

April 2012

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UPI Talk

“When we act together on our campus in conjunction with our affiliates in the labor movement, our allies in other organizations, and our supporters, we can shape the state’s politics.”

Jon Coit

UPITalk

Editor: Terri Fredrick

Dear Colleagues,

At least two signs confirm that our Chapter is a healthy organization: there are so many bargaining-unit members to thank, and there are so many accomplishments they have achieved.

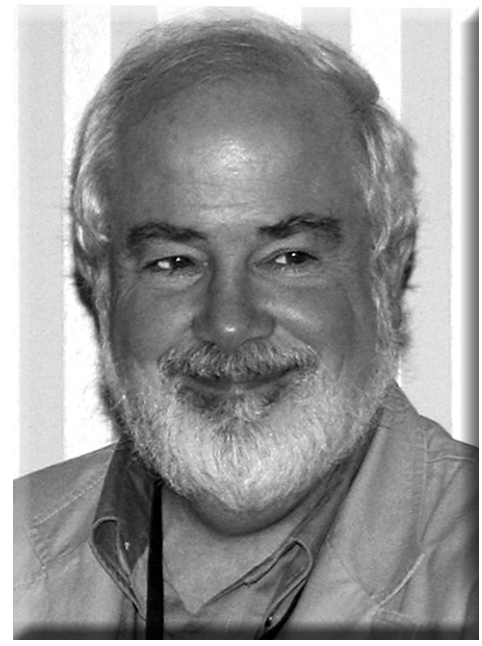
Thanks are owed to the department representatives who help recruit new members, ensure a reliable flow of communication, and respond to potential problems at the ground level. Thanks are owed to members of the House of Delegates who write important resolutions and help guide the course of our Local. Thanks are owed to members of the Committee on Political Action and Legislation. They have organized and participated in panels related to public education, public pensions, and the American economy. In addition, they have written letters and assembled a database to counter misinformation about public employees, in general, and public educators and support professionals, in particular. Thanks are owed to our grievance representatives for enforcing the contract and supporting their colleagues. And, of course, thanks are owed to the members of our Executive Board, election-related committees, and bargaining team for coordinating our union activities and representing our collective interests.

Finally, thanks are owed to all of you who have called and/or e-mailed legislators and the governor, successfully impeding bad legislation aimed at our earned pensions and benefits.

The fight isn’t over. We will all need each other’s help again and again.

In solidarity,

John Allison
UPI/EIU Chapter President



Spring Reports

House of Delegates

Grievances

Contract Negotiations

Kai (Billy) Hung
Assistant Professor, Biological Sciences
First-time House of Delegates attendee

I attended the House of Delegates meeting for the first time this year, but the process actually started before the actual weekend.

The EIU Delegates began meeting about three weeks prior to the convention to discuss topics of concern to us and to draft resolutions to be presented at the meeting. The process was carried out mostly by small groups of delegates who took on a topic of particular interest to them in order to formulate a draft for the resolution. The drafts were then discussed and modified at follow-up meetings. The most difficult part of drafting a resolution was articulating clearly the thought behind the proposed resolution to make it an actionable item. In this regard, seeing the resolutions that have been passed previously was very helpful.

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Another valuable part of the experience of drafting these resolutions was the ability to connect with faculty all across campus to talk about issues that affect our jobs. While we all talk about our jobs with our colleagues, I have not had much opportunity prior to this experience to tackle issues that extend beyond our campus. I think it helps highlight the connectivity of our profession in a very direct way.

Once the resolutions were submitted, the delegates traveled to the Crown Plaza Metro Hotel in Chicago for the meeting. The meeting kicked off with a presentation of awards in appreciation for service to the Local. This was then followed by a social mixer event. I had the opportunity to get to know a few delegates from Western Illinois and Chicago State as we chatted over vegetables and cheese cubes.

Saturday was the day of the main events. In the morning, we had reports about the union's past year of work, as well as presentations on upcoming issues that demand our attention. This is the part that was the most valuable to me. The reports on the union's activities were great opportunities to get a closer look at how our



union functions. We get newsletters and emails, but seeing it all presented in a tidy report helped me put the pieces together. There was a moment during the presentation of the fiscal statement where I felt that I was finally beginning to peek behind the curtain to see the inner workings of our union. I find it easy to simply take for granted that our union works when, in reality, it is the product of many people's hard work and time. That point crystalized for me that morning as I sat and listened to these reports, and it made me appreciate what we have.

During lunch, topics that had been submitted by attendees were assigned to each table as a focus of discussion over lunch. This is a new format for the House of Delegates, and I think it worked out well. At my table, we talked about engaging faculty of diverse backgrounds at various levels within our union. Hearing the experiences of our colleagues at Western Illinois was particularly helpful.

The afternoon was devoted to working on the proposed resolutions. Some resolutions were passed without much fanfare, but some drew a lot of discussion and disagreement. I enjoyed watching the discussion unfold, realizing that like most human endeavors, there are institutional memories that go beyond what is being actively discussed at any one time. It was exciting to be part of that process and to witness how resolutions are debated and passed. The experience will certainly be helpful to me as I contribute to the process of drafting resolutions in the future.

Overall, I found attending the House of Delegates meeting to be very educational. I learned a lot about not just our duties as delegates, but also the culture and personality of our union.

Gloria Leitschuh
Professor, Counseling/Student Development
Veteran House of Delegates attendee

I have participated in a number of House of Delegates (HoD) meetings over the past nine years. It is always an awesome experience to see so many dedicated professionals from around the State of Illinois come together to work on the challenges that affect university employees.

The HoD allows university members to submit resolutions, which are discussed and voted upon by the membership. It is interesting to gain an understanding of issues that affect union participants across campuses. The resolutions cover a wide array of topics that affect many employees, either directly or indirectly. Some of the topics addressed at the 2012 HoD included faculty bullying, faculty job responsibilities, use of electronic evaluations, trends in university hiring practices, university health insurance, and pensions.

It is valuable to be able to meet with other university employees to discuss various viewpoints on common shared interests. It is important that we come together to support and propose solutions for common causes. The support and bonding that occurs is incredible. This year, I especially enjoyed the informal luncheon discussions. Each table was assigned a topic, and delegate participants were then given the choice of which table to choose to have their lunch and to discuss the topic. This was an excellent format for meeting representatives from other universities who shared a common concern. It was an engaging and healthy format to form new connections.

If you have not considered becoming a House of Delegates (HOD) member, you might consider running for a position at some point in the future.



I have enjoyed my association with the other delegates and would like to express my gratitude to those who have been responsible for the planning of this very important event!

Tim Shonk
Professor, English
UPI/EIU Grievance Officer

The grievance process through UPI has been able to help dozens of faculty and staff in the past academic year. The Grievance Officer, Tim Shonk, and the Assistant Grievance Officer, Jon Blitz, have fielded scores of phone calls, emails, and face-to-face inquiries from employees asking for contract language clarification and seeking help in attending meetings with the Office of Civil Rights, state officials, and immediate supervisors. In concrete terms, the UPI grievance people have helped faculty in

1. retaining positions on tenure lines after negative evaluations
2. correcting errors in compensation for classes taught
3. protecting faculty from arbitrary changes in working conditions
4. ensuring that summer teaching rotation policies are followed
5. assisting staff workers with inappropriate material in personnel files

In the process, UPI has been able to successfully resolve a number of issues at the first or second step of the grievance process. Currently, five grievances are pending.

Grant Sterling
Professor, Philosophy
UPI/EIU Chief Negotiator

Negotiations between UPI and the EIU administration have been progressing since late February. The two teams have been meeting every Wednesday evening for four hours. The interest-based bargaining (IBB) is being facilitated by Mr. Conrad Bowling from the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service.

While IBB requires extensive discussion and research regarding each issue, and so does not lend itself to rapid movement, we have made substantial progress so far, and have either resolved or are approaching resolution on more than half of the issues originally brought forward by the two teams. Both sides remain hopeful that a complete settlement can be reached in an amicable manner in time for ratification in August when faculty and staff return from summer break.

Report from the Committee on Political Action and Legislation (CPAL), 2011–2012

Jon Coit
Assistant Professor, History
CPAL Member

In January 2012, your efforts, combined with those of our allies and supporters throughout the state, beat back an attack that was both vicious and pointless. State Rep. Luis Arroyo's proposal to end partial tuition waivers for faculty and staff employees of state universities was defeated in the State Legislature. Vicious, because Arroyo demonized us as a wealthy elite unfairly taking taxpayer dollars. Pointless, because every dollar Arroyo's plan would have "saved" would have been matched by an additional dollar in revenue for public universities.

The defeat of Arroyo's bill provides a lesson we have to continue learning: when we act together on our campus in conjunction with our affiliates in the labor movement, our allies in other organizations, and our supporters, we can shape the state's politics. We did the same thing in 2010, when UPI members joined thousands of protestors in Springfield in a successful (yes!) call for the state to raise taxes.

So what can we do when there isn't a big demonstration? CPAL focuses on three interrelated goals:

- Contributing to membership's knowledge of political issues that affect their employment and the university
- Educating the public about the misinformation they commonly receive on these issues
- Meeting with state politicians

These endeavors are informed by our attempts to reframe political debate. We not only provide facts to those who can be persuaded by them, but also challenge members, the public, and politicians to reject narrow-minded attacks on government and public goods, in favor of an equitable society based on opportunity for all.

In the past year CPAL has hosted a forum offering multiple perspectives on the relationship between government and the economy. This spring, CPAL brought Ralph Martire, the Executive Director for the Center for Tax and Budget Accountability, to talk

about fixing the state's budget problems. In between organizing these events, the committee kept up a consistent presence on letters to the editor pages in our orbit (*JG-TC*, *Chicago Tribune*, and other publications), and met with Sen. Dale Righter and Rep. Chapin Rose. The group maintains a wiki page with links to research and related news accounts, fact sheets, and future letters to the editor.

The UPI Committee on Legislative and Political Action (CPAL) is chaired by Rich Wandling. The other members serving on the committee are John Allison (ex officio), Jon Coit, Charles Delman, Michael Gillespie, Barbara Lawrence, Andy McNitt, Dannie Otto, Nora Pat Small, and Bailey Young. Anyone can come to a meeting and get involved!



Watch your email this summer for important legislative updates!

During recent summers, state legislators have attempted to pass bills that threaten our pensions and other benefits. The choice to raise these bills during summer months is strategic: legislators proposing to cut state employee benefits know that teachers are a major force opposing such bills, and these legislators hope teachers around the state will be less likely to mobilize while away from their schools.

Thus far, we and other union members around the state have responded well to these threats. You can expect more of the same this summer. What can you do to help?

- Watch your email for messages to the UPI/EIU listserv
- Be ready to write or call your legislators when needed

Not yet a member of the chapter listserv? Go to eiu.edu/~EIUUPI and click on "Join the UPI Listserv!"