

# PROFESSIONAL INSTRUCTORS ORGANIZATION

# The *Negotiator*

SPRING 2012

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## **PIO OFFICERS**

Thomas Kostrzewa

*President*

Karl Schrock

*Vice-President*

Steven Cartwright

*Secretary*

Michael LoPresto

*Treasurer*

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## **An open letter from PIO President Thomas Kostrzewa**

Dear WMU part-time instructors,

First, let me say it is an honor serving as President of the PIO. As I have watched the amazing efforts of our first two presidents (Karl Schrock and Steve Cartwright), I have truly been inspired by the improvements that are possible through tireless leadership and collective effort.

Secondly, I hope as many of you as possible can join us for regular meetings. Bring your concerns and comments as we gear up for another bargaining session. As someone who has taught at WMU for over 25 years, I realize the tremendous effort our members put in to the success of WMU on a daily basis. Your participation in our next negotiating effort is critical to the success of our union and the success of the mission of WMU. Expect regular announcements prior to all scheduled meetings.

Thirdly, and as no surprise to any of you who follow the political landscape, public employee unions are under unprecedented attack in a number of states including Michigan. This is not hyperbole, this is fact. Republican Governors and legislators of yesteryear (including the likes of George Romney and Bill Milliken) supported collective bargaining and supported the idea of public employee unions. My own father, who was a ranking member of the Michigan State Police, assisted in unionizing the State Police with much less opposition than is found in the anti-collective bargaining disposition of many of our current legislators. The latest configuration of this sentiment is found in the passage of the bill to ban payroll dues deductions for K-12 school employees. This, of course, has been a staple of the relationship between unions and the public institutions they serve.

While unions are by no means perfect, they and we (PIO), have come into existence for a reason. Collective bargaining and unions are part of the fabric of every modern democratic society. Our own PIO came into existence with overwhelming electoral support of its members. Such support reflects the frustration and isolation of years of operating alone and marginalized from the institution and educational mission in which we have invested so much. It is certainly worth remembering that our organization, like other unions, operates with a democratic structure. We are the outcome of our members' voting choices and participation. Thus, our union and unions across the democratic world, are a product of self-organization and citizen participation. This fact is simply overlooked by those attacking the right to collective bargaining.

Our PIO and other unions at WMU and across the state are mounting a strong effort to respond to the attacks on our right to organize and fairly bargain. A state-wide petition is being circulated to make collective bargaining a constitutional right as part of an intrinsic democratic right. We are also working to support legislators who see our work as having value and do not demean us as the enemy. These are strange times when in the aftermath of near Wall Street collapse, teachers and public employees in general have been characterized by some in power as the villains of society. You know how hard you work, let's make sure we support and work with those in office who appreciate the jobs we do and the role we play in our educational institutions.

Sincerely,

Dr. Thomas Kostrzewa  
President, PIO-WMU, AFT-Michigan, Local 1903  
Haenicke Institute and Lee Honors College



## Public policy update

Public employees like us are only at liberty to form labor unions and collectively bargain for better wages, benefits and working conditions because of the Public Employee Relations Act (PERA). Originally signed into law by Governor Kim Sigler (R-Detroit) in 1947 and amended and strengthened by Governors George Romney (R-Bloomfield Hills) and William Milliken (R- Traverse City), PERA would not exist without the hard work of labor unions, and supporters of working people both Democrat and Republican, working together to ensure that no one working under the auspices of the state may be exploited or mistreated. The National Labor Relations Act (1935) does not protect the collective bargaining rights of public employees. In fact, today there is no constitutional protection for public employee labor unions at the state or federal level. But tomorrow, change is coming.

There are currently more than 80 bills pending in the Michigan legislature attacking union members. Just this month, Governor Rick Snyder signed bills preventing university research assistants from organizing and barring public schools from using payroll systems to deduct union dues. Sick of defending against relentless attacks on union members and our rights, and tired of being cast as villains in the ongoing budget battles across our state, Michigan labor unions have taken the offensive to promote an amendment to the Michigan constitution that will provide each individual with a fundamental right to organize and maintain labor unions and put an end to the divisive and dishonest sniping of those who would break the back of organized labor for imaginary financial gains. **Our message to Lansing is clear: stop wasting our time and money undermining public employees and start working with us to rebuild a smarter, stronger Michigan.**

The referendum to amend Michigan's constitution will appear on the ballot in November only with your help. The "Protect Our Jobs" campaign is a collaborative effort of every labor union in Michigan to collect more than 320,000 signatures to get the collective bargaining amendment on the ballot. Because of our groundbreaking and daring approach to protecting workers' rights, failure is not an option. **PIO is standing strong with our brothers and sisters across the state, and we will do our part to win this fight.**

What can you do to help? First, you can gather signatures. We need to collect as many valid signatures (eligible Michigan residents only) as quickly as possible. If you have not yet signed the petition, contact us at [piowmu@gmail.com](mailto:piowmu@gmail.com) and someone will bring a petition to you. We encourage you to take matters into your own hands by carrying a petition and gathering signatures on campus or at other community events you will attend in the coming months. If you are willing to accept this challenge, contact us at [piowmu@gmail.com](mailto:piowmu@gmail.com) to schedule a short training session.

Remember, getting the referendum on the ballot is only half the battle. Anti-worker interest groups with deep pockets across the country will spend tens of millions of dollars to defeat us, because whether we like it or not, Michigan has become the battlefield over the rights of workers to organize and fight for better working conditions. For us, failure is not an option and winning is going to take a lot of money. Luckily, we are among millions of union members and supporters across the state, so rather than million-dollar-donations from a few billionaires, we rely on small donations from individuals across the state, fighting to protect their rights. Join us by contributing to the AFT Michigan Political Action Committee today and help us win this campaign. **To donate to the AFT Michigan PAC, use the form enclosed or find the "Click Now To Donate" button at [www.aftmichigan.org](http://www.aftmichigan.org).**

## Contact Your Elected Officials

Michigan House of Representatives, PO Box 30014, Lansing, MI 48909

**Sean McCann (D)** - 60th District, (517) 373-1785, [seanmccann@house.mi.gov](mailto:seanmccann@house.mi.gov)

**Margaret O'Brien (R)** - 61st District, (517) 373-1774, [margaretobrien@house.mi.gov](mailto:margaretobrien@house.mi.gov)

**Jase Bolger (R)** - 63rd District, (517) 373-1787, [jasebolger@house.mi.gov](mailto:jasebolger@house.mi.gov)

Michigan Senate, PO Box 30036, Lansing, MI 48909

**Tonya Schuitmaker (R)** - 20th District, (517) 373-0793, [sentschuitmaker@senate.michigan.gov](mailto:sentschuitmaker@senate.michigan.gov)

**Mike Nofs (R)** - 19th District, (888) 962-6275, [senmnofs@senate.michigan.gov](mailto:senmnofs@senate.michigan.gov)

Governor

**Rick Snyder (R)**, PO Box 30013, Lansing, MI 48909, (517) 373-3400, [rick.snyder@michigan.gov](mailto:rick.snyder@michigan.gov)

U.S. House of Representatives

**Fred Upton (R)** - 2183 Rayburn House Office Building, Washington D.C., (202) 225-3761

U.S. Senate

**Carl Levin (D)** - 269 Russell Office Bldg Washington D.C., 20510, (202) 224-6221

**Debbie Stabenow (D)** - 133 Hart Senate Office Bldg, Washington D.C., 20510, (202) 224-4822



## Why I teach

By Joe Sanders, English Department

It's been more than four years since I first stepped into a Thought and Writing classroom and it has definitely been the best and most challenging job I've ever held. Of course, there are frustrations that come along with being a part-time instructor at WMU; both inside and outside of the classroom, but the challenges of the job continue to be overshadowed by its perks.

I often speak with fellow 1050 instructors who express a lot of annoyance at the prospect of teaching Thought and Writing. They seem to view it as a chore, or a necessary step until they can get hired as a "real teacher." I disagree. I've often told my students how lucky they are to be taking this class at WMU, because when I took the equivalent English course during my undergraduate studies, it was little more than writing a series of essays, with minimal lecture and minimal feedback on our final assignments. I find Thought and Writing to be an enormously beneficial class for all students, even if they can't see its merit during the course of the semester.

As a teacher, it's hard to ignore the amazing capacity for laziness the typical Thought and Writing student has. Not to paint with such a broad brush, but the number of students willing to go above and beyond to benefit as much as possible from this class is small. The number of students willing to do enough work to get a decent grade is fairly high, but I'm astounded each semester at the number of students who are completely incapable of putting in the necessary effort on their projects. Especially since the class itself is basically a step-by-step breakdown of how to do well in the class. Of course, when a student does go above and beyond to create a multimodal project, or use other media to bring their writing to life, it makes the laziness pill much easier to swallow.

Being able to continue working at WMU after the completion of my Master's Degree is great. I love that I can take up to 4 free credits each semester I teach. So far, I've used this generous gift to take playwriting workshops; giving myself deadlines and a better motivation to develop my writing and keep working on new projects. It's also nice to have some level of job security now that I've been working here for so long. With each semester, I get less and less worried that I'm going to be given classes to teach next semester. My student feedback is consistently positive, and I try to attend as many brown bag events as possible to work on my teaching skills. I've found these workshops to be very beneficial and look forward to more brown bags in the future.

Now, I was able to put myself through college and grad school without accumulating any student debt. A near impossible feat it turns out as talking to several of my friends and colleagues working at WMU have enormous amounts of debt to pay back, and a relatively small salary to do it with. Without debt, I can survive on the salary Western gives me to teach. But I would be lying if I said that a higher income isn't becoming more of a necessity. Yes, I can live on my salary, but things like setting money aside in savings is a delusion. The money I manage to save during the school year will barely get me through the summer months, and as I approach the age of 30 (the age all popular culture implies that my body will spontaneously fall apart), little things like health insurance would be a welcome luxury.

**Why do you teach? To share your story in an upcoming newsletter, please email us at [piowmu@gmail.com](mailto:piowmu@gmail.com).**

## What are they thinking!?

Did you know that WMU does not allow part-time instructors to apply for faculty and staff job postings during the "internal posting" period? According to the university, only "benefits eligible employees" are permitted to apply as internal applicants. As you may know, if you have ever eyed a faculty or staff job opening in the past, many positions are filled by internal applicants before external applicants are considered. PIO believes that part-time faculty are an integral and important part of the university, teaching thousands of students each year, and that we should work together to start attacking these phony barriers.



### 2011-2012 PIO Stewards

**Martin Burch**

*Frostic School of Art*

**Steven Cartwright**

*History*

**Britt Hartenberger**

*Moore Hall*

**Robert Humiston**

*School of Music*

**Michael LoPresto**

*English*

**Marcus Johnson**

*English*

**Thomas Kostrzewa**

*Haenicke Institute, Lee Honors College*

**Mark Miller**

*Physics, Mathematics & Geosciences*

**Tracey Moon**

*Industrial & Manufacturing Engineering*

**Glenn Roehrig**

*Office of Field Placement*

**Karl Schrock**

*School of Music*

**D. Terry Williams**

*Theatre*

## Get to Know the PIO!

PIO has **264 members** teaching this semester, 65% of all part-time instructors, with more members joining each day. Our membership ratio is up 7% from last semester.

The **Physician Assistant** program employs the most part-time instructors this semester, with 33 part-time instructors, however, the department with the most PIO members is **English** once again with 24!

Part-time instructors are teaching roughly **1,854 credit hours** this semester, or **618 3-credit courses**. **The average part-timer is teaching 4.5 credit hours this semester, for an average salary of \$4,770 or \$1,060 per credit hour, an increase of over 3-percent from Spring 2011!**

Undergraduates pay about \$300 per credit hour, so for a 3-credit class of 30 students, WMU brings in over \$27,000 in revenue. The average part-time teacher makes about \$3,200 leaving nearly \$24,000 to the university. **Let there be no doubt that WMU could not function without us!**



## PIO fielding bargaining team for fall 2012 negotiations

By Steven Cartwright, Secretary

It seems like only yesterday that the PIO negotiated its first contract with WMU, but in fact we are nearing the end of the second year of our three year contract. We are scheduled to begin negotiating our second contract in November—and that will be here before we know it!

The time is now for us to start planning for our negotiations, and we are looking for PIO members willing to serve on our bargaining committee. This will require a few hours a week initially as we work on our contract issues, and then perhaps ten hours a week once we begin negotiating. We are looking for members who are committed to teaching and to serving their fellow instructors, who are good with numbers and who have excellent communication and people skills. Most importantly, we need members with the patience and thoughtfulness to help build consensus, and make a strong, persuasive case for our positions with the University.

Given the important nature of this work and that the university's bargaining team is paid to be there, we are currently exploring the possibility of compensating our bargaining team with a stipend. Bargaining and enforcing a good contract is one of the most important things the PIO does. A good contract will have a strong effect on the morale and work of instructors, and thereby on the education of our students. We need good negotiators to make this happen!

Dr. Cartwright is a part-time instructor in History, past president of PIO and member of the 2010 bargaining team.



## *Contract Fun Facts!*

Our contract with WMU includes new rights and opportunities that you might not be aware of:

- **Article 19.1.** Increased minimum base pay for all instructors to \$750 per credit hour
- **Article 19.2.** Additional pay for continuing instructors of 1% for 2011-2012 academic year
- **Article 19.5.** Wellness payments for all part-time instructors of \$20 per credit hour
- **Article 19.6.** Part-time instructors may use Sindecuse Health Center, including its pharmacy
- **Article 19.8.** Employee **tuition remission** for up to four credit hours during the semester that you teach
- **Article 5.6.** Access to the Student Recreation Center on main campus. The SRC offers an indoor climbing wall, basketball courts, squash, racquetball and tennis courts, a swimming pool, weight room, aerobic room and much more **for only \$90 per semester**, less than \$25 a month! By comparison, an individual membership at the YMCA of Greater Kalamazoo costs \$47 a month. Contact the SRC at 387-4REC for more information.