**Akron-AAUP**

**The University of Akron Chapter of the American Association of University Professors**

**P.O. Box 528 Akron, Ohio 44309**

**Phone: 330-972-6131**

**Website: http://www.akronaaup.org**

December 28, 2009

Dear \_\_\_\_\_\_ :

 As you may know, the faculty at the University of Akron is at the end of negotiations for its second contract with the university’s Board of Trustees.  Unresolved issues are going to a neutral, third-party fact-finder who will recommend a resolution to those issues.

 One unresolved issue of concern to the faculty is the Board’s apparent attitude toward faculty with domestic partners.  To attract the best possible faculty for available positions, we need to ensure that faculty with domestic partners will not feel discriminated against relative to other faculty.  Every other major university in Ohio offers such health benefits.  These would be the same benefits available to other faculty.  As a matter of fairness and competitiveness, Akron needs to offer a similar profile of benefits.

 Yet the Board of Trustees remains opposed to such benefits.  In our first negotiation, they said it was due to the recently passed state Constitutional amendment against same sex marriage.  Since then, however, the Ohio Supreme Court has ruled that single benefits such as this do not approximate marriage, and therefore are legal.  Furthermore, domestic partner benefits could apply to either heterosexual or same sex domestic partners, as is generally the case for faculty at other Ohio campuses.

 Given that the University President and administration have endorsed “Inclusive Excellence,” its campaign for an excellent and diverse campus, why has it apparently singled out faculty with domestic partners for exclusion?  With so many other academic institutions in Ohio and around the country offering domestic partner benefits, our absence from their company raises questions about our motives and the openness of our institution.

 As for cost, such benefits invariably only apply to a very small number of employees, adding less than 1% to the cost of health benefits for the employee pool as a whole.

 As a supporter of the university and a prominent member of the community, your opinion matters.  We hope that you will communicate to the university your views on this subject.  Excellence, equity, and fairness are fundamental principles that the faculty support.  We hope you can see fit to encourage the university to do the same.

 Thank you for your time.

 Sincerely,

The Akron-AAUP Executive Committee

Walter Hixson, Chapter President, Distinguished Professor of History

Karen Lahey, Chapter Vice-President, Professor of Finance

John Hebert, Chapter Treasurer, Professor of Management

Kate Budd, Chapter Secretary, Associate Professor of Art

Jennifer Holz, Past President, Associate Professor of Sociology – Wayne Campus

Rudy Fenwick, Departmental Liaison, Associate Professor of Sociology

Stacy Willet, Departmental Liaison, Associate Professor of Public Service Technology

Steve Aby, Past President, Professor of Bibliography

David Witt, President Ohio Conference of AAUP Chapters, Professor of Family & Consumer Sciences