Wesleyan AAUP 2023-24 End-of-Year Report
June 2024

Overview

2023-24 was a busy and affirming year for Wesleyan AAUP, its second as a fully chartered chapter. Our One Faculty! campaign, launched in spring 2023, continued to supply the framework for our chapter activities with focus on achieving real faculty co-governance of the University, true academic freedom (tenure protections) for all faculty, and a fully staffed University in which faculty and staff are able to pursue their educational and research work with sufficient resources, unencumbered by false claims of scarcity.

In this context, we achieved a series of successes in 2023-24:

- A successful independent financial audit of the University in September, which set much of the agenda for the year’s work inside and outside the chapter.
- A strengthened purview of the faculty Compensation and Benefits Committee (CBC) regarding the compensation peer group (which supplies the target range for faculty salaries).
- Correction of Wesleyan’s misreporting of salary data to the national AAUP compensation survey. With cooperation from Michael Whitcomb in Institutional Research and Provost Nicole Stanton, we produced a timeline outlining the instructions for faculty salary reporting to the national AAUP and Wesleyan’s past misreporting of salary data.
- A substantial corrective salary increase for associate professors. In response to corrected salary reporting, which shows that our peer ranking particularly in the assistant and associate categories is lower than previously thought, associate professors received a $3900 salary increase on top of an average 4.5% raise. This is only a first step, with action on assistant professors still needed; the University has promised a three-year plan of salary correction. We will be working closely with the CBC on this and other compensation issues.
- Our first institutional win in 2022 was to regularize the sharing of internal data on the structure of the faculty and compensation with the AAUP chapter and the standing committees of the faculty, and we are happy to be working with Institutional Research to continue this progress in transparency.
- In response to our request for institutional transparency, the administration has committed to sharing its annual IPEDS and IRS forms shortly after they have been submitted to the federal government.

The Wesleyan University Chapter of the American Association of University Professors
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Membership
At the end of our fourth semester as a public AAUP chapter, we are proud to say that we have 156 members representing all academic divisions and units on campus and about 39% of the total Wesleyan faculty inclusive of all appointment categories. Our goal is to achieve a majority (50%+1!) of the faculty, and we encourage everyone to recruit colleagues who might want to join our work. Be thoughtful in doing so, sensitive to the fact that colleagues may have a variety of reasons for interest or reluctance. Our chapter recruitment primer is a helpful guide.

University Finances and Independent Audit
On September 22, 2023, at the invitation of Wesleyan AAUP, Howard Bunsis presented an independent financial analysis of Wesleyan University. The audit provided the entire campus community with a thorough and clear view of the financial health of the University. The key takeaway was that there is no financial justification for a climate of austerity at Wesleyan. The analysis also provided faculty, staff, and students with tools to critically and actively engage with a fuller and more accurate picture of University finances and challenge administrative claims in the budgeting process. The chapter will keep doing this work!

Faculty and Librarian Compensation
Although inflation has come down from its heights, faculty compensation has not recovered from the pay freeze in 2020-21. In December 2021, the faculty overwhelmingly approved a motion by the CBC asking the administration to remedy “the erosion of faculty salaries from the pay freeze” and to honor its prior commitment “to place Wesleyan average faculty salaries at all ranks in the top third of our fifteen school comparison group.” This year, many colleagues reported to the chapter that their salary raises since the pay freeze have been insufficient in addressing painful price increases in essential goods such as housing, transportation, health care, and insurance. The paucity of adequate housing within reasonable commuting distance from campus has been made worse by the fact that Wesleyan, unlike other universities, owns only a small number of staff and faculty rental units. AAUP compensation data also shows that in 2022-23 all Wesleyan faculty had dropped to the bottom third of our peer group. In 2023-24, only full professors were at the median of our peer group. Assistant and associate professors continued to be ranked in the bottom third. The current administration has stated that their compensation policy aims to keep faculty salaries “at or above the median of our peer group” (May 3, 2024 merit memo). Illustrating data provided by Academic Affairs in response to a
question we submitted for the May 15 faculty meeting, the line graph below shows that despite an overall improvement of faculty compensation over the last decade, salary “catchups” have not been sustained over time. The failure to consistently compensate all faculty at least at or above the median is clear evidence that the University’s compensation policy does not meet the needs of its faculty. Every year of inadequate pay means that faculty have less money for retirement investments, which leads to negative compounding and makes it harder for faculty to retire at a reasonable age.

![Wesleyan Salary Ranking in Peer Group](image)

Compensation data reported to the IRS shows that faculty underpayment correlates to overpayment at the top level of the University’s administration. For years, Michael Roth has pocketed one of the highest payouts of any president in the University’s peer group. Administrative overpay occurred also in the year of the faculty/staff pay freeze, which pushed the brunt of the allegedly “shared sacrifice” to the bottom of the University’s pay hierarchy.

The University’s failure to pursue a responsible compensation policy appears to be by design rather than accident. This is underscored by the administration’s insistence that chairs rank their units’ faculty on a scale ranging from “distinctive merit” to “no merit,” a mechanism designed to save the University money by underpaying a portion of its faculty not deemed “meritorious.” The negative effects of the punitive de-merit system are most pronounced for colleagues at the bottom ranks of the pay scale. Librarians in particular start from a lower pay base than faculty, receive on average pay increases of 1% less than faculty yet are still made to compete with their colleagues over who is more meritorious. Merit pay has been contested since the Wesleyan administration introduced it in the 1980s, and while at that point it was subject to budget
negotiations with the AAUP and, later, with the CBC, the administration for years has set merit policies without consulting the CBC.

Inadequate support for research and conference travel has been another area of persistent faculty dissatisfaction. Project grants are competitive, but when granted they are frequently insufficient to cover the full costs of research; support for conference travel has not kept up with inflation; general grants are smaller than at our peer institutions and are only granted if requested. There appears to be a broad consensus among faculty that the current Grants in Support of Scholarship (GISOS) system is both underfunded and unnecessarily onerous.

In sum, Wesleyan’s compensation policy continues to be a major source of faculty demoralization, frustration, and cynicism. The chapter’s Resources Working Group will continue to seek wide faculty input about compensation concerns, gather and analyze data, and advocate for improvements.

**Governance Reforms**

Howard Bunsis’ independent financial audit demonstrated that for faculty to be effective co-governors of the University, shared governance needs to be transparent, inclusive, participatory, and procedurally sound. Based on the work of the chapter’s Faculty Handbook Working Group, Wesleyan AAUP proposed reforms that would strengthen the faculty’s role in the allocation of faculty lines and in the long-term shaping of the University’s budgeting priorities. Unsurprisingly, the administration was less than thrilled with these proposals. More surprisingly, the Faculty Executive Committee (FEC), which is tasked with advising the chair of the faculty in setting the agenda for faculty meetings, voted not to bring the proposals to the faculty for discussion and instead produced a set of proposals of its own. In rejecting the AAUP proposals, the FEC argued that faculty are already overburdened with service work. Although not without merit, the latter argument amounts to the faculty delegating significant portions of its governance responsibility to the administration. The position of Wesleyan AAUP is that rather than abandoning norms of shared governance, most faculty would like to play an active part in shaping the University, and they would like to do so in a meaningful rather than merely symbolic fashion.

Effective standing committees are a necessary yet not sufficient condition to realizing shared governance. Making governance more meaningful for all faculty members requires faculty meetings that are inclusive of a diversity of voices and concerns. This is not currently the case. Faculty meetings have been narrowly scripted and geared towards giving a voice to the president, provost, and the chairs of the Educational Policy Committee (EPC) and Compensation and Benefits Committee (CBC). But there has not been a mechanism for faculty to directly bring concerns to their colleagues, and to do so in the absence of administrators (regrettably, recent chairs of the faculty have not been willing to call executive sessions of the faculty). The
dysfunction of the faculty meeting in its current shape shows that serious and substantial governance reforms are urgently needed. Such reforms should include the enfranchisement of permanent non-tenure-line faculty, more and better reporting by standing committees, and possibly an overhaul of the current “approval ballot” voting mechanism. A university that claims to instruct its students in the virtues of liberal education and democracy but cannot commit itself internally to shared governance is bound to demoralize and alienate many of its faculty. Wesleyan AAUP will continue to fight for reforms that make the faculty’s role in the University meaningfully participatory, inclusive, and democratic.

**Professor of the Practice Reforms and Tenure-Line Density**

The chapter was consistently involved in refining and improving the provost’s plan for modifying reappointment and contract structures for Professors of the Practice this academic year. The current plan outlines a path toward an automatically renewing “evergreen” contract for contingent faculty after eight years of employment (including one reappointment and two promotion reviews). This is an excellent step forward for non-tenure-line faculty at Wesleyan. We will continue this work in the coming year, particularly related to the implementation of the plan, and will focus future work on enfranchisement of non-tenure-line faculty in our governance structures. This includes incorporating Professors of the Practice with evergreen contracts into Academic Council and expanding our faculty committees to include non-tenure-line faculty representatives.

In addition, the provost has set a benchmark of 80% tenure-line density at Wesleyan and aims to achieve this goal by 2030. Using data provided by Institutional Research, the graphs below show that tenure-line density has notably declined over the past two decades. This academic year, roughly 40% of Wesleyan faculty are non-tenure track or visiting. We will continue to advocate for a fully staffed university and an increase in tenure-line density to reduce the University’s reliance on disenfranchised short-term visiting faculty.

![Wesleyan Tenure-Line Density](image)

![Wesleyan Faculty Composition 2023-2024](image)
Academic Freedom

Academic freedom is the essential first principle of the AAUP, as articulated in the 1940 Statement in the Red Book. This year was, alas, another treacherous one for academic freedom in the United States. The national AAUP issued a series of statements asserting the principle of academic freedom as a contribution to the common social good, and articulating that general principle with the concrete situation of U.S. faculty and staff under our continuing conditions of right-wing assaults on higher education as well as the recent wave of attacks on students and faculty in the context of the crisis in Gaza. Our chapter’s website continues to supply these and an additional broad array of academic-freedom resources for colleagues. Wesleyan AAUP issued its own statement of support for the national AAUP statements; supported colleagues at other universities who were facing persecution by administrators, donors, and others; solicited concerns about academic freedom from Wesleyan faculty and staff; and worked with Wesleyan students who were unfairly targeted in relation to free-speech actions on campus.

Chapter Working Groups

Wesleyan AAUP’s working groups are, with the executive committee, the heart of the chapter. Their work in 2023-24 was inspired and inspiring. Not only did the working groups achieve real gains for all faculty and staff, but their ongoing work is a testament to what we can do when we work together in solidarity toward a common end.

Resources

The chapter Resources Working Group addresses primarily economic matters: the overall structure and composition of the faculty, compensation and benefits, and other aspects of material support, such as research funding. Its most spectacular accomplishment this past year was serving as the primary organizer (with the collaboration of many other chapter members) of the independent financial audit by Howard Bunsis in September, which was a great success both in terms of reception (see articles in the Hartford Courant and the Wesleyan Argus) and in enabling us to make the case for a fully staffed university with well-compensated employees, against the University administration’s claims about insufficient resources.

In February, the Resources Working Group hosted an open forum for all University colleagues to bring their concerns and their ideas for improving salaries, research funds, and other benefits. The discussion generated a long inventory of matters of concern, which the chapter posted on our website and distributed to the entire faculty via the faculty forum. This inventory will inform our work in 2024-25 as we support but also operate in parallel to the CBC, whose work was severely compromised for many years but which recently has been reengaged by committed colleagues.

Faculty Handbook

The Faculty Handbook Working Group (FHWG) drafted a major proposal for three substantial reforms to Wesleyan’s faculty governance aimed at strengthening and deepening the faculty’s
role in making the decisions that matter most to the University’s mission. These proposals were part of Wesleyan AAUP’s ongoing project to revivify faculty governance at Wesleyan, to increase transparency, and to make this essential work valuable and consequential:

- **Line allocation:** Proposal for a new **Faculty Resources Committee:** an elected standing committee of the faculty that would review all requests for new positions (tenure-track and non-tenure-track alike) and make recommendations to the provost and president.

- **University budgeting:** Proposal for a new **Budget Committee:** an elected standing committee of the faculty composed of faculty, staff, and student members that would review, analyze, and offer recommendations to the president and treasurer on all budgetary plans, proposals, and priorities. The purview of this committee would be wider than the current Compensation and Benefits Committee, which is concerned only with matters of compensation and benefits.

- **Refinement of CBC’s purview:** Proposal to augment the role of the Compensation and Benefits Committee’s role by giving the committee a voice in compensation policy and in the operations of Human Resources, as well as in determining the composition of the compensation peer group and the compensation target within the peer group.

As the FHWG explained, these reforms are timely. Faculty have grown increasingly concerned about compensation and the overall structure of the faculty. Deterioration of salary and benefits has occurred in the context of the understaffing of units across campus: faculty are working more, and stretching their units’ capacities further, while being paid less. In these conditions, even good-faith efforts by the administration to rectify the situation are often viewed with suspicion by the faculty. On the whole, colleagues recognize a failure of legitimacy in University governance. Over the last three decades, concerns about service workload and efficiency have led to a leaner faculty governance infrastructure with fewer committees, shorter service terms, and more responsibilities being delegated to the administration. An unintended consequence has been the hollowing-out of much faculty-governance work: in practical terms, colleagues complain, their significant contributions are devalued, and colleagues often view this work to be inconsequential due to faculty disempowerment. At the same time, the size of the faculty has grown considerably, from about 300 full-time faculty in the year 2000 to well over 400 full-time faculty now. Our institutions of faculty governance have not kept up with these changes, and reforms are overdue. We believe that the proposed reforms will enable a strengthening of genuine shared governance (the AAUP’s norm for a healthy university) and will help build a culture of trust among faculty and between faculty and administrators.

The process of pursuing these reforms was itself an education in the current state of faculty governance at Wesleyan. The proposals were initiated by the FHWG, discussed and revised by the chapter executive committee, circulated to 150+ Wesleyan AAUP members and discussed at an all-members meeting in November, then revised and submitted to the FEC. The FEC
circulated the proposals to the major standing committees for comments which were then returned to Wesleyan AAUP at the end of the fall semester. Wesleyan AAUP held a second all-members meeting in late January to discuss the exchange with the FEC and revise the proposals. The revised proposals were then returned to the FEC on January 23. During the spring semester, the FEC declined to bring the AAUP proposals to the faculty for consideration. Instead, it produced diluted versions of its own which, in the view of most AAUP chapter members, failed to address the structural problems that incited the original proposals from the chapter. Nevertheless, in May the faculty voted to strengthen the CBC, and the substantial questions of budgeting and line-allocation committees were deferred to fall 2024 for further reflection and deliberation.

**Contingent Faculty**
The Contingent Faculty Working Group (CFWG) continues to be an especially bright and active part of our chapter. This year, the CFWG continued to drive the chapter’s work on improving the provost’s plan to establish “evergreen” contracts for Professors of the Practice. For the past two years, the chapter has been working hard to improve the proposal by meeting with the provost and president, reviewing a series of drafts, and providing strong recommendations for improvement. Core to our recommendations is the AAUP principle that probationary appointments should not exceed seven years; we have been heartened by our success in arriving at a compromise position of eight years to “evergreen,” which is how the provost’s current proposal stands. As the provost’s plan moves toward implementation in 2024-25, we will work to ensure that reappointment and promotion expectations for Professors of the Practice are consistent with AAUP principles and that the “evergreen” promotion and review process aligns with academic freedom protections. Looking ahead, our chapter will need to strategize about the best way to support our Professor of the Practice colleagues and comrades while advocating for genuine academic freedom protections, which are guaranteed only by tenure.

**Wellbeing**
It has been clear for some time that faculty and staff need support in dealing with workplace issues of all kinds that affect campus morale and our ability to thrive in our profession. In response, the chapter is forming a Wellbeing Working Group. In November, we hosted an open meeting during which colleagues from around the University (members and non-members alike) shared concerns about Wesleyan as a workplace. The Wellbeing Working Group will be a site of support, linking colleagues with resources at Wesleyan and beyond, it will also be a means of identifying problems that the chapter may be able to help solve. By connecting colleagues with one another, individual suffering and complaint can be converted into common cause.

**Campus Labor**
The Campus Labor Working Group (CLWG) participates in the larger Campus Labor Network (CLN), which also includes representatives from faculty, staff (unionized and non-union),
The purpose of the CLN is to coordinate efforts across campus, create and maintain networks of solidarity, and identify shared areas of concern among all campus workers. One project of the CLN was the creation of a listserv for staff, many of whom don’t feel comfortable using the Community Forum to make connections with other staff or share challenges they face in their jobs. The CLN hopes to increase the number of members on this listserv (currently around 50) and use it to activate campus workers to push for improvements, with the support of their comrades across the university.

Members of the CLN helped direct Wesleyan’s participation in the National Day of Action for Higher Education for the Public Good on April 17. Wesleyan AAUP endorsed the national statement and ran an active tabling event at Usdan. CLN members worked with various campus organizations and encouraged them both to visit the Wesleyan AAUP table and organize their own events around the National Day of Action.

Looking towards the upcoming year, the CLN will support the members of WES GLU as they go through the NLRB election process and negotiate a first contract, and also monitor student and staff organizing efforts. Additionally, the CLN hopes to establish more regular meetings and use this growing network to inform campaigns and actions for students, staff, and faculty.

**Elections**
The chapter’s second successful annual election since its formal chartering in June 2022 was completed in February 2024. Four comrades will join the chapter executive committee for two-year terms (2024-26): Jeffers Lennox as co-president (stepping down as at-large member to assume the new role), Joe Fitzpatrick as treasurer, and Lynne Stahl and David Westmoreland as at-large members. The chapter also voted to amend its bylaws to remove the provision making the most recent former co-president a member of the executive committee.

**2024 AAUP Conference and Biennial Meeting**
Cori Anderson and Dave Constantine attended the AAUP Conference and Biennial Meeting in Washington, D.C. We cast votes in favor of a fossil-fuel divestment and renewable energy reinvestment resolution (which passed), and in elections for AAUP officers and council members. A new set of national AAUP officers were elected from the United Faculty for the Common Good slate, and Paul Davis (previous vice-president) was elected to a term as an at-large council member.

The meetings were suffused with a sense of excitement over a large number of new chapters (like ours!), and also a sense of extreme urgency regarding the ongoing and unprecedented attacks on higher education. There is much work to do!