

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

Introduction

Support for University Faculty needs in the State of Wisconsin has continued to deteriorate. The trend dramatically accelerated during the first months of 2011 and became even worse in 2015 and afterward. In response to this situation, the UW-Milwaukee University Committee (UC) contends that the time has arrived for the UW-Milwaukee Faculty Senate to use an organization empowered to voice the concerns of the UW-Milwaukee faculty publicly. The model for this new organization is 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 (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. A half-time administrative assistant, Michelle Felber, also staffs PROFS. 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. Therefore, contributions for a faculty member with a \$70,000 salary amount to \$70 annually. Nearly 1,000 UW-Madison faculty are members.

Successes and Accomplishments

PROFS has worked vigorously over the past four decades and has accomplished a great deal for UW-Madison faculty, including the following:

- PROFS continues to advocate for competitive compensation and helped secure: the 2%/2% pay plan passed in the 2017-19 state budget; the Regents' proposed 3%/3% pay plan for the 19-21 state budget; and Governor Evers' 19-21 budget, which includes a 2%/2% pay plan, and gives the university enough funding to add an additional 1% per year to get to 3% per year.

- Working with the PROFS Entrepreneurial Group, composed of faculty who started businesses, PROFS has gotten legislation drafted that would make it easier for UW institutions to contract with companies in which faculty members have a financial interest. The bipartisan legislation almost passed the Legislature in 2018 and was reintroduced in 2019 (SB 42/AB 38). PROFS is working on this legislation with entrepreneurial UW-Milwaukee faculty.
- After passage of Act 10, PROFS led the fight to make sure retirement contributions are taken pre-tax, saving the average UW-Madison faculty member about \$1,800 per year. PROFS worked with UW-Milwaukee and UW-La Crosse faculty members who first highlighted this issue, and then convinced the governor and legislators to make the change.
- Several years ago, PROFS successfully advocated for first-day health insurance coverage and domestic partner coverage for university employees.
- PROFS continues to advocate for capital projects and is currently making the case for the governor's proposed capital budget. PROFS played a key role in securing \$86 million in state-supported bonding for the UW–Madison Chemistry Building in the 2015–17 state budget.

History of Steps already taken at UW-Milwaukee

A. Results from the Faculty survey in 2011

The Faculty Senate (at the April 21, 2011 meeting) authorized the UC to conduct an advisory on-line survey of the faculty. A total of 305 faculty (roughly 35%) responded to the survey between April 22nd and May 6th. The results from the three individual questions are shown below:

1) Do you support the Faculty Senate creating an organization to provide a public voice for faculty concerns?

YES (218, or 71%); NO (87, or 29%)

The “YES” responses (218) are 25% of the total number of UW-Milwaukee Faculty (874).

The following questions were optional:

2) What is the maximum (as a percentage of salary) you would be willing to voluntarily contribute to this organization?

Of those answering YES to Question #1:

0.1% (127, or 58%); 0.2% (52, or 24%); 0.3% (39, or 18%)

3) If the Academic Staff create a similar organization, should the Faculty organization seek to collaborate with it?

YES (205, or 67%); NO (56, or 18%); NO ANSWER (44, or 15%)

B. Faculty Senate Authorization and additional progress in 2011

The Faculty Senate (at the May 2011 meeting) passed FD 2793, which authorized a plan to create and activate a non-profit [501 (c)(6)] corporation called the Milwaukee Organization Representing the Faculty Senate (MORFS, Inc.).

However, the process was not able to proceed as expected; specifically, the Governor’s office did not respond to requests asking to authorize MORFS to receive funds from UW-Milwaukee faculty through voluntary payroll deductions. Nevertheless, the UC did follow through and create the non-profit [501 (c)(6)] corporation called the Milwaukee Organization Representing the Faculty Senate (MORFS, Inc.) in 2015. MORFS, Inc. has been kept up-to-date and ready to be activated since that time.

Developments in 2019 and Rationale for Moving Forward Now

With changes in the Governor's office, and support from UW-System, MORFS has now been authorized to receive funds from UW-Milwaukee faculty through voluntary payroll deductions.

However, we need some time to determine how this organization can best served UW-Milwaukee faculty interests. That will be determined to a large degree by how much funding support the faculty are willing to give this new organization. At UW-Madison, about 50% of their much larger faculty (~1000) contribute to PROFS, generating an annual budget of about \$90,000. At UW-Milwaukee, given our small total number of faculty, a realistic level of contribution will most likely be in the range of \$20,000 to 30,000 per year. This estimate includes an expectation that some faculty will chose to contribute at levels higher than 0.1% (in proportions consistent with the 2011 survey results).

Therefore, the University Committee proposed that we move forward, but allow a year to gauge the annual level of financial support likely from the faculty and develop a comprehensive implementation plan for MORFS activities appropriate to that budgetary level. No payroll deductions will be authorized for MORFS until after total annual commitments to the organization exceed \$20,000 and an implementation plan is presented to and approved by the Faculty Senate. The target date for presentation of this plan for approval is May 2020. The UW-Milwaukee Faculty Senate approved this general plan in May 2019. The specific faculty document with the details is below.

Faculty Senate revises Authority given to the UC regarding the Non-Profit called Milwaukee Organization Representing the Faculty Senate (MORFS)

Faculty Document 2793R1, approved May 9, 2019

1. In May 2011, the Faculty Senate authorized the University Committee to take the necessary steps to create a non-profit [501 (c)(6)] corporation called the **Milwaukee Organization Representing the Faculty Senate (MORFS, Inc.)**.
2. The initial Bylaws of MORFS, Inc. are included in this document.
3. The Faculty Senate further authorized the University Committee to develop an implementation plan for the organization which may include recommendations on additional voluntary contribution levels, staffing, and operational matters.
4. The Faculty Senate further authorized the University Committee to conduct information sessions and take whatever additional steps deemed appropriate to encourage faculty to become voluntary contributors to MORFS, Inc.
5. Now, the Faculty Senate further authorizes the University Committee to implement the process to allow faculty to voluntarily agree to contribute 0.1% (or more) of their salary each year in support of MORFS, Inc. However, next year (2019-2020) will be used by the University Committee to gauge the annual level of financial support likely from the faculty and develop a comprehensive implementation plan for MORFS activities appropriate to that budgetary level. **No funding expenditures from collected funds are authorized for MORFS until after an implementation plan is presented to and approved by the Faculty Senate.** The target date for presentation of this plan for approval is May 2020.

Committee Members:

Bettina Arnold
Kathleen Dolan
Devendra Misra
Kristian O'Connor, Chair
Laura Otto-Salaj
John Reisel
Mark D. Schwartz