



BICENTENNIAL BAGGAGE

Who Rules Our University?



Students for Staff

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Meetings: Fridays at 5:00 in Harrison 109



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As we celebrate Miami's bicentennial and reflect upon its history, we may find much to take pride in. However, in order to build a better future we must also engage the less savory aspects of that history. In the past twenty years, the voices and interests of students, faculty and staff have been consistently undermined by "institutional" priorities designed to promote the Miami image while protecting university investments, contracts and endowments. Administrative voices have defined what is best for us, but their policies and decisions often seem at odds with the needs and values of our community. As we are increasingly encouraged to articulate and realize those values as members of an "engaged" university, we wonder why no one is listening.

A Brief History of Disempowerment

- ◇ 1989 – Miami University illegally decertifies the union representing classified staff, AFSCME Local 209, denying the staff's right to negotiate their contract.
- ◇ 1994 – The Ohio Supreme Court finds MU guilty of unfair labor practices and orders the university to allow the union to negotiate.
- ◇ 1997 – A study by the Mercer consulting firm reports that Miami University's wages for classified staff are insufficient at 18–19% below market value.
- ◇ 2000 – A survey conducted by the Classified Personnel Advisory Committee shows that a "majority of the participants expressed opinions that indicated a low level of morale, not only among themselves, but among the classified staff in general." Morale among staff "is perceived to be low and worsening."
- ◇ 2003 – AFSCME Local 209 goes on strike after contract negotiations fall through. A report from a state-appointed fact finder recommends wage increases of 20–25% based on market comparisons and the ability of MU to pay the increases. Miami engages in corporate-style strike breaking (as documented by former Miami professor, William Wines) and the strike ends with a 4.25% wage increase.

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- ◇ 2006 – President Garland closes the Western College Program/School of Interdisciplinary Studies, despite outcry from students, faculty, and staff regarding the lack of due process and transparency.
- ◇ 2009 – A study released by University Senate reports that, within the last decade, administrative salaries have risen more sharply than faculty salaries as the number of administrative positions has also significantly increased.

Beyond the Bicentennial

The continuing lack of democratic decision-making at Miami is evident in the administrative response to the current budget deficit. In the coming months, 100 Miami employees will lose their jobs while the remaining staff, many of whom are already overworked and underpaid, will find themselves under further strain. Meanwhile, graduate assistantships have been cut in Art Education, Communications, Spanish, and the Institute of Environmental Sciences. We must imagine—and demand—an alternative Miami (OUR Miami) where students, faculty and staff alongside administrators work toward a common vision, a Miami based upon shared power and respect, where decisions and policies respond to the needs of community members. We must demand a change in the wage structure of our university, in which administrators presently earn some of the highest salaries and receive raises to match while faculty and staff take on an ever increasing workload. We must demand real power in the governance of our university, rather than settling for a voice which is solicited symbolically but consistently devalued and ignored.



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