

UFSO UPDATE

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VOTE YOUR CONSCIENCE: A MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT

It's been an eventful few weeks. After more than 70 faculty-signed petitions were submitted to President Pascale Manning, the Faculty Senate discussed and, without dissent, voted to schedule a no confidence referendum in Chancellor Leavitt. This was a vote that Leavitt argued was unconstitutional, and that he leaned on Manning hard to pull from the agenda.

In his long response to the petition, Chancellor Leavitt suggested that the union led this effort because we are upset that he will not meet with us, noting that such meetings would be illegal. I'd like to respond to this specifically, because it directly involves our union. The petition for a referendum gained widespread support—well beyond our union members. We have many allies.

The nine "indictments" in the petition did not include his declining our offers to meet and confer. Despite 87% of the 175 employee respondents of our November survey endorsing this relationship, we chose to focus on a broader concern—the Chancellor's lack of commitment to robust shared governance. We aren't upset that the Chancellor won't meet with us, we just think he'd have more information — about people's views, work conditions here, and morale across campus — and thus make better decisions if he did. That's why we support adding representatives from faculty, Instructional Staff, University Staff and student government to the Chancellor's Cabinet.

It is not illegal for the Chancellor to meet with us. He lives in the United States where, like the rest of us, he enjoys a First Amendment-guaranteed freedom of association. He has met with us before—one meeting was as recent as late last school year. If this were illegal, he should be reported. But, of course, that's silly; in listening to us he wasn't running afoul of the law and neither were we. What we are not allowed to do together is officially bargain on your behalf. We'd be happy to negotiate a swift return to our normal teaching loads and better working conditions for Instructional and University Staff, but we can't. What we can do is raise our voices with you in support of these things. And we have. (*cont'd on next page*)



QUICK FACTS - HOW'D WE GET TO A VONC?

- Aug 3, '23: Chancellor announces budget crisis
- Aug 31: UFSO hosts listening session after Convocation
- Sep: UFSO/Faculty Senate shares list of expectations for administration, petition gets 585 signatures
- Oct 1: FS President Manning receives response to expectations resolution from Provost and Chancellor
- Oct 3: UFSO hosts rally with 250 people protesting planned cuts, process of plan, and inadequate response to expectations
- Oct 16: Layoffs announced, causing 140 people to lose their jobs
- Nov 6: With other AFT-WI locals in WI, UFSO formally requests a "meet & confer" (M&C) relationship with the Chancellor
- Nov 8: Chancellor on M&C: "I am declining your request."
- Dec: UFSO completes workplace conditions survey with 177 responses, which shows strong support for M&C and VONC;
- Jan, '24: UFSO holds open forum, members vote to pursue VONC
- Feb 16: Faculty submit VONC petition signatures to Manning from nearly 25% of the faculty, triggering referendum process via FS

GREETINGS FROM JON SHELTON

Hi union siblings,

This is an existential time for public higher ed in Wisconsin: I don't need to tell you about what you what you've been through at Oshkosh, and we're feeling the chill on a lot of other campuses, too. At Green Bay, for instance, we've been fighting back against admin who have tried to unilaterally eliminate majors and minors that give our students the kind of experience they deserve. It's not hyperbole to say that our future hangs in the balance.

And so that's why we have to keep fighting now: because no one else is going to stand up for us against the austerity that has been imposed on us for so long



Jon Shelton, Interim President, AFT-WI

UFSO has been a model on how to fight back, and other higher ed locals are paying attention. At Green Bay, for instance, we were inspired, in part by UFSO's survey on "meet and confer", to hold our own demonstration election on campus recently. In total, 182 faculty and staff voted that they want their union to represent them in meeting with admin.

(*cont'd on next page*)

VOTE YOUR CONSCIENCE

(cont'd from p. 1)

For many years we have offered practical ideas about how to improve learning conditions on campus and foster better relations between us and the Administration. We have done our best to remain a positive force and we will continue to do so, because our careers are here, and we want UWO to be the best school it can be.

To that end, we'd urge you to keep informed, stay active in making UWO the best it can be, and vote your conscience on the upcoming referendum.

All the best - Dave
David Siemers
President, UFSO



Upcoming events:

- 3/26-4/3: VONC vote
- Monthly happy hours at Fifth Ward Brewing:
 - 4/4, 4-6pm
 - 5/2, 4-6pm



MEET A MEMBER

"I am happy to be in the union both to honor my heroes of the past and to work collectively with my colleagues here in the present. As a historian I am acutely aware that many securities we take for granted like safe working conditions, equitable pay, and weekends came only after brave union organizers in the past fought for them. I'm proud to be a part of the labor movement tradition. My years in UFSO have repeatedly shown me the value of working collectively to make a difference here at UWO." — Michelle Kuhl, Professor of History

JOIN US!

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



Newsletter questions or ideas? ufso54901@gmail.com

GREETINGS FROM JON SHELTON

(cont'd from p. 1) . Other campuses (from River Falls and Lacrosse to Stevens Point) are planning demonstrations and other public events to shine a light on the necessity of public funding for higher education this spring.

We finally have fair legislative maps, and flipping the legislature could provide us the best opportunity in years to get full UW system funding and collective bargaining back into state statute. We'll need to keep pushing for those things, but make no mistake about it, all the work we are doing now is going to put us in the position to do it. So keep fighting and keep the faith in each other. Solidarity! -- Jon

VONC FAQs (a partial list)

Common Question or Concern	Response
I'm worried about retribution.	Nearly 25% of the faculty signed the petition. There's strength in our numbers-besides, the Faculty Senate voting process is confidential. Faculty have much greater protections than adjuncts or staff. Let's use our privilege to stand up for others.
What's the point? What good will it do?	We need to stand up for what is right even though we can't guarantee what comes next. Our research on votes of no confidence shows that 51% of University presidents resigned or otherwise left within a year.
The financial mess is not the Chancellor's fault. It is the state legislature's. It's a win for the legislature if we vote no confidence.	The Economics department has prepared charts showing that we have consistently been in a worse financial position than other UWs for many years. Every other UW is subject to the same pressures. We are doing worse, far worse, than any other campus. We are voting on the Chancellor's performance, not the legislature. But we can try to hold both parties accountable...vote! Participate!
What about student enrollment? We'll be worse off if it drops more.	Our enrollment management team confirms that student enrollment was not harmed by the blizzard of negative stories in the fall. If all that bad publicity did not negatively affect us, this won't be the thing that does. How many high school seniors even know what a Chancellor is anyway? We need better leadership FOR the students.
What about bad publicity?	We have been responsible in our approach: We insist that we are a good institution that happens to have bad top-level management. We have not gone to the press nor tried to play this saga out in the media.
I really like Provost Martini. Won't this be bad for him?	Provost Martini has been admirably communicative. If an Interim Chancellor is appointed, Provost Martini will continue to do his work.
What if we get someone who is worse?	We don't know what will happen. We do need someone with skill and experience in leading a large academic organization that Andy lacks. We need someone who will balance the budget and not have to slash jobs. We are going to get a new Chancellor sooner or later...so this concern is not prompted by our efforts, it is just a general concern in present-day Wisconsin higher ed.
This is not fair to Chancellor Leavitt.	This is not an indictment of the Chancellor's performance as a human, but an assessment of his performance at this particular job, a job with important consequences for hundreds of people. Given his overall performance, it is not the best for our community to keep him in this job. With power comes responsibility.
I don't know if I even want to vote.	Voting is what separates democracy from monarchy or fascism or a dictatorship. Be a good colleague and stand up for yourself, the institution, and others.