

Another Win for Faculty Union at Illinois-Chicago

October 24, 2011 - 3:00am

The faculty union at the **University of Illinois at Chicago** won another victory Friday, with a ruling by the Illinois Educational Labor Relations Board rejecting a request by the university to stay an order certifying the union. The union is the result of a major organizing drive conducted by the American Association of University Professors and the American Federation of Teachers, which have hoped that the effort at UIC would pave the way for more faculty unions at doctoral institutions. The university has challenged the right of the union to form, as currently planned, because both tenure-track faculty members and adjunct professors would be in the same unit. The university maintains that this violates state law, but the state labor board in September rejected that argument, and certified the union. The university vowed to go to court to block the union, and requested a stay.

Union officials noted that the board's decision rejecting the stay suggested that the university will lose in court. "We find that granting a stay in this case would be contrary to the public policy that supports a duty to bargain," the board said in its ruling. It added that "we find that there is not a reasonable likelihood that the employer will succeed on the merits."

Read more: <http://www.insidehighered.com/quicktakes/2011/10/24/another-win-faculty-union-illinois-chicago#ixzz1bi9uoCpN>

Applicants' Privacy Is at Heart of Lawsuit in Illinois

By *THE NEW YORK TIMES*

To what extent does federal law protect the privacy of a college applicant's personal information?

As Tamar Lewin reports in today's Times, that question is at the forefront of a lawsuit between the [University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign](#) and The Chicago Tribune.

In 2009, the Tribune exposed that the university kept a list that tracked well-connected applicants who were given an edge in admissions. Now, as Ms. Lewin writes, the newspaper is seeking the G.P.A.'s and ACT scores of admitted students on that so-called clout list.

As Ms. Lewin reports:

The university argues that the federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, or Ferpa, forbids disclosure of such information — and threatens the loss of federal financing if it hands over private records. Personal information about students is precisely what the federal privacy act was designed to protect, it said, raising the specter of a world in which students might be shamed by the public release of their academic credentials.

But The Tribune argues that the documents are not education records under the federal law, but rather records of questionable conduct, so the public's right to know should prevail.

What do readers of The Choice think of the conflict? Should the private statistics of the admitted students in question be made public? Share your thoughts in the comment box below.

Faculty senate leader made false charges

I write in response to Joyce Tolliver's Oct. 5 letter because I need to correct two factual errors.

She asserted that:

The Academy on Capitalism and Limited Government Foundation (ACLGF) did not want to subject itself to the appropriate **University of Illinois** oversight.

Why would ACLGF, including a chancellor (a former provost), several top current and retired UI administrators, key UI Foundation executives, approximately 20 outstanding UI faculty members, a number of generous alumni and friends who care deeply for the University of Illinois, need, or want to, circumvent university procedures?

That would be self-defeating and counter-productive. We love the UI and want to help it become the best it can be.

Tolliver also claimed the ACLGF was improperly organized and in violation of the tax code's 509(a)(3) requirements.

In light of Tolliver's claims, and more important, because these issues reach into the soul of what our great university fosters — the search for truth — I ask Tolliver to:

— Produce evidence that ACLGF leaders attempted, considered, discussed or planned to circumvent university procedures.

— Prove ACLGF leaders violated its 509(a)(3) requirements.

If Tolliver fails to provide such evidence, I believe she is honor bound to:

— Submit a public apology to the ACLGF family — directors, faculty friends, Foundation executives and donors.

— Invite me to appear before the full faculty senate to discuss in complete transparency the rise of ACLGF and the senate's handling of it. This conversation could prevent misunderstandings from occurring in the future.

I hope to hear from Tolliver soon.

JIM VERMETTE
Champaign

Whining over money getting tiresome

I'm getting really tired of the **University of Illinois** crying about its money woes.

Why are the universities owed the most by the state? Is it because they spend too much?

They should not spend so much money on these searches for employees or bonuses.

They have stated they have cut back on staffing. Where?

I really believe that upper management needs to make more cuts by eliminating searches for high paid individuals and taking away bonuses.

AILEEN O'DEA
Mahomet

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Public can learn more on UI reactor demolition this week

Mon, 10/24/2011 - 9:00am | [Tim Ditman](#) ^[1], Anchor, Reporter, [Newstalk1400](#) ^[2]
[WDWS-AM](#)

The [University of Illinois](#) is tearing down a building that once housed an atomic reactor, and the public has an opportunity to learn more about it this week.

The UI College of Engineering will hold an informational meeting Wednesday night to let the public know what they can expect with the demolition of the building at 102 S. Goodwin Ave., U.

Jim Stubbins is the department head of the Nuclear, Radiological, and Plasma Engineering Department at UI.

He said the work won't disturb those walking by the building.

[Click here to hear from Jim Stubbins.](#) ^[3]

Stubbins said there is still some equipment and some radioactive material in the building, but none of it presents a safety hazard.

He says the reactor core, which was used for teaching beginning in 1960, was shut down and shipped out of state in 2004.

Stubbins says the demolition project is expected to take about 8 months in total.

Wednesday's informational meeting begins at 2 p.m. in Room 190 of the Engineering Science Building on campus.

EMPIRE-BUILDERS

New caution for U.S. universities setting up overseas

By JUSTIN POPE
AP Education Writer

It's a modern version of the quest for "gold, God and glory" that drove explorers overseas in centuries past. For the last decade, American college presidents have been obsessed with expanding abroad — looking to tap new markets, spread the gospel of American higher education and leave a glamorous global legacy.

But like most empire-builders, they've found the reality on the ground more challenging than expected.

High-profile and expensive failures of Middle East branch campuses run by Michigan State and George Mason were a wake-up call. Suffolk University recently closed a campus in Senegal after concluding it would be cheaper just to bring the students to Boston. The University of Connecticut dropped plans for a campus in Dubai amid criticism of the United Arab Emirates' policies toward Israel. Plans for a University of Montana campus in China never panned out, and Singapore's government shut down a Johns Hopkins

University biomedical research center.

Even elite schools still pushing forward, like Duke, Yale and New York University, have faced resistance from faculty concerned about finances, quality and whether host countries like China, Singapore and the UAE will uphold academic freedom.

The result: a new era of caution, particularly toward a model that once looked like the wave of the future. Some experts say branch campuses — where a U.S. university

"plants a flag," operates its own campus and awards degrees in its own name — are falling from favor.

Instead, schools like UCLA and the Universities of Michigan and North Carolina have opted for more of a soft-power approach — a range of partnerships often starting on the departmental or school level where the home university is less invested but also offering an easier exit strategy if things go south.

In short, befitting the financially turbulent times, more akin to renting than owning.

"The gold rush mentality of the 2000s is over," said Jason Lane, a professor and co-director of the cross-border education research team at the State University of New York-Albany. His data show 60 U.S. institutions with 83 overseas campuses in 39 countries. But the number of new international branch campuses peaked at 11 in 2008 — just before the financial crisis — and only four have opened since.

"We saw a leap-before-you-look

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UNIVERSITIES

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mentality. Folks wanted to be first to enter the market," Lane said. Now, "there's a lot more caution from institutions about whether or not this is a worthwhile endeavor, and thinking about where they should go."

What isn't over is a commitment to internationalize, even at cash-strapped public universities. College presidents still punctuate their sentences with the word "global." An international presence is considered both noble public service and a valuable resource to students and researchers back home.

But beyond that, motivations vary. Some schools got into the overseas game for much the same reason a business would — hoping the huge global demand for higher education and the prestige of American universities will translate into new tuition revenue.

"What we do know is there is demand for Western education," said Ben Wildavsky, a senior scholar at the Kauffman Foundation. "It's really become the gold standard."

More prestigious universities were initially more reluctant to risk their reputations. But they were bombarded with proposals and eventually found some too good to resist.

When first approached by investors from the United Arab Emirates, NYU President John Sexton asked for a \$50 million "earnest money" donation, just to show they were serious. They were, and wrote him a check. Now the government is covering all of NYU's costs there, including substantial student financial aid and airfare to fly in hundreds of student finalists for a candidate's weekend.

What varies is the approach. One model is to operate a kind of branch of the home university itself (sometimes with local partners) and award degrees featuring at least some version of name of the home university. Advantages include control over finances and facilities. It's also a signal of ambition — that a school aims to play in a global league of super-universities whose reach isn't limited to a single campus or even continent.

Perhaps the most prominent example is Education City in Doha, Qatar, the now decade-old community of six

U.S. branch campuses — Cornell Medical School, Texas A&M engineering, Northwestern journalism, and others. The project has been by most accounts a modest success, though enrollments in most programs still top out in the low hundreds.

But when George Mason closed a Middle East campus 2009 and Michigan State in 2010, due partly to lack of demand, many U.S. universities got cold feet. Administrators realized they may have misjudged the market. It's true foreign students have proved they want to attend universities in the United States, and may even pay U.S.-sized tuition. But it doesn't necessarily follow they'll pay that much to attend branch campuses elsewhere.

"Many (branch campuses) are under-enrolled," said Philip Altbach, a leading scholar of international higher education at Boston College. "If they're not under-enrolled, they may be enrolled by people who will not fit the standards at the home campus. That happens quite a lot. Are you going to damage your brand name?"

During the 1980s, 30 U.S. branch campuses opened in Japan. Only two remain. The countries that U.S. universities are now pushing into are even more complex, with challenges ranging from currency fluctuations to protecting the rights of gay students.

Another obstacle is persuading home-campus faculty to move overseas to teach (though NYU, which has offered bonuses of up to 75 percent, says it's had no trouble).

Universities can hire locals to teach, said Mark Tessler, vice provost for international affairs at the University of Michigan, which has widespread global partnerships but has avoided branches. "But if we're not really delivering the instruction, it's not really a Michigan education," he said.

Faculty have also objected to the partnerships between U.S. universities and authoritarian governments that branch campuses entail. They argue it's morally preferable to work across a lower level, directly with academics and universities. NYU Professor Andrew Ross says the univer-

sity has failed to speak out against human rights abuses by its government partners in Abu Dhabi. Carnegie-Mellon's recently announced Rwanda campus will be paid for by the Rwandan government, whose human rights record has been attacked, and the African Development Bank.

That may be one reason "branch campus" has become something of a dirty word. Vanderbilt, facing some student criticism over negotiations to build an education school in Abu Dhabi, emphatically avoids using the term for the proposed arrangement. Carnegie-Mellon University does the same for its Rwanda campus, even though it will be run by CMU and award CMU degrees.

Carnegie-Mellon says accreditation issues require it to call the arrangement an "additional campus," not a branch. Engineering dean Pradeep Khosla says he is comfortable with the Rwandan government's record and the partnership, and that such criticism misses the greater good.

"If there's one thing that part of the world needs right now, it is access to high-quality education," he said.

It's too early to say whether one model will win out. And in fact, the experiments don't fit neatly into categories.

Still, the divergent approaches are apparent in three pairs of elite, competitive and neighboring institutions.

No university has been more ambitious than NYU, which has already opened essentially a large outpost of itself in Abu Dhabi and plans something similar in China. (NYU also rejects the term "branch campus." It favors "portal campuses" of a globally networked university). The early results are impressive: In the second class of its new World Honors College, median SAT math and reading scores were 1,460 out of 1,600. Nearly 6,000 students applied for admission to just 195 slots. About 20 percent of students come from the United States.

But Columbia University, just over 100 blocks north, has gone a different route: opening essentially regional embassies in France, Jordan, India and China. The facilities coordi-

nate activities there but aren't true branch campuses offering Columbia degrees.

Something similar has played out in Chicago, with Northwestern University opening a campus in Qatar and the University of Chicago generally favoring the "embassy" model.

In North Carolina, Duke University, which already has numerous global partnerships including a medical school in Singapore, will be flying its flag along with a local university over a new campus in Kunshan, China, scheduled for a delayed opening in 2013. The university says it will be a separate entity called Duke Kunshan University, though some faculty feel it raises many of the same issues as a branch campus. The nearby University of North Carolina, meanwhile, has purposefully steered clear of anything like a branch campus.

Duke's plans haven't gone as smoothly as hoped. Planning documents show the estimate for Duke's share of the initial costs has increased from \$11 million to \$37 million by 2016. (Duke's administration says only about one-quarter of that will be "new" expenses, factoring in ways the new campus will save money Duke currently has to spend in China on things like facility rentals).

Such amounts may be small change for elite universities, but "their brand, their reputation is hugely important to them," said Wildavsky. "A high-profile failure in a foreign country could be very damaging."

At Duke, the concern was, will the expansion compromise Duke's name? When the first proposal for a degree program emerged, faculty at Duke's Fuqua School of Business raised so many concerns that curriculum planners went back to the drawing boards. Administrators recently brought in three high-profile China experts, including former Harvard dean William Kirby, which appears to have assuaged some but not all worries.

"People just need to go in with their eyes wide open in terms of how hard this is," said Fuqua professor John Payne. "It's going to take more time and more resources than we probably initially expected

to do it right."

Michael Schoenfeld, Duke's vice president for public affairs, says Duke's strategy is to partner with a Chinese city and university to create something none could create alone. Having a physical presence will help Duke capitalize on teaching and research opportunities that will emerge over the long run and "that you can't get through a rental facility or a hotel room."

"We're finding every day faculty and students and others who are coming up with interesting ideas and want to be a part of the enterprise," he said. "We never expected nor would we want it to be fully baked the day it starts."

Ron Strauss, UNC's executive associate provost and chief international officer, calls Duke "our good friend," the schools' epic basketball rivalry notwithstanding. But Duke's struggles to bring faculty on board validated his skepticism about establishing some version of the home school overseas. UNC, which has extensive partnerships in places like Ecuador and Malawi, considered a branch in the Middle East but rejected the idea.

"It was almost impossible to take the qualities we admire in Chapel Hill and our university and take them off the shelf and move them to the Persian Gulf and expect that they are going to be of the same character and value as they are in North Carolina," he said.

Branch campuses, he added, haven't proved they can endure, and can foment distrust about motives.

"To be blunt, Ivy League universities or private institutions that are building campuses abroad are not being charitable institutions," he said. "They are building branch campuses with the expectations that they will generate revenue and reputation."

Then he dropped what is a very bad word indeed among international educators, saying he's learned the need for "caution about replicating colonial structures in how we build universities."

Duke's Schoenfeld said the university isn't in this to make money. "This is an investment in the long-term future of the educational enterprise," he said.

Unity time for graduates

You have nothing to lose but your student loans

BY RON GROSSMAN

In just over a month, Occupy Wall Street has generated numerous spinoffs, handing President Barack Obama a problem once confronted by a politician in France, the birthplace of street demonstrations.

During one of the revolutionary episodes that convulsed that country in the 19th century, a lawyer named Alexandre Auguste Ledru-Rollin made his way to the top of the political ladder. Then Parisians took to the streets and a huffing-and-puffing Ledru-Rollin was spotted running after them.

"There go my people," he said. "I must find out where they are going so I can lead them."

By and large, those camping out in New York City and trying to in Chicago's Grant Park are Obama's people. The signature of his campaign was a mantra — "Yes we can!" — that supporters heard as a call to end the status quo. Yet America remained mired in economic woes and intractable wars, spawning a loosely defined movement of those determined to be leaders not followers.

So like Ledru-Rollin, Obama needs to know where the crowd is headed and who is in it. Some are veteran dissenters, graying alums of innumerable campaigns to free the Earth from war and pollution. Others are newcomers, outraged that Wall Street grows richer, while on Main Street jobs are lost and homes foreclosed on. A few are the left's equivalent of party animals, attracted by the opportunity to play conga drums and watch pot smoke curl skyward.

Others represent a type new to the protest scene: college students for whom the American dream has failed.

Joshua LaVigne was among a group that recently pitched tents near the state capital in Lansing, Mich. A University of Michigan graduate, he hasn't been able to find a job.

"I now have more than \$100,000 in student debt," LaVigne told a Detroit News reporter.

For several generations, a college degree has been a passport into the middle class. Now it looks more like a trapdoor to recent grads like Benjamin Vail, who has looked in vain for work since graduating from the University of North Texas in 2008. At a recent demonstration in Dallas, he wore a sign proclaiming his student loan debt: \$61,544.69. His wife Kim told the Dallas Morning News that her loans bring the family's total indebtedness to \$100,000.

The predicament that LaVigne, the Vails and myriad others face marks the apparent end of a social revolution that began with the GI Bill. Before World War II, college was largely a privilege of the well-to-do. But as that conflict ended, America decided to say thanks to those who served by offering veterans various benefits, including financial support to go to college.

Enrollments soared, and stayed higher even after the GI Bill generation left campus. Seeing all those new graduates inspired families who might never have dreamed of having children in college to send them. The cost was moderate. When I went to the University of Chicago in the mid-1950s, tuition was \$600 a year. Currently, it is \$41,853.

At first, the curve connecting those two data points sloped gently upward. Then it took several sharp bends. After adjusting for inflation, the cost of going to college is roughly three times more expensive now than in 1978. A pay-as-you-go approach to college became impractical.

As an undergraduate, I worked part time as a florist at \$2 an hour — a rate that could put a reasonable dent in \$600. That number now having become \$41,853, you'd have to be a corporate CEO to work your way through college. Even relatively well-off families have to take out loans.

By 2010, the average graduate was leaving college with \$24,000

in outstanding loans. That year, the nation's total student-loan debt exceeded its credit-card debt, itself no small piece of change, to reach \$830 billion.

Tuition inflation has outpaced the much-publicized soaring cost of medical care — a fact for which universities have offered a variety of explanations. None of them make much sense. But for a while, students and parents could console themselves with the colleges' argument that those with bachelor's degree earn significantly more than those without.

But it takes a job to turn that theory into checkbook reality. And those white-collar jobs are increasingly hard to find. A lot of recent college graduates are working espresso machines at Starbucks, or are otherwise over-qualified for their jobs. Researchers at Rutgers University surveyed those who graduated from U.S. colleges between 2006 and 2010. "Fully 40 percent obtained positions that did not require a four-year college education," the researchers found.

Not surprisingly, the grads surveyed don't see a rosy future: Less than half thought they'd have greater financial success than their parents. If that's not a coda to the American dream, what is?

Mr. President, I know there's a lot on your to-do list. But these are your people — young Americans who responded to your call with choruses of "Yes we can!" They canvassed voters, stuffed campaign literature in mailboxes, worked precincts on Election Day. Some even persuaded Republican parents it was time to vote for change.

Critics glibly dismiss Occupy Wall Street for not spelling out its objectives. But it doesn't take a political genius to figure out what young people like LaVigne, the Vails and others want.

They don't want to sleep on parents' couches for the rest of their lives.

Ron Grossman is a Tribune reporter and former history professor.

latimes.com/news/local/la-me-uc-apply-20111024,0,4217121.story

latimes.com

UC's new admissions rules confuse applicants

The SAT subject exams are no longer required. If students take them anyway, good scores can help but poor scores won't hurt, administrators say.

By Larry Gordon, Los Angeles Times

October 24, 2011

A major change in freshman admission requirements for the University of California this year was supposed to ease the burden of standardized test-taking for high school seniors and allow more students to apply.

But the new rules have caused widespread confusion and anxiety among students about whether to take the supplemental tests known as SAT subject exams. To boost their chances of UC admission, thousands of high school seniors are taking the subject exams even though the university has dropped them as a requirement, starting with applications for next fall. UC still requires scores from the main SAT test or its rival, the ACT.

Good subject test scores in any discipline will be a "plus factor" in a freshman application, similar to musical ability or club leadership, UC officials say. Not taking them or doing poorly won't eliminate anyone, they emphasize.

Many high school students and counselors contend that is a bewilderingly mixed message. If taking the subject tests helps some students, they ask, won't not taking them potentially hurt others in the zero sum game of admissions? Adding to the uncertainty is that several UC engineering and science programs recommend subject tests in math and science.

"It's definitely been confusing for them," said Noel Hernandez, a Monrovia High School counselor. "I've had a lot of students come in to my office and ask, 'Should I take them or should I not take them?'" About half of her UC applicants are taking the tests, she said, and because submitting the scores is optional, she advises them to do so only if they do well.

Robin Sroka, a counselor at Wilson High in Long Beach, said she and many of her students are skeptical of UC's promise that skipping or doing poorly on a subject exam won't hurt. "It's like telling a jury to ignore damaging information that a judge rules inadmissible after the jurors have already heard it," she said.

Student reaction is divided as deadlines near: Nov. 30 is the last day to submit a UC freshman application for next year; Nov. 5 and Dec. 3 are the final two dates UC allows seniors to take the exams.

Daniel Antalan, 17 and a senior at Eagle Rock High in Los Angeles, said he took five subject tests so he wouldn't miss any advantage in applying to UC campuses. "If people don't take it, they most likely won't be able to compete with people who took the subject test," he said.

In contrast, Charles Shirley, 17, a senior at Wilson High in Long Beach, was happy not to take any subject exams. "In some ways, it's been a real relief," he said, adding that it freed up time to prepare for the main SAT test as he applies to several UC campuses and to the U.S. Naval Academy. "I would have taken them if I had to ... but it did take some stress away, not having to take them."

UC officials say the new policy should not cause worries, although they acknowledge that any big admissions change can provoke anxiety for many students and parents.

Kate Jeffery, UC's interim director of undergraduate admissions, said taking the subject tests in math and science may be a good idea for those applying to competitive engineering programs that recommend them. But students will not be denied admission just because they didn't take the exams, she said, "just as no student will be denied admission merely because he or she was not editor of the student newspaper, a star athlete or any number of other plus factors."

All the angst may puzzle anyone who has not recently applied to college or has no college-age children. For the uninitiated: UC requires the basic SAT test, also called the reasoning test, which takes three hours and 45 minutes and has three parts: critical reading, math and writing. (The rival ACT exam can be used instead, with the SAT writing test added.)

The nonprofit College Board, which owns the SAT tests, offers 20 hour-long subject exams in such topics as world history, biology, literature and Spanish. It costs at least \$44 to take two of the tests in one sitting, with extra fees for language listening exams. Many Ivy League colleges and some other prestigious private schools still require or recommend two subject tests.

For years, the most important factors in UC admissions were high school grades and combined scores from the SAT or ACT and two subject tests. But faculty leaders determined that too many gifted students, especially low-income, black and Latino students in urban and rural areas, were not taking the subject exams. The reasons included test fees, poor counseling and high schools not offering the honors courses that prepare students for the exams.

In February 2009, UC's regents voted to drop the subject tests, previously called achievement or SAT II tests, starting this year. Other changes also were made to allow additional students to be eligible for at least one of UC's nine undergraduate campuses. For example, a student who ranks in the top 9% of his or her high school class (up from the previous 4%) is guaranteed a spot somewhere in the system, although only UC Merced will enroll eligible students this year who are rejected at all other UC campuses.

UC's decision to stop requiring the subject exam may cost the College Board. Last year, about a third of the 312,000 students nationally who took the test were in California. The state's numbers are declining this year, but it is too early to say how much, said College Board spokeswoman Kathleen Steinberg.

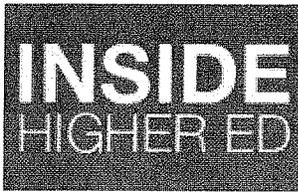
To help clear up confusion, UC officials have been explaining the reforms at meetings of high school counselors and administrators around the state. After a recent session in Anaheim, several counselors said they still felt unsettled.

"They kept saying that the subject tests are not required but could help. What does that mean? It is a

little nebulous," said Jared Fulton, acting assistant principal and a counselor at Los Amigos High School in Orange County. "You could argue both ways on what we heard."

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Do Faculty Strikes Work?

October 24, 2011 - 3:00am

Kaustuv Basu

Last month, faculty members at Cincinnati State Technical and Community College went on strike for a week before going back to work. They did so without a new contract and without any movement in the negotiating position of the administration – the traditional goals of a strike. Also last month, faculty members at the C.W. Post campus of Long Island University went on strike for four days before a five-year contract was signed with university officials.

Strikes have also been authorized by unions at Southern Illinois University; there is talk of one at California State University. Last week, faculty members at Rider University voted to authorize a strike. So did those at Lewis and Clark Community College.

The strikes and possible strikes (many authorization votes aren't followed by strikes) raise the question about whether work stoppages are still a viable option in these changing times.

Administrators and faculty members are guarded in their opinions.

Pam Ecker, American Association of University Professors spokeswoman at Cincinnati State, said the strike was planned for a week from the beginning, and was a way of demonstrating concerns. "The reason we chose to do so [go back to work] is because we did not want to disrupt the academic term," said Ecker, a professor of technical and professional writing. The dispute centers around teaching workloads.

"I do not yet know if we will see a different demeanor from the administration," Ecker said. "But strikes and collective bargaining remain a profound way of demonstrating serious concerns."

About 200 full-time faculty members are represented by the AAUP, Ecker said. The college has about 575 adjunct professors. Talks between the union and administration were going on last week and Ecker said some "new approaches" were being discussed but did not specify what they were.

At the C.W. Post campus of Long Island University, a strike by full-time faculty members resulted in a contract with a 1 percent increase in base pay in the second year and a 1.5 percent increase in the third year, according to *Newsday*. Before the strike, the union – C.W. Post

Collegial Federation – rejected a five-year contract with a "one-time payment equal to 3 percent of pay in the second year," the newspaper reported. Jeffrey Kane, vice president for academic affairs at Long Island University, stated in an e-mail that negotiations with the union were focused on salaries and benefits, and that the strike "did not materially change the compensation available for the faculty."

Symbolic Value?

Strikes are symbolic most of the time, and faculty strikes tend to be short lived, said Richard Boris, director of the National Center for the Study of Collective Bargaining in Higher Education and the Professions at Hunter College of the City University of New York.

" 'Let's get down and discuss it but let us end it early.' That generally is the process," he said. "The last thing they want to do is damage the students."

But the academic workforce has changed in character, he said. The financial constraints at the national, state and local level, whether they are real or not, have led to the reduction in full-time employment in the academic workforce, Boris said, and full-time faculty members have been replaced by a large contingent of part-time employees.

"We don't know how unions are going to adapt to this change," he said, but added that unions in the academic workforce are growing.

Public universities are transforming, they are becoming less recognizable, he said. "Strikes are different now because the level of frustration is different," he said. "Ten years ago, strikes were limited in their focus – mainly on the condition of employment. There are new tensions now as colleges are pushed to find new sources of income."

But they remain an important tool. "They are always a viable tool but not the only tool," he said.

Boris said a two-week strike at Eastern Michigan University in 2006 demonstrated how a strike can change the conversation, One benefit of that strike, said Howard Bunsis, professor of accounting and a former president of AAUP at the university, is that an independent third party, a state-mandated fact-finder, became part of the conversation.

The strike also united the faculty members, Bunsis said. "In each instance, we believe that exercising our right to association did help the faculty and ultimately helped the university," he said.

Sometimes, he said, strikes are the only way to get administrators to take notice. Andrew Ross, professor of social and cultural analysis at New York University, who is a strong supporter of unions, said strikes in higher education have become more like public campaigns. In his opinion, to be successful, a strike has to reach out to stakeholders in the community.

One way strikes at universities are different from other kind of work places, said Ross, is that the money has already been collected from the students. In a traditional strike, a picket outside a store would discourage any purchases there, but at a college, a picket would only discourage students from getting the education for which they have paid.

“You cannot threaten the revenue flow,” Ross said

Ross said some university administrators have increasingly tended to hire union-busting law firms. “They have a playbook and administrators tend to follow it page by page,” he said.

Jeff Cross, co-editor at *The Journal of Collective Bargaining in the Academy*, who is also the associate vice president for academic affairs at Eastern Illinois University, but spoke only in his capacity as co-editor, said nothing much has changed in institutions which have collective bargaining.

“Any time we are in an academic setting, I think the perception is different because it is affecting our sons and daughters,” he said “But these are extraordinary times for public higher ed. There are limits being put on bargaining and those moves are certainly resonating with some in public.”



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Some jail inmates flood county with FOIA requests

By **JOHN REYNOLDS** (john.reynolds@sj-r.com)

The State Journal-Register

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The 5-inch thick folder of **Freedom of Information Act** requests in front of Mike Walton is from one jail inmate over a seven-month period.

Walton, director of support services for the Sangamon County Sheriff's Office, is the department's freedom of information officer, which means it's his job to respond to requests for documents under the state's Freedom Of Information Act.

Over the past few years, his office has been inundated with more and more requests, and the time spent fulfilling them is up to 14 hours a week. Walton believes many of the requests are being filed by inmates who are more interested in creating work for his office than in getting information.

Officials with the American Civil Liberties Union of Illinois say other governmental bodies have reported similar concerns, but they say inmates have the right to the same access to documents that the general public enjoys.

"The balance here is, you don't want it to be abusive, but you want to leave the door open for exactly the sorts of abuses that the Freedom of Information Act is meant to uncover," said Ed Yohnka, director of communication and public policy for the **ACLU of Illinois**.

Booking photos, menus

Illinois' FOIA laws were designed to make it easier for people to obtain official government documents. It's used by reporters, insurance companies and everyday people who might want a copy of an accident report or information on a government project.

Walton, as well as Sheriff Neil Williamson, said they have no problem with people who have legitimate requests, but they believe some inmates are abusing the system.

"We want to comply with everything and be transparent and open," Williamson said. "But this is burdening us down with frivolous, obscure Freedom of information Act things."

One recurring theme among the inmates is requests for booking photos.

"The mug shot thing has been going on for four or five months. They want pictures of themselves," Walton said. "It's always, 'I want all the mug shots you have of me.' I don't know what they're doing with the mug shots. Maybe they're sending them to their girlfriends."

Inmates also request copies of their own fingerprints and the names of corrections officers.

The 5-inch file on Walton's desk contains a variety of requests. The inmate requested invoices for jailhouse food, menus, certification of kitchen workers, proof of medical certification of jail employees and copies of all grievances filed by inmates in 2010 and 2011.

"That's the one that took the longest," Walton said of the grievance request. "That took 19 hours."

One recent request from another inmate was for the names of all serving sheriffs of Sangamon County. Walton thinks the inmate really wanted a list of deputies, but Walton stuck to the letter of the request.

"I gave him the name Neil Williamson and his badge number. He's the only serving sheriff we have," Walton said.

Another inmate was convinced that jailers were stealing his mail, so staff members started photocopying the incoming envelopes in an attempt to prove he was getting all of his mail.

That prisoner eventually filed a Freedom of Information Act request for copies of the photocopies.

Defense attorney uses FOIA

Springfield defense attorney Bruce Locher said that if an inmate has a good lawyer, there's really no reason for the inmate to file his own FOIA request with the jail.

"An inmate could use FOIA to get information," Locher said. "Whether it's legitimate or not, I can't make that judgment."

Locher said he has filed FOIAs with the jail because it is sometimes faster than going through the discovery process in the court system.

He's even requested booking photos, which he said can be a valuable piece of evidence.

For instance, if a police officer writes in a report that something incriminating was found in a client's shirt pocket, a booking photo might reveal that the client was wearing a shirt without a pocket, Locher said.

A booking photo also can document an arrestee's physical condition when he is booked into the jail.

Yohnka pointed out other situations in which an inmate has a legitimate need to file a FOIA request with the jail that is holding him.

"There may be issues of safety or security that someone from the outside or even an advocacy group from the outside might not uncover," Yohnka said. "The person who is detained in the facility might have more insight about the appropriate questions to ask that might lead to something."

Problem seen across state

On average, the Sangamon County Jail has a population of about 360.

In Morgan County, where the jail population is closer to 50, Sheriff Randy Duvendack said officials haven't seen any problems with inmates filing FOIA requests.

"Every now and then, we get some requests from people who have already been sentenced," Duvendack said.

Greg Sullivan, executive director of the Illinois Sheriff's Association, said he has heard of some other sheriff's departments being inundated with FOIA requests. Larger departments usually see the most requests, but smaller departments also might find themselves buried in FOIA requests, he said.

The smaller departments sometimes have to pull deputies off the street to respond the requests, Sullivan said.

Important work

In addition to Walton, there are six other employees in the sheriff's records office.

Walton handles FOIA requests himself. One of the employees covers for him when he's on vacation.

Complying with the requests can be time-consuming, especially when the request involves a police report. Walton has to read each report and redact the names and addresses of witnesses, as well as personal information such as Social Security numbers.

"I try to go as quick as I can without making any mistakes," Walton said. "I used to be able to have one of the other employees take a look to make sure I didn't miss anything. Now, we are so short-handed I try to re-check it myself."

The data entry work being done by other workers is important, Williamson added.

"If civil papers, warrants or orders of protection don't get entered," Williamson said, "that could be a life or death situation."

Legislature responds

A law signed by Gov. Pat Quinn this summer allows public bodies to take more time when processing some Freedom of Information Act requests.

The law allows public bodies to take up to 21 days to respond to FOIA requests made by people who have filed more than 50 requests to the same public body in a year, more than 15 requests in a month or more than seven requests in a week.

Governmental bodies normally are limited to five days to respond to requests.

The new law does not apply to the news media or non-profit or scientific organizations.

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