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FACULTY SPECIALISTS/CONTINGENT FACULTY AT WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY: A PERSONAL RETROSPECTIVE

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I. INTRODUCTION

In the Spring semester, 2005 I took a sabbatical for the second time in my twenty-nine years as a professor at Western Michigan University (WMU). The dictionary defines a sabbatical as “release from normal teaching duties granted to a professor, as for study or travel.” When faculty, friends and relatives ask me what I did on my sabbatical, I first tell them that I spent the month of January in Aruba; basking in the sun, snorkeling, and playing poker. Everyone seems to like and understand that answer. Then I say that I am writing a brief history of the Faculty Specialist employee category, and I get blank stares in return. Two questions are most often asked: “What is a faculty specialist?” and “Why are you doing that?”

A faculty specialist is what many people in higher education refer to as “contingent faculty.” At most institutions of higher education, the term “contingent faculty” is synonymous with the term “non-tenure track faculty.” In other words, they are “at will” employees with no job security, frequently no benefits, and often only part-time status. Western Michigan University is one of the few institutions of higher education that offer all full-time faculty at least the possibility of becoming eligible for tenure. Even faculty on one-year term appointments have the potential to be transferred

to a tenure line. This is partly due to the union's insistence on protecting tenure by capping one-year renewable contracts at five years of service.

The current Agreement between Western and the WMU AAUP states that the One-Year Renewable Term Appointment "is used for leave-of-absence, sabbatical leave and emergency replacements and for other situations for which this appointment is appropriate on a renewable basis as described in Department Policy Statements and/or with the recommendation of the departmental faculty, but the consecutive appointments shall not exceed five (5) years." (pg. 25) The faculty specialist employment category includes a variety of non-traditional faculty. Some may lack the usual terminal degree in their respective field. Some may work primarily in the clinical arena. Some may teach in areas which are relatively new to institutions of higher education.

There are five categories of specialists at WMU, including: 1) career English language specialists, those who teach the English language to international students; 2) some faculty teaching in the College of Aviation. 3) lecturers; 4) program coordinators; and 5) clinical specialists. Many other universities have some or all of these employment categories. The difference is that at Western, persons occupying these somewhat peripheral roles have an opportunity to qualify for tenure and to participate fully in the academic tasks, privileges and opportunities usually reserved for traditionally-ranked faculty. By using the term peripheral, we do not mean to imply that the roles are less important, less central to the academic mission of the university, nor do we mean that they are of diminished status.

The story of faculty specialists is being recorded here for several reasons. For one thing, I am in a unique position to tell this story. I served as contract administrator of the WMU faculty union from 1992-94, and from 1998-2001. I served as president of the local Chapter of the AAUP from January 2000-August of 2004. I was also a member of the bargaining teams for the faculty union in 1993, 1999, and 2002. I was the author of the original 1999 faculty specialist article in that Agreement. I served on the Advisory Committee which ironed out many of the problems which we shall be considering later on. I rewrote the tenure and promotion articles which allowed for the inclusion of faculty specialists. So I have played a central role in the creation and development of the faculty specialist employee category which gives me a unique perspective.

It is also important to note that I do not claim sole authorship for the idea of faculty specialist. As with any major organizational change there are many people involved in the process. This change does not occur at a point in time, but rather is a gradual process over the course of many years. None of us deserve sole credit. Chet Rogers, the immediate past Associate Provost for Academic Affairs and Director of Academic Collective Bargaining, deserves much credit for his insistence on mutual gains bargaining, his openness to new ideas. He shouldered the responsibility for selling this idea to the deans and vice presidents. Tom Hustoles, longtime chief negotiator for the administration, was another key player who could have easily nixed the concept of faculty specialist but instead was open to innovation. Nancy Barrett, former provost, was a staunch supporter of the concept, although she was gone by the time it became a reality. Dean Janet Pisaneschi, dean of the College of Health and Human Services, was an

initiator of the first committee, in 1990, to study the clinical professoriate which produced a report in November of 1991 entitled “The Clinical Title Series Committee”. She was also on the negotiation subcommittee with me (we being the only two members of that subcommittee) which produced the first contract article in 1999. She was a strong supporter of the idea. I remember saying at the negotiation table in 1999 that “Nancy Barrett and Janet Pisaneschi were the architects of the idea, and I was the carpenter.” I honestly do not know if Provost Barrett would have been in favor of tenure for faculty specialists, but I do know that she championed the development of such an employee category.

Ariel Anderson was president of the WMU-AAUP for some of this process and a member of most of the negotiation teams during the entire time span. She also serves as the Chair of the Collective Bargaining division of the national AAUP and in this role was instrumental in providing national exposure to our work at the local level. Elaine Phillips is an important member of the AAUP’s negotiation teams in 1999 and 2002. She was also a valuable contributor on the joint committee that ironed out many of the difficulties between the ’99 and ’02 contracts. As you can see, there are plenty of people in the cast of this play. I could spend another two or three pages mentioning them, but this would begin to read like the chapter of Genesis in the Bible. Instead I will mention other players as the story unfolds.

Finally, I am telling this story because history has a way of evolving into a kind of mythology if the real facts do not see the light of day. For example, on an unrelated

aspect of the contract which was negotiated in 1993, the February 24, 2005 edition of the WESTERN HERALD student newspaper has a lead story entitled “Spirit Day has little to do with school spirit.” The article goes on to explain that Spirit Day came into existence as a day to honor various religious holidays throughout the school year. “It was not intended originally to be a spirit day, like ‘rah, rah, school,’” according to Thom Myers, news and communications specialist for University Relations. Actually, Spirit Day *was* named in terms of school spirit. It was originally a holiday to commemorate Good Friday. In 1993, the president of the faculty union was an atheist who objected to having this public university celebrate a religious holiday. The faculty negotiation team was naturally unwilling to just give up the extra holiday altogether, so the two 1993 negotiation teams decided to call this holiday Spirit Day to celebrate homecoming weekend and in direct contradiction to the honoring of religious holidays. It is an extra day of holiday that no one really knows what to do with. It was changed from Homecoming Friday because then President Elson Floyd became concerned that our students were leaving the community for a long weekend when classes were cancelled, instead of sticking around and participating in Homecoming events. He changed to location of Spirit Day so that more students would participate in Homecoming events.

II. HISTORY

1. Pre-1996

The first official record with the avowed purpose of establishing a faculty category for employees of Western Michigan University who are not traditionally ranked faculty is the Final Report of The Clinical Title Series Committee in November of 1991. This report, from a committee chaired by Nicki Nelson, a Professor in the Department of

Speech Pathology and Audiology, recommends a plan to be pursued by Dean Pisaneschi. “The plan should address the following concerns: It would be preferable for holders of clinical titles to be eligible for tenure and for regular sources of professorial support, such as merit pay and faculty research funds.... Criteria for tenure and promotion should be adopted that recognize contributions from clinical faculty and remain flexible for evaluating the performance of individuals in different kinds of positions and disciplines... Starting salaries and opportunities for promotion should be equivalent for clinical and regular faculty positions.... flexibility should be allowed; that is, faculty should not be locked in or out of a clinical professorial position, and mechanisms should be in place for making transitions back and forth. (pg. 1)

Clinical workers and their colleagues in the College of Health and Human Services, one of eight colleges at Western, were firmly in favor of a clinical faculty status including tenure as early as 1991. It is fair to say that, at that point in time, they were in a tiny minority. Another group with a special situation was the career English language specialists (CELSIS). The faculty in this small unit, about ten employees, teach international students to speak English as a second language. They do not teach “for-credit” courses within the curriculum. They teach a very different and demanding schedule. Furthermore, they are self-funded, which means that if the students do not come, they do not get paid. They were, until 1999, a special unit of the AAUP and had their own contract and required their own set of negotiations, which was both costly and cumbersome.

The other reason for including lecturers under the faculty specialist umbrella has to do with preparations for the 1993 contract negotiations. In preparation for the 1993 contract negotiations, the faculty negotiation team decided to visit every department in the University. There are about 56 departments. Not every department accepted this invitation, but one that did was the Department of Business Information Systems in the Haworth College of Business.

This department has a history of employing persons having extensive experience in business, but lacking doctoral degrees. They need them for teaching, but the College was unwilling to tenure them. The compromise has been to employ them on one-year term contracts for five years, then interrupting their service for a semester or an academic year, then rehiring them for another five years. By doing so, they are meeting the letter of the contract but not the spirit. This is clearly, in the opinion of the union, a misuse of the one-year term contract, defined above. The extreme hardship for those affected is that these faculty members must face unemployment every five years. During their time off they go naked on health insurance. Persons in this group typically do not have the doctorate.

Pre-1996, the aviation program was a small program in the College of Engineering. The small number of faculty in the program were traditionally-ranked faculty and therefore not an issue. This would change dramatically in 1999.

Program coordinators were included in this employee category because faculty who devote a large portion of their workload to program coordination fall outside of the mainstream of traditionally ranked faculty. I am a social work educator by profession, and in virtually all schools of social work there are coordinators or directors of field education. These professors are responsible for finding, developing, monitoring and communicating with scores of community agencies and their designated field instructors. Fieldwork is an essential element of social work education. This job is not a traditional teaching job. Some schools of social work fill this position with Ph.D.'s, some choose to retain social workers with a wide knowledge of community agencies, but little interest in research, publication, and doctoral studies. At Western, we have had both traditionally ranked faculty and faculty specialists fulfill this role. In the School of Social Work at Western Michigan University, we also have a branch program in Grand Rapids, which serves a five county area north of Kalamazoo. This too is a hybrid job, which includes community relations, student recruitment, coordination of the part-time faculty, and a host of other tasks. The person filling this position as of this writing is also a faculty specialist.

There are two sources of inspiration for including the title of lecturer in the classification of faculty specialists, both equally important. First is the system used by York University. Sometime during the 1990's, the WMU AAUP secured a copy of the York University faculty contract. I used this contract as one of my source documents in planning, writing, and defending the faculty specialist article in our contract. In the York University contract, they specify two streams: professorial and alternate stream faculty.

Alternate Stream faculty have the rank titles of Assistant Lecturer, Associate Lecturer, and Senior Lecturer. In their preamble, the York University contract explains that “the main responsibility of faculty in the Alternate Stream is teaching. Thus, extensive preparation and a large number of contact hours per week in the classroom, laboratory, or studio are required of individuals in this stream.” (Page 27)

So this tenured employee classification at York University is primarily focused on lecturers, although upon closer scrutiny we see that what WMU calls CELCIS and clinical professors fit into the broader category described by York as lecturers. I would often refer to the York faculty union contract to demonstrate the previous existence of faculty specialists. It is always easier to persuade colleagues and the administration to do something if they know that it has already been tried elsewhere.

The second reason for including lecturers is the plight of the Business Information Systems faculty who would lose their jobs every five years and then be rehired months or years later. Naturally, the administration blamed the union for this sad state of affairs. When I heard the heartfelt and passionate pleas of these colleagues, I vowed to find a way, some day, to rectify this situation. The faculty specialist provision in the 1999 contract is an attempt to do just that.

This overview and discussion of the origins of the faculty specialist employee category explains the context which set the stage for the 1996 contract negotiations. The idea can be traced back as far as 1990. Some members of the administration were

predisposed to discussing the concept of a faculty specialist. Some members of the union were also open to the idea. And then the 1996 contract talks began.

2. 1996

I applied for the position of chief negotiator for the 1996 contract negotiations. Charles E. “Chip” Hines was chosen instead. Chip was the first choice of Lyn Bartley, then President of the WMU-AAUP. He was also the first choice of the Executive Committee. His field is accountancy, which has face validity for a chief negotiator. He also has a fire in his belly, while I only have smoldering embers; I can see why he was preferred. I was later asked if I would like to be on the team, but declined to apply for a spot on the team after having been denied the chance to lead the team. Perhaps it was partly my bruised ego. It was partly my wanting to stay out of Chip’s way. At any rate, I was not on the team, and therefore must rely on methods other than direct observation to report what happened. No article was negotiated on the subject of faculty specialists, but a first step was taken, albeit a baby step. A letter of understanding was written and became APPENDIX E of the 1996 contract. The highly controversial nature of the issue is plain to see in the language of the letter: “...the parties agree to a new non-bargaining-unit appointment category designated as a professional specialist/clinical supervisor. The individual holding this appointment is responsible for teaching/supervision in various skill areas, such as flight training in the School of Aviation Science or a clinical experience in the School of Nursing, as well as other designated areas in the University.

The total number of such appointments shall not exceed seven percent (7%) of the total membership of the bargaining unit, and no bargaining unit member shall be assigned involuntarily to this appointment category.

Furthermore, the parties agree that academic freedom is both a basic and valued principle of the academy, and that the University has no intent to erode that valued principle for any individual with instructional responsibilities nor to erode the established tenure system of the University which protects it.” (p. 194)

3. 1999

The next negotiations created Article 20, and the new employee category was given the name Academic Career Specialists (ACS). The new employee category was now in the contract, rather than in the Appendix. Article 20 was written with less than a week remaining in the negotiations. If not for this time pressure, I do not believe that it would have been included. Many questions remained unanswered. How could an ACS be a part of the bargaining unit and not be a faculty member? Are they eligible for sabbaticals? What about job security? If they don't have tenure, do they ever achieve permanent status?

On the one hand, the danger was that if the ACS's did not receive all of the rights of other bargaining unit members, we would be creating a second class--an inferior class, with inferior status. On the other hand, if we gave the ACS's tenure and faculty rank, many of our faculty would almost certainly revolt. Walking this tightrope was not easy.

While the Article reads, “Persons holding this appointment shall be fully participating members of the academic community,” it also reads that “Academic Career Specialists shall have all of the rights and privileges provided by the currentAgreement, except for ...Tenure...and Promotion.” I was particularly proud of this language, because I would then argue for the next three years that all of the provisions of the agreement applied other than tenure and promotion, because of that language. It was often an uphill battle.

Other provisions of the article were probationary status of no more than six years, and continuous appointment “until resignation, retirement, termination for disability, dismissal for cause..., or expiration of the recall period in the event of layoff.” I did not tell anyone, even on our own team, but that language was lifted directly from our tenure article. In other words, while we called it “continuous appointment,” I constructed it to be as much like tenure as possible, with an eye to the future.

The basis for this idea was actually provided by Steve Finner, a former union organizer for the national AAUP. When I had called him in 1996 (I was at the time, Contract Administrator of our local Chapter, even though I wasn’t on the negotiation team) at the direction of Lyn Bartley, then President, to ask if national would object to the inclusion of professional specialists in the contract. Steve is the kind of guy who liked to talk in metaphors and similes--in other words, he is a sociologist. He was skeptical. Steve objected to the unwillingness of Western’s administration to give tenure to persons in this employment category. I had said to him that “the administration seems to be

willing to provide protection in terms of academic freedom, and some kind of continuous appointment. They just refuse to call it tenure.” Steve replied: “If it walks like a duck, talks like a duck and swims like a duck, it’s a duck.”

Oddly enough, this provided ammunition for both sides of the argument. In 1996, the opponents of professional specialists, who were in the majority of the union leadership in 1996, argued that since they don’t deserve tenure, therefore we cannot include them in the contract. They frequently cited Steve Finner, and his duck statement, spinning it to mean that if the administration was unwilling to call it tenure, then it could not be included.

Then, in 1996, when I was writing Article 20, I adopted the strategy of making continuous appointment as much like tenure as I could, even to the point of using the same language, so that in the next round of negotiations, I could argue that continuous appointment is for all intents and purposes synonymous with tenure and if it walks like a duck, looks like a duck quacks like a duck...why not call it a duck?

4. 2002

One of the provisions of Article 20 in the 1999 Agreement was that “Additional criteria for continuing status, evaluation, and promotion not listed in Articles 17 and 18 shall be developed by a joint study committee appointed by the University President and approved by the President of the Chapter, with changes incorporated into this article no later than January, 2000, to suit the unique characteristics of Academic Career

Specialists.” So even though we did not have time to completely resolve all of the issues regarding ACS’s in 1999, we provided for a continuing process of collaboration to do so. This reminds me of those pioneers in labor relations experimenting with the concept of a living contract, which is always open to revision, rather than having one point in time as a negotiation process.

In 2002, both sides agreed to tenure and promotion for what we now call Faculty Specialists. One reason we decided to change the name was to narrow the differences between them and traditionally ranked faculty. It is in everyone’s best interests that faculty specialists be perceived as different in role, not diminished in stature, not stigmatized, and not inferior.

There were two members of the administration’s negotiation team who were central to establishing the faculty specialist employee category. One was Thomas P. Hustoles, the chief negotiator for Western in every contract negotiation since the union was established in 1976, and Chet Rogers, the highly skilled and imaginative Director of Academic Collective Bargaining during this time period. Tom Hustoles is on record as being in favor of mutual gains bargaining. In a paper entitled “Faculty Collective Bargaining: Past, Present, and Future,” presented in 1999 at a conference at Eastern Michigan University, Hustoles writes: “Always consider first the approach of mutual gains bargaining, since if it works, it will be quicker, easier, and more pleasant than traditional bargaining.” (p. 12) In my opinion, mutual gains bargaining was partly responsible for achieving consensus on the issue of faculty specialists.

Chet Rogers was very important in achieving faculty status for the specialists. It was he who dubbed the extant faculty “traditionally ranked.” It was he who took the fight to the Chairs and Deans and came back with a plurality in favor. He made no bones about the fact that there were many opponents still standing and they were not a happy group. Chet Rogers also persuaded members of the union leadership to attend a workshop on mutual gains bargaining which was being held annually and sponsored by M.I.T. and Harvard. We were reluctant, we were suspicious, and we were skeptical, but we went, and Chet went too, and it did help us to achieve several remarkable goals.

At the request of the President of Western in 2002, Elson Floyd, the teams agreed to a one year compensation package and to postpone revisions to the health care article until the summer of 2003. Then Elson left to become Chancellor of the Missouri system of higher education in the winter of 2003. The vote on the 2002 provisions of the contract by the faculty was 285 yes, 183 no. This was considered a close vote for our union. But partly due to the opposition stirred up by providing tenure to the Faculty Specialists, the vote on the 2003 revisions to the Agreement was 246 yes, and 225 no. It passed by a scant 21 votes. Whew. A big part of this close vote was again opposition to the idea of faculty specialists.

5. The Present

As I write, the 2005-06 academic year is beginning. Faculty specialists are a regular part of our bargaining unit. There is a new negotiating team at work for the

Chapter, all of whom are new to the task. Based on what we are hearing, there are few, if any, changes anticipated for the Faculty Specialist Article. The only controversy is regarding order of layoff. One way to sell the idea of tenure for Faculty Specialists as not being threatening to traditionally ranked faculty was to place tenured faculty specialists in line for layoff previous to the layoff of non-tenured traditionally ranked faculty on tenure-track appointment. The current team is proposing that the order be reversed. The proposal is that in the new contract, untenured traditionally ranked faculty will be laid off before tenured faculty specialists.

To show how far we have come, the current chief negotiator, Jon Neil writes the following in a June 8, 2005 Negotiation Update: “At the risk of stating the obvious, faculty specialists are faculty. And tenured faculty specialists are tenured faculty. In my opinion, the tenure of a faculty specialist should be every bit as sacrosanct as the tenure of a traditionally ranked faculty. I assure you that I was very concerned about the faculty specialist position when it first appeared in the Contract. I was even more concerned about the removal of the caps on the number of faculty specialists who could be hired as faculty specialists, etc. However, I came to realize that our Contracts have never prevented the Administration from hiring and tenuring faculty with the qualifications that faculty specialists have...In short, I now hold the position that the faculty specialist article was at worst, a very small concession to the Administration, and at best, recognition and protection for a group of faculty who are critical to curriculum delivery in many departments.”

III. The Joint Study Committee of 1999-2000

There were two committees which emerged from the 1999 contract, one to facilitate the transition of the language specialists into the bargaining unit. The other was the joint study committee on Academic Career Specialists. A copy of the Language Specialists' report is in the Appendix. I did want to elaborate on the issues considered by the Joint Study Committee, because they are more generic, and many of the decisions reached in the Joint Study Committee were extended to cover the Language Specialists.

It has been stated at different times and by different people that God is in the details, and that the devil is in the details. Probably both are true. The Joint Study Committee dealt with the details of bringing faculty specialists into the faculty fold. We agreed that faculty specialists should have the right to serve on department, college, and university committees. Why should traditionally ranked faculty have all the fun? Perhaps one of the most contentious issues is whether or not to include faculty specialists on tenure and promotion committees. It was decided that tenured faculty specialists could serve on tenure committees. On the other hand, traditionally ranked faculty being promoted to full professor must have a research record. Most faculty specialists are not required to do any research nor to publish. Therefore, faculty specialists cannot sit in judgment on promotions to full professor.

Faculty specialists are eligible for faculty travel, research, and creative activity funds. They are also eligible for sabbatical leave. I had originally conceived of faculty specialists as only tenure-track and tenured, because of the continuing abuse of the one-

year term temporary faculty employee category by the administration, which is explained above. But when push came to shove, I agreed with Chet Roger's request to make the faculty specialist appointment types identical to the traditionally ranked faculty employee types, because of the need to make them as much alike as possible, to provide flexibility for the administration, and finally, because I thought that this was a battle that I could not win.

With regard to work of the unit, the differences in the workload of the faculty specialist will be detailed in the letter of appointment. Ranks were decided by the Joint Committee to include Senior ACS, Associate ACS, Assistant ACS, and ACS Instructor. This was changed in the 2002 contract to Faculty specialist I (equivalent to Instructor), faculty specialist II (equivalent to Assistant Professor), and Master Faculty Specialist (equivalent to Associate Professor). Here again we were faced with a dilemma. We want to preserve the status of full professor as not being attainable by specialists, but we did not want to put a ceiling on advancement for faculty specialists at the level of associate professor. The compromise is the availability of a merit-based step increase for master faculty specialists, which is detailed in the article on economic compensation. Every six years, a master faculty specialist can apply for a step increase of \$2000. They go through the equivalent of a promotion review, with the final decision being made by the provost.

Caps

There was extreme concern by some that the advent of faculty specialists as an employee category would flood the Western campus with a horde of faculty specialists, causing the appointment of traditionally ranked faculty to dry up to a mere trickle. To

stem the tide, the 1996 Agreement limited faculty specialists to seven percent (7%). The 1999 Agreement limited faculty specialists to ten percent (10%) of the total number of traditionally ranked faculty. Over the course of years of experience, it became clear to the leadership of the union that capping the number of faculty specialists was unnecessary. We therefore omitted a cap in the 2002 Agreement. There are currently fewer faculty specialists than there were in 1999, about seventy as of this writing. There are, in comparison, a total of eight hundred and forty-one bargaining unit members.

Critics

There has been no shortage of critics when it comes to the faculty specialist employee category. Dr. Joseph Belonax has written that “The new structural provisions, raise the status of ‘faculty specialists’ to that of the ‘traditionally ranked faculty’...without having to undertake and complete the arduous path toward the terminal degree of an earned doctorate.” Elsewhere he writes “The very foundation of tenure has been compromised. Not only has this resulted in a devaluation of the careers of tenured faculty, for the untenured faculty, it has questioned the priority and value of establishing a research agenda and publishing new knowledge.” Here are some other comments culled from e-mails.

From two retired faculty: “(We) have been more than just aware of the specialist issue in this Agreement. We actively appealed to our former colleagues to vote ‘no’ from our relatively impotent positions as emeriti. I have also been in direct contact with President Floyd. I said, in part: ‘(I cannot) explain how such a disastrous structural

proposal...could occur under your leadership, ultimately, as your responsibility...We are vitally concerned about our university, our colleagues and the post-graduation reputation of our students. We are now faced with a proposal that will diminish the stature of the university in ways that will undo the gains in reputation and excellence that you...have worked so hard and successfully to achieve. More parochially, it will reinforce the anti-research bias of the union, making the union an impediment rather than an asset for the University.”

From a faculty member: “Welcome to WMU, Kalamazoo’s other community college.”

Another faculty member: “I think that a large number of us were hoodwinked by the recent contract....In the traditional academic liberal arts and sciences, the progression of degrees closely parallels the medieval guild progression of apprentice, journeyman, master. Given organized labor’s roots in the guild system, it seems surprising to me that the AAUP did not effectively perform the first role of its guild forebears and restrict membership... When individuals having lesser qualifications can perform the same tasks and can sit in judgment of fully qualified faculty, our value as professors has directly diminished...”

And another: “So now that they are members of the union and can get tenure we give away the cap and open Pandora’s Box? Just because some members have been voting on these tenure and promotion committees before makes it right? My question is why did you give the cap away?”

Kudos

Piper Fogg began her article on faculty specialists at Western this way in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*: “In a move that the AAUP called ‘a historic breakthrough,’ a group of full-time adjunct faculty members at Western Michigan University has won the right to become eligible for tenure.” She ended the article with this quote, “ ‘It’s hard for me to understand why people are worried,’ said Gary Mathews, president of the AAUP chapter at Western Michigan. ‘It doesn’t take anything away from the regular faculty. It creates a more secure and accepted auxiliary faculty.’”

Jordan E. Kurland, Associate General Secretary of the AAUP, in a letter to Ariel Anderson, wrote, “I take real pleasure in reporting that our Committee A, after discussing the tenure provisions in the recently (2002) negotiated WMU successor collective bargaining agreement, voted to commend the AAUP chapter for its fine achievement in bringing previously non-tenure track faculty positions into the tenure system.”

The Committee on Part-time and Non-tenure Track Appointments of the AAUP also commended the WMU Chapter and the President of WMU “for their historic breakthrough in defense of tenure and academic freedom. The developments at WMU stand out in stark contrast to the troubling trends away from tenure...Farsighted chapters and institutions are now seeking ways to extend tenure’s purview because it is necessary to safeguard the integrity of higher education. Western Michigan stands out as a fine example of academic citizenship that we can only hope others will soon follow.”

Finally, in the September-October, 2003 issue of *ACADEME*, this letter to the editor by Jil Hanifan was written to respond to an earlier letter critical of Western's innovation.

“TO THE EDITOR: Leave it to an English professor to make tenure sound like incarceration. In a letter published in the March-April *ACADEME*, James McCormick reacts to the tenuring of ‘faculty specialists’ at Western Michigan University by envisioning two scenarios that he describes as undesirable. Tenure, he warns, could mean that faculty specialists will ‘be forever doomed to teach (without health benefits) lower-level, work-intensive grunt courses, to work in temporary and crowded offices, and to be denied funding for research and conferences.’ On the other hand, it could mean that faculty specialists (lecturers, clinical instructors, and academic professionals) might poach on some of his prerogatives, like teaching upper-level courses and participating in committee work. The latter scenario, he asserts, means ‘departmental need, committee input, and university interest will be subverted.’

Apparently, academic freedom isn't worth mentioning. When armies of nontenured faculty publish books and articles and teach thousands of courses with tenure's protection, how important can arguments for ‘academic freedom’ really be? For McCormick, tenure seems entirely a matter of job security and rank privilege, and he openly expresses what tenured faculty are usually too embarrassed to admit publicly: that tenure might be less about defending academic freedom than it is about defending status, power, and perks. For decades, fiscally strapped administrations have made permanent a ‘temporary’ faculty. Although universities claim they need the flexibility offered by nontenured faculty in order to respond to changing programs and enrollments,

the demand for a ‘special’ faculty to teach grunt courses is deeply entrenched. Far from subverting institutional interests, faculty specialists are meeting a demonstrated need. However, our pervasive exploitation is a consequence of shortsighted, long-term ethical and managerial failures by both faculty and administration.”

The road to establishing faculty specialists as important and valued members of the faculty, the union, and the university, has been long and rocky. The anxiety resulting from this change has been apparent in many members of the university community. Those of us who provided the leadership for this change have been roundly criticized, publicly attacked, and even reviled by members of our own community of scholars. On the other hand, the support and proclamations from some sectors of higher education have been many and generous. Whether we have made an important and lasting change in the nature of the professorate only time will tell. One thing is for sure: people will continue to have strong feelings both pro and con.