Panel: Retirement Security for Precarious Employees

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Negotiating a Retirement Benefit for Adjunct Faculty

The 2016 contract negotiations between Wayne State University Administration and the Union of Part-time Faculty (UPTF), AFT Local 477
Wayne State University

• Presenter has been Lead Negotiator for the UPTF, AFT Local 477 from 2007 through present.

• WSU is a heavily unionized campus with an AFT affiliated Graduate Student Local and a Full-time Faculty local that is both an AAUP and AFT affiliate. The UPTF is exclusively composed of part-time faculty.

• WSU is located in Detroit Michigan and the home of the Walter Reuther Labor Library and Archives, WSU adjuncts are drawn from over 80 cities and towns in southeast Michigan and beyond. With a Medical, Business, Law and Engineering School, as well as campuses in the suburbs, there are many UPTF members that pay dues to the local but do not really identify as adjunct faculty.
UPTF Demographics

• The UPTF has about 720 bargaining unit members, virtually unchanged over the last 2 years, but down 10% from Fall 2016.

• Turnover is relatively high, especially among PTF with 5 years or less, at WSU.

• That said, a current survey of union members shows 28% having been employed at WSU for more than 15 years, while another 24.4% has been at WSU for between 10 and 14 years.
History of UPTF Negotiations on Retirement

• First Contract negotiations were in 2007-2008. CBA established a joint Administration-Union (2N) Committee to look at benefits. Outcomes included:
  • Employee paid Dental and Vision Insurance
  • Part-time Faculty (PTF) eligibility in the tuition reimbursement/remission program (effective fall 2012).
  • PTF participation in 403b, but with no employer match (effective fall 2012).

• In 2016, one plank of the Bargaining Platform was some sort of employer match.
Retirement Negotiations (concluded)

• It was a heavy lift. Virtually everything was settled by the end of April, except retirement.

• WSU has a state-wide elected board. We walked away from the table, spoke before the Board of Governors, and asked the State Federation President to talk to the University President.

• By the last week in June, the President had agreed to a \( \frac{3}{4} \) of one percent salary match to take effect in September 2017.

• The article was signed on July 1.
Images from the Retirement Village
Adjunct Faculty
Retirement Home
UPTF AND THE WSU RETIREMENT PROGRAM

• All full-time employees of WSU who participate in the retirement program receive matching contributions. Union of Part-Time Faculty (UPTF) members, some 750 in total, do not. They may, however, contribute to the program without a match. A match is an important job benefit, as it maximizes the value of these accounts. Without a match, we will find it increasingly difficult to retire.

• The UPTF, therefore, has asked for a minimal match, one that will not cost the university even 1% of the current total cost of the UPTF to the university, although we would expect that the cost could grow after 2020.

• In Michigan, all part-time faculty who teach at Community Colleges are in the State Retirement system and the Colleges pay a significant fraction of the cost, although State funding for the retirement system cushions the expense. State Universities have largely opted out of the Michigan Retirement Program and do not receive funding earmarked for retirement. Consequently, part-time faculty working 49% of full time or less (the definition of part-time faculty here at WSU) are explicitly not part of the retirement program match that is provided to full-time employees.

• This is unfair to a group of WSU employees who teach approximately 3,000 classes annually; many of whom have been employed by WSU for 10, 15, 20 years or more.

DO THE RIGHT THING, WSU!
PROVIDE PART-TIME FACULTY WITH A RETIREMENT MATCH!
PTF may participate in the University 403(b) Retirement Program.

A. Any represented PTF who has completed two consecutive years of employment at WSU and has a reasonable expectation of employment in both the fall and winter semester is eligible to enroll.

B. Once qualified, an Employee may enroll at any time.

C. Once enrolled, an Employee may contribute up to the maximum permitted by law.

D. Pending IRS approval of the University’s revised 403(b) plan, beginning with the fall semester of 2017, the university will contribute three quarters of one percent (0.75%) of salary to the retirement account of any participating employee contributing at least five percent (5%) of salary.

E. If the University matching contribution for the PTF program exceeds $50,000 in Academic Year 2017–18, the salary increase for the Fall of 2018 shall be two percent (2%) rather than two and one half percent (2.5%) as stated in Article XIX, Salary. If the University matching contribution for the PTF program exceeds $75,000 in Academic year 2017–18, the salary increase for the Fall of 2018 shall be one and three quarters percent (1.75%) rather than two and one half percent (2.5%) as stated in Article XIX, Salary.

F. If the University matching contribution for the PTF retirement program exceeds $60,000 in Academic Year 2018–19, the PTF salary increase for the Fall of 2019 shall be two percent (2%) rather than two and one half percent (2.5%) as stated in Article XIX, Salary. If the University matching contribution for the PTF retirement program exceeds $85,000 in Academic Year 2018–19, the salary increase for Fall of 2019 shall be one and three quarters percent (1.75%) rather than two and one half percent (2.5%) as stated in Article XIX, Salary.
UPTF Participation in AY 2018-19

• HR reports that 98 PTF are in the program, about 14% of bargaining unit members this year.

• HR reported that many of these signed up after January 1.

• By dividing the total amount the University contributed to PTF retirement by .0075 we can arrive at the PTF salary represented. This calculation indicates about 38.6% of the annual aggregate salary of the unit received a partial match during the current AY.

• Comparing the two percentages, it would seem that the 14% who are participating are among the higher paid in the unit, as measured both by salary per credit hour, and by the number of credit hours taught.
Going Forward

• We are currently preparing to bargain in the fall. Thus, we have circulated a bargaining survey, both a paper survey distributed face to face by our activists, and an online version. It closed on March 25 with about 46% of members responding...we did not poll “free riders”.

• 25% of respondents said they participated in the 403b program.

• An additional 60% said they would if the match was higher.