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OUR SHARE OF THE PIE?

Part-time Faculty at Connecticut State University

The Connecticut State University American Association of University Professors (CSU-AAUP) is the collective bargaining agent for an unusual collection of university employees. It got its start by representing full-time faculty in 1977 and has grown to include librarians, coaches and eventually, in 1983, part-time faculty. The first two contracts covering 1983-1984 and 1984-1987 consisted of separate contracts for part-time faculty. With the 1987-1990 contract, part-time faculty were folded into the more general contract with specific articles identified for part-time members.

How the CSU-AAUP came to represent the part-time faculty reflects an interesting series of events. Since CSU is a state university, the legislature had to pass a law enabling state employees to unionize. This right was given to state employees in 1976, and in an election for representation, AAUP won the right to organize both the University of Connecticut faculty and the faculty at the four state colleges (Central, Eastern, Southern, and Western). After negotiating two contracts, the state employee unions (including CSU-AAUP) wanted to improve the state law to provide the right of state employees to strike and/or have binding arbitration. Dave Newton, then president of the CSU-AAUP, in a newsletter in May 13, 1982 wrote: "We had hoped to gain the right to strike or binding arbitration for state employees. We failed, but we did secure bargaining rights for exploited part-timers. A significant step in the right direction."

Part-time faculty had already begun to organize at Southern in January of 1982. The state legislature granted bargaining rights for part-timers as of October 1, 1982. The CSU-AAUP Executive Council voted to "seek amendment of our bargaining unit certification to include part-timers" Permission was given for CSU-AAUP to run an election asking part-time faculty to vote on being represented by CSU-AAUP as their collective bargaining agent. The election was held in the spring semester of 1983. The CSU-AAUP wanted part-time faculty who had taught in the fall 1982 semester to be eligible to vote, but the CSU administration wanted only faculty who had taught in the fall 1982 semester and continued to be teaching in spring 1983 semester to be eligible. The State Board of Labor Relations sided with the CSU administration and out of 525 ballots received, 175 were considered ineligible. The CSU-AAUP had urged that any part-time faculty member from the fall 1982 semester cast a vote. The counted ballots consisted of 302 votes for CSU-AAUP, 47 votes against CSU-AAUP and a single voided ballot. The 302 votes out of approximately 600 part-time faculty satisfied the 30% rule, and CSU-AAUP became a union that represented both part-time and full-time faculty. The first contract (one year) was negotiated in 1983 and took effect on August 22, 1983. Most part-time faculty saw an immediate 10% increase in their salaries, less the standard (.0075) dues assessment on salary. Part-time faculty were also granted access to group health insurance (full cost to be borne by the part-time member), and after teaching for 18 hours, part-time

faculty and their immediate family members could take a course at reduced rates. In addition, salaries would be paid according to a schedule made available when the part-time member signed the letter of agreement to teach a course. The current contract states that "The final payment may be held until all obligations are completed." However, the four campuses have folded in the part-time faculty to the regular bi-weekly pay periods and depending on the calendar, the final paycheck may arrive during finals.

And the good times for part-time faculty began. What has changed since our first contract in 1983? How responsive has the CSU-AAUP been to the issues that affect part-time faculty? As might be expected, answers to these questions are as varied as the respondents. For many long-term part-time faculty the answer may be that expectations have been raised and not always met. CSU is an interesting university system in that it joined four separate state colleges into a loosely connected state university system that has a Chancellor and Board of Trustees. But each campus has its own president and administration. For part-time faculty on the separate campuses, even with an identical contract in hand, vast differences were apparent. While the CSU-AAUP and its governing body were sympathetic to issues of part-time faculty, individual full-time faculty members often expressed resentment toward their part-time colleagues. When contracts came to the membership for vote, some full-time faculty complained that the part-time faculty (whose numbers almost equaled those of the full-timers) could "vote down the contract" even though all its provisions did not apply to them. This fear was never realized, partly because in 1986 binding arbitration was passed by the state legislature and contracts that went to binding arbitration were not subject to voting approval by the union members. CSU-AAUP staff and officers were helpful and concerned with part-time issues. Part-time members were elected to serve on the CSU-AAUP Council as well as individual campus Executive Committees. In 1988 a system-wide part-time faculty survey was underwritten by the CSU-AAUP. Under sponsorship of the CSU-AAUP part-time members have attended national conferences: AAUP conferences, Collective Bargaining Congress conferences, and the 1996 National Adjunct Faculty Guild Conference. A part-time faculty member served on the bargaining team for the 1997-2001 contract. Three annual system-wide conferences for part-time faculty were sponsored by the CSU-AAUP from 1993-1995.

Additional improvements have continued. In 1996 part-time faculty was included in participation in 403b pre-tax retirement investments on all campuses, and direct deposit of paychecks was also allowed on all campuses. Part-time faculty has always been given faculty-parking permits at no charge. In the 1997-2001 contract, funds were set aside specifically for travel and professional development for part-time faculty. These funds have been used for a wide variety of enrichment--from a week long Advanced Geometer's Sketchpad Workshop at the University of California at Berkeley, to an international conference on "Cognitive Strategies for Language Communication" at Simperofol University in the Ukraine, to an on-campus workshop for all faculty on effective syllabus design and curriculum scheduling. The unexpended travel and development funds roll over for future part-time faculty use. Compared to many of our colleagues, CSU part-time faculty has privileges and rights far beyond them. At two of our campuses, Central and Southern, part-time faculty have elected representatives to the Faculty Senate. At Central, one faculty position on the University Budget and Planning Committee is designated for a part-time faculty member. These rights were all achieved with assistance from the local AAUP chapters.

However, we still have part-time faculty with no office space, with no access to department copy machines, with computer access limited to a facility for students, with health insurance payments that take over 50% of their salaries. Who are assigned courses the day before classes start, or have their courses changed or cancelled the day before classes start. Who are dropped from a department with no explanation. Who hear administrators and full-time faculty refer to us as second-rate faculty who lack the ability to get a tenure-track position. We have watched the increase in part-time positions and one-year appointment and emergency appointments, and we see some of our peers holding fresh doctorate degrees reduced to teaching part-time while they apply for the ever decreasing number of tenure track positions.

We see at our own system the retiring full-time faculty replaced by temporary positions (full-time), and we wonder what will happen to us in the fast-changing future.

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