



## **WHAT DOES A UNIONIZED FACULTY MEAN FOR WCU STUDENTS AND PARENTS? UPDATED OCTOBER 2011**

APSCUF has always stood up for high-quality college education. The interests of both faculty/coaches and students coincide:

- Students are taught by full-time faculty, not graduate students
- Faculty at WCU are primarily *teachers*
- Faculty continually fight for lower class sizes
- Faculty are mostly full-time and tenured or tenure-track
- Faculty are regularly evaluated in a transparent manner
- Faculty advocate for students and for public higher education

### **Students are taught by full-time faculty, not graduate students**

Most institutions of higher education consistently rely on grad students to teach classes, especially entry- or lower-level classes. Our faculty contract does not allow this, and so students take classes with qualified and experienced experts in their fields at all levels of their programs.

### **Faculty at WCU are primarily *teachers***

At many other institutions, faculty research is the most rewarded component of their jobs. Faculty with the most publications and grants are those who receive the highest salaries, and the institution is set up to enable their ability to do their research. Teaching comes second and is one of the reasons other schools have underpaid grad students and part-time faculty teaching so many of their classes. But at WCU, our faculty union requires that teaching be the primary component of our job: in teacher evaluations at all levels, this is the area that gets the most weight. Faculty at WCU teach more classes per year than faculty at most other colleges, thus helping to keep tuition lower. No system is perfect, and sometimes faculty may not always rise to our high teaching standards. However, both students and parents should know that WCU's faculty evaluation processes work continually to help faculty improve in the classroom.

### **Faculty continually fight for lower class sizes**

Across the country, class sizes have increased astronomically, as institutions try to make their classes more "productive" – i.e., they only have to pay one instructor for 50, or 100, or 200 students, thus making the class that much more profitable. In the Pennsylvania state system of higher education (and thus at WCU), faculty have lost the right to determine class sizes; campus managers set them. But that doesn't stop faculty from continuing to fight for smaller class sizes where those class sizes make sense, and for

the better education that usually occurs in smaller classes. Smaller classes give us the best chance to get to know our students and to help you succeed both here at WCU and once you graduate and start careers. Think about it: if you are having trouble with a subject, would you believe someone if they advised you to go sit in a lecture of 200 other students? No, you would seek individual tutoring, the smallest of small classes. That is why APSCUF faculty stand up for lower class sizes and the learning opportunities they allow.

### **Faculty are mostly full-time and tenured or tenure-track**

APSCUF represents many types of faculty, but we believe that students are best served when faculty who are employed only at WCU and who support student success across campus. Full-time, tenured or tenure-track faculty get involved with student activities, advise students, serve on committees, take part in campus decision-making, and maintain a consistent record of scholarly and professional activity. Faculty who invest a lot in a school will know more about that school and its students and thus will be better able to address local needs. APSCUF has thus required a cap on the number of temporary and part-time faculty on each campus, to ensure the commitment of the faculty at a time when other institutions may have the majority of their classes taught by faculty who are not as fully involved and who may teach at multiple institutions.

### **Faculty are regularly evaluated in a transparent manner**

Each permanent full-time faculty member on campus goes through regular evaluations that use student evaluations and peer observation reports as data. In the first five years of employment, faculty members are reviewed annually in the areas of teaching, scholarship, and service to the institution. At the end of this period, faculty must be considered for tenure, which means that WCU decides whether or not this faculty member is a good fit with the university, and whether or not the faculty member has done his/her job well enough to be continually employed (barring circumstances outlined in the contract). Faculty are also evaluated in the same way when they try for a promotion. After tenure and between or after promotions, they are still evaluated every five years, unlike at many other institutions. If faculty are not tenured or tenure-track, they are evaluated annually. Faculty and departments take this evaluation process seriously, and consider it an opportunity to address concerns and strengthen instruction. In fact, WCU's faculty evaluation process has been recently commended for its transparency in the *Chronicle of Higher Education's* July 29, 2011 issue.

### **Faculty advocate for students and for public higher education**

WCU faculty care about the future of higher education in Pennsylvania and are concerned about declining state funding and thus the rising tuition costs that trouble students and parents. Even though WCU offers the lowest in-state tuition for a four-year institution in southeastern Pennsylvania – and even though the state system of higher education as a whole offers the lowest tuition in the state – faculty worry that the students for whom public higher education was created are increasingly unable to afford college. In the 1990s, the state financed approximately 60% of WCU's budget, but in 2011, that percentage has dropped to below 20%. This is why APSCUF has taken an active role in pushing for more state aid to public universities: to make certain that affordable higher education is within the reach of all Pennsylvanians. We believe that the future of our state in part depends on making sure we have a well-educated citizenry.