

**SENATE REMARKS ON FACULTY UNIONIZATION  
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Faculty unionization would mean the end of the University of Illinois as a top-tier institution. Here's why:

1. Many of our best faculty would leave because they don't want to be part of a unionized campus. Several have said so already. Union organizers aren't making clear to people that once 50% plus one of the faculty vote for a union, *all* faculty would need to be represented by the union and pay "fair share" dues to it whether they want to or not. We are constantly fighting to prevent top faculty from leaving, and this would be the tipping point for many of them.

It would also be a severe impediment for recruiting top talents to come *here*, for the same reasons.

2. The only AAU schools with unions – Florida, Oregon, Rutgers, a couple of the SUNY branches – are good schools but not peers. Conversely, *none* of our peer institutions, public or private, is unionized. Private universities, in fact, can't be unionized, and this would be one more advantage our prime competitors have in hiring away our best people.

I can see why capturing a campus like this would be a big win for the cause of faculty unionization – and I'm sure that's why the national AAUP and AFT are putting so many resources into the union drive here. But it would do nothing to lift this campus's prestige – it would damage it. You hear a lot of rhetoric from union advocates, but you never hear them talk about *excellence*.

3. Look at our sister campus in Chicago, which is literally split over the union issue. The gap between the unionized East and non-unionized West

campuses there has never been bigger. For us, this would involve a split between departments and colleges on the *same* campus, and toxic relations among the pro-union and anti-union faculty who remain here.

4. Union advocates suggest a future of plenty. But no less an authority than Cary Nelson, former President of AAUP and a strong union advocate, admits, “[R]esearch shows that, although unionized community college faculty earn more than their nonunionized counterparts, *full-time unionized and non-unionized faculty at 4-year institutions earn about the same.*” (“What Unions Do,” March 15, 2011).<sup>1</sup>

5. The primary source of threats to our salary and benefits is outside the power of a faculty union to negotiate. At a time of diminishing state revenues, the problem is not “bosses” who refuse to pay workers more, but the budgetary constraints imposed on the university by the state of Illinois.

*In fact*, the people most affected by increased union demands would be tuition-paying students and their parents. I just ask you to imagine what newspapers around this state would write about increased faculty salary demands and the threats of a strike from a high-tuition school like Illinois. It would be a public relations disaster.

6. Union advocates assure us that the discretion of campus units to differentiate salaries and provide competitive counter-offers to faculty would not be diminished by a collective-bargaining system. But with a shrinking revenue pie, it seems counterintuitive to claim that you can *substantially* raise salaries for all faculty while also raising the ceiling for the most in-demand faculty.

7. We have a highly decentralized system at Illinois, which gives a great deal of flexibility to deans and department heads on salary. Faculty members

deal directly with their *local* administrators over this issue, and that model has served us very well. But in a unionized context, those discussions could no longer take place. Collective bargaining would occur between a handful of union representatives and members of the University Administration, a step *removed* from the level of the campus. It is ironic that unionization would create *a much more centralized* salary system than the one we have now.

It is also ironic that union advocates complain about the “corporatization” of the university, while proposing changes that would make the university function *more* like a unionized business, and less like a self-governing academic community.

8. There are many more questions. What would annual dues be, and why aren't people being told this *before* committing to the union? In light of the budget constraints we face, is there any reason to expect that net salary increases would offset the annual dues being paid, beyond what most faculty could expect to receive in the normal salary process? (The research cited below is not encouraging on this point.) Would unionization commit faculty to sympathy strikes or not crossing picket lines in solidarity with the GEO, custodial workers, or other unionized campus employees who might strike? What would a *faculty* strike look like, and what would its effects be on public support for the university? What would happen to faculty who want to continue to teach their courses? Would they be called out by their union colleagues as scabs? If faculty define themselves as employees, not as professionals, will that hasten state regulations like Positive Time Reporting that require *every* university employee to record their exact working hours? Do we want to make longstanding professional rights like tenure and sabbatical *simply* matters of collective

bargaining, and how would that affect the state's and the public's willingness to continue to support them?

9. Other unionized universities are already having buyer's remorse and looking to de-unionize. I have been told that many faculty up at UIC are already having second thoughts. But union rules make it extremely difficult to undo this decision; it is onerous even for individuals to withdraw their signed union cards. So this isn't something we can "try out" for a while, and then change our minds if it doesn't work out as we hoped. Instead, we'll be right back here having this argument all over again. But by then the damage will already be done.

Let me now briefly address the issue of shared governance.

Along with other elected Senate leaders, I have seen close up some of the biggest challenges to shared governance in recent years. Our Senate, its elected leaders and governance processes, have been very effective in exposing and pushing back against Global Campus, the Academy on Capitalism and Limited Government, the admissions scandal, and most recently the Hogan/Troyer mess. In each case it was the efforts of the Senate that helped change policies and demanded accountability from administrators, even when it meant calling for them to step down. *Our system of shared governance works, and it works very well.*

In fact, our shared governance system at Illinois is viewed as a national model. James Duderstadt, former President at the University of Michigan, says it is the strongest system of shared governance in the country.

At many universities the senates are ineffectual in representing faculty interests and are routinely ignored by campus administrators. I can see why under those circumstances faculty might think that only a union can represent

their interests effectively. But that is not the situation we face here at Illinois.

Shared governance is not broken. Unionization would break it. Here's why:

1. Shared governance is based on the model of a collaborative partnership between faculty and administrators. That doesn't mean we don't have big arguments. But it is a relationship of collegiality, trust, and mutual respect that makes those disagreements effective.

The collective bargaining approach, whether you like it or not, is based on a fundamentally adversarial model. It draws sharp lines between "workers" and "management" and emphasizes the *incompatibility* of their interests, which need to be worked out in a process of aggressive negotiation from both sides under the potential threat of a strike. That's what unionization is, and that is antithetical to the spirit of "shared governance."

2. Those of you in the Senate have seen this shift of rhetoric from union advocates serving in this body. A tone of suspicion, hostility, and even disrespect has been on frequent display in their comments toward campus and university administrators. Look: when you treat people like adversaries they react like adversaries. It's a self-fulfilling prophecy. A collective bargaining campus will be characterized by frequent contract renegotiations, with accusations of stonewalling and bad faith shooting back and forth, and threatened or actual strikes. Do you want to be part of a campus like that?

3. When you are talking about coal miners or garment workers, it makes sense to talk about the struggle between workers and bosses, under the logic of capital accumulation. But this is a very poor analogy for how universities work. Administrators aren't our bosses, and they have very limited abilities to direct our work. They aren't "other" to the faculty; they are faculty themselves, they

share the academic values of faculty, and many continue their faculty work. The collective bargaining game is based on the assumption that “management” will not address or appreciate faculty concerns unless they are *forced* to do so. That is not our situation here.

4. I also don’t see how you can make faculty governance stronger by taking rights and responsibilities away from it. Our Senate and its committees do not only deal with issues of academic policy. Substantive deliberations about budget and salaries are frequent topics of interaction at the department, college, campus, and university levels. In fact, there are two important shared-governance committees, the CBOC and the Senate Budget Committee, that give faculty a strong voice in campus budget decisions. The Statutes also specify that departmental and college advisory committees must be consulted about unit budgets. Under the terms of collective bargaining, those conversations would not continue.

5. Under the model apparently being contemplated on this campus, many of the policies and procedures defining shared governance would themselves be the subject of collective bargaining and written into the contract. Union advocates like to call this “strengthening shared governance.” But under that model, the Senate would have only those powers that the union cedes to it. The policies and rules of governance, and even protections like tenure, would exist only within the terms of a negotiated contract, and hence be continually subject to renegotiation from either side with each new contract cycle. The idea of the Statutes and General Rules as foundational governing documents – our Constitution if you will – that are agreed to and binding upon *all* of us, defining our shared values as an institution, would be lost.

6. In the end, effective shared governance does not mean consulting with faculty just because a contract requires that you do so. Within such a climate, administrators will do the absolute minimum they are required to do by those negotiated rules, *not* actively sharing information and decisions because they value and respect faculty as partners in the policy and governance process. A colleague from the University of Florida has told me that the administration there avoids dealing with the faculty union whenever it can.

One way of defining a healthy relationship of shared governance is when the administration shares information and decisions with the faculty that it is *not* strictly obligated to do. This happens regularly on this campus and at the university level. Collective bargaining would destroy that relationship, not “strengthen” it.

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<sup>1</sup> Hedrick, D. W., Henson, S. E., Krieg, J. M., & Wassell, Jr., C. S. (2011). Is there really a faculty union salary premium? *Industrial and Labor Relations Review* 64, 3, 558-575; Wickens, C. M. (2008). The organizational impact of university labor unions. *Higher Education* 56, 5, 545-564.