

UFSO UPDATE

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YOUR UNION WORKS: A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

This is my second stint as president of UFSO in some form. I stepped in for Jim Feldman when he was on sabbatical a couple years ago and now I'm serving as the primary co-president with Stewart Cole, who will take over primary responsibility second semester. One of the most satisfying parts of being in the Union, probably the most satisfying part, is getting to know dedicated, thoughtful, hard-working and resourceful members like Jim and Stewart. Without them I cannot imagine UFSO.

Being president and having been on the Executive Committee since UFSO's inception has prompted me to think about our union, unionization within higher ed., and labor-management relations more generally.

I think of our union work as largely reactive. UFSO began in response to Administration suggestions that they were going to shut down programs. We beat back that possibility. UWO's leadership responded by engaging in a systematic campaign to reduce the number of faculty by increasing teaching loads in our largest college, Letters & Science. We fought back against that, too, and have now clawed back, against the odds, our former teaching load in L&S. This came with an added benefit of a pledge of an equitable teaching load across all colleges and at the access campuses as well. These are major victories that do not typically happen. Your union works.

This semester began with a labor crisis at UWO. 100 state jobs were unceremoniously put on the chopping block by our administrators. We mobilized. We marched. We told our story in news outlets. We gathered signatures. We pressured the administration. They backed down. We preserved good jobs and built a sense of community in the process. We're looking into parlaying that success by inviting non-teaching staff to join UFSO, with the long-term goal of beginning a unit specifically dedicated to University Staff.

The fact is, without Scott Walker, without Walker's Board of Regents, without an administration that has devalued shared governance and job satisfaction, UFSO would not exist. But the fact that we are here means we should turn our attention to being proactive, not just reactive. (cont'd on next page)



WHAT'S AT STAKE THIS FALL

BY JON SHELTON, PRESIDENT, UWGB-UNITED, VP OF HIGHER EDUCATION, AFT-WISCONSIN

It seems that every election in recent memory is the most important in our lifetime, and somehow, every single time, it's true. In 2010, reactionary Scott Walker's election as governor brought disastrous cuts to both K-12 schools and the UW system while stripping public employees (including those of us who work in higher ed) of their rights to collectively bargain. In 2014, his re-election, combined with the work of an undemocratic, heavily gerrymandered legislature, allowed him to take rights from private sector employees and strip tenure and shared governance from state law. In 2016, we failed to prevent the authoritarian billionaire Donald Trump from winning the White House. In 2018, however, we won a reprieve from Walker when our locals helped elect Tony Evers Governor (by a mere 30,000 votes) and from Trump in 2020 (by 20,000). We also saw how Trump reacted, inciting a coup attempt against our democracy itself, which made the outcome of that election all the more important.

Now Democrat Tony Evers, who has fought at every turn to restore funding to public education in Wisconsin (including funding the tuition freeze) is up against Tim Michels, an anti-union out-of-state billionaire. Michels has cast aspersions on our democratic process, spreading misinformation about 2020's free and fair election. He is an extremist who opposes women's rights, (cont'd on next page)

Upcoming events:

- 11/3: UFSO Happy Hour at Fifth Ward, 4-6pm
- 11/8: VOTE!

Find UFSO on
Facebook and under
"Join the Union" at
aft-wisconsin.org



YOUR UNION WORKS

(cont'd from p. 1) Our first opportunity to be proactive comes with the upcoming election. We need to talk to neighbors and friends and relatives about what it would mean to lose Tony Evers—the consolidation of campuses and the elimination of majors. We need to point out the importance of voting to our students (in a non-partisan way if we are in the classroom, of course). And we need to do our part to canvas and work on behalf of union-friendly candidates like Lori Palmeri.

In adverse times, where much of the state government seems hostile, when the legislature is controlled by a party that eyes us with suspicion, and the Administration often seems ready to adopt positions that compromise educational quality, we are the conscience of the University. I urge you to actively support your values and your union, both through your dues and through your actions.

All the best,
Dave Siemers
President, UFSO



Key themes from our 10/26 listening session:

- The abysmal state of shared governance at UW
- Concern about potential mergers/reduction in leadership in COLS
- Worries about IAS and complications with the Assistant Teaching Professor position
- UFSO being proactive

LABOR CONTEXTS

BY DAN CUMMINGS, UFSO INTERN

At one time, unions were largely organized according to specific skilled trades. These craft unions existed not so much for the purpose of pursuing the interests of the working class as a whole but rather to protect their trade and their employment. It was necessary to receive some formal training in order to learn a skilled trade, and it was also often necessary to be a member of the craft union in order to be hired by an employer. The old craft unions were not concerned with collectively bargaining, but they would try to maintain desirable wages by limiting the number of people brought into the union and taught the trade. This was intended to prevent an oversupply of skilled workers, which would result in reducing the price of their labor. Consequentially, craft unions were highly exclusionary, and the workers of a particular establishment would be represented by multiple unions for each trade employed. After skilled trades began to decline as a result of technological advancement and further division of labor, workers began to organize industrially, meaning all those working in a particular industry would belong to the same union regardless of specific jobs, tasks, or departments. Industrial unionism fosters greater solidarity among workers, and it unifies workers as a class against their employers as opposed to the craft unions in which workers were organized around their trade interests. Industrial unionism constructs the framework by which workers can exercise greater autonomy over their labor and practice a more democratic form of management. How might this apply at UW?

WHAT'S AT STAKE

(cont'd from p. 1) and he supports our state's 1849 law criminalizing virtually any abortion. And he enthusiastically plans to cut funding for public education, instead sending hundreds of millions of hard-earned taxpayer dollars to unaccountable private schools.

Though he hasn't said much about the UW system, we already know what the GOP plans for us if they control both the legislative and executive branches in our state. If the Walker years are any precedent, we would be looking at drastic budget cuts in the next budget biennium, even though the state sits on a surplus over \$4 billion.

Just this year, the Republican legislature passed a bill to restrict our academic freedom to teach about race and gender. That bill only failed to become law because of Gov. Evers' veto pen. The state senate has refused to confirm Gov. Evers' regent appointments, so if Michels wins, he will almost certainly repopulate the BOR, with help from Republicans in the legislature, with anti-education reactionaries who loathe the Wisconsin Idea.

The Republican Lieutenant Governor candidate Roger Roth supports a plan to close UW campuses and cut any academic program that he thinks doesn't directly lead to a job that he deems valuable, and it is difficult to imagine he wouldn't have a potential Gov. Michels' ear. Given their deeply disturbing stance on women's rights, you could even see Michels and Republican legislators enact a gag law that would make it a crime for us to so much as tell our students about their right to travel out of state to seek reproductive services.

So, yes, every election in recent memory has been the most important in our lifetime, and yes, so is this one. In the time we have left between now and the election, every single one of us needs to make sure those around us understand the stakes of this election, too. If everyone reading this article makes sure that five people in your social network votes, that will go a long way in winning what will almost certainly be an election with a razor-thin margin.

But if we lose, and we are faced with the possibility of the extreme, anti-democratic policies I've outlined above, we can't give up. At that point, we're going to have to take bigger actions than voting. Our schools and universities, in fact, every productive institution in our state, only exist because of the work we do every day to support them. They cannot function without us. We'll need to use every ounce of the power that gives us to defend our livelihoods, our students, our state, and our democracy.

