

Collective Bargaining and Faculty Status for Librarians: West Chester State College

State college librarians in Pennsylvania have had faculty status for the last fifty years, but collective bargaining has enlarged the meaning of the term. The librarians at West Chester State College have been active participants in the collective bargaining process in order to insure the proper definition and interpretation of the responsibilities of the academic librarian.

INTRODUCTION

WEST CHESTER STATE COLLEGE, one of the fourteen state colleges of Pennsylvania, is a state-supported liberal arts and state teachers college, located in a town of 19,300, twenty miles west of Philadelphia, with an enrollment of 8,000 students. The Francis Harvey Green Library (the library of the college) contains over 300,000 volumes and employs a professional staff of seventeen librarians, the majority of whom are comparatively new to West Chester, having worked at the library six years or less.

West Chester State College librarians have faculty status; we have had it for about fifty years, but in the last four or five years we have realized the real meaning of the term. We have an academic year, faculty rank, representation on campus committees, and peer governance in the form of elected evalua-

tion, promotion, and merit committees. Recently we have seen the formation of the library faculty into an academic department with an elected chairperson.

How do the librarians at West Chester State College have these privileges which are denied most academic librarians? Partly because we are protected by a collective bargaining agreement negotiated by the faculty union, APSCU-PAHE (Association of Pennsylvania State College and University Faculty, Pennsylvania Association of Higher Education, an affiliate of NEA). This contract determines that we are considered faculty with all rights, privileges, and responsibilities thereof and protects the above mentioned accoutrements of faculty status.

The present climate at the Francis Harvey Green Library is one of campus involvement so as to illustrate the interest of librarians in the college community and our willingness to accept faculty responsibility. Several years ago the librarians were an unrecognized group on campus, constantly fighting to maintain our faculty status (which, because of our lack of campus involvement, perhaps we did not deserve). Today we

Mary Anne Burns is reference librarian and Jeanette Carter is bibliographer in the Francis Harvey Green Library, West Chester State College, West Chester, Pennsylvania.

are an organized, cohesive force who are respected and who hold the following campus offices: (1) vice-chairman of the Faculty Senate; (2) secretary of the West Chester chapter of AAUP; and (3) treasurer of the West Chester chapter of AAUP.

We also have representatives on the following college-wide committees: (1) Tenure; (2) Promotions, Sabbatical Leaves, and Merit Increments; (3) Curriculum (the library representative is secretary of the committee); (4) Professional Rights and Responsibilities; (5) Long-Range Planning; and (6) All-College Senate Task Force.

THE FIRST STRUGGLE TO RETAIN FACULTY STATUS

Though West Chester State College librarians have enjoyed faculty status since 1922, it is a position we have continually had to guard. In 1969 the state government initiated a study by the Public Administration Service of selected faculty positions in the Pennsylvania State Colleges and University. The status of librarians was included in this study. Librarians were there classified as "nonprofessorials," as opposed to the professorial group who, according to the report, are occupied primarily in instruction and related scholarly duties. The Public Administration Service recommended that the professorial rank system was poorly suited for these "non-professorials" and that these positions should be appointed on a twelve-month basis, a definite backward step for the Pennsylvania state college librarians.¹

When the report became public knowledge, there was a general outcry against its conclusions by those whose positions were affected. Each group mentioned in the report responded by presenting reasons for the exemption of their profession from the recommendations of the study. The West Chester State College librarians argued their positions on several fronts. The eighteen

librarians then on the staff drafted a letter to the president of the college and the faculty representative of the state education association. This letter detailed the need for librarians to retain their faculty status and asked for assistance in securing this goal. Both individuals promised their support. The director of the library was extremely active in defense of faculty status and supported his staff's position completely. Other library staffs and library directors in the state college system responded in similar fashion. Thus, a united front was presented to the state government, and the recommendations of the report as it related to the librarians was defeated.

CAMPUS INVOLVEMENT

After their success in defeating this threat to faculty status, West Chester librarians realized the importance of being active and involved in the campus community. We began to see that our status was directly related to our impact upon the other faculty. In order to be recognized as professional equals, it was necessary to involve ourselves in the activities of the campus.

The Faculty Senate of West Chester at that time included no representative from the library. Realizing the need to increase the visibility of the librarians' interest in senate concerns, the librarians adopted a policy whereby librarians volunteered to attend senate meetings as observers. Thus, by having a librarian present at every senate meeting, we accomplished a twofold goal: (1) the senators began to know a number of librarians and became cognizant of their interest in the campus; and (2) the librarians brought back to the library the latest thinking on campus developments and projects.

In 1971 librarians became an active group in campus affairs. A librarian was elected to the Faculty Senate as an at-large representative. The library did not

(and still does not) have a representative on the Faculty Senate; thus, it was necessary to run in the at-large group. This librarian was subsequently elected secretary of the senate and presently serves as vice-chairperson. (In the 1974 election two librarians were elected as at-large representatives.) Concurrently, a librarian was elected from the non-classroom faculty to represent the group on a Task Force on Faculty Evaluation and Professional Personnel Policies. This task force assumed a great deal of prestige on campus, and the participating librarian was recognized for her contribution.

THE BEGINNING OF COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

A tremendous change in the campus situation was effected in October 1971 with the advent of collective bargaining, made possible in the public sector through Pennsylvania Law 195. The Pennsylvania State Colleges were one of the first groups to take advantage of collective bargaining. The state college system consists of thirteen state colleges (Bloomsburg, California, Cheyney, Clarion, East Stroudsburg, Edinboro, Kutztown, Lock Haven, Mansfield, Millersville, Shippensburg, Slippery Rock, West Chester) and one state university (Indiana University of Pennsylvania). Several unions campaigned at the state colleges, a vote taken, and APSCUF/PAHE was chosen as the bargaining agent.

The West Chester librarians became aware immediately of the importance of collective bargaining. A campaign promise of APSCUF/PAHE had been the support of faculty status for librarians; and we wanted to make sure that APSCUF/PAHE lived up to its promise. Similarly, librarians in all of the fourteen state-owned institutions became involved in the collective bargaining process. With the PAS report fresh in our minds, the Pennsylvania state

college librarians wanted to be in on the ground floor in order to further protect faculty status.

West Chester librarians drafted a position statement to West Chester's representative at the bargaining table:

We believe that an academic library is the very core of the college community, that its teaching and research functions are closely allied with those taking place in the classroom, that its specialized functions complement and support the various academic programs of the college on all levels, and that the vital services provided by dedicated teacher-librarians are in every way as professional and as essential to the academic well being of the college and its students as are those contributed by our colleagues in the classroom.

We would like to have our membership in the instructional faculty of our college confirmed in the master contract and all other contracts that are negotiated on behalf of West Chester State College. Furthermore, where the "faculty" is defined to include the teaching and instructional staff of the college, hired in the ranks of instructor, assistant professor, associate professor, and professor, we wish to have our inclusion in that group clearly designated and not open to question, with precisely the same educational requirements and the same rights and privileges as all other faculty hired within that framework.

Any external or apparent differences which may exist between librarians and classroom teachers are clearly of minor importance; in comparison with their shared primary function of education and instruction. We firmly believe that librarians must receive the same treatment in collective bargaining as all other faculty.

Following the presentation of our demands, we remained very active and concerned about the negotiations. The following important elements became obvious: (1) the need to elect a representative of the librarians to communi-

cate with the campus bargaining representatives; (2) the need to join APSCUF/PAHE despite the high dues; (3) the need to write job descriptions as a basis for protection of our status; and (4) the need to establish a liaison system among the fourteen state colleges.

It was not long before we realized the wisdom of having established a communications network among the fourteen libraries. Word was relayed to us that the negotiators were considering stripping librarians of their faculty status. The weekend that the word was received, telephone lines all over Pennsylvania were constantly in use between the state college librarians and the negotiators. Faculty status and rank were preserved in the final contract, and even if our quick and efficient reaction was not instrumental in that decision, we knew the Pennsylvania state college librarians were prepared to act quickly in an emergency.

We had barely survived this crisis when the *Governor's Review of Government Management* was published one month later.² A group of businessmen had surveyed the entire state system, making suggestions for efficiency and, of course, saving money. The state colleges were examined, and within them the libraries did not escape scrutiny. One recommendation which wreaked havoc was item 148. *Replace five of the West Chester State College library's faculty staff with nonfaculty personnel.*³ (Similar recommendations concerning reduction of the number of librarians were made for several other state college libraries.) Again West Chester librarians grouped together and wrote a response which was channeled through West Chester's president. All other state college librarians affected responded in a similar fashion. At this point, the recommendation of the *Governor's Review* has not taken place, and the librarians are now protected by the

collective bargaining agreement.

NEGOTIATION FOR THE NEXT CONTRACT

Because of the effectiveness of the liaison network in negotiating the first contract, a meeting of the fourteen state college library representatives was planned for April 1973 to decide upon demands in the contract to be negotiated in the spring of 1974.

To provide West Chester's representative with input, the library staff met in March to discuss its wishes for the contract. This meeting was the start of a number of meetings to explore different ideas concerning the position of librarians. Quite a few of us were particularly interested in the idea of a departmental constitution and an elected department chairman. In December 1973 the staff voted to present the following points to our campus negotiator for input into the new contract.

The library is an academic department and shall elect a department chairman from bargaining unit I who shall report to the dean/director of library services. . . .

Librarians in the performance of their various professional responsibilities shall be scheduled for no more than 35 hours per week and librarians shall be expected, as are other faculty members, to assume committee assignments and other campus responsibilities. . . .

A librarian's schedule shall be based on library needs as determined by the library department chairman in consultation with members of the library faculty.

With the advent of the department chairperson, we see the library director functioning in the role of a school dean. The director would administer the library through the staff-elected department chairperson. Definite delineation of administrative duties would have to be worked out after its imple-

mentation. It does seem clear, however, that items such as budget, building plans, and overall long-range planning functions would be the responsibility of the director. The department chairperson would be responsible for implementing the collective bargaining contract, for example, seeing that the proper personnel committees are elected, ensuring that personnel procedures followed the terms of the contract, making sure deadlines for personnel recommendations are met, etc.

While the resolutions given above were indicative of the wishes of the West Chester State College librarians, two resolutions passed at a February 1974 meeting of the liaison librarians represented a consensus of opinion of all state college librarians. In their order of priority, the resolutions were:

A librarian's contract shall be the academic year as outlined in the official college calendar. The academic calendar year is composed of those days when classes are in session, when tests are given, and when registration is going on.

The library shall have an elected chairman whose duties shall be the implementation of this contract.

These resolutions were presented by the liaison librarians to members of our state-wide APSCUF/PAHE negotiating team. In order to facilitate further communication between the negotiators and the librarians, it was decided to elect one librarian as a liaison person between the state APSCUF/PAHE negotiators and the state college librarians. The librarian elected to this post was the West Chester representative.

THE NEW CONTRACT AND ITS INTERPRETATION

In October 1974 a new contract was signed by APSCUF/PAHE and the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. In the section pertaining to librarians, the following points are included:

Subject to the provisions hereof, all members of the professional library staff shall enjoy all faculty status with all the rights, privileges, and responsibilities pertaining thereto. For administrative purposes, the professionals shall constitute a department. APSCUF shall conduct an election among all of the members of the library faculty to designate a chairperson who shall act in a representational role for the department. The chairperson shall reflect the views of the members of the library faculty in their consultations with the President or his/her designee on matters of appointment of FACULTY, renewal and non-renewal of FACULTY, FACULTY development and evaluation, promotion, tenure, librarian's schedule.

A librarian's schedule shall be based on library needs as determined by the President or his designee in consultation with members of the library faculty.

The interpretation of the role of the department chairperson has varied among the fourteen state colleges affected by the contract. Some library staffs have seen the library department chairperson as nothing more than a glorified shop steward, while other library staffs have accorded their department chairperson full participation in all matters which are handled by other campus chairpersons. Because of the difficulty of securing total agreement among all the state college libraries, APSCUF/PAHE has considered it best to let each college chart its own course, providing it is agreeable to the individual library staff and college administration.

At West Chester, we have found the definition of the role and duties of the department chairperson to be a challenging prospect. A library department chairperson certainly changes the existing patterns of library procedures. For all professional staff members, there has been created a new working relationship

with the library director. Charting the path of this new relationship is not easy, but it is one library staff members must accomplish to achieve fully equivalent faculty status with our teaching colleagues. Now we are put to the test to determine if the faculty status, for which we fought, is truly deserved.

REFERENCES

1. Public Administration Service, *A Personnel Program for Selected Faculty Employments in the Pennsylvania State Colleges and University* (Chicago: PAS, 1969), p.16,19.
2. *Governor's Review of Government Management* (Harrisburg: Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, 1972).
3. *Ibid.*, p.106.