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# THE WESTERN FRONT

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## Conflicts with administration not limited to professors

**Marie Biondolillo**  
THE WESTERN FRONT

Western's faculty union members aren't the only employees engaged in conflict with the university administration.

On Friday, Western's high-level administrative support workers' and supervisors' union went up against the administration in Whatcom County Superior Court. The administrative support workers and supervisors belong to Unit D of Western's Public School Employees of Washington union.

The Unit D union has been having difficulty bargaining its contract with Western's administration since 2004, said Susan Banton, president of the Unit D union and Western procurement and supply specialist.

The administrative support workers and supervisors are concerned because the administration is denying them the right of interest arbitration, where a neutral third party, or arbitrator, is called in to settle disputes between employer and employee. In interest arbitration, the arbitrator gets input from the administration and the employees' union but has the final say in set-

see **UNION** page 9 ▶

## Western students run for a cure

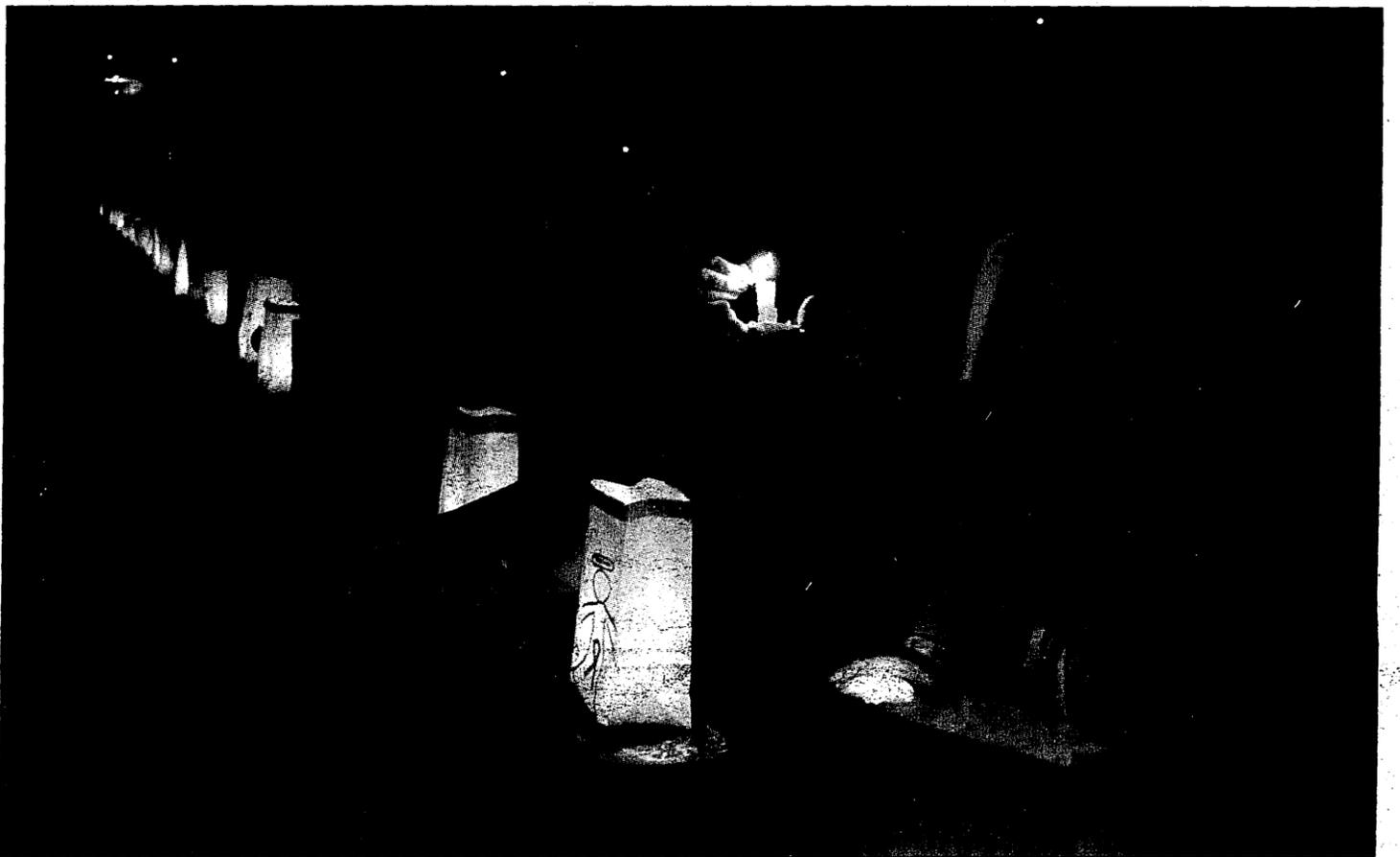


photo by Paul Moore THE WESTERN FRONT

After a long day raising money for cancer research at Relay for Life, Western sophomores Bess Butterworth, left, and Julianne Lynch sit behind a row of candlelit paper bags at the candlelight vigil Saturday at the Turf Field. Butterworth said she participated in the event for her mother, who is fighting skin cancer.

### Campus community members attend Relay for Life, an annual event to raise money for cancer research

**Amanda Winters**  
THE WESTERN FRONT

At the start of his sophomore year of college, Western senior Chris Fuhrmann was diagnosed with Non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma, which is cancer of

the lymphatic system.

"I had a tumor in my liver and my skull and my central nervous system," Fuhrmann said. "I went through many different kinds of IV drugs and injections of the spinal cord."

Fuhrmann said over the

course of 16 weeks, he received treatment while still attending school part time.

He said he felt sick, tired and lethargic during treatment, despite the support he received from family and friends.

But Fuhrmann said he felt

empowered when he saw shirts and bracelets from the Relay for Life, an annual event which raises money for cancer research, worn by students at Western.

"I would see people with

see **RELAY** page 11 ▶

STUDENTS' ASSOCIATION BOARD OF CONTROL.

photo courtesy of WWU Libraries Special Collections

The Associated Students Board of Directors, called Students' Association at the time, pose with administrators in 1908, when Western was called the Washington State Normal School.

## AS accomplishments span 100 years at Western

**Carolyn Copstead**  
THE WESTERN FRONT

The Associated Students (AS) is an organization that extends to many areas of Western's campus.

Founded 100 years ago, in 2008 the AS is governed by the members of the AS Board of Directors who, after being elected by the student body, have a significant impact in the creation and execution of all the services and programs the AS oversees.

This year's AS Board of Directors' terms in office will end

when spring quarter ends.

The newly-elected members will then assume their roles within the student government and lead the AS into the 2008-09 academic year.

In addition to being the 100th anniversary of the AS, 2008 also marks the 50th anniversary of the Viking Union.

The Outdoor Center, the Social Issues Resource Center and the Viking Union Gallery are all made possible by AS Programs. AS Services is responsible for

see **BOARD** page 4 ▶

# UNION: Unit D seeks the right of interest arbitration



photo by Michael Leese THE WESTERN FRONT

Assistant Attorney General Keri Hanson, left, represents Western in an arbitration hearing Friday between the university and the Washington Public School Employees Union. Eric Nordlof, right, represented the union.

ting the dispute.

In 2004, the Public Employment Relations Commission (PERC), a state agency whose job is to mediate conflicts between public employers and public employee unions, granted the Unit D union the option of interest arbitration in contract negotiations with Western administration.

Since then, Western's administration has been trying to get PERC's decision suspended while the Unit D union has sought to have it upheld.

On Friday, the union and Western administration faced off in Whatcom County Superior Court.

Members of the Western administration believe PERC's decision was unwarranted, said assistant attorney general Keri Hanson, who represented Western's administration in Whatcom

County Superior Court.

Western's administration asked that the court suspend PERC's decision because interest arbitration is only supposed to be granted when an employer refuses to bargain and seems unlikely to do so, which was not the case in this instance, Hanson said.

Since Western's administration has always been willing to bargain with the union, PERC's decision was not legal, Hanson said.

The Unit D union requested the case go to the Court of Appeals rather than being suspended.

On Friday, the union members wanted the Superior Court to send the case to the Court of Appeals.

The Court of Appeals has the authority to decide whether interest arbitration should be

granted. Members of Western's administration wanted the union's case to be suspended and not allowed to continue to the Court of Appeals.

The union won.

"This particular administration has a fear of the word 'union' and sees it as some sort of outside bogeyman that's going to force them to do things that they don't want to do," said Chris Sutton, a Unit D union member and administrative services manager for Western's geology department. "They don't want to agree to any form of arbitration because it means that they might have to be more fair, or more reasonable, or give somebody a square deal."

Usually, if a union and its employer disagree, the employer has the ultimate say about how to resolve the issue.

In 2004, PERC awarded

the Unit D union with interest arbitration because Western's administration committed unfair labor practices by refusing to negotiate Unit D union salary increases and by making intimidating comments to the Unit D union bargaining team about job security, Sutton said.

"[Former Western human resources Director Val Berry] told us that they could hire anybody off the street in Whatcom County to fill our positions — that it wasn't hard to do," Sutton said.

PERC granted the union interest arbitration to ensure fair contract negotiation, Banton said.

"The university appealed again, PERC found in our favor again and now they're taking it to the courts," said Unit D union member Marty Hitchcock, an administrative services manager for Western's accounting department. "How many times does the university have to be told that this was wrong?"

Both the university administration and the Unit D union

would like a timely decision to be made as contract negotiations will begin soon, Hitchcock said.

PERC's decision mandates that if the union and Western administration have not reached an agreement on Unit D's contract by Aug. 15, the contract must go to interest arbitration.

Western administration feels it would be unfair to have to submit to interest arbitration before PERC's decision is declared legal, Hanson said.

Whatcom County Superior Court Judge Charles Snyder, who presided over the case, agreed PERC had the authority to make the decision, Hitchcock said.

"It's harmful to [Western administration] because there's no incentive for [the Unit D union] to come to agreement to with them," Hitchcock said. "We have a deadline too; if we don't come to an agreement with Western before Oct. 1, we'll be out of luck because money for any raises we get can't be included in Western's budget."



photo by Michael Leese THE WESTERN FRONT

Judge Charles Snyder presides at the Whatcom County Courthouse Friday in downtown Bellingham in an arbitration hearing between Western and the Public School Employees Union.

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