Creating an Organization
to
Publicly Represent the UW-Milwaukee Faculty Senate

Introduction
Support for University Faculty needs in the State of Wisconsin has continued to deteriorate in recent years. The trend dramatically accelerated during the first months of 2011, and shows no signs of reversing. In response to this situation, the UW-Milwaukee University Committee (UC) contends that the time has arrived for the UW-Milwaukee Faculty Senate to create an organization empowered to publicly voice the concerns of the UW-Milwaukee faculty. The model for this new organization will be the existing UW-Madison Public Representation Organization of the Faculty Senate (PROFS).

Background

What is PROFS?
PROFS is a voluntary, non-profit [501 (c)(6)] organization funded entirely by faculty contributions. PROFS is registered with the State of Wisconsin as a non-stock, non-profit corporation, and is required to file an annual report with the state each year (filing fee is $10 per year). It was created in 1977 by the Faculty Senate to give a voice to UW–Madison faculty, allowing them to communicate their concerns and reactions to matters, including legislation, which directly affect the university and its faculty. The University Committee, the executive committee of the Faculty Senate, serves as the PROFS Board of Directors. The PROFS Steering Committee includes past presidents of PROFS, members of the Faculty Senate, the University Committee, and the Commission on Faculty Compensation and Economic Benefits.

How PROFS Works
The UW-Madison faculty’s support of PROFS allows the organization to hire a half-time legislative representative, Jack O’Meara. Jack monitors legislation and communicates with legislators, the governor, members of Congress, and the Board of Regents. PROFS is also staffed by a half-time administrative assistant, Michelle Felber. PROFS communicates regularly with all faculty through e-mail messages and newsletters, which are posted on the PROFS website, www.profs.wisc.edu. PROFS’ contributions support the organization. Contributions are voluntary and are 0.1% of a nine–month salary, deducted monthly. So, contributions for a faculty member with a $60,000 salary amount to $60 annually. Nearly 1,000 UW-Madison faculty are members.

Successes and Accomplishments
PROFS has worked vigorously over the past three decades and has accomplished a great deal for UW–Madison faculty, including the following: PROFS successfully lobbied for a state-funded competitive compensation fund for faculty salaries in the last three state budgets. PROFS continues to advocate for levels of compensation that allow UW–Madison to retain and recruit the best faculty. After many years of hard work, UW–Madison faculty are now eligible for domestic partner benefits. Countless faculty contacted their state legislators over the years in
support of this much-needed legislation. During the 2007–2009 state budget debate, PROFS helped defeat a proposal that would have required faculty to pay 5% of their salaries to the Wisconsin Retirement System contribution (an effective 5% pay cut). PROFS also fought off proposals that would have gutted the current sabbatical program, reduced sick leave, and required faculty to pay a minimum of 10% of total health care. Faculty today enjoy employer-paid health insurance when they are hired, thanks in large part to PROFS. Previously, faculty had to wait six months for employer-paid coverage.

Action Plan at UW-Milwaukee

Step One: Survey of the Faculty
The University Committee (UC) has shared information about this proposed action with the entire UW-Milwaukee Faculty. The UC first proposes to conduct an advisory on-line survey of the faculty asking the following questions:
1) Do you support the Faculty Senate creating an organization to provide a public voice for faculty concerns?
2) What is the maximum (as a percentage of salary) you would be willing to voluntarily contribute to this organization, 0.1%, 0.2%, or 0.3%?
3) If the Academic Staff create a similar organization, should the Faculty organization seek to collaborate with it?

Step Two: Consideration by the Faculty Senate
Guided by the results of the on-line survey, the UC will prepare a full proposal, including By-Laws and implementation plan for the proposed organization for consideration by the Faculty Senate at the May 12, 2011 meeting.