

EMU board passes outdoor noise policy

Amplified events held in the EMU Amphitheater will not exceed a sound level of 83 decibels

By Teri Meeuwsen
Higher Education Editor

A noise policy for the EMU Amphitheater was passed by the EMU board creating regulations for amplified, scheduled events during a public forum last night. The policy will go to Johnson Hall for consideration.

The policy would set a sound standard of 83 decibels for events outside the hours of 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. During regular business hours, the sound level of events must be low enough not to disturb nearby classes and offices. Eighty-three decibels falls somewhere between the sound level of a loud orchestra and unsafe levels, according to Jim Long, a member of the policy working group.

"We're not just doing this so when a band gets real loud we tell them to shut it off and turn it down, but so bands can play

their whole sets," said group student member Luke Wardlaw.

"Peoples in the community won't be calling which will result with police officers coming down and shutting down events," Long continued, "so it will work out for the people in the hills or whoever because they won't have to have the extra noise, and the band because they will be able to finish their set."

Amplified sound includes any amplification of voice, musical instruments or any other sound-producing equipment, according to a draft of the policy. The equipment that does the actual amplifying must be from the EMU Technical Services and operated by an EMU technician, who will monitor the sound levels as a liaison between the sponsoring group and the performers.

"We're not trying to get mean about this," Long said. "We're just trying to get everyone to get through an event without having it shut down early."

The "noise policy" working group was formed after a Multicultural Forum event was unofficially shut down early due to noise complaints. The working group looked through existing city ordinances and EMU scheduling policies and met with retired officer Dave Poppe to discuss general procedures that are followed when the police department receives noise complaints.



GTFs: Union status could be lost



MATT GARTON/Emerald

Students and other spectators watch during a rally held by the Graduate Teaching Fellows Federation on Wednesday afternoon.

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mation on proposed GTF employment offerings for the 1998 summer session a few weeks ago, the amount of hours offered, called full-time equivalent, for various department employments was drastically lower than they had expected, said GTFF organizer Jon Silvermoon. About 350 GTFs would be affected by the summer contracts, he said.

While the GTFF assumed it had bargained for higher summer wages, it now thinks the University is offering reduced FTE to compensate for the money no longer saved through a reduced summer salary rate. "Instead of cutting 40 percent [of our salary], they are cutting our hours," Becky Mansfield, vice president of University relations for the GTFF, said at a noon rally at the EMU Amphitheater on Wednesday.

But University officials see a fundamental difference between the summer session and the academic year. Maggie Morris, vice provost for research and graduate education, said sessions last fewer weeks — thus there are fewer office hours to maintain, fewer tests that can be given and graded and fewer papers to read. In many cases, there are fewer students in classes as well, she said.

"The University takes the position that summer is different," she said.

Some University administrators were surprised by the GTFF's concerns. Ron Trebon, director of the summer session, said he believed GTFs and University departments worked together on deciding the hours it takes to teach specific courses during last fall's negotiations; however, he said he did not attend the negotiations. But it was still a surprise to him to hear that there was a discrepancy in the amount of hours needed to teach such courses, he said.

Employee relations manager Eric Buckles, who did attend the

negotiations, also felt surprised about the GTFF's concerns. "I think it was clear in bargaining that some [GTFs] may benefit and others may not," he said.

Morris said in the best cases some departments consulted extensively with GTFs who had taught previous summer classes to see how much time was needed, but they weren't required to do this. Many departments had the authority to decide on their own without consulting GTFs.

Departments need to ask GTFs who have taught classes how much time it takes to teach in all cases for a feasible FTE, Waller said. He believed the amount of hours offered would be much higher in this case.

But the quality of education will be hurt by the subtraction of working hours, Waller said, not to mention the GTFs' pocketbooks. "It's not like our rent goes down in the summer or it costs us less to eat in the summer," he said.

Also of concern was the offering of an FTE below the union minimum of 88 hours during the term. These summer contracts would pay GTFs at an hourly rate, and GTFs could not maintain status in the union, losing the ability to file grievances and tuition waivers in some cases.

The point of Wednesday's rally was to remind the University that the GTFF is paying attention to its activities, as well as to alert GTFs to read the letters of employment that they will soon receive for the summer session, he said.

"We want to make sure the confusion doesn't end up costing GTFs money," Waller said.

GTFF members were urging GTFs to keep track of all working hours this summer in order to see if they were receiving enough pay for their work. Members of the GTFF can file grievances and receive back pay if they feel they have been underpaid, Mansfield said.

Summer grad work

The GTFF suggests GTFs consider the following if they are thinking about teaching in the summer:

- Ask to see your department's summer-specific workload section of its General Duties and Responsibilities Statement. Compare the hours allocated for various tasks (in-class contact hours, preparation, grading, etc.) during the academic year with those for summer session.
- Discuss any concerns about hours allocated with your department. Ask for their justification for summer requiring less hours to teach.
- Make sure the summer position is being offered as a GTF and not as an hourly employee.
- Contact your department steward. If you do not know who your steward is or if your department does not yet have a steward, contact the GTFF office (344-0832 or gtfforg@efn.org).
- Be sure to ask your department how many hours per day and how many hours per week you are being asked to work. If you think they are compressing work into too short a time, let them know.
- If you decide to sign a summer offer letter, make sure you keep track of your actual hours worked. Mark them on a calendar and indicate what they represent (office hours, in-class, grading, preparation, etc.). If you find you are exceeding your FTE, contact your steward or the GTFF about filing a grievance.

SOURCE: GTFF

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