

UFSO UPDATE

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UWO NEEDS OUR VOICES: A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

In taking over the primary responsibility for leading the United Faculty and Staff of Oshkosh this semester from my co-president Dave Siemers – who has done a fantastic job in being a proactive, communicative, and effective leader over the past five months – my goal is to work with our committed Executive Board and the wider membership to continue our gains in improving working conditions here at UWO.

Pursuing this goal will not be easy. As the Chancellor's semester-opening email made clear, UW Oshkosh is once again facing enrollment challenges – with the threat of financial austerity and the deterioration of working conditions that come with it. Rather than despair, however, we at UFSO believe that it would be most productive to build a campus-wide conversation about how what we do in the classroom can be a key part of the solution. In short, we need to assert that teaching is at the center of why students come to and stay at UWO – and to demand, therefore, that teaching be the focus of not only of faculty and staff energies but of administrative investments.

There are a lot of ways we can get involved to advocate for such investments. Firstly, early this semester, the Executive Board of UFSO will be convening two listening sessions – one in person (2/15), one virtual (2/16) – to gather stories and ideas about the challenges you as faculty and staff are facing, as well as any opportunities you might see developing, or any avenues of support you feel would help you in better educating and supporting our students. One set of colleagues we're particularly interested in hearing from is IAS, many of whom face having their teaching assignments raised next year to 15 credits per semester. Given that IAS disproportionately teach first-year students – the very group we most need to support and retain – this increase in the workload of the teaching staff who form the bedrock of the USP seems only likely to exacerbate the university's enrollment and financial troubles, and therefore to directly impact all of us. In addition to the ethical reasons for solidarity with our IAS colleagues, we all have very concrete, practical reasons as well. (cont'd on next page)



QUICK FACTS BUDGET, ADMINISTRATION & FACULTY

- State GPR funding for UW System/student in 1973 (inflation-adjusted to 2021 dollars): **\$12,664**
- State GPR funding for UW System/student in 2021 (2021 dollars): **\$6,320**
- WI's estimated budget surplus as of 1/23/22: a record **\$7.1 billion**
- UW System operating budget, 2023-25 biennium: **\$262.6 million**
 - WI ranking for % of budget going to higher education in the U.S., Midwest: **41st, LAST**
- UW System faculty and staff pay increases: **2% in '22, 2% in '23**
 - U.S. annual inflation rate in 2021, 2022: **7%, 6.5%**
- UW System number of faculty, 2014-2017: **-8%**
- UW System number of administrators, 2014-2017: **+3.5%**
 - **UWO** number of faculty, 2014-2017: **-6%**
 - **UWO** number of administrators, 2014-2017: **+30%**



LABOR CONTEXTS: WHO REPRESENTS THE WORKING CLASS? *OPINION*

BY DAN CUMMINGS, UWO SOCIOLOGY AND HISTORY MAJOR, UFSO INTERN

Wisconsin was once the state of Bob LaFollette, where the Progressive party was once one of the two major parties, where the city of Milwaukee had Socialist party mayors until the 1960s, and where the Socialist Victor Berger was elected to the US Congress. However, this is also the state that unleashed Joe McCarthy and Paul Ryan on the country, and where Scott Walker led the campaign to destroy labor unions while promising prosperity with the Foxconn deal that turned out to be a total failure. The Republican party has managed to successfully carry out a full-on assault on the working class while convincing them that they represent working class interests. The notion of a "liberal elite" has turned many away from not only the Democratic party and labor unions, but also from identifying with their own class interests. The intention is to blur the line between business interests and public interest, to convince workers (cont'd on next page)

UWO NEEDS OUR VOICES

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Another crucial way in which UFSO members and our colleagues can get involved this semester is through the search for a new Provost. UFSO membership is well-represented on the Search Committee, but beyond that, we need to be actively present at open forums, questioning the candidates on their priorities, submitting our feedback, and doing our utmost as a teaching community to ensure that the next Chief Academic Officer of UWO is a student-centered, ideas-driven educator at heart – someone who understands first-hand the challenges we face in the classroom, who shares a vision of the teacher-scholar (or teacher-artist) ideal to which so many of us aspire, and who is steadfastly committed to shared governance and transparent decision-making. Our teaching community is afforded a strong voice in shaping this Provost search process, and it is crucial to the university's future that we use it.

As Dave emphasized in his letter in the previous iteration of this newsletter, we as a union have proven that we can drive positive change – in the past year alone, we have spearheaded campaigns to help save UWO custodians' jobs from privatization and played a substantial role in crafting and passing the new university-wide workload policy, while working hard to place the IAS Bill of Rights (which came out of a Provost-convened workgroup that we requested) at the forefront of the campus conversation. In light of these accomplishments, we have good reason to hope that our active involvement can help shape a better future at work for all of us. If that is to be the case, however, we need more than just your membership: we need your ideas, your engagement, your willingness to be heard. Thank you for being members of this union. I look forward to hearing your voices.

All the best,
Stewart Cole
President, UFSO

Upcoming events:

- 2/15 & 2/16: UFSO Listening Sessions
- 3/2: UFSO Happy Hour at Fifth Ward, 4–6pm
- 2/21 (primary) & 4/4: VOTE! WI Supreme Court (AFT-WI has endorsed Janet Protasewicz)



MEET A MEMBER

Misty McPhee (pictured) is an Environmental Studies professor and proud UFSO member. Why? "I care deeply about the students at UWO and the faculty who teach them. Our University is built on the Wisconsin Idea and a foundation of shared governance and I cannot just sit by and watch while both of these pillars of our educational system deteriorate. UFSO is the most effective way I can advocate for the protection of faculty rights and our students' education."

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WHO REPRESENTS THE WORKING CLASS?

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that they share the same interests with their masters. Labor unions, and "the Left" who represent working class interests, have been blamed for loss of jobs and businesses shutting down or moving overseas, because unions are allegedly greedy and keep demanding more and more privileges and entitlements. Act 10 and Right-to-Work have had their intended consequences of turning non-union workers against union workers, diminishing union membership, to render organized labor largely impotent.

Despite the recent increase of union activity in the US with Starbucks and Amazon workers, Wisconsin remains relatively hostile toward the working class. The Democratic party has notoriously had difficulty appealing to rural voters in recent years. Meanwhile, the Republican party has effectively marketed itself as defending the common American against a conspicuously undefined "liberal elite." To be fair, Democrats have not helped their own cause when undermining Bernie Sanders, a candidate who had broad appeal beyond the Democratic base, and forcing Hillary Clinton down our throats, a candidate who was the physical embodiment of the ambiguous "liberal elite" and was infamously disliked by much of the country, including many liberals. Like any group that has gained power, conservative Democrats have become more dedicated to maintaining control of the party than winning elections. Therefore, rather than allow a popular candidate like Sanders become the presidential nominee and have the party move to the left, they risked losing the election to Trump by backing Clinton.

Neither the Republican party nor the moderates in the Democratic party represent working-class interests. However, despite the Republican's superficial appeal to rural and working-class voters, they fundamentally represent the interest of big business at the expense of workers and common folks. The Democratic party, on the other hand, is not a fundamentally anti-worker party like the Republicans. The problem with the Democratic party is its commitment to moderation—its reluctance to push too hard for working class interests and standing up to big business. Labor unions are the organizations which represent working-class interests, and the party that opposes unionism is the party that is antagonistic to workers. What has been hopeful in recent years is not only the popularity of someone like Bernie Sanders, an Independent who openly identifies as a democratic socialist, but the emergence of figures like Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, Ilhan Omar, and Mandela Barnes. Even though Ron Johnson defeated Barnes in the last election for US Senate, Democrat Tammy Baldwin remains Wisconsin's other Senator, and Wisconsin also reelected Democratic governor Tony Evers. Electing Democrats in and of itself will not eliminate all the threats facing Wisconsin workers, but there does exist an established progressive faction in the Democratic party that, with the support of working class and rural voters would benefit the people of Wisconsin rather than big business. Though ostensibly not partisan, the election for Wisconsin Supreme Court in April may have a lot to say in this regard.

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