for domestic partner benefits. One resolution was agreed on: the call for domestic partner benefits is for same- and opposite-sex domestic partners, students and employees. Also discussed was House Bill 101, a bill to include sexual orientation in the State of Illinois non-discrimination policy supported by Governor Ryan yet stuck in committee.

Since April 2001, several AAP members have been working on the campaign for domestic partner benefits. Our signature campaign continues. Jane Reid wrote a powerfully concise op-ed piece (Octopus, 1/25/02) laying out the reasons why UIUC should provide domestic partner benefits, how the University is in violation of its own non-discrimination policy, and how the State Employees Group Insurance Act (SEGIA) is open to interpretation, contrary to what University Legal Counsel has concluded.

The primary endorsed course of action by the inter-campus coalition is to request a meeting with President Stukel with the hope he will have a change of heart and take the issue to the Board of Trustees.

In the meantime, a multi-pronged approach will keep the issue in the forefront of University business and make use of employees' and students' strengths. The campaign needs your help and there are several things you can do now:

- Sign the petition in support of Domestic Partner Benefits (www.shout.net/aap/domestic)
- Join the AAP (The AAP works for YOU.)
- Bring YOUR ideas to the AAP's committee on domestic partner benefits. (Meetings on the second Friday of every month, 12pm-1pm, McKinley Foundation, Geneva Room.)
- Call and/or write your state senator and representatives to support HB 101. Call State Senator Weaver (from Urbana) and Senate President James "Pate" Phillips, and urge them to let the bill pass onto the floor and be fully debated.

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Sign the petition:
www.shout.net/aap/domestic.

Average September 2001 Raises for Selected UIUC Job Titles

Senior Research Programmer	9.1%	\$65,723
Network Analyst	8.9%	\$48,342
Research Programmer	8.8%	\$50,834
Research Specialist in Life Sciences	7.1%	\$31,048
Management Methods Analyst	7.1%	\$53,820
Media/Communications Specialist	6.0%	\$41,451
Research Specialist in Agriculture	5.6%	\$33,314
Research Scientist	5.5%	\$53,324
Child Care Resource Specialist	4.2%	\$26,753
Creative Specialist	3.6%	\$33,614

Average September 2001 Raise

Average '01-'02 Salary for Title

Budget Crisis, continued from page 1

The Association of Academic Professionals has offered to help the University by going to Springfield in support of President Stukel's efforts and lobbying on behalf of the University budget before the legislative session ends on May 17. As an affiliate of the Illinois Education Association, the largest lobbying group in the state, we carry clout. Contact the AAP (aap@shout.net) if you are interested in lobbying with us.

AAP also proposes that the University follow this set of principles to do the right thing in response to the budget crisis:

- 1) No AP should be fired; reductions should come through attrition only.
- 2) All APs should receive cost-of-living increases this year in order to avoid taking cuts in real pay.
- 3) The University should not transfer any health care costs to APs without increasing those APs' salaries by an equal amount.
- 4) If staffing in a unit is reduced, it should be understood that the amount of work completed by that unit will decrease too.
- 5) Communications from the provost regarding budget cuts should be shared with everyone affected, not just managers.
- 6) Upper-level administrators should demonstrate leadership and freeze or reduce their pay by at least as much as any other APs if pay freezes or reductions are needed.

By July 1, campus unit budgets—including raises—will be finalized. Academic professionals can count on the AAP to continue gathering and distributing information about the budget crisis. ■

Domestic, continued from page 2

- Talk about these issues in your unit or department (Many APs are unaware that a problem exists.)
- Contact Lydia Khuri, 244-3356, mkhuri@ntx1.cso.uiuc.edu; or Jane Reid, 333-3701, jereid@ntx1.cso.uiuc.edu ■

AAP Membership Growing—for Many Reasons

By John Flamer

People join the Association of Academic Professionals for a variety of reasons, and that fact is reflected in the broadening range of issues the AAP has been addressing. These issues now range from domestic partner benefits and child care to job security and representation in the campus Senate. The AAP has only made progress on these issues because of its diverse and burgeoning membership.

Even APs who are pleased with their work environment join the AAP. Some APs join to make sure that the things they love about working at the University don't change. Other APs join because they want to help advocate for change for those who are frustrated with their work environment. They see that without the accountability that an empowered third party can bring to conflict resolution, the potential for arbitrary dismissal remains a real possibility.

Ultimately, without a strong democratic organization representing the interests of APs, the University itself will never realize its democratic potential. ■

Why Join? APs Speak Out

“Many people don't realize that the position of ‘academic professional’ was only just created in the 1970s by the University because they needed qualified academics who were not faculty to effectively run the University. Unfortunately, the AP has remained sort of in limbo—not a civil service worker (protected by a union, I might add), nor a tenure-track professor. In fact, most APs live on a year-to-year contract basis and can be dismissed at any time, for any (or no) reason. The AAP has made me aware of these facts, plus many others. The AAP provides a wealth of information and support that wouldn't exist if it were left up to the University. The AAP consists of all of *us*. But one does have to officially ‘join.’ This is what makes us a strong force to be reckoned with. I urge you to check out the AAP for yourself.”—New Member ■



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HOW DOES YOUR RAISE MEASURE UP?

Average AP raises ranged from 3.6% to 9.1%. See page 3 for details.