**ACF conversation**

(starting with the most recent)

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from: Sue Kelley, Fairmont State University

March 2, 2013

They have, though.  They got OPEB through for us, they protect us every year with PEIA, unfortunately they passed 330 because classified staff from higher ed went to the union and told them to promote it, they have worked for us.  The thing is, higher ed people do not stay in the union and do not support the union.  As our numbers have dropped, so has our support from AFT.  They only have one full-time lobbyist in the capitol who is constantly working and constantly trying to put out dangerous fires.

Remember that SB 359 will affect higher ed, too.

I am not an AFT rep by any means, but I go to the capitol as often as I can to work against the higher ed bills we don't want.  I am working with my institution's president about legislative issues all the time.  I know you are all doing the same.  As you know, one day in the capitol does nothing.  They have appointments from morning till 4 p.m.  They are meeting with groups every hour they are not in session, in committee meetings, etc.  You have to go down there as often as you can.  It doesn't mean we will win, but we have to keep harping on them.  We need HEPC doing so and our presidents doing so.

Every time our faculty senate meets, I propose action, i.e., everyone writing letters or everyone calling.  They don't. The apathy is breath taking.  Even my union members don't call.  A few will, but never more than 10. And then they blame me because we didn't win that time.  It's the union's fault; it's not that they didn't call, that they didn't write.

It won't help us to have a lobbyist there who has no votes or money behind him/her.  The union succeeds because it has a block of votes to use as a hammer.  When the union first started, its reps never got into a legislator's door.  As it has built power, it is very often at the table.

A union is its members.  If you join a union, you are the union.  What you do makes the union work or not work. If we had more higher ed members, we'd get more of their time. For now, higher ed doesn't cooperate.  In order to get members, AFT offered "buck-a-month," which means that you pay $1 a month when you join and go to paying regular dues in the fall.  K-12 does this all the time.  K-12 joins through buck a month and stays in.  Higher ed joins through $1/month and quits as soon as it's more than $1/month.  Higher ed doesn't take the actions the union encourages it to take. When I go to PEIA hearings, which I have been doing for years and years, there may be an ACF member, but the bulk of the union people there are K-12.  If a real cut is threatened, I am able to browbeat one or two of my members to go, but why doesn't higher ed fill the seats?  We are passive.  We put a sign on our back that says, "Kick me."

 As it is, we have many grievances AFT has helped us win, we have representation on CCTE and representation on HEPC.  The head of the grievance board is a union representative.  Because we don't have anything in code, AFT has spent thousands and thousands of dollars on higher ed union members for grievances.This is the way we can build protections.  For instance, we won a big grievance two years ago now that has set a precedent institutions have to abide by: institutions must follow their policies.  This may seem small, but when you are dealing in grievances, it is huge.  We have to continue to bring important grievances to set these precedents so that higher ed faculty and staff can be protected.  That's what the union is doing for higher ed, but it costs thousands of dollars in legal fees.  When there are no higher ed members, there's no money for those legal fees.  And how often are we who are union members working with the representatives we have on these boards and telling them exactly what we want?  How many of us are doing that?  It is a big deal that we have reps there.  How has ACF used them?

It took 20 years for AFT to build from about 7 members to almost 17, 000 now.  It took that many years to establish influence.  It took that long to build votes. But it also took vision and an understanding of what was most important for the most members.  Since higher ed does not join the union or stay in the union, our representation is small.  We are not "the most members," so when the choice is made to do what is best for the most members, the most members get the action.

How are we going to get our faculty to pay for a "lobbyist"?  What power will that lobbyist have so that the legislators will listen to him/her?  We would have to have someone who already knows the game, knows everyone there, knows how to maneuver and negotiate with everyone there, and so on.  The salary can't be less than $40,000/year, if someone can even live on that in Charleston.  Plus, we would have to pay all expenses, like driving, meals, hotel stays and so on, depending on how active we want that person to be.

There is another political issue.  We, ACF, cannot lobby.  Second, the last time I met with Plymale, he came right out and said that HEPC is an arm of the legislature, implying to me that HEPC has to support whatever the legislature passes.  Aren't we an arm of the HEPC?  It sort of puts us in the middle, doesn't it?  Just asking.

Obviously, I have seen what the union has done for higher ed and for K-12.  I have seen the work that goes into getting people elected who might support our position.  I have seen the planning that goes into deciding what will work and what won't.  I have seen union reps drive all over the state to support higher ed staff and faculty in grievances.  In fact, one was just at FSU on Friday to help with a grievance.

I'm tired.  Signing off.  But we should at least try to get our faculty to call re: Outcomes Based.

Sue

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from: Mike Ditchen, Bridgemont CTC
March 02, 2013

*Seems like been there done that......*

When AFT tried to organize higher ed, the promise was they'd lobby for us (higher ed). You can see how well that worked for us.

While I think we could use a lobbyist, the lack of money precludes this.

The only way I see this being almost feasible is approach a lobbyist to determine the annual fee. Then divvy that cost up among the colleges based upon their faculty size and ask for pledges. I would suggest doubling the needed amount and hope for what we need. Without proven results in the first year, I fear it would be a one or two year experiment.

Doable yes, realistic......

Mike

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from: Betty Dennison, Mountwest CTC

March 2, 2013

I have to admit this is worth discussing. The key would be getting the best lobbyist.

Betty

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from: Erik Root, West Liberty Uinversity
March 2, 2013

I agree and as I have said for several years now: it e for us to hire a lobbyist folks and go on our own as a state faculty interest.

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from: Susan Kelley, Fairmont State University

March 1, 2013

Ugh is right.

By the way, legislators have rec'd thousands of calls about SB 359 and are already changing it in response.  We need to do the same with HB 2566.  We could make this a public issue rather than a private one just among higher ed folks.

Sue

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from: Roy Nutter, WVU

March 1, 2013

Yuk.... And you warned me.....Roy