

Professionally Speaking

NEWSLETTER of the
Wisconsin Science Professionals



Affiliated with American Federation of Teachers

AFT-Wisconsin, Wisconsin State AFL-CIO



JUNE 2007

De-mystifying your contract

by Matt Roach, District 1 Representative

First, let me thank you for taking the time to fill out the bargaining survey. It is probably the best way for our union leadership to get a good idea of the issues that are important to our members. Member comments revolved around several themes that we hope to address with the State in bargaining, but they also contained some misperceptions about the bargaining process or about our contract and how it works.

Two of the responses dealt with different aspects of advancing through the classification system. One member asked about advancement in the progression system, saying, "I could be employed here for 10 years and still just be an entry level" employee. If you are getting good performance reviews, that should not happen. The pay progression series that includes the entry level for Science Professionals is a semiautomatic progression and, unless you have been receiving unsatisfactory performance evaluations, you should be at the senior level after three years. If three years have gone by and you are not at the senior level, contact a WSP steward or District Rep (listed at www.wspunion.org) and let us see what we can do to help you.



Another member asked about opportunities to go from senior to advanced. This issue is important to a large number of our members, so union leaders will continue to address it. However, the member went on to reference reaching the "psicm-level" of the senior range. PSICM is an old term that applied to the pay system that was used about eight years ago, and that system has not been used since our positions were broadbanded. Under the broadband system, all senior and advanced employees are in the same pay range, which is 15-03.

As of this writing, pay in that range runs from \$20.960/hour to \$44.121/hour (and no, no one that we represent makes close to the ceiling). Although it is generally true that advanced employees have higher salaries than seniors, that is not always the case. And, unfortunately, under the current system, a promotion to advanced does not come with a guaranteed raise, as it once did.

We hope to use this forum to help clear up other misconceptions about how the system works. In the meantime, read your contract and remember that managers often do not know what our contract requires of them. If you do not understand something, please ask and we will try to clear it up.



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WSP and the federal budget

by Gary Steffen, WSP President

Some WSP positions are federally funded. It is therefore important to monitor the federal budget. We rely on Bill Cunningham, an AFT National lobbyist with 30+ years on Capitol Hill, both to keep us informed about the potential impacts of federal budget cuts on WSP positions in Wisconsin, and to be our voice in Washington when our jobs are threatened.

But we also need to help ourselves. If you don't know the source(s) of funding for your position, make it a point to ask your supervisor. Let your union representative know if your position is federally funded. With your help, the WSP leadership can monitor and advocate for the continued funding of the necessary jobs that we all do.

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PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

by Gary Steffen

Collective bargaining and the UW

In his budget, the Governor proposes collective bargaining rights for academic staff in the UW System. Various UW System management organizations claim that collective bargaining rights will result in lower salaries for academic staff. Mendacious (misleading) is one term that comes to mind when these tenure sharks talk.

A recent audit of Wisconsin's Technical College System found that teachers at our technical colleges have higher salaries than professors at the smaller UW-System campuses. Why the disparity? Academic staff at technical colleges have collective bargaining rights, while university professors do not.

Salary is only one facet of work that can be addressed in collective bargaining. Nonunion academic staff in the UW System are essentially on perpetual probation. In a recent issue of a Madison weekly newspaper, former employees of one UW-Madison

academic department described the working conditions there as a *Lord of the Flies* environment. Working conditions for academic staff in the UW System vary widely, and collective bargaining would help ensure better basic working conditions for all academic staff.

As WSP members, we have seen the positive results of our right to bargain collectively. Support the same right for UW System academic staff.

Announcing the 2007 Bargaining Team and Bargaining Support Team

Bargaining Team Members: Doug Swanson, AFT-W Staff Representative, chief spokesperson for the WSP bargaining team; Lisa Treffinger,



Bargaining Chair, DOJ, Milwaukee; Gary Steffen, DNR, Madison; Chiara Wuensch, DOJ, Milwaukee; Matt Roach, SLH, Madison; Cheryl Laatsch, DNR, Oshkosh; Alan Hopfensperger, Commerce, Madison.

Bargaining Support Team Members:

Ken Olson, DOJ, Madison; Bill Wells, SLH, Madison; Kelly Oneil, District 7 Representative, DNR, Mercer; Brooke Ludwig, Treasurer, DNR, Eau Claire; Sara Schreiber, Membership Secretary, DOJ, Milwaukee; Dino Tsoris, District 1 Representative, DNR, Madison; Ken Walz, DHFS, Milwaukee; Karley Hujet, DOJ, Madison; Marie Stewart, DNR, Madison; Mark McCloskey, DATCP, Madison; Liz Temple, DHFS, Madison.

Several team members attended AFT-W training on March 23 and 24. The training was very informative, especially for those who are new to the bargaining process and for those who have been away from the table for awhile.

Thanks to all who took the time to fill out the bargaining survey! We sent out over 1400 surveys and we received over 600 responses. Now the bargaining and support teams will go through the information gathered from the surveys and will contact those individuals who were willing to help collect salary information.

Squeaky wheels

by Matt Roach, District 1 Representative

Fellow members, you might recall that, during the last bargaining session, 39 Science Professional classifications received a market stratification of up to \$2.50/hour, on top of the general wage adjustments for all of us. By any measure, this was a large increase, but it did not go to everyone. In the normal bargaining process, negotiated increases come from either the normal, state budgeted compensation reserve, or from a pool of “market money” that the state has set aside for classifications that need larger adjustments. But this time was different. The money used for this market stratification came out of the budgets of the various state agencies sitting at the table, most notably the DNR.

Although the union attempted to include the “forgotten” classifications, the agencies employing the majority of those people absolutely refused. Those agencies claimed poverty (DATCP, DHFS), denied there was a problem or, in some cases (UW, WSLH), refused to talk to us at all. That refusal created a two tier wage scale among the Science Professionals. Since that time, the DNR awarded its chemists discretionary compensation awards (DCAs) to bring them up into the first tier of Science Professionals. Chemists at UW and DATCP have now been doubly disrespected, being made second class not only within the larger group of other Science Professionals, but also within their own classification.

The new round of bargaining is an opportunity to make the “forgotten eight” classifications whole in relation to our other members. Though we normally do not reveal details of our bargaining strategy in this forum, it should be obvious to all that this issue is a priority. Your union leadership will be calling on you to put pressure on your agencies during this round of bargaining. It is time to think, plan, and *agitate* for a better deal.

You might think that your voice will not make a difference. Not true.

The ball started rolling at the DNR when the foresters began contacting their supervisors and HR department about their low pay. That eventually led the entire agency to look at all of its Science classifications and to find a lot of money for them.

More recently many, many employees at the WSLH complained when the contract first came out. They complained to their supervisors, to the lab administration, and to the UW administration. They expressed how angry, disappointed, and disrespected they felt at being excluded from what was probably the only significant raise we will see for some time. And they had an effect! Because of those voices, the UW asked to sit down with WSP and work toward a solution. We have met three times in the past five months.

Those meetings would never have occurred without the pressure of our members. In fact, that outpouring of unhappiness was specifically cited at our first meeting as one of the reasons that management decided to talk to us. The emails, letters, and phone calls let

the administration know that they had created a corrosive situation, that the disrespect shown by management at the table had begun to erode the morale of the people who make the lab run. Ultimately, management came to the conclusion that they had made a mistake. Your voices did matter.

Will these talks bear any fruit for the classifications at the WSLH? At this point, that is an open question. But the ongoing talks show that expressing your opinion can have an effect. Will such an effort work at every agency? Maybe not, but it is a certainty that doing nothing will get you nothing, as management will assume that you are satisfied.

Remember to be respectful if you do express your displeasure. Be forceful and blunt, but keep in mind the old adage about catching more flies with honey than with vinegar.

Agitate, agitate, agitate.

Introducing the new WSP logo



**Thanks to Aaron Matson, Forensic Imaging Specialist,
for the new design and to all others
who submitted their ideas for a new WSP logo!**

WSP 2007 Convention

by Gary Steffen

The annual WSP convention was held this year on May 5, 2007, at the AFT-Wisconsin Office in Madison. We had 18 delegates in attendance. We heard speeches from Chris Runge who spoke about opportunities for training in leadership; Candice Owley, who is on the AFT-National board and works at community Hospital in Milwaukee; Jim Mangan, who is a staff rep from AFT-Wisconsin; and Scott Spector, also from AFT-Wisconsin informed us of Wisconsin legislative initiatives and gave an update on the budget analysis.

The business portion of the convention took place following lunch. Committee reports were given and constitutional amendments were voted on. You can see the amendments that passed here.

Constitutional Amendments

Amendment 1

ARTICLE V. DISTRICTS

SECTION 2. Each district will have at least one District Representative. Additional District Representatives shall be added for every one hundred (100) represented employees or major fraction thereof (i.e. the next 51 or more); this number will be determined at the time of each election. To be eligible for a District Representative position a member must be in good standing for a period of not less than ~~thirty (30)~~ fourteen (14) days preceding his/her nomination.

C. McCurry friendly amendment to keep "than".

Amendment 2

ARTICLE VI. MEMBERSHIP AND DUES

SECTION 5. VOTING: For the purpose of voting in Union elections and referendums a member must be in good standing for at least fourteen (14) days. For the purpose of contract ratification a member must be in good standing for at least ~~seven (7) days~~ fourteen days (14) prior to the ratification mailing.

Amendment 3

ARTICLE VII. WISCONSIN SCIENCE PROFESSIONALS CONVENTION

SECTION 4. ELIGIBILITY FOR DELEGATE: To be eligible as a convention delegate a member must be in good standing for a period of not less than ~~thirty (30)~~ fourteen (14) days preceding his/her nomination.

Amendment 4

ARTICLE XI. EXPENSE REIMBURSEMENTS, STIPENDS, AND DUES REBATES

SECTION 6. Dues will be rebated to WSP members of the WSP Executive Committee (as defined in X.9.A), the grievance chair, and the newsletter editor. The rebate shall not exceed the actual dues paid by any such member. Dues will also be rebated to the respective Bargaining Chair from

appointment through contract signing by the Governor or UWHC Authority Exec Board if he/she is not already receiving a dues rebate for another position held. This rebate to the bargaining chair will be effective with the contract beginning July 1, 2005.

Amendment 5

ARTICLE XI. EXPENSE REIMBURSEMENTS, STIPENDS, AND DUES REBATES

SECTION 7. DISTRICT REPRESENTATIVE STIPEND: Representative Council members attending scheduled and special meetings of the Council shall receive an attendance

stipend after attending an entire meeting, in addition to any authorized expenses incurred. The amount of the stipend shall not exceed one month dues assessed to a member and will be determined by the Executive ~~Council~~ Committee.

Amendment 6

ARTICLE VI. DUES:

SECTION 3. DUES:

B. The local's portion of the monthly dues shall be determined by a majority of the voting strength of the delegates present and voting at the convention. Dues shall be payable bi-weekly/monthly to the Treasurer on a payroll deduction basis as provided under the laws of the State of Wisconsin. Part time members

and part time Maintenance of Membership employees shall be rebated only the AFT-Wisconsin and AFT dues deducted, on a prorated basis. Part time members and part time Maintenance of Membership employees are defined as employees whose appointments are 50% or less annual salary is \$32,000 or less.

Thanks to all who attended. We encourage all to attend this event next year.



New leadership in WSP

by Gary Steffen

WSP is pleased to introduce the new representatives for the 2007-2009 term. Please welcome Percy Mather and Greg Zukowski who join incumbents Matt Roach, Roger Springman, and Constantine (Dino) Tsoris in District 1. Susen Trail is the new District Representative in District 3. Rick Thorbjornsen is continuing in his representation of District 5. We also welcome Kelly O'Neil as a new District Representative in District 7. Also worth noting are the others who are serving our membership in other positions. President, Gary Steffen; First Vice President, Lisa Treffinger; Second Vice President, Ron Grasshoff; Recording Secretary, Chiara Wuensch; Treasurer, Brooke Ludwig; Membership Secretary, Sara Schreiber; AFT-Wisconsin Vice President, John Burger; Grievance Chair, Carol McCurry; and Duane Popple, District Representative in District 6. Be sure to contact any of these individuals if you have any questions, concerns, or want to join the union.

Was it a “Blacklist”?

by Gary Steffen

WSP has been dealing with this issue for over a year. Through AFT-W we have made two open records requests and have asked several questions about the information received from the requests. Over a year ago an Excel spreadsheet was brought to the attention of WSP. The file was on a file service at the DNR and could be viewed by any employee in the agency. Several people did view the spreadsheet and the nature of spreadsheet raised some concerns.

What was so special about this file? The file was titled Forestry Retirement Data sorted 55+.xls. It listed all the positions within Forestry and had the class, age, region, station, etc. listed so that a person could identify each individual. There were two columns of interest – Class and “Hand.” The reason class was of interest was because after one position the following was entered – “example of a manual adjustment.” The Hand column was probably meant to be handicapped but that term has not been used in over 20 years and had been replaced with disability. There were 12 people identified with a “9” in the “Hand” column adding to the confusion was that at least 4 of the people identified do not have any handicap nor have asked for any accommodation. Any information about a disability for an employee is to be kept confidential. So when this information appeared in an Excel spreadsheet on a file service that anyone could view it is a serious breach of confidentiality.

In the initial request for information the response on what “9” meant was answered by a statement that it was part of the information that came from HR and there was no explanation for it. The original information also had all non WSP employees redacted (blacked out) except for the other rows with the number 9 in the hand column. There was one station had 3 people with a “9” in the hand column. Were all 3 “handicapped”?

After this list came out I contacted all but one of the WSP represented people and all of them told me they had been denied training, recogni-

tion, or a transfer. They were all good Foresters that did a good job. They had been outspoken on issues important to them at some time since 2002. The probability that I would have encountered the same stories with 4 other random people in the Forestry program would have very high odds against it. If this is the norm then this is something that is not good. Adding to that the “example of a manual adjustment” after a classification title for an individual that has since left the agency and the “Hand” column “9s” could be seen as being related.

The only meeting on the subject produced no answers to shed any light on this topic. After the meeting we were given the explanation that people with the “9” had a disability but that this information was closely guarded and not even shared with supervisors. Then what was it doing in this spreadsheet? Also, how could that be possible when none of the people I talked to had a legally defined disability. The individual that was using the spreadsheet did not remember who had sent the spreadsheet to him and could find no emails that it came in. Adding to this was the explanation that another retired employee may have been responsible for the 9s. The people we met with said that since this person was

retired they could do nothing more. We pointed out that this employee had returned as an LTE and that they could contact the individual. After the meeting they did contact the individual and this person had no knowledge of the spreadsheet or what was in it. From our point of view some of the answers have been evasive with explanations both coming after other incomplete answers have been given. On the other hand, all the answers given to us could be 100% truthful. This is something that we will never know the answer to. One thing that can be guaranteed is that any Forester marked with a “9” will be vigorously defended by WSP and AFT-W should they go through the discipline process. We will also make it a point to let the agency know that disability information about an employee is to be kept confidential and not passed out to anyone that really has no use for this information.

Classification and Compensation

by Gary Steffen

WSP is an organization of 100% volunteers. There are always more issues than volunteers to work on them. Two of the biggest issues that does not get enough time are classification and compensation. The representative board wants to create a committee of members to address these very important issues. If you have concerns about your current job classification and the lack of advancement opportunity then this is the committee for you.

The amount of time required will be less than 20 hours a year. WSP is only looking for three volunteers to help guide and support the work needed to get positive changes in our classification system. It will not make a difference whether you are in northern or southern Wisconsin because we will make use of teleconferences or whatever to accommodate the needs of the volunteers.

If you are interested in making a difference, then please send an email to President@wspunion.org expressing your desire to help us help you. Committee appointments are for one year, with the option to renew if members are interested in doing so. We can guarantee that you will learn a lot about how positions are classified. Please consider volunteering. Send your email of interest by Friday, June 29.

What have WSP and AFT-W been working on?

by Gary Steffen

We need to communicate the answer to WSP members. One of the ongoing issues that will have an effect on state employees is the state budget process. In the budget process WSP and AFT-W have worked to retain positions at DATCP and the DNR. We were also active in the process to add DNA analysts at DOJ. We are watching to make sure there are no position losses and for ways to decrease the reliance on contracting out in other agencies.

We are also preparing for bargaining with the state. We have assembled our bargaining teams and will be meeting with several agencies to discuss the issues that affect our members. We will be laying the groundwork for positive changes. As part of this process we will be asking members to speak up in the coming months. It is one thing that really makes a difference.

WSP also voiced it's support for SB-15, which would have the DNR Secretary appointed by the Natural Resources board, at a hearing in the state capitol.

Finally the WSP board has approved taking our grievance on vehicle reduction issues to arbitration. This decision will affect our members that have had a state vehicle assigned to them taken away due to the vehicle reduction the Governor imposed upon agencies.

All of the issues we raised have been denied through the grievance process. We feel that these issues have merit and will be upheld at the next step in the process.

AFT-Wisconsin 2007 Convention

WSP is asking interested WSP members to join us at the AFT-W 2007 convention at the Concourse in Madison, Wisconsin. To be recognized as a WSP delegate you must contact your district representative and ask to be a delegate for this convention. The dates for the convention are October 25th and 26th. Please make your contact with the your district rep by August 15th if you are interested in attending.

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ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

Events

2007

- June 14-17 AFT Public Employees Conference, Las Vegas
- June 21 Union Social, 4:30-6:30pm, Memorial Union Terrace, UW-Madison
- July 19 Union Social, 4:30-6:30pm, Capital Brewery Bier Garten, Middleton
- July 22-26 Union Leadership Institute, Delavan
- Aug. 23 Union Social, 4:30-6:30pm, Memorial Union Terrace, UW-Madison
- Sept. 8 WSP Rep Council Meeting, AFT-W, Madison
- Sept. 20 Union Social, 4:30-6:30pm, Location TBA
- Oct. 18 Union Social, 4:30-6:30pm, Location TBA
- Nov. 15 Union Social, 4:30-6:30pm, Location TBA
- Dec. 6 Union Social, 4:30-6:30pm, Location TBA

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