

Board Statement 2/5/2015

I'll start by welcoming you back to campus for this new year. We're getting into the swing of a new Spring semester, but we haven't put winter behind us. One cancelled day, one cancelled evening, and one delayed opening so far—and who knows what's on the horizon?

Although many of our students now live on campus, not all of them—and none of our teaching or support staff—do. Getting to school in marginal weather is dangerous and, in weather like this past Monday, getting home after a delayed opening poses risks as well. I want to go on record and say that when deciding on weather-related closings or delays, we should always err on the side of safety, and always consider the well-being of those of our community who are on the roads. Our faculty are extremely adept at using technology to ensure that course materials and objectives are covered even when classes cannot meet.

As for being on campus, our workers and the contract snow people work hard clearing parking lots and major walkways, and we appreciate that. However, sometimes it's just impossible to finish, and the campus is simply not safe when students and staff arrive. I leave this topic with a tweet from one of our students on Monday: "Yes, students have the option to skip class today, but if Montclair chose to open, they should have been PREPARED to be open."

The agenda for this morning is light, so I would like to start by congratulating all those who are having their sabbatical applications approved for Academic Year 2015-2016. You are approving 24 sabbaticals of the 26 applications tendered. The Local applauds these numbers. When the sabbatical contract language changed to eliminate quotas, Dr. Cole promised to fund all "worthy" applications, and we see that she has kept her promise.

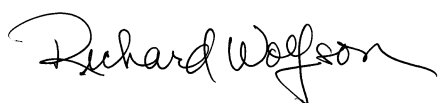
You are reappointing 22 faculty and 69 Professional Staff, and the Local applauds all of them. I would be remiss, however, if I didn't point out that of the three faculty appointments you are making today, two are single-year emergency hires and the third is a Specialist. Specialists do not have faculty rank, as per your resolutions creating these positions, yet this one is listed as faculty. This anomaly causes confusion, so you should consider, in your next series of appointments, changing the categories to better reflect where Specialists fall in our academic organization.

You are approving a contract to the Prudential Center, the Rock, for our 2015 commencement. The announcement to the campus regarding this change did not result in excitement, but in consternation. Everyone wanted to know: Where will we all park? Will we have to pay for parking? Will our students and their families have to pay for parking? I have attended each of the 32 commencements since I came to Montclair, and I've always encouraged others in our community to attend as well. We should be doing everything we can to encourage participation in commencement, and the announcement should have contained language to address these concerns—or at least acknowledge that it is a concern. Which brings me to yet another request for transparency.

I have noted before that the administration is short on details in its communications. Your agendas contain no details, and votes are taken without discussion. It took an exposé in the Bergen Record for the campus community to learn that the Red Hawk sculpture was funded with \$100,000 of student money, \$4000 raised at Homecoming, and “only” \$121,000 coming from funds generated by tuition. That could have been included in the materials at that meeting, or made public after my request, since you voted on that item after I made my remarks.

It apparently doesn't occur to anyone that besides wanting to be included in some decision processes, we may actually have something valuable to contribute to some deliberations. In the case of the commencement venue change, perhaps questions about parking could have been anticipated and answered, rather than having the community think that the administration simply doesn't care. Even the investment policy you will be approving today doesn't outline the changes being made. Some of these issues are not traditionally the Local's and I see that Dr. Sandra Collins will be making a statement on behalf of the University Senate later in the agenda. You should engage her and see where you, the administration, the governance structures, and perhaps even Local 1904, can work together for the betterment of Montclair State University.

I thank you for your time.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Richard Wolfson". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the typed name and title.

Rich Wolfson
President, AFT Local 1904