

In Retrospect...

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Without a doubt, those three days in October left an indelible impression across the Commonwealth. The solidarity of faculty on each campus, and across the campuses, combined with the student support, created powerful and long-lasting optics of thousands determined for a common cause. We were successful on many levels, most importantly in achieving a contract that was long overdue.

In the weeks and months that followed the strike, I have had many opportunities to think about what might be done differently if we ever have to go through a work stoppage again, as well as what we did well in the weeks leading up to the strike. Listed below are my Top Ten Lists for each category, with the hope that 1) we never need to use them, but if we do 2) that they might be helpful to those in the future who are trusted and charged with the task of planning for the next strike.

Top Ten (Eleven):

What I might have done differently

- 1 Apparel** – As soon as the strike was announced, I would have begun the process of ordering APSCUF apparel, including hats, umbrellas, and t-shirts, rather

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than waiting to see what the state office was going to do. T-shirts and hats can always be used for events, such as on move-in day, but would have been especially beneficial to have during the job action.

- 2 **One-week picketing schedule** – Going into the strike we were well prepared with a three-day picket schedule. For ease in scheduling, organizing and communicating, in hindsight a seven-day, repeatable schedule would have been more efficient, especially with a strike that began mid-week.
- 3 **Rotating picketing sites** – Picket assignments were based on zone locations, and zone locations were established to cover as many sites around the central perimeter of the campus. While the zone and picket sites were effective, picketers reported to the same locations each day. Those picketers who were located along the perimeter of the Oak Grove saw a lot of action, while those who were located in more remote locations saw little. If we were to plan this again, we would recommend rotating picketers each day to reduce boredom and to give everyone a chance to see different aspects of the strike.
- 4 **Food** – While we were well fed with donuts, cookies, and other treats throughout the strike, going into the strike with a more comprehensive plan for feeding picketers would have helped to ensure that everyone who was on the line had an opportunity to receive a meal. Having a food committee take charge of ordering, preparing, and delivering meals would be beneficial and ensure that specific dietary restrictions are considered as well. Some campuses had a specific location for picketers to go to pick up a meal; others had tents/tables set up at picket locations.
- 5 **Off-campus email** – In retrospect, we should have begun to test and use the off campus email system prior to the strike. While test emails were sent to

members, we did not learn of the majority of the glitches with off-campus email addresses until after the start of the strike. Valuable time during the strike was spent troubleshooting, re-entering off-campus addresses, or discovering that email messages were not going through. Members reported feeling frustrated with the flow of information (or lack of), when email messages were not going through.

- 6 **Daily Announcements** – In order to increase the flow of communication to members, I would recommend printing out daily announcements and delivering them to zone captains to share at their picket sites, rather than rely on email or verbal communication.
- 7 **Keep it interesting** – While many members reported having positive experiences overall on the picket line, keeping members engaged and interested as the strike went on could have been facilitated by rotating picketers across zones, encouraging picket site contests, scavenger hunts or awards, or arranging for entertainment around the picket line.
- 8 **Label Everything** – Throughout the strike we found it necessary to put a call out to members to lend the chapter the use of items such as staple guns, supplies, tables, or canopy tents. At the end of the strike, when it came time to return items, there was at times confusion about to whom the items belonged or, in the instance of canopies, some items were damaged. In order to locate rightful owners, it would have been beneficial to label each item as they arrived to the AP-SCUF office.
- 9 **Set-up and Tear-down** – Because we did not do 24-hour picketing around the campus, it would have been beneficial for each zone to have a set-up and tear-down committee each day, including delivering/collecting picket signs, water, and canopies, rather than relying on the same people to complete this task each day.

- 10 **Picket signs** – We significantly underestimated the number of picket signs and sandwich boards needed for picketers. In order to have picket signs ready that could withstand inclement weather conditions, once pickets signs were received from State APSCUF, we would have sent a copy of each one to a print shop to have sufficient quantities printed and laminated, and encouraged members to have their individually designed posters laminated as well.
- 11 **Expect the unexpected** – We would have anticipated that administration would take preemptive actions in advance of the strike, including eliminating the ability to turn off on-line courses or to make email blasts well before the start of the strike. With one person (the office manager) being able to send off-campus email blasts and no ability to keep members informed via mass emails using campus mail, we were severely hamstrung for several hours in terms of being in communication with our members. In retrospect, when the State System walked away from the table many hours before the strike was to begin, that would have marked the start of active mobilization.

**Top 10 (Eleven):
What I would do again**

- 1 **Assembled a dedicated team** – None of our efforts would have gotten off the ground without the brain-power and muscle of a dedicated team of individuals to spear head the strike committee actions. These individuals put in countless hours of time in the planning and implementation of our strike plan, and kept the process going like a well-oiled machine.
- 2 **Planning: working with campus and local safety officials** – The prospect of a strike can be filled with unknowns and uncertainty. We worked closely with campus and local safety officials prior to the strike to

identify concerns and plan for foreseeable concerns.

- 3 Planning: working with campus administration –** Prior to the announcement of the strike, I affirmed our commitment with the university president to preserving the integrity of the relationship and community that we had worked very hard to build before, during and after the strike. While we understood that we each had a job to do, and that we took our “marching orders” from opposite sides, we also knew that we would be working together long after a job action. That guiding principle enabled us to traverse many difficult situations along the way. The fact that our president was the first in the State System to announce the end of the strike and welcome the faculty back to work and that our faculty were prepared to return to work the following day in a variety of capacities is evidence of our commitment to our community and the value that we placed on these relationships.
- 4 Information sessions –** While every effort was made to keep members informed before and after the strike via email and the monthly newsletter, we also held approximately twenty information sessions to answer questions about strike related matters, and about the tentative contract. This enabled members to ask questions in an open forum if they so chose. Information sessions were scheduled across campus at a variety of times and days in an attempt to accommodate schedules and locations.
- 5 Identifying and using our human resources –** People stepped up and wanted to help before and especially during the strike. Having jobs at the ready enabled us to mobilize folks quickly. APSCURF members were invaluable in helping to shuttle members from parking to picket sites and stood on the line with their APSCUF peers. Members made solidarity buttons and created posters. Some delivered food or donated needed items.

- 6 **Daily Communication** – Emails went out at least once per day with a status report about the strike. Although I mentioned email glitches in the top ten list above, those who were able to receive the daily emails commented about how helpful they were in keeping them engaged with the purpose of the strike, and also helped them to know that what we were doing was making a difference.
- 7 **Supporting local businesses** – While we were concerned with the strength of the picket lines and the optics of the success of the strike, we were also aware of the impact of the strike on local businesses, especially those who surrounded the perimeter of the campus, and relied on the university for patronage. Whenever possible, APSCUF turned to these businesses for larger lunch orders and encouraged the campus community to be patrons at these businesses.
- 8 **Feeding the Troops** – In the absence of a committee dedicated to the creature comforts of our picketers, IUP-APSCUF worked with local businesses, especially those adversely impacted by the strike, to provide lunch for our members.
- 9 **IUP-APSCUF “Terrible Towels”** – While we did not have sufficient time to organize an apparel order in advance of the strike, we did work with a local business to order IUP-APSUF “Terrible Towels” for picketers to use in lieu of picket signs. They also came in handy on hot or rainy days...
- 10 **Quick reimbursement turn around** – Our dedicated treasurer was available throughout most of the office hours to quickly process reimbursements to those who organized meals and purchased supplies as needed.
- 11 **Thanking our students** – We were overwhelmed by the support that our students provided during the strike. They were eager to show support on the picket lines, deliver food and water to their faculty, stage sit-

ins in the Oak Grove, travel the line to entertain us... and most of all they inspired us on the line to continue to fight for their quality of education. In November, we thanked them with free ice cream and pizza. It was a huge success and a great treat for our students who had not a break (aside from those three days in October) for the entire semester.

A strike had never before been held in the history of AP-SCUF, and hopefully will not ever have to be done so again. While we were prepared in many respects, there were some things that we did not anticipate. No doubt, if there is another job action, it will not be conducted in exactly the same way; however, learning from our successes, as well as from our errors, we hope those in the future can learn from our experience and benefit from our recommendations.



APSCUF Makes Contract Concessions for Quality Education, Ends Strike

Oct. 21, 2016

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

For more information, contact:

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The strike is over.

Faculty negotiators have reached a tentative agreement with Pennsylvania's State System of Higher Education. The three-year deal, ending in June 30, 2018, concludes a strike that began 5 a.m. Wednesday, Oct. 19. Faculty members will leave the picket lines immediately.

To preserve quality education, the Association of Pennsylvania State College and University Faculty accepted concessions to salary and benefits in exchange for eliminating most of the 249 changes the State System proposed in June. Also for the sake of students, APSCUF agreed to a salary package that was significantly lower than that of the other unions. APSCUF will release details about concessions and rescinded items in a future statement.

“Our primary goals were to preserve quality education for our students, protect our adjuncts from exploitation, and make sure the varieties of faculty work are respected,” APSCUF President Dr. Kenneth M. Mash said. “We achieved every single one of those goals, and the faculty were willing to take less than every other bargaining unit in order to preserve those goals. We are relieved to have an agreement that preserves quality public higher education in Pennsylvania and allows our members to get back into the classroom where they belong.

“We are thankful to Gov. Tom Wolf for his commitment to reaching an agreement. We may never have received a deal if it were not for his commitment to public higher education, our universities, and our students.”

APSCUF Vice President Jamie Martin thanked others who were pivotal in the process.

“We are especially grateful to Majority Leader Dave Reed, Rep. Mike Hanna, Sen. Judy Schwank, Sen. Jay Costa, Sen. Vince Hughes, the leadership of all four caucuses, and other members of the legislature,” Martin said.

Mash continued: “We also were overwhelmed and grateful for the support of our brothers and sisters at other unions. Most of all, we thank our students. If any high school student is looking for a place to go to school, they should look at how much all our students supported their faculty. We have phenomenal students, and we are proud to be able to return to the classroom to supply the quality of public higher education they deserve.”

This was the first strike in APSCUF’s history. The faculty contract expired June 30, 2015, and negotiations have been ongoing since late 2014.

APSCUF represents about 5,500 faculty and coaches at the State System universities: Bloomsburg, California, Cheyney, Clarion, East Stroudsburg, Edinboro, Indiana, Kutztown, Lock Haven, Mansfield, Millersville, Shippensburg, Slippery Rock, and West Chester Universities of Pennsylvania.

The “Wolf” is Here

Robert Mutchnick

Indiana University of Pennsylvania

I come from a union family. Back in the 1950s, my uncle helped start the 15,000 strong, Amalgamated Meat Cutters in New York City. My father was an active member of the union his whole working career. My mother was a New York City public school teacher and a member of the UFT (United Federation of Teachers) during the time Albert Shanker was the union president. As a child, I lived through a number of strikes.

I am a proud member of APSCUF, the faculty union for individuals teaching at one of the fourteen state owned, state controlled universities in Pennsylvania. For the past thirty-five years I have been an active member of APSCUF both locally on my campus and at the state level. I have served as a member of the negotiations team, helping to settle the 2007-2011 Collective Bargaining Agreement. I was elected to be a member of the Executive Council of the union, a position I held for two years. For almost twenty-five years I have been an elected member of the Legislative Assembly, representing my campus. At the local level I have served two terms as local chapter president and have been a member of both the local Executive Committee and Representative Council for thirty years. My interest in and concern for the welfare and rights of faculty is something I do not take lightly.

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Leading up to and during the strike, I served as co-chair of the FEAR Committee, or better known as our strike committee. Our preparation for our strike that took place during three days in October 2016, actually began years before. During each of the three previous contract negotiations we took steps to prepare for a strike. Each negotiation brought us closer and closer to the strike that took place in 2016. It did not happen overnight, nor did preparation take place in only the few months leading up to the strike. As each negotiation took place and the State System of Higher Education (SSHE) held back on reasonable raises and tried to reduce benefits, the faculty and the SSHE moved further and further apart. Even though contracts were eventually settled, the faculty began preparations for a possible strike. A pattern began to develop with the State System appearing to see how far they could push the faculty. It became clear that the State System did not believe the faculty would ever strike. Our threats were perceived as just that, threats without action. We were like the “boy who cried wolf” to the point where the townspeople (SSHE) no longer believed in the threat.

However, without the faculty realizing it, each time a strike was threatened, it necessitated our preparing for a strike. Each preparation brought us closer and closer to being ready to go on strike. When we showed them the “wolf” so-to-speak, we were finally ready. All fourteen campuses were ready. All fourteen campuses struck and in each instance, a majority of the faculty honored the picket lines. At Indiana University of Pennsylvania, my home institution, over 600 faculty not only honored the picket lines, they walked the picket lines. Less than 15 faculty could be identified as crossing the picket lines. Our pickets closed every entry to campus, including the parking lots.

How did we manage to be so successful? As I said above, it actually involved years of planning and years of faculty becoming angry enough to support a strike. In the months leading up to the three eventful days in October, a local group of the leadership spent time with representatives from the other

thirteen institutions and our state leadership discussing strategy and what it would take to be successful. Outside experts were brought in to provide guidance. Meetings were held on campus to keep the faculty informed about the lack of progress in the negotiations as well as what we would need from them should a strike be called.

It is important to note that the strike, if called, was not against the local administration, but rather against the Chancellor and his folks in Harrisburg. In fact, locally, we met regularly with a small representative group of administrators to work to reduce the potential for conflict. Locally, both sides understood that if there were to be a strike, when it was over we would once again have to work together. We formed a committee consisting of three local administrators and three faculty who would meet regularly before and during the strike to address issues of mutual interest. For example, faculty and graduate students in the natural sciences had animals that were being used in studies that had been ongoing for long periods of time. If the faculty were to go on strike, how would these animals be cared for? Neither local administration, nor the faculty wanted to leave the animals to die if the faculty were on strike. It was agreed that the faculty who had animals would be canvassed as to the type, number, location, and needs. A master list would be compiled and shared between the two sides. A retired faculty would be identified who would escort a small group of faculty onto campus to care for the animals. The retired faculty member would then escort the small group of faculty off campus. This would continue as needed during the strike. Not one animal was lost during the time of the strike because of the positive efforts of both local administration and the faculty working together.

Administration wanted to know where we intended to picket and what hours we would picket. We discussed with local administration our plans to close the whole campus. They shared with us information about what was borough property and what was campus property so that we could plan accordingly. We also met with the local police chief to discuss

our plans so as not to impede their law enforcement responsibilities. The campus police and the local police were very cooperative and appreciative of the approach taken locally by both sides.

Local businesses that surround the campus were approached about being able to use their facilities during the strike. Every business that was approached welcomed the faculty during the strike. During the strike, the students went out of their way to demonstrate their support for the faculty. The IUP Marching Band came out to serenade the faculty. Students who lived around campus set up their grills and cooked and delivered food to faculty on the picket lines. Students made signs and picketed on some of the city streets (for liability reasons we did not allow students to picket with the faculty). Some members of management came out to the picket lines to let the faculty know they had their support. The overall turnout was amazing, far better than we ever expected. Because of the turnout of faculty, the lack of classes, not only on our campus, but, across all of the campuses, the press reported that the schools were effectively shut-down. State legislators started to ask questions of the SSHE and pressure came to bear from the governor for a settlement. The strike was over in three days because a tentative contract agreement had been reached.

While there are many things we did not think of before the strike and discovered while we were on strike, there is one that I would like to make everyone aware of. When I reported that the students brought food to the faculty, it should be understood that the quantity of food and drink provided by the students was so great, the restaurants surrounding the campus that survived on the largesse of the faculty suffered greatly during the three days. Each of these businesses had been supportive of the faculty and now were unintentionally being hurt by them. Once we became aware of the problem the local union leadership took steps to remedy the problem. Each day we ordered large quantities of food from one of the businesses and distributed it to the faculty and students.

While this did not make up completely for the losses the local restaurants experienced it demonstrated to them our interest and concern for their well-being.

After the strike was over we wanted to thank the students for all their assistance. We decided the faculty would host a pizza and ice cream social for all 14,000 students. We ordered almost \$3,000 in pizza from one of the locally affected businesses and ice cream from another. We served over 2,000 students that evening. The students did not need to support the faculty, but they did, in very large numbers thereby making the strike effort that much more successful.

From a faculty perspective, the fact that there really was a “wolf” made all the difference. In this case there were fourteen “wolves” and they were bigger and stronger than SSHE ever anticipated. Hopefully, letting SSHE see the “wolf” for three days in October will mean we don’t have to show them the “wolf” in the next round of negotiations. We will know soon, because the contract we went on strike for in October 2016, expires in June of 2018. Negotiations will begin again in summer/fall of 2017. While we hope we don’t have to do this again, that a fair and reasonable contract agreement can be reached, the “wolf,” if needed, is now always nearby.



Faculty, Coaches to Vote in December on Contract Ratification

Nov. 18, 2016

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

For more information, contact:

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Faculty members and coaches at state-owned universities will vote Monday through Wednesday, Dec. 5–7, on whether to ratify their respective tentative contract agreements. The Association of Pennsylvania State College and University Faculties will tally votes Thursday, Dec. 8, in its Harrisburg office.

APSCUF will release contract details after the documents are ratified by both its members and Pennsylvania's State System of Higher Education.

The faculty negotiations team reached its three-year tentative agreement Oct. 21. To preserve quality education, APSCUF accepted concessions to salary and benefits in exchange for eliminating most of the 249 changes the State System proposed in June. Also for the sake of students, APSCUF agreed to a salary package that was lower than that of other unions.

After several weeks of lawyers finalizing language, delegates from all 14 campuses met Nov. 16 via a special legislative assembly conference call and voted 89-7 to recommend the tentative agreement move forward to membership for ratification.

Coaches, who bargain separately, reached their tentative agreement Oct. 27. The four-year deal provides reasonable salary increases for coach members while keeping the costs of their healthcare plan affordable, APSCUF Coach Executive Leader John Gump said that day. APSCUF's executive council voted today to move the tentative agreement forward to coach membership for ratification.

If a majority of members vote in favor of ratifying their respective contracts, the documents go to the State System's Board of Governors for approval.

Both previous contracts expired June 30, 2015, and negotiations had been ongoing since late 2014.

APSCUF represents about 5,500 faculty and coaches at the State System universities: Bloomsburg, California, Cheyney, Clarion, East Stroudsburg, Edinboro, Indiana, Kutztown, Lock Haven, Mansfield, Millersville, Shippensburg, Slippery Rock, and West Chester Universities of Pennsylvania.



From Solidarity Invoked to Solidarity Built

Seth Kahn

West Chester University

APSCUF brother and longtime friend/collaborator Kevin Mahoney and I have been pondering for years why there's no verb in English for *democracy*. We can *democratize* (make systems more democratic), but there's no single verb that captures the activity of *doing democracy*. It's not until recently I understood that the word *solidarity* has the same problem. There's no way to make it an act; the way most of use it, it's at best an incantation, or a description of a state of mind.

I say this to begin because the result of this syntactic trap is a necessarily cumbersome effort to describe what shouldn't be that complicated—what it means to be in solidarity, really **be in solidarity**, instead of simply saying “In solidarity” as the closing of emails or meetings. Not that there's anything wrong with using the word in hopes that it has actual magic powers (Pascal's Wager is always a good bet), but it doesn't really seem to do much just by saying it.

In the wake of a successful first-ever APSCUF strike, I've been thinking a lot about what made it work and what it will take to sustain the solidarity we worked so hard to build in the months (well over a year) we spent preparing. In a nutshell, there were three major factors that contributed to our success.

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- 1 The number of people involved in planning/organizing: over time, hundreds of people had at least a finger in it, if not a whole hand. That's not to diminish the people who were in it up to their elbows, but to say that there was widespread participation in the process even before the first member signed up for picket duty.
- 2 The time we spent planning: even though both the Strike Authorization Vote and the actual strike date declaration put us under deadline pressure at times, the planning process began in earnest sixteen months before the October 19th walkout.
- 3 The trust we were able to build by virtue of (1) and (2), and how that trust should contribute to a sustainable solidarity that we'll need to nurture and build upon in the days ahead.

Not to put too fine a point on it, the November 2016 Presidential election won't allow us to be complacent with what we've built. As I said to a colleague about thirty minutes after I started drafting this piece, all that organizing and solidarity-building we did in preparation for the strike will be essential to holding together our campuses and likely the legal right to unionize at all during what promises to be turbulent times.

Widespread Involvement in Organizing

I'm not very good at arithmetic, so I'm not going to wind up with a total number here, but one day during the strike, while I was alone in our staging area (a park about three blocks from any of our picket sites), I realized how many different groups of people had been involved in getting us ready for what was happening:

- Negotiations Team and Negotiations Committee
- Statewide Executive Committee
- State APSCUF staff, and all the chapter office managers

- Statewide committees and the locals of each: Mobilization, Public Relations, Membership, Student-Faculty Liaisons
- Each campus Strike Team (which I'll describe in more detail below): the chairs of the above committees, plus the chair of the local Adjunct Faculty Committee; Picket Chair; Spokesperson and Deputy Spokesperson; Sign Chair; Building Arrangements Chair; Solidarity Fund Coordinator; Coordinator of Department Representatives

Just think about that for a minute; each of those local committees and strike teams operated in parallel (roughly) on fourteen campuses. By the time we count all those people—acknowledging that sometimes people did double-duty, and some positions were unfilled—I'd estimate that nearly ten percent of our membership was involved in planning/preparing. That's before anybody signed up for picket duty, or anybody who suddenly decided they wanted to be more involved popped up out of the blue (and yes, that happened, too). In other words, these are the people whose roles were built into the process *by design*.

Our campus strike leadership (Mobilization Co-Chairs and Chapter President) decided from the beginning not to ask anybody currently serving on our local Executive Committee to be on the strike team. We wanted to recruit particular people for their skills, but I also saw an opportunity to do some leadership development. I also understood that as focused on strike preparation as we would be, the ordinary work of running the chapter wouldn't just stop; the members of our EC already had plenty to do. This decision involved at least six people who had never been in leadership in planning from the very early stages, and gave us the opportunity to train new people much more fully than we would have otherwise.

Although most of our rank and file didn't know in detail how many people were in leadership positions and doing

what kinds of work, the sense of grassroots organizing was palpable. Especially starting from midsummer 2016, members were getting emails from people they didn't know asking them to participate in events—staffing the Strike Authorization vote tables; marching from the APSCUF office to the Quad to kick off the vote; moving the APSCUF office off-campus, etc. Those activities are routine in negotiation cycles, but it mattered that somebody besides the Chapter President and the Mobilization Co-Chairs were organizing them. More concretely but just as importantly, it helped to defuse the problem of seeing the same people's names on every email and getting tired of them.

Finally, while I don't know this for certain, I think it also enabled one of the key developments in the lead-up to and during the strike—people who weren't already in the leadership structure, or even the usual first to volunteer when we asked, volunteering to take on large, sometimes difficult, projects without being asked. People I know who had never been visibly involved in union work emailed Strike Team members with messages like, “I feel like I should be doing more to help. What do you need?” Or “Would it help if somebody arranged [task]?” Of course to some extent people who simply popped up that way were likely responding to the sense that we needed the help (and we did!) as much as they were sensing the ethos of collective leadership.

Ever since I got involved in state-level APSCUF activities, I've been telling members across the state that WCU faculty might look jaded and uncommitted based on sparse attendance at all-faculty meetings, low response rates to surveys, and so on, but that when we need to turn out, we do. The strike demonstrated how true that is, beyond anything I could have expected, and at least one reason why is that members trusted the process enough to claim places in it—which they knew they could do because so many people already had.

Time Spent Planning

Curry Malott and I became co-chairs of the WCU Mobilization Committee in late 2014. The first concrete preparations involved revisions to our Strike Manual in January 2015. A group of long-timers gathered at the Harrisburg office brainstorming revisions to the protocol (where necessary), working out an ideal timeline (complicated by the fact that contract expiration dates often have passed without much ado, so there wasn't any specific date to anchor a timeline), and so on. Although the Strike Manual is a confidential document (so I can't detail everything we did), one revision had really significant effects: adding the Strike Team as a layer of leadership.

Although it took time to approve the revisions formally, Curry and I began working with Chapter President Mark Rimple to assemble the team in short order; almost all the obvious choices (some members are already-appointed committee chairs) were willing. The Sign Chair, who has a background in Theater, also brought tons of activist experience to the team. The Picket Chair, a former chair of a large department, brought the logistical skill you'd expect from somebody who could successfully chair a department with seventy faculty and 500 majors. For Coordinator of Department Representatives, we asked the person most outspoken at Rep Council meetings who didn't already serve in another leadership position. Our Building Arrangements Chair has been involved in local politics for years and knows every property owner, rental agency, law enforcement leader, and legal resource in the area. That the team came together so quickly meant we had one fewer problem to solve, and more time to work.

An unexpected perk of the long timeline was being able to tell members, long before activity started ramping up publicly, that the team was ready to go—so when we started sending out requests for off-campus contact information, and reminders to start saving money/thinking about how to man-

age health issues and so on, those calls had a gravitas that made people listen more carefully than usual. The difference between “This is me, nagging you” and “Our team is ready to go; we’re just waiting for you” was palpable. Starting the basic organizing so early also helped us because the people most likely to respond immediately to those calls are the committed members, which meant that when problems/questions arose, they were coming from people who would be patient while we sorted out answers; in fact, being able to tell members, “That’s a great question. I’m glad it’s you asking it because I know you won’t panic if I need a few days to figure it out, and I’ll need to know it when somebody else asks” encouraged some of our regulars to feel at least somewhat included in the planning, if only as beta-testers for the “real thing.”

There were, to be sure, issues with starting early. It’s easy to get complacent, as in: we’ve been working on this for so long, everything *must* be going well, right? More than once, I was convinced I had finished a task because I remembered having thought about it a long time ago (so I must have done it). Perhaps a little counter-intuitively, at times the opposite was also true; within those long stretches of slow, careful preparation were sudden moments of intense activity, e.g., the Strike Authorization and Contract Ratification votes, which felt super-condensed because tight deadlines were so rare otherwise. Finally, and one of the key takeaways for next time I’m involved in such planning, not everybody is an early starter; it can be very frustrating when people seem not to be willing/available to do obvious and important tasks, but they’re not responding. You may be asking before they’re ready to think about it.

For example, when I was scheduling shifts for the Strike Authorization vote, I started asking for volunteers about three weeks in advance. We needed to conduct voting in seven different locations (three off of the main campus), and I couldn’t ask people for shifts more than two-hours because people wouldn’t do them. I recruited specifically from a list of mem-

bers who had provided me with their preferences for what help they were most willing to offer—in short, the call for volunteers was targeted at people who had indicated willingness to work tables and help with votes. When I sent out the initial message, a handful of usual suspects signed up within a day, and I figured all was copacetic. Nobody else signed up for another few days, so I sent another call to the same group, plus another batch of potential volunteers who had checked off a “Call me when you need me” option on the form. Still the response rate was low, and I was nervous. A week before the voting began, I sent one last plea to the volunteer list, and within hours all the shifts were filled. I suspect one reason for it was the timing of the vote itself, during the second week of classes. When I started recruiting, we hadn’t even come back to school yet. But I also think asking people to commit—especially small—chunks of time works better if you wait until closer to the time you need them.

Those kinds of problems, however, connect again to the theme of trust. While I found certain moments to be stressful, generally everything went about as smoothly as it could—because people who told us they would do things did them; because people who took on leadership roles did them well; and because we had enough time to fix mistakes.

Trust, Built and Sustained

I realize it’s possible to see these descriptions of what it took to get to the strike as serendipitous as much as the result of trust. Those aren’t mutually exclusive, by the way; sometimes a trusting relationship makes serendipity possible, and sometimes serendipity is necessary for building trust. But it’s not helpful, as organizing advice, to tell people just to hope something lucky happens so all the hard work can pay off. More to the point, what got us *to* the strike and what got us *through* the strike aren’t exactly the same.

I’ve been arguing that the widespread participation in planning and organizing the strike was one key to its success.

Another key was responsiveness to members' concerns, especially given the anxieties that members expressed (and these are just those they talked to me about) in the weeks before we went out: finances; insurance questions; complying with rules about technology use; students' fears about losing credit for the semester; and so on. And then as we approached the actual date, nerves about the strike itself compounded those anxieties: logistics like parking and bathrooms; getting information about picket duty/responsibilities; concerns in some departments about care for experimental animals and sensitive materials; political concerns about pressure to cross the line or pressure to strike; a litany that anybody who's been involved in faculty union contract negotiations probably knows.

Our response to those stresses was two-fold, one obvious and one less so. The obvious response was to answer questions and dispel misconceptions quickly and accurately. Our chapter president and I, along with other leaders of our chapter, answered emails by the hundreds. I couldn't spend an hour on Facebook without fielding at least one question, usually more. But it was important that people get accurate information quickly. Also, when responses were slow, people needed to understand why. Sometimes questions were just hard, and when I could, I made a point of warning them that I might need time. One recommendation I'd make is to set a deadline in writing and invite the person who asked to nudge you if you're late. What's important is to get the right answers to people as fast as you can, and to be clear when "as fast as you can" may not be "as fast as they want."

We also used our chapter blog to answer questions or point people to resources for answering their own questions (like the dozens of messages that came from state APSCUF that some members weren't reading as carefully as we'd have liked). Sometimes posts contextualized our negotiations in the US higher education landscape; still others offered pep talks as morale fluctuated periodically. Although the subscribed readership for the blog is only about forty people,

posts push out automatically through the Facebook accounts of all four contributors, and can reach a substantial network of members and supporters. In short, the blog was useful for addressing lots of questions/issues at once instead of email by email, and sometimes for addressing rumors/misinformation before they could get traction; and other times a way to recognize that there were concerns widely shared among the membership that we needed to address.

The second strategy for responding to members' anxieties/stresses, this one I think less obvious than being accurate and as quick as possible to respond to issues, was to make clear to the membership that part of my job as Mobilization Co-Chair was to soak up the stress people were feeling. Members needed to believe their concerns were being taken seriously.

An example—I had lunch with a junior faculty member one day, during which she told me that junior faculty in our department were put off by what they heard as the angry tone of communications from the state-level leadership. Although I spent a few minutes defending against the critique and putting it in context of long frustration we've had with the Chancellor's Office, I also realized she was telling me something really important—that crucial information was bouncing off people's ears, and we needed to address that problem without accusing those members of doing something wrong. A blog post I wrote about it, which ran on the State APSCUF blog, aimed to clarify what we wanted people to hear, but also to acknowledge that we recognized why they weren't. It also pushed me (and I pushed on this throughout the planning in statewide Mobilization Committee meetings once I understood it) to be as precise as possible about the attitude I wanted to convey to members in communications with them. There are times to be angry, times to be resolutely quiet, and sarcastic, and conciliatory, and so on. But none of those works if the target audience doesn't hear them the way we want or understand why we want to sound that way. My point is, a sizeable group of faculty had a legitimate concern about

the way leadership was communicating with them, and it was crucial that we answer more responsively than “Just trust us and read everything. Solidarity!”

A more positive side of that coin occurred to me about three weeks before the October 19 strike date. While it was sometimes frustrating to field the same questions repeatedly, what I realized—and made sure to say to as many people as I could anywhere I could say it—was that all these questions were good news because it meant people wanted to get it right. The insight itself was helpful for my psyche, but more so when I heard members saying it to each other; it convinced me that much of the angst palpable on campus was not aimed at the union leadership or the decision to declare a strike date, but was aimed at making sure we were ready.

During the strike itself I saw the clearest evidence of how deeply that sense of getting it right had established itself among the membership. Not only did people turn out *en masse* for the three days of picketing, far beyond what we expected based on the picket schedules, but we took care of each other and looked after each other in a way that’s unlike anything I’d ever seen from faculty anywhere. It’s hard to convey this sense in concrete terms, but here are some examples that get as close as I can:

- From early October, once faculty understood that the threat of an actual strike was real, the question I got most often and aggressively was what faculty were supposed to do about parking if they couldn’t park on campus. With the help of a member—one of those I described earlier who asked for things to do because she felt like she needed to contribute more—we developed what amounted to a transportation schedule to three different remote parking sites around the borough, where people could park and know that somebody would pick them up within a few minutes. Ironically, almost nobody used it—but several people told me it made them

willing to figure out their own parking because they knew we'd attended to it. This task (shuttling people to/from remote parking areas) also provided ways for people who couldn't picket to participate), along with the next two (buying supplies, shuttling people to from restrooms).

- We had a sign-up sheet for people to supply food, drinks, paper products, trash bags, art and other supplies. In theory, people would check it every afternoon, where I would list what we needed so that we wouldn't get 30,000 cans of soda, no ice, and a mountain of snacks nobody would eat. As it turned out, while a handful of people used that list, dozens of people bought supplies without saying they would, and we wound up with more snacks than we could ever eat—but our students could, and they have! And we weren't short on anything else.
- Because of the size and surroundings of the WCU campus, we had to run shuttles so people at some of the most far-flung locations could use bathrooms.
- Because our turnout was so strong, we ran out of signs within three hours on the first day. At least ten times over the first two days, people who just happened to wander through the staging area volunteered to run to the nearest office supply store, came back with materials, and spent hours in the park making more signs. As signs began to fray or tear, a group of anywhere from four to eight members hung out in the park for hours doing "sign triage." It was the sort of contribution I'd never have thought we might need, but we would have struggled without it.

This list could keep going. The point is to say that all the time we'd spent planning, including people, being as clear as we could about what was happening, responding to questions and concerns quickly and accurately, really practicing a vis-

ible solidarity and care rather than hoping it would happen magically when we needed it, paid off when we hit the lines. Sure, people got crabby sometimes. Sometimes people complained about the snack choices. We're human. But the leadership, and all the members who worked on planning and organizing, and all the members who worked behind the scenes, made it possible for us to turn out hundreds of faculty in nine different locations in four different cities/townships, sustain that level of intensity for three full days, and win.

As friend and comrade Robin Sowards (who works for USW in Pittsburgh, where many western PA APSCUF members are likely to have crossed paths with him) commented on one of my Facebook posts after I'd gone home from the first day, "A strike is pretty much the only thing that makes the members really *feel* like a union in their gut." I thought I'd understood solidarity before, but the strike changed everything.

The Near Future

As we head into what promises to be a turbulent period for organized labor, it couldn't be more important that we remember not just what we did that worked (and didn't) in terms of conducting the strike, but *how it felt when we got it right*. We organized in response to an Office of the Chancellor that routinely disrespected our union and denigrated our work. We should expect more of that and worse in the coming years, and we need to maintain what I would call the architecture of our mobilization: contact information lists, opportunities for people to take leadership roles, training, etc. But just as important, we need to remember that *we did it*. We stood, doing whatever that verb for *solidarity* would be, and we won.



APSCUF Faculty, Coaches Vote in Favor of Contract Ratification

Dec. 8, 2016

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Faculty and coaches are one step closer to new contracts after union members at state-owned universities voted this week to ratify their respective tentative agreements. Of APSCUF faculty members who voted, 94 percent were in favor of the deal. Of coach members who voted, 100 percent cast their ballots affirmatively. The Association of Pennsylvania State College and University Faculties does not tally results by campus.

After members voted Monday through Wednesday, APSCUF tallied ballots today in its Harrisburg office. With this step complete, the documents go to Pennsylvania's State System of Higher Education's Board of Governors for approval. The board is slated to meet 9 a.m. Tuesday, Dec. 20, for this action.

APSCUF will post the full contract on its website after ratification is complete.

“Our faculty and coaches look forward to the State System Board of Governors completing the ratification process,” APSCUF President Dr. Kenneth M. Mash said. “Our faculty and coaches relish the opportunity to educate our students without the distraction of a contract dispute. APSCUF will continue to advocate for quality public higher education because our students deserve it and because of the vast benefits our universities provide to all Pennsylvanians.”

The faculty negotiations team reached its three-year tentative agreement Oct. 21. To preserve quality education, APSCUF accepted concessions to benefits in exchange for eliminating most of the 249 changes the State System proposed in June. Also for the sake of students, APSCUF agreed to a salary package that was lower than that of other unions.

Coaches, who bargain separately, reached their tentative agreement Oct. 27. The four-year deal provides reasonable salary increases for coach members while keeping the costs of their healthcare plan affordable, APSCUF Coach Executive Leader John Gump said that day.

Both previous contracts expired June 30, 2015, and negotiations had been ongoing since late 2014.

APSCUF represents about 5,500 faculty and coaches at the State System universities: Bloomsburg, California, Cheyney, Clarion, East Stroudsburg, Edinboro, Indiana, Kutztown, Lock Haven, Mansfield, Millersville, Shippensburg, Slippery Rock, and West Chester Universities of Pennsylvania.

This release has been updated to include the date of the Board of Governors meeting.
Pennsylvania.