

On Tuesday, May 12, Lisa Klein (AAUP at Rutgers U) and Bill Lyne (Western Washington U and United Faculty of Washington State) spoke to an audience of about 65 members of the UW faculty on how unionization has benefited their faculty at their institutions. The report below is organized around seven questions that members of the UW AAUP posed to the speakers:

**Why did faculty at your institution unionize?**

Lisa Klein: New Jersey is a union state and Rutgers is a state university. All state employees are organized into collectively bargained groups with 4-year set contracts. The union is a political reality and a political necessity.

Bill Lyne: WWU salaries were below average for its peers. It suffered from an administration that was contemptuous of faculty. It claimed to have the faculty interests at heart but failed to demonstrate that in its actions. Once enabling legislation was enacted, WWU faculty unionized.

**What did you get out of unionizing?**

Lisa Klein: We got stability and predictability. We are able to work out raises based on good faith budget negotiations with state government.

Bill Lyne: We got more money—20% increase over the last 4 years. Union bargaining has worked well for WWU faculty and even UW faculty have benefited as a way to deflect the desire to unionize. We also gained statewide influence through our alliance with AFT and WEA.

**How has it affected the resolution of grievances?**

Lisa Klein: We have contracted procedures for grievances. We don't need outside counsel but work with arbitration. This gives us predictability and a time-line for working out grievances.

Bill Lyne: We now have genuine shared governance, which we really didn't have before. We went from a parent-child model to true shared governance. The union forces the administration to have genuinely meaningful conversations about wages and working conditions. The union gets a much more active response from the administration than the faculty senate ever did, because of the power of the union contract. It is much more willing to resolve disagreements promptly to avoid having to enter binding arbitration, which is stipulated in the contract. The power to determine grievances and work load was the hardest thing for the administration to give up and they even tried to buy the power back with salary increases, but the faculty stood firm.

**How has it affected the faculty's relations with the administration, and/or with state legislators?**

Lisa Klein: The relationship with the administration can be sometimes contentious. Rutgers is also experiencing the corporatization of the university, but the union can head off some of the worse aspects of this. It works to remind the administration of the importance of faculty. The union also gives faculty representation at the state level.

Legislators like to talk to the union to get a more realistic understanding of the impact of the budget cuts on the university that are currently under negotiation. The union meets with state representatives regularly.

Bill Lyne: The relationship with the administration has improved with unionization (and a new president). The university hired a well-known union-busting law firm to negotiate the first contract, which took 18 months and included faculty demonstrations. The new president recognizes the benefits of working with the union to represent the university in Olympia. The WWU union is an affiliate of WEA (Washington Education Association) and AFT-Washington (American Federation of Teachers). WEA has 82,000 members and AFT-Washington has 5,000, and both affiliates have strong Political Action Committees. This gives them a presence in state government. *Even with the current cuts, WWU faculty are still getting not only their contracted salary increase but also their extra merit raises.* The union has chosen to postpone them for one year in order to add on non-tenure track sections to balance workload. This power is backed by the contract and the administration has to back off. The union has a good relationship with the faculty senate. The senate no longer has to deal with wages and working conditions. This is now the domain of the contract, so that it can focus on curriculum issues.

### **What positive results beyond salary and benefits has faculty unionization produced at your institution?**

Lisa Klein: The benefits of unionization extend beyond salary and benefits. Contract negotiations are opportunities to have conversations with the administration about work load policies. The Rutgers faculty have created a faculty development fund to build new faculty lines. This also provides a cushion for hard times. The administration is obligated to use these funds to provide a net gain of 100 new faculty positions, or else the money is to be divided up among existing faculty. The union also helped to negotiate a salary increase for graduate assistants (who are part of the same union) to ensure success in graduate recruitment. The union has also established a Work/Family Balance Committee and negotiated extended parental leave.

Bill Lyne: The union has given the faculty more power over their work lives. Morale has improved tremendously; the WWU faculty had previously been badly demoralized. The contract gives legal protection of faculty interests. They now have more faculty control at the department and college level, which is defined by the contract, especially in the areas of tenure and promotion procedures and grievances.

### **What is distinctive about faculty unionization in Washington State?**

Bill Lyne: The enabling legislation stipulates that all faculty must be represented by a single bargaining union. The desire for union representation is a challenge for faculty to transcend their particular interests to ensure that the union benefits everybody. If you do it right, you get a stronger faculty and a strong union. When the union at WWU came to a vote, it won by a narrow margin of 16 votes. Today, it would have the support of 99% of the faculty, including some who were opposed to it at first. This is because the union has delivered what it promised in faculty raises—even for higher paid faculty.

**What is distinctive about faculty unionization at a research university?**

Lisa Klein: We use part of the money set aside from salaries to increase graduate student salaries and to create competitive graduate student assistantships. When the university tries to change our workload, it has to contend with the union. With grant-funded faculty, we get them together to ask, what can we do for them? For WOT faculty we have, for example, helped sort out visa issues for foreign researchers, and we also talked to administration to help them address the quandary of how to write renewal grants if the current grant stipulates that your time cannot be used for grantwriting. When research faculty have particular issues, such as how to keep the rats fed and keep them alive until the start of the next grant, we work on what they need.