

Power Through Information

If information is power, then Sinclair's faculty have always been powerless in certain respects. For years, a lament commonly heard at Faculty Assembly meetings has been that faculty don't have direct access to data on topics such as average faculty salaries, full-time-to-part-time faculty ratios, and the recent dramatic rise in the number of administrative positions.

By law, such information is public information and available to anyone requesting it. Indeed, several local newspapers publish annual lists of salaries of public employees in their communities. (See, for example, <http://projects.pulsejournal.com/publicsalaries/>.) Faculty at other colleges routinely obtain and use such information in their negotiations with their administrations. The information is free for the asking, but Sinclair's faculty have never asked for it. In Fall 2008, our Faculty Senate took a step toward ending our self-imposed state of ignorance, deciding to ask for data on faculty and administrative salaries. Despite occasional discussion within Senate since then, this decision has not resulted in an actual request for any information.

Recognizing that information is one of our most valuable assets, Sinclair's AAUP chapter (SCCAAUP) chooses not to accept Sinclair's culture of secrecy on matters of public record. In late April, we formally requested data on employee salaries, as well as data on faculty teaching loads and reassigned time. A copy of our request is online at http://sccaaup.org/documents/FOIA3_4_22_2010.pdf.

During our campaign to visit faculty in their offices, we've found that Sinclair's online employee directory is riddled with outdated and mistaken information. Therefore we have also requested (http://sccaaup.org/documents/FOIA2_4_19_2010.pdf) a current list of faculty, their titles, and their office locations.

These requests represent SCCAAUP's second foray against Sinclair's unfortunate tendency to keep secret what should be made public. In November, responding to the lack of transparency in last year's FIT discussions, we requested minutes from past FIT meetings and access to future FIT meetings. The college's administration forwarded that request to their lawyers, who informed us (see http://sccaaup.org/documents/Response_FIT_Request_2_16_10.pdf), in effect, that faculty have no right to know what goes on at FIT meetings. Score that episode as a win for the lawyers, and a loss for advocates of openness.

Some observers—even some faculty—may demonize SCCAAUP for requesting information that any citizen has a right to obtain. No matter. We're confident that our latest request will meet with success. When it does, we'll gladly share this information and our analyses with Faculty Senate and the Faculty Assembly. Sinclair's faculty will, for the first time, be in a position to make accurate, independent calculations of average salaries, full-time-to-part-time ratios, and changes in the number of administrative positions versus faculty positions.

The Sinclair chapter of AAUP is conducting a card campaign for the purpose of forming a collective bargaining unit. Here is what your colleagues have to say about why they signed a card. Note: While these faculty freely shared their reasons for signing a card, SCCAAUP wants to reiterate that utmost care is being taken to keep the cards signed by faculty confidential and safe.

Why I Signed a Card

I have signed a card because I care a great deal about Sinclair—its reputation, the quality of education it provides, and the ways it can best serve its students. I feel the most effective means for maintaining our high standards is for faculty to have a greater role in the decision-making process that affects the direction Sinclair is headed as an institution. An AAUP collective bargaining unit will ensure that faculty and administration work together in a collaborative process—with faculty input valued and required as decisions are made.

Tom Wilson, Mathematics

I signed because I don't believe that Sinclair's governance structure gives faculty a large enough role in decisions on issues that affect the quality of education, such as the full-time-to-part-time faculty ratio, distance learning, and curriculum. AAUP will make faculty stronger and more effective by giving us the power to do more than merely make recommendations that are easily ignored.

Nick Reeder, Electronics Engineering Technology

To me, SCCAAUP represents an opportunity to empower faculty with the perfect mechanism to ensure shared governance and to protect academic freedom. My union affiliation reflects my commitment to maintaining my integrity, dignity, and autonomy as a college educator. There is also a responsibility not only to improve the terms and conditions of employment, but also to enhance the quality of life in the academy.

As SCCAAUP, we must be agents of change and transform the culture of the college beginning with the relationship between the administration and faculty. However, we are creating a legacy that must include self-reliance and self-determination as well as cooperation and collaboration. For we are contributing to the viability and sustainability of the professoriate.

To me, SCCAAUP represents a compact and covenant relationship that we honor through our solidarity and unity. It reflects the culmination of my career in the academy.

Ben McKeever, ACA

I signed a card because I strongly believe that Sinclair should hold quality of education as its highest goal, and that all decisions made for our college should keep that in mind. To that end it is essential that honest and open communication between faculty and administration be ongoing. The faculty's voice and perspective needs to have an appropriately high weight, because they are the ones who have the most direct knowledge of the quality of our education and how it might be improved.

Kay Cornelius, Mathematics

Executive power is best dispersed and must always be watched skeptically. The governed must have real power. This is American political philosophy, embedded deeply in the DNA of the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution. Enlightenment and benevolence in an Executive do not obviate the necessity for the governed to be active and involved and informed.

Jeff Patzer, Criminal Justice

I signed the collective bargaining card because of the history and legacy of shared governance at the academic level. It is because of AAUP that faculty have tenure and can count on academic freedom. For faculty to effectively do their jobs, and for students to receive the best education possible, it is pertinent that agreements affecting our pedagogy and professional lives are legally binding. Without the card, we have no legal recourse if administration defaults on their end of the agreement, and yet, administration can take recourse against us if we default.

Adrienne Cassel, English

I signed a card because I care enough about this institution that I want to improve it. Having interacted with faculty from sister institutions operating under an AAUP collective bargaining governance structure, I learned enough to convince me that our great faculty deserve the same honor and ensuing benefits. AAUP collective bargaining will enable us to work more closely with our administration as true partners in our efforts to better serve our students and the community, especially in these tough economic times. This change will make Sinclair better.

Moez Ben-azzouz, Mathematics

Show your support for a stronger faculty voice. Please sign the card.

Another Look at the Full-time to Part-time Ratio

We are told that the ratio of full-time to part-time faculty at Sinclair is 48% to 52% (as of fall of 2009). It is not clear exactly how these numbers were determined. Are overload classes taught by full-time faculty, but paid at the part-time rate, counted in the full-time faculty figure of 48%? Are classes like SCC 101, which are sometimes taught by full-time staff who are not full-time faculty counted in the full-time faculty figure of 48%?

The fact is that the Ohio Board of Regents holds two-year colleges to higher standards when it comes to this ratio. The following is taken from the **Ohio Board of Regents Operating Manual for Two-Year Campus Programs** (see <http://sccaaup.org> for a link):

Standards for the Approval of Associate Degree Programs

(C) General Standards for the Approval of Associate Degree Programs.

- (1) Full-time faculty members and administrative personnel should be provided in numbers which will assure:
 - (a) Familiarity and identification with the goals of the field of concentration.
 - (b) The continuity of the program.
 - (c) Continuing interchange of ideas and experience within the faculty.
 - (d) Adequate attention to the needs of individual students in the program.

(2) A minimum of sixty percent of the curriculum generally should be taught by faculty members who devote full time to the teaching and administrative responsibilities of the two-year campus.

What is the Lowdown on the Dues?

The SCC-AAUP leadership has this to say about dues.

1. The amount of dues will be determined by a secret ballot vote of the SCCAAUP membership.
2. Dues will be assessed only for faculty who join the chapter. If you don't join - you don't pay.
3. Dues for chapter members will be less than 1% of contract pay.

But please keep the following in mind:

*The larger the membership in the chapter, the better the contract. A strong chapter membership is the key to effective negotiations.

*A 1% negotiated pay increase pays your union dues for the remainder of your career at Sinclair.

Visit the SCC AAUP website at
<http://sccaaup.org/>