



**UW-Whitewater United Meeting with administration: Faculty Layoff Policy Petition
For Immediate Release: April 28, 2025**

Attendees: UW-W United President Brandon Thomas, UW-W United Vice President David Simmons, UW-W United Member-at-Large Robert Gehrenbeck, Chancellor Corey King, and Interim Provost Robin Fox.

We spoke about the Administration's revisions of the Faculty Layoff Policy that was approved by the Faculty Senate. Member Gehrenbeck broke down some of the key provisions of the Faculty-approved policy. The Chancellor claimed that he was not responsible for any of the revisions made to the document and received them all from the Office of General Council (OGC). The administration hopes to negotiate the policy with the Faculty Senate, but it is not necessarily tied to any of the changes suggested by the OGC. Chancellor King also said that he is willing to push back against OGC and has before.

Vice President Simmons made it clear that we are living in difficult and scary times for workers in higher education and that there are a multitude of threats to our livelihoods. The union also said that we will push for the strongest possible version of a Faculty Layoff Policy and that, in particular, Faculty need to be in a partnership role, rather than advisory role in decisions about layoffs and program closures, the timeline should fit within a 9-month salary, and that every possible attempt should be made to retain faculty, academic staff, and programs.

We had a discussion about the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion efforts, particularly with regard to the 'DEI audit' sponsored by the state legislature, along with the deal made by System President Jay Rothman and Speaker Robin Vos that might be used to attack programs and personnel. The administration underlined that no programs or workers have been lost as a function of the attacks, though they have been rebranded within the Chancellor's 'inclusivity efforts.' President Thomas brought up specific examples of changes to the language of DEI programs and stressed the importance of standing up for DEI programs and jobs in the future.

Chancellor King spoke about the importance of worrying about Whitewater and not becoming "collateral damage" in fights about "external noise." He also said that we should trust the leadership at the university and that we to have "3-5 priorities" to focus on and communicate. In response, the union was clear that the so-called external noise could and likely will affect us directly and that the union's priority is to protect the jobs of and fight for the best possible working conditions for academic workers.

Throughout the meeting, the administration spoke about many of its accomplishments and priorities (e.g., boosting low-enrollment programs by accommodating technical college degrees, a budget for the next fiscal year with no structural deficit, and boasting one of the most diverse classes in the UW System, etc.). We also briefly discussed the calls for UW-Madison to leave the UW-System, and the American Association of Colleges & Universities letter to oppose government overreach and political interference, which UW-Madison Chancellor Jennifer Mnookin signed as a member of the Big 10, but not Universities of Wisconsin President Jay Rothman, nor other chancellors in the UW System.

In the end, the union stressed how much we care about UW-Whitewater and that we are willing to work with administration in ways that we can while standing up for the faculty and academic staff on campus.