

Statement of the Faculty Senate *Ad Hoc* Committee on Bargaining and Representation

The following position statement intends to stimulate open discussion and debate among LSU's faculty members so that we can make informed decisions regarding our current situation and future development.

The committee believes that the organization of the faculty into a collective-bargaining unit may be the most effective way to strengthen the faculty in three critical areas, namely empowerment, rights and responsibilities, and compensation.

1. Faculty Empowerment

In recent years, the voice, power, and morale of the faculty have been eroded by unilateral actions regarding curriculum, research priorities and initiatives, and university reorganization by an increasingly imperial upper administration.

The Faculty Senate of LSU represents the faculty on all these matters, but has increasingly been thwarted in this function by the LSU upper administration (see, for example, "Transcript of the Faculty Senate Forum: Vistas of Reorganization" at <http://www.lsu.edu/senate/Transcript%20of%20Forum%20rtf.rtf> ; also <http://chemistry.lsu.edu/stanley/Provost-Chancellor-Reorganization-forum-April14-2009.wmv>). In addition, and especially in the current fiscal crisis, the Faculty Senate cannot effectively address the faculty's economic situation because it has no legal authority in this area. Ultimately, the administration may be more inclined to respond to faculty interests if the faculty has come to a consensus about its priorities. Furthermore, faculty interests are broader than issues of compensation and benefits. An empowered faculty can address community issues that are related to our mission as educators and directly participate in the political process in order to influence the legislature and governing institutions in this state.

2. Faculty Rights and Responsibilities

Currently, faculty rights are largely subject to the whims of LSU's upper administration. The current fiscal crisis has driven this point home. By seeking the power, in spring 2009, to institute compulsory furloughs without having to declare financial exigency (see "An open letter to chancellor Martin: On the budget crisis and the possibility of furloughs" at <http://www.aaup.org/NR/rdonlyres/54E31E76-411A-48D5-924C-B404F30BD3DA/0/LSUletter.pdf>), the university administration has shown a willingness to ignore the contractual rights of faculty members under the assumption that they are unlikely to pursue legal recourse as individuals. The plan of applying the furloughs only to research time suggests the administration's failure to understand the unity of research and teaching in the faculty's mission. It is also the faculty's responsibility, in cases of financial exigency, to make economic sacrifices in the interest of the overall good of the university and the state, but the faculty must have a voice in this process.

The recent firing of Ivor van Heerden is an example of what may lay in store for the faculty. Since the LSU administration has offered no reason for van Heerden's dismissal, the public is forced to conclude that LSU is willing to fire faculty when under political pressure to do so. Faculty Senate Resolution 08-11 "Transparency and Integrity in PS-36-T Personnel Processes for Faculty" (see <http://www.lsu.edu/senate/Resolutions/R08-11.pdf>) requiring the administration to disclose, upon demand by the affected faculty member, the reason for a negative personnel decision has simply been ignored since its adoption on October 7, 2008, by the Faculty Senate. An organized faculty can protect itself and the university from political pressure that interferes with the mission of the university.

3. Faculty Compensation

Collective bargaining is a more effective means of achieving fair and reasonable compensation for faculty than when members are forced to negotiate as individuals. Though individual faculty members may be able to improve their compensation through merit raises, they are still subject to the same benefits package as everyone else. As the Faculty Senate Benefits Committee has shown, LSU's benefits fall significantly behind those at other comparable institutions (see "View Presentations from the Benefits Committee Presentation on May 6th" at <http://www.lsu.edu/senate/viewpresentations.html>).

The Report of the Faculty Senate *Ad Hoc* Committee to Investigate the Feasibility of Collective Bargaining for the LSU Faculty in 2002 (see "Collective Bargaining" at <http://www.lsu.edu/senate/2005%20collective%20bargaining%20report.html>) suggests that a collective-bargaining agency can significantly improve faculty salaries and benefits. Among other things, that report examined collective-bargaining contracts at five representative universities. At the time, these contracts contained 1) strong provisions protecting academic freedom; 2) strict procedures for addressing faculty rights and concerns in cases of financial exigency or academic reorganization; 3) strict procedures in cases of dismissal for cause (PS-104) and grievances; and 4) significant provision for and emphasis on merit increases. Two of these institutions had equity clauses in their contracts.

In the opinion of the present committee, collective bargaining at LSU would

- enhance the influence of the faculty as a whole and the role of the Faculty Senate in shared governance;
- inform faculty members of their rights and give them the means to protect those rights;
- improve overall compensation and benefits for the faculty through the power of the collective contract.

A faculty that functions as an equal partner with the administration, fully involved in university planning and programming, will be a positive force for the advancement of the flagship agenda.

We all have questions about the pros and cons of collective bargaining, and most of these questions will be answered through the process of forums, panel discussions, debates, intellectual exchange, and invited lectures on this campus. Our committee presents this statement as a way of starting the discussion. We want to hear the thoughts, questions, and suggestions of faculty members, particularly those who have personally experienced collective bargaining in an academic environment. Our committee will collect faculty input and organize a series of forums that will address the issues that are raised. We trust that the faculty at LSU will be able to reach a consensus on how to develop and express their interests.

Respectfully submitted by the *Ad Hoc* Committee on Bargaining and Representation

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