

far higher than national averages, reasonable working hours, comfortable offices, relatively secure positions and an opportunity to pursue their passion for research. Having scored a gig like that, who would want to hazard a clash with management?

During the 1970s, however, a rash of teachers' unions at community colleges set a precedent and profs began thinking — could things be better? Anti-union legislation in many states hindered — and continues to hinder — unionizing at private colleges, but most public universities have always enjoyed the legal right to collectively bargain. And conditions had changed on campuses nationwide. Administrations had begun hiring adjuncts at temp-worker wages to teach classes normally helmed by tenured professors, and had been focusing more on “branding” the university to sell it to prospective students. By the time the UO drive got going, there had been for many years a reaction among university faculty nationwide against what

on adjuncts — people paid \$4,000 a class for a 10-week term, busting their ass, with no guarantee they'll be there the next term — the environment the students are learning in is degraded.”

Still, in Eugene, the effort didn't exactly get off to a sprinter's start. Faculty involved in those early years say that AFT's Ziemer seemed out of touch with the nuances of higher education, had a hard time understanding the different categories of faculty, and overall didn't inspire confidence in the ranks of faculty activists. As Ziemer and faculty were trying with little success to iron out the kinks and personality clashes, the Provost's office had begun sending out memos to faculty “educating” them on the unionization process. In one memo dated Nov. 17, 2009, Provost Jim Bean cautioned faculty to “Please read carefully anything you are asked to sign ... as you may be giving up your right to vote and committing yourself to inclusion in the union.” They banned union activists from using campus email to communicate to their fellow professors about the union, according to Vitulli. They also

and I know union-management relationships tend to be adversarial, and I don't think it would be good for the university as a whole.’ To which my response was, ‘Tell me about those good decisions. If they're good decisions, why are we one-third tenure-track, two-thirds contingent faculty, and why are we in salary scale on the bottom of all our comparator institutions?’”

In a state with a median household income of \$49,000, you might risk an aneurysm trying to coax a tear for a professor pulling in more than \$80,000 a year (UO profs' average), but it's important to place it in perspective: Of the 60 member institutions in the Association of American Universities, a grouping of elite research universities, the UO ranks dead last in salary. There are many who feel that this makes it tough for the university to retain the best and the brightest, thereby undermining its stated mission to provide the highest-quality education possible to students in Oregon.

“We hire good people and we lose them really fast,” says history professor David Luebky. “Other universities know Oregon has lots of good talent for the plucking.”

By the summer of 2010, nearly three years since the effort began in earnest, United Academics still had not initiated the card-check phase that would lead to its certification, the amassing of a critical number of supporters that would make the union a reality. The AFT removed Ziemer and brought in Yonna Carroll, and the new blood seemed to invigorate the effort. Perhaps fittingly, the Oregon State Board of Education decision to terminate the contract of popular president Richard Lariviere, in part for giving faculty and administrators raises against the wishes of the state's governor, in November 2011, may have swelled activist sentiment and nudged the union into existence. At the very least, it was a symbolic moment.

“It reaffirmed to many of us that the idea of faculty governance is mythical, that we really didn't have a say in the direction of the university,” Dreiling says. “He was

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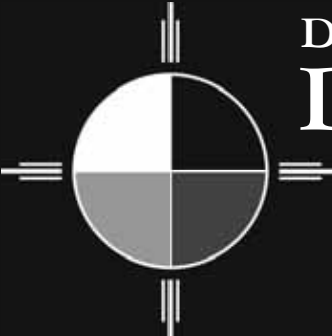
— DAVID LUEBKY, HISTORY PROFESSOR

was seen as the corporatization of higher-education, a bottom-line approach that eroded the university's mission of cultivating novel ideas through research, promoting freedom of investigation and thought and offering the highest quality education possible.

“Administrations had begun to treat the university and the delivery of classes as something coming off a production line that can be met at the lowest cost possible,” sociology professor Michael Dreiling says. “By depending

built an “informational” website for faculty to visit, countering United Academics' website. Meanwhile, pro-union profs were fanning out across campus to introduce the idea of a union to other profs. Political science professor Gerald Burke was one of those charged with rapping on office doors, behind which he found a mixture of support and caution.

“It was all over the map,” he recalls. “One person said to me, ‘I trust the administration to make good decisions,



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