

A Campaign Letter to the AFT Local Membership

From Michael G. Wright, Candidate for 2nd. Vice President

Dear AFT Member:

My name is **Michael Wright**; I have been an AFT Adjunct Faculty member in good standing serving the student of Wayne County Community College for over twenty years. I have served the membership as a Steward for the Northwest Campus and most recently as Second Vice-President representing all adjunct faculty members. I'm a current candidate for re-election to that position.

Inasmuch as some of you may not know me personally or be familiar with by academic background, I have prepared the following narrative description for your review. It is my hope that after having read my academic philosophy and career biography I will have gained your confidence and your vote for re-election to the office of **Second Vice-President** in the upcoming election.

Philosophy of Education,

I believe that many of the social maladies befalling our nation and the world can be alleviated if not averted entirely through education and equity of opportunity. Having received an early introduction to art and history; I am an unwavering advocate of early exposure to science, art, music and literature in the lives of young people.

Years ago, an astute elementary school teacher recognized my talent for drawing and painting. Thereupon, I was recommended to participate in the Detroit Public Schools, Fine Arts Program for gifted and talented students at the Detroit Institute of Arts. My weekly visits to the DIA created within me an indelible appreciation for the arts and a profound curiosity to learn about history and culture. The experience was life changing, and ranks among the most pleasurable of my youthful memories. From those experiences comes my enduring belief that positive exposure and opportunity can produce extraordinary and lasting benefits in the lives of ordinary people.

The University

The University is a unique social institution, it is ancient yet contemporary. The university is part laboratory, part library. Like that of a hospital the university nurtures and heals the infirmity of ignorance. Similar to an investment bank the university pays dividends in the form of knowledge-based interest to its investors. From an assemblage of seemingly unrelated subjects and material sources the university creates an intangible, and yet self-sustaining product of immeasurable value.

The product of the university is the intellectual capacity, and potential it develops in its students and graduates. The product is unique in its ability to perpetuate that potential beyond time and space. The environment in which the university carries out its mission

is the traditional campus and the cyber classroom. The campus can be an oasis of academic sustenance within a wilderness of contending, and conflicting adversaries.

Teaching

Teaching is a time-honored occupation, steeped in antiquity and in tradition. Tradition has been the prevailing influence, perhaps more than any other quality, which has characterized the persona of the university professor. Tradition, indeed occupies a meaningful, and important place within the delivery of a structured curriculum. All too often, however, traditionalism on the university campus took on a life of its own interposing itself between the teacher and the learner. To that extent, the classroom often became stuffy, stale, and uninspiring. The post-war period of the 1950s and 1960s, often described as postmodern, ushered in a period of social activism, reflection, liberalism, and racial mobility. That sense of reflective re-evaluation found its way into the university and brought about a relaxation of traditionalism for traditions' sake.

The advent of The Internet in the latter decades of the Twentieth Century questioned traditional methods of university educational delivery. The technology driven society of the Twenty-first Century requires the university to integrate web-based modalities and resources into every aspect of its systems and operations. In order to remain economically viable and socially relevant the university must keep pace with the increasing demands among its current students. Likewise, the Twenty-first Century university professor is equally challenged to utilize and develop new and innovative methods of instructional delivery. In as much as the demand for convenience, efficiency and speed are likely to increase, the university, and its methods of instruction must undergo perpetual re-evaluation and redesign.

The Teacher-Student Learning Dynamic

Throughout my years of teaching I have sought to not only impart a set of discipline based learning objectives but also, to nurture and inspire curiosity in the minds of my students. That is, to guide the imagination of unrealized possibilities toward the possible.

I regard teaching as both a privilege and a responsibility. It is a privilege and a pleasure each time I enter the classroom and stand before a group of diverse Learners. Students have every right to be respected, and to expect a well prepared, compassionate, and enthusiastic educational leader. I make an effort to make my students feel welcomed, and I make it a personal goal to exceed their academic expectations.

I believe subject learning is made more relevant to students when presented from a chronological perspective. To this extent, I present a linkage between philosophical, theoretical, historical, and contemporary real-world events and issues. I believe students should be afforded a comprehensive, fundamental approach to academic inquiry by asking leading questions that address not only the *what*, and the *how*, but the *why* of compelling national and international issues. Among the oldest and most

potent teaching methods for fostering critical thinking is *Socratic* teaching. As you know, in Socratic teaching we focus on giving students questions, not answers. We model an inquiring, probing mind by continually probing into the subject with questions. By focusing on the elements of reasoning in a disciplined and self-assessing way we allow the logical relationships that result from such disciplined thought to emerge.

To that end I utilize, and present instructional information from original, seminal and contemporary sources during classroom instruction. Together, my students and I deconstruct texts, debate motives; analyze meaning, implications, and contradictions. I often organize my students into small cohorts groups to debate particular aspects of a contemporary issue. Using this Cubist approach, students critically examine a single issue from multiple perspectives and take ownership of their learning.

Student Mentoring

I encourage my students to expand their collegiate learning experiences with additional suggested reading, seminar participation, and travel-study wherever possible. It is my ongoing pleasure to recommend students for academic recognition, scholarships, and graduate school admission.

Community Service

I am an advocate for responsible, effective public education policy, and barrier-free access to art, health care, information and technology. I share a strong commitment to building viable urban communities by supporting art, education and economic development activities in Northwest Detroit neighborhoods. I am currently affiliated with various youth mentoring initiatives within the Brightmoor, Redford Communities, and a supporter of the Rosedale Park Players Youth Theatre. I am a board member of Strategic Builders Inc. a non-profit youth mentoring organization that sponsors programs hosted by the Detroit Public Library and Focus Hope Inc.

As a community advocate and activist, I participate as a research consultant with the Community Health Initiative. In collaboration with the University of Michigan, and the Michigan Kidney Foundation the CHI collects data on the incidence of diabetes and kidney disease in the lives of residents in Northwest Detroit. In addition, the research seeks to explore how the home lives, and educational endeavors of area students may be affected and improved.

Higher Education Administration and Management

My career in higher education administration and teaching extends more than 25 years. I have enjoyed the pleasure of serving as an Academic Director, Academic Coordinator, as well as a faculty member with several colleges and universities throughout the metro-Detroit area. My most recent administrative experience was in service to University of Phoenix as the Chair for its General Studies Degree Program, and later as Director of Academic Affairs.

In service as Chair of General Studies, I was directly responsible for the implementation and ongoing development of the Liberal Arts degree program in General Studies. In this capacity I corresponded with the Dean of Undergraduate General Studies on a regular basis, and collaborated on various issues with my counterparts at campuses throughout the country.

In my succeeding position as Director of Academic Affairs to University of Phoenix, Detroit Campuses, I was responsible for the implementation and management of all institutional academic policies and program initiatives. Within this capacity, I was accountable to secure, orient, and maintain a cadre of certified professional faculty sufficient to meet the needs and demands of student enrollment. Simultaneously, I was charged to increase overall academic effectiveness, and to facilitate student academic goal achievement, and degree attainment.

I also had the distinct privilege of assembling and supervising a diverse academic team of dedicated professionals, and Para-professionals. Together, I was charged with maintaining rigorous monthly and annual academic measurements, as well as for operating my department within quarterly budget restraints. In addition, I oversaw the recruitment, orientation, evaluation and ongoing training of faculty within their various disciplines. In this capacity, I developed annual faculty initiatives focused on teambuilding, instructional quality and morale elevation. As Director of Academic Affairs, I also organized and conducted bi-annual general meetings for all faculty members serving the Metro-Detroit Campuses.

In this seat of responsibility, I spearheaded campus Beta testing and implementation of integrated on-line modalities; for contracting adjunct faculty, acquiring and disseminating curriculum instructional materials, and for facilitating end of course completion and documentation. I also conducted orientation seminars to introduce new and continuing students to university provided on-line resources and enhanced digital protocols. Additionally, I participated in the development, and implementation of numerous specialized certificate programs.

In my capacity as Academic Director, I acquired extensive administrative experience by working collaboratively with all areas of campus administration. I successfully engaged in principles of management-based problem solving with various internal departments and external organizations around issues such as: new program implementation, student-faculty disputes, and inter-campus employee relations. In addition, I participated with colleagues across the country on regional program review committees tasked with making recommendations for increased operational efficiency, policy adaptation and organizational improvement.

AFT Leadership

As Second Vice-President, during the past two years, I had the pleasure of serving with a dynamic team of fellow officers: Joanne Wittbrodt; Christian Nwamba; Roger Short and Ella Davis. Together, this team successfully represented numerous members in resolution of a range of issues with college administration. It is my sincere belief that our campus-based and executive leadership teams will continue to promote an atmosphere in which common ground solutions can be reached.

AFT Unionism and Activism

I believe in the unique ability of union organizations to express the broad hopes and desires of its membership. Only through collective bargaining can we achieve fair labor practices, comparative wage equity and safe respectful working conditions worthy of our dedication and commitment. Despite the recent legislative attempts to undermine the proven effectiveness of collective bargaining we must strive to protect our fundamental *Right* to organize. We must accentuate the necessity for solidarity within our ranks and acknowledge the benefits of Collective Bargaining. To that extent, I encourage each of you to continue to participate in your organization, to support its leadership and to willingly contribute to its longevity. I remain optimistic that our best years as a faculty union are still ahead.

In solidarity,
Michael G. Wright
Candidate for Second-Vice President



Experience



Integrity



Commitment



Vision