

Finney will head YSU-OEA

BY MELISSA MOSCHELLA
The Jambar

The newly elected president of YSU's faculty union said improving relations with administrators is the top goal he has for the next two years.

Michael Finney, an associate professor of English, will replace current YSU-Ohio Education Association President Bob Hogue in August.

Finney said he would like to see all contract negotiations completed before Spring semester of 2005. This, he said, would require positive relations between the union and administration.

Returning union Secretary Howard Mettee echoed Finney's wishes, saying working closer with administrators is a goal he shares.

"To try to preserve the integrity of relationships with the current administration and hope that it does not go in the wrong direction for one reason or another," Mettee said as he described his initiatives for the next term.

Mettee, however, said

some of the goals he and other officers have set for the next two years may be hard to meet because of recent cuts in higher education.

"As far as my goals are concerned, I think we have to look after the interest of our bargaining unit and try to preserve the integrity of our contract, which we recently negotiated," Mettee said. "And it might be very difficult because of the conditions that exist in higher education in Ohio today."

Mettee was speaking of the state subsidy that comes to universities being reduced systematically by legislation.

"This puts a lot of pressure on not only YSU but all public higher education institutions in the state," Mettee said.

He said officers can not ignore this goal simply because it is difficult. The YSU-OEA, Mettee said, plans to raise the public's interest in higher education by focusing on the importance it can play 10 to 20 years down the road in building a stable economic infrastructure.

Mettee said he worries

convincing state legislators will be even harder.

"It is a very general sort of goal, but we have to pay attention to it and try to influence Ohio taxpayers and the legislature as well and they are so inclined the other way that it is very difficult," he said.

Mettee said YSU-OEA officers will also be looking out for new issues in higher education such as long-distance learning - something he said the union has been looking into for years.

Other officers for the 2003-05 term include First Vice President James Schramer, a professor of English; Second Vice President Ray Beirdorfer, an associate professor of geology; and Treasurer Kathylynn Feld, a professor of health professions.

Feld said she also would seek to maintain good relations with administration.

"I will be continuing on as treasurer to serve members of the bargaining unit a best as possible," she said. "I will follow what the union represents and have a working relationship with administration."