

Adjuncts: AFA fails to garner strong support in union survey; only 59% endorse bargaining unit

by John Celidonio

The Adjunct Faculty Association (AFA) will have to work for support from adjuncts, full-service faculty and students in order to make progress because of the results of a recent survey.

The survey, drawn up by a joint committee of the YSU/OEA and the AFA and conducted last December, indicated that the majority of the adjuncts responding supported collective bargaining; however, the support was not considered overwhelming enough by the executive committee of the full-service union to work for collective bargaining for adjunct faculty.

YSU/OEA President Thomas Shipka said that the results of the survey showed that, while a bare majority (59%) supported collective bargaining, a majority also considered the dues they would have to pay excessive if they did receive collective bargaining.

Both the OEA and the National

Education Association set policies concerning the amount of dues to be paid, he noted, and the opposition among the adjuncts polled to paying such dues is a major obstacle as far as his Association is concerned.

Many adjuncts may have been disappointed, Shipka said, by his blunt statements that conditions were not ripe for the YSU/OEA to demand, in the current negotiations, that the Trustees reverse themselves and authorize collective bargaining for adjuncts.

The survey indicated that the adjuncts are not "militant enough" in their desire for collective bargaining, Shipka said, noting that "once the Trustees make a public decision, you'd better have troops ready to battle." Shipka said he was "not going to war with too few troops."

AFA President Alice Wilkinson said that her group will have to "mobilize" increased support and understanding among the rest of the campus community, adding that she

thinks the AFA is "misunderstood" by many students, including Student Council which recently defeated a motion supporting her organization.

"I thought everybody knew that we get no benefits at all — no health, no sick leave, no nothing," Wilkinson said. But, she said, she has heard that one reason that a Council member didn't vote to support the AFA was because the member thought that the AFA already receives benefits.

She said that she was upset with the types of questions raised by Student Government President Ray Nakley when the issue had been brought before Council. She said the AFA had been asked how it would vote on issues when it does not even have the right to collective bargaining. Wilkinson called such questions as "putting a price on our civil rights."

The issue, she emphasized, is the right to bargain, and "the right to bargain is not shaded by opinions," she said. Wilkinson called Council's defeat of the motion

"foolishly short-sighted" and said that Council "cannot always act solely from self-interest."

Many students seem to have the impression that the AFA is out to raise their tuitions, she said, but that is not true. Wilkinson said that students are already paying for University policies toward adjuncts and that they will pay even more this spring.

She said that the University policy established by the Board of Trustees that limits adjuncts to 20 hours teaching each year has resulted in reduced course offerings. This will be the case spring quarter. She pointed out, when many adjuncts will only be allowed to teach one class, making it harder for students to find their teachers on campus.

Adjuncts, Wilkinson said, will "not be around as much with only one class," and it will be "a lot harder for students to find their instructors." She noted that teachers are only required to keep one office hour

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for each class and that being available for fewer hours will be especially hard on students in classes like composition, most of which are taught by adjuncts.

The AFA's main goal right now, according to Wilkinson, is getting the limit of 20 hours raised to 24 so that adjuncts could teach two classes a quarter all year. She said that she has written Shipka, requesting that

his organization reconsider its position on the 20-hour limit.

Many adjuncts need to be able to teach two classes a quarter, Wilkson said, because they depend on the second income from teaching at YSU for necessities. She said that, "in the interests of fairness," she asked in the letter that full-service faculty "not try to take our jobs away."

Wilkinson said that she under-

stands why Shipka and the YSU/OEA have taken the position they have, since it is in their interests to want more full-service faculty hired, but she said that, because of the problems the University faces with the budget, the position simply isn't practical.

Shipka had not received Wilkinson's letter as of press time, but said the issue of limiting the number of hours that adjuncts can

teach each year is part of a larger issue — that is, what the number of full-service faculty should be and the percentage of classes that should be taught by adjuncts.

Shipka said that while he "doesn't know whether it was a coincidence or not, "the limits adopted by the Board of Trustees are the same as those proposed by the YSU/OEA in contract negotiations last year.