

AAUP News

Cleveland State University Chapter

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Faculty Involvement Leads to Faculty Satisfaction

By Julie A Cajigas

Roger Govea, Ph.D., and chairperson of the Political Science Department is an expert in the political process and political transitions. In the late 1980s and early '90s, he could see the need for a transition at Cleveland State University – the transition from a time when faculty's voices were not heard, to a time when the faculty would play an active role in the governance and guidance of the University.

"In theory, every university should be functioning with a significant amount of faculty governance," says Govea, "and at that time, I and many others felt that the faculty was being ignored." In his history of the American Association of University Professors at CSU, Govea explains, "While there were plenty of competent, assertive faculty members, the structure of governance curtailed faculty input."

One of Govea's chief concerns was that the faculty morale was suffering. "The faculty members are stakeholders," says Govea. "When stakeholders are not consulted about the direction of their organization, they begin to think that their opinions are not being heard and their expertise and knowledge is not being properly utilized." The dipping faculty morale was not the only problem caused

Question: The Faculty is typically at odds with the Administration (yes or no)?

**1989 – 58% say yes 1995 – 50% say yes
1998 – 34% say yes**

2004 – 94% say NO!

by the interactions, or lack thereof, between the faculty and the administration. "The byproduct was that faculty developed an extremely negative view of the administration," says Govea.

Morale was also affected by salary inequities, fears about the University's future and the administration's treatment of specific faculty members. "The administration refused to recognize salary inequities under the assumption that salary decisions were based on merit, and if faculty were



earning a low salary, it was proof that they were not doing a good job," explained Govea in his history of the CSU AAUP. At the time there were faculty members with more than 10 years of service making less than new hires because of salary compression and increasing demands for the University to remain competitive at the hiring table. The future of the university was also in question, which added to feelings of uncertainty among the faculty. "At the time it had also been made clear that legislators in Columbus had no interest in protecting Cleveland State University." When you combine this with the fact that there was little to no recourse for faculty who disagreed with the administration, the morale was extremely low.

Driven by the lack of true faculty involvement in direction of the university along with these various other struggles, Govea spearheaded the movement to bring an AAUP chapter for collective bargaining to the university. He worked with others to build faculty support for the union and adopt collective bargaining. He was heavily involved in the long process of individual faculty appeals, as well as in negotiating the early contracts with the administration. Govea and other faculty members spent year after year focused on improving the working conditions for the faculty.

Finally, in 1995, the faculty had a contract that would establish minimum salaries, establish tenure as a status granted by the university, improve the university's professional leave program and grant the faculty the power to negotiate workload and raises. The contract also provided two important protections: first, it was a legally binding document, something the faculty had not had in the past with their handbook, and second, it provided for an equitable grievance process that provided opportunity for appeals and even outside arbitration.

Having an active AAUP has made a major difference

A Strong Faculty Creates a Strong University

in the campus climate. There were initially concerns that collective bargaining would create tensions within the faculty. According to Govea, the exact opposite has been true. "The establishment of a union on campus has actually improved faculty-administration relationships," says Govea, citing an annual survey done by the Office of Planning.

This research shows that perceptions of the faculty-administration relationship have improved over the years. It is just one concrete marker of many that show how beneficial the work of Govea and his colleagues has been to the university and its faculty.

Today, Govea is still working to ensure that faculty are treated fairly, that salaries continue to be fair and equitable and that morale is high. He has one concern moving forward.

"The one thing that hasn't happened is that we haven't gotten an increased faculty involvement in the life of the university by faculty members becoming active in union matters," he says. "The one regret I have about the process is that we haven't been able to get faculty, especially newer faculty, more actively involved." Faculty involvement is important, especially as the founders of the union have often been asked to join the administration as department chairs and even higher-ranking administrative officers. There is a continuing need for new union leaders to emerge.

"People think the union is going to come in and save them as if it was some sort of a magical entity that appears when needed," says Govea. The future of the AAUP depends on each and every faculty member becoming an active member of the union, volunteering to take on leadership positions within the union and becoming active in union matters.

"I charge the faculty to come together to maintain and continue to improve our AAUP chapter," says Govea. "The protections the CSU-AAUP provides are important to the current faculty, but also to the faculty who will carry this great institution into the future."

Rodger M Govea

Rodger M Govea is an Associate Professor and Chair of the Department of Political Science at Cleveland State University. In 2006 he was named Fulbright Scholar to Kyrgyzstan for the 2006-2007 school year. Govea has his Ph.D. from Syracuse University. His research interests include comparative political processes, including leadership succession, political transitions and causes and potential management of political violence, particularly in Latin America. Govea has long worked towards equality and fairness in salary structure and the tenure process. He was a founding member of Cleveland State University's AAUP, and is considered by many to have been the key leader in the formation of the union.

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About the Author



Julie A Cajigas is both a Cleveland State University alumni and a current graduate student in the Department of Communication. Cajigas received her B.A. in Communication and her B.Mus. in Music Education from Cleveland State University in 2006.

After graduation, she pursued a career in public relations, and after several years working for a major Cleveland corporation, she started her own business as a professional writer and public relations specialist.

Cajigas is currently pursuing her Masters in Applied Communication Theory and plans to pursue her Doctorate Degree in the hopes of one day becoming a tenured Professor of Communication herself.

She is an active writer in the Cleveland area; a frequent contributor to *CoolCleveland*, a weekly e-zine devoted to Cleveland events and accolades, and has been published in the Plain Dealer.

Cajigas also serves as a contributing writer for a number of trade publications on a monthly basis. She is an avid musician and performs regularly with the Cleveland Orchestra Chorus and Cleveland State University Chorale.

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