

working to try and find some solutions, to rectify some of the holes in the [UO] Constitution, to try and deal with the trends in employment relationships and salary. So this was a real look at how power works in the university system. We realized we didn't even have a tug on the reins."

"I think we were all still getting to know him a little bit," says Deborah Olson, an instructor in special education. "But everybody felt he was fighting for a vision for the university. He just stuck his neck out one too many times."

Coincidence or not, the card check drive finally began less than two months after the Lariviere's contract termination, on Jan. 9 of this year, with the School of Law — firmly anti-union — exempted from the vote. The union had 90 days from getting the first signature to filing for certification. On March 13 it sent 1,837 signed union cards to the state Employment Relations Board. As the board was counting the votes, it came out that the administration had hired anti-union lawyers to try and squash the union effort, but by that time it was a *fait accompli*. On April 27, the union was formally certified. The work to maintain a stable union is not nearly done. If the faculty activists are not able to hammer out a proposal soon, the entire effort could fall apart. The AAUP just opened a Pacific Northwest office in Olympia, Wash., in large part to have someone on the ground to support the newborn UO union.

**D**ivisions remain among tenured professors, some of whom feel that with a union membership disproportionately weighted with adjuncts (at the time of certification, only 521 of the 1,832 union members were tenure-track faculty) the specific concerns of tenured faculty will not be adequately promoted. Art history professor Jeff Hurwit, who voiced his anti-union sentiment at meetings prior to certification, is blunt:

"Somebody who teaches a yoga class in the fall will have an equal vote to a tenured full professor who teaches two classes and a scientist who might bring in millions of dollars from outside grants," he says. "That strikes me as odd."



GORDON  
LAFER

Union pushers, as might be expected, have less a Beatles-breakup, more a Peter-Paul-and-Mary-linking-arms view of the prospects of an inclusive union.

"I work with non-tenure-track people all the time," Leubke says, "and they are cognizant of the needs of the tenure faculty. I know our place in the university differs from theirs and vice versa, but it doesn't necessarily follow that because interests are diverse, they are antagonistic."

For economics professor Bill Harbaugh, the success of the union drive was an outgrowth of a pattern of questionable spending practices by the administration and a necessary corrective to what has been a top-down power structure.

"In theory our administrators are supposed to work with us to make this a good university," he says. "But in practice they don't listen, and they've set it up so that we can't have anything effective to say. The university still does not have a plausible plan for how it's going to spend its money between undergrad education, research and graduate education. The administration has failed in its responsibility to develop a plan for the university's future and a budget for the future. They've been spending

students' tuition money on a raft of pet projects incidental to our mission."

Howard Bunsis, AAUP's collective bargaining chair, recently did an analysis of the UO's financial condition and would agree.

"Despite what you hear, they have strong reserves and a strong annual operating cash flow," he says. The only thing wrong with UO financial situation is their priorities. They spend too much on administration and not enough on the core academic mission."

**I**t's hard to hear the word union without your thoughts going to ... STRIKE! and a faculty strike could indeed have a devastating effect on the university. In 1990, the faculty at Temple University in Philadelphia walked out for 29 days, a time during which more than 1,800 students withdrew from the university. While union activists scoff at the possibility, even if a no-strike clause is included in the looming agreement, it is really a misnomer — if the union decided the administration wasn't honoring the agreement, it would be within their rights to walk out. The prospect of a strike is the big gun unions have in establishing leverage.

"I'm concerned that should there not be a meeting of the minds between the administration and the union, the only recourse will be a strike, and that will harm our students," Hurwit says.

Marie Vitulli, who, along with Lafer, started the movement, dropped out for health reasons during the Ziemer phase and never re-entered the fray. She observed the union's certification from the outside but has never lost her emotional investment in the process.

"I really hope that when the contract is negotiated positive changes will happen," she says. "A lot of things have been done so unevenly and so secretly for so long; it would be really nice if that changes."

As this story went to press, union committees were still working on their first proposal to present to the UO administration, which did not respond to requests for comment. ■

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