

LOCAL 1796
At
William Paterson University of New Jersey
General and Executive/Local Council Meeting

Date: Tuesday, February 20, 2007

Location: Raubinger 1

Time: 12:30 pm – 1:45 pm

Present: S. Tardi, L. Gazzillo Diaz, C. Williams, J. Pinkston, M. Mwaura, E. Matthews, R. Wolk, I. DiMaio, F. Pavese, G. Pope, C. Goldstein, M. Peek, G. Guerrieri, J. Carter, J. Najarian, P. Jackson, R. Rehberg, I. Nack, M. Innis-Jimenez, S. Betts, K. Louie, J. Peterman, A. Montare, S. Lawrence, A. Scala, C. Mulrine, K. Park, A. Cheo, K. Martus, R. Cauthen, E. Phadia, J. Heavy, E. Birge, B. Mason, M. Turkish, C. Simon, R. Schwartz, L. Orr, E. Goldstein

Items distributed to the Council and General Membership:

- 1) Proposed Agenda for Meeting
- 2) 12/19//07 Minutes of the General and Executive/Local Council Meeting
- 3) Response to 12/21/06 request for ART percentage of the University's operating budget
- 4) State of New Jersey Health Proposal (2/16/07)

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 12:39 pm.

2. Adoption of the Agenda

Motion to approve the agenda was made by Martus, and seconded by Montare. Approved unanimously.

3. Approval of Minutes of the General Membership and Executive/Local Council Meeting

A motion to approve the December 19, 2007 minutes was made by Najarian, and seconded by Wilkerson. Approved unanimously.

4. Treasurer's Report

Tardi announced that our Local's annual review of finances has been conducted by our accountant, and our Local has been deemed financially sound. Our financial consultant, Vince Baldassano, will attend a future meeting to discuss our investments.

5. President's Report

a. State Agreements Update

Tardi stated that the negotiations team met with the State on 2/16/07 and there is bad news concerning health and pension benefits. There is a proposal to eliminate the traditional plan and the NJ Plus and replace them with a nationwide PPO. The retirees

would not be affected by the proposal. Tardi said the Council President made the statement that the proposed health plan was better because it is a nationwide plan. Tardi noted that further comparative analysis is necessary since in some areas the proposed PPO involves a reduction of benefits. Tardi expressed concern that the Council Negotiation Team was not given a detailed analysis indicating the strength and the weakness of the proposed plan.

Tardi reminded the Membership that our Local voted not to ratify the last contract. The Leadership of Local 1796 had identified what the members wanted prior to negotiations, fought for what the members wanted at the bargaining table, and then recommended that the members not ratify the proposed contract. The members supported the decision. This did not occur at the other locals. Tardi stressed that the leadership of our Local will provide their personal recommendations regarding this contract, but will fight for the needs and desires of the Membership.

Membership comments

A member stated that the average age in his department is 65 so he is advising people to retire now in order to maintain their current benefits. Another member asked for clarification of what department representatives should tell members of their department. Tardi responded that the representatives should provide as much information as possible so that each department can express their priorities. Tardi requested that each Department Representative report back to Union leadership regarding the contract issues for which they are willing to fight. Tardi noted that if CWA negotiates and ratifies a health plan, that will be the health plan offered by the State. We (AFT) will then have the option of participating in the state-offered health plan, but technically not in negotiating the plan. She further noted that right now, AFT can apply pressure. Membership support is the key. A member stated that information from the departments should be sent to the Union leadership as soon as possible since the next negotiation meeting will be held 3/8/07.

Tardi noted that there is more bad news concerning the State's economic proposal:

7/1/07 -- 0% increase (step 12 will get a \$750 bonus)

7/1/08 -- 0% increase (step 12 will get a \$750 bonus)

7/1/09 -- 1.25% increase

7/1/10 – 1.5%

A member questioned how many faculty members are at step 12. Tardi responded that the exact figure is not known, but it is small.

Tardi stressed the importance of using AFT email addresses and not sending confidential information via the William Paterson email system. Members are asked to email Union leaders at the aft-local-1796.org address. The email address for each member of the Local 1796 Executive Board is their last name, first initial@ aft-local-1796.org (tardis@aft-local-1796.org). She told the Department Representatives they should request to be included as a standard item on the agenda of every department meeting.

Tardi reminded the Membership that no one is permitted to negotiate on behalf of the

Union. She said there have been instances where the Provost, in his visits to departments, has addressed items which are considered union-negotiable with departments. Tardi reminded the Membership that no one is permitted to negotiate on behalf of the Union. She said that is a dangerous practice and neither the Provost or individual Union members have a right to do that. She noted that Union leaders are elected by the members to serve as the negotiating body.

Tardi discussed the promotion process. She said the Union has an observer for the promotion committee to ensure that the procedures outlined in the policy are followed. She said several people who were recently denied a promotion complained to the President and the Provost. Tardi strongly cautioned against this, stating that this could potentially lead to the administration arguing for the need to modify the promotion process and having the administration take control of the process.

A member stated that the President should make more promotions available. The member asked what can be done to help harness anger within the faculty over the lack of promotions, and over the State attempting to decrease health and pension benefits. Tardi stated that it comes down to what members consider to be strike issues. She said that although striking is not the first option, our Local should be prepared to take a strike vote. She asked if anyone is willing to serve as a strike captain, and M. Mwaura, A. Montare, P. Jackson, M Turkish, and C. Goldstein volunteered. A member stated that it is possible that faculty members are going to the Provost because there is a sense that the Union is not helping them. Tardi noted, 1) that the Union observer on the committee is trained to know policy and ensure that the members serving on these committee abide by policy, 2) each year, Union Leadership provides data and rationale regarding the need to increase the number of promotional opportunities, and 3) the administration commended Union leadership on its data and positively responded by adjusting the promotional opportunities upward. Tardi said if members feel there is something the Union Leadership is not doing, to please tell us and we'll do it. (No suggestions or recommendations were made by the members.) She said if individual members continue to complain to the administration, we all risk having the process taken away entirely. Tardi said other universities do not have the option of having this process in the hands of faculty committees, and once control is given up, the faculty will never get it back.

b. Council Executive Board Nominations

M. Turkish, Chairperson of the Nominations Committee, announced the following nominations for the Executive Board for the 2007-2008 year:

Susanna Tardi, President; Linda Gazzillo Diaz, Vice President for Negotiations; Chriss Williams, Vice President for Grievances; Ed Matthews and Shari Selke, Professional Staff Co-Representatives; Jan Pinkston, Recording Secretary; Robert Wolk, Library Officer; Frank Pavese, Adjunct Officer; and Muroki Mwaura, Treasurer.

A. Montare moved to accept the nominations, A. Scala seconded. The motion was approved unanimously.

Tardi noted that this is an open process and any member can run for a position on the

Executive Board. Tardi said she is also running for Executive Vice-President of the State Council. The person who is currently in the position has limited experience and if something were to happen to the President, no experienced individual would be in charge of negotiations. Tardi explained that according to the State Council constitution, the Executive Vice-President is the person who would replace the Council President and be in charge of negotiating the contract.

c. Legislative Breakfast

C. Williams stated that our Local is hosting a Legislative Breakfast on Wednesday, March 21 from 8:00 – 10:00 a.m. in Hobart Manor. This is an opportunity to meet with our legislators to discuss the budget and other issues that concern William Paterson. Williams noted that a good turn-out is necessary not only to demonstrate that we are serious about the budget and other issues, but to put forth a concerted effort to let legislators know why higher education is important. E. Goldstein and R. Martinez are helping to facilitate this event. Members are asked to invite members of their departments and students. RSVPs are requested.

6. Negotiations Report

a. Professional Staff Evaluation Forms

Gazzillo Diaz reported that a new form has been approved for Professional Staff on multi-year contracts. Tardi noted that the form will protect Professional Staff members because it will help identify problems early, and give the Professional Staff member an opportunity to work on a development plan if necessary.

b. Alternate Assignment Update

Tardi noted that progress regarding the ART section of the Alternate Assignment Proposal has been made. The Provost is willing to agree to have the Deans involved in the ART application at the beginning of the process only. Tardi referred to the document in the meeting packet regarding the percent of the overall operating budget that is used to fund ART (the document indicates that .31% of the total operating budget is being put forward for Alternate Assignment). Tardi said the Provost indicated that in order to meet the needs of the revised proposal, he would minimally double that figure to .62%. The Union and the administration will negotiate the criteria used to determine the scope of projects. There will be a two year period to do research, and a one year trial period for the program. A member asked for clarification of the Dean's involvement. Tardi said the candidate's ART proposal will be presented to the Chairperson for signature only first, and then to the Dean for review. The candidate will have the right to review and comment on the Dean's response. The application will then be forwarded to the University Committee. A member stated that since the administration is committing to award everyone who applies and meets the criteria, this could be a problem if many more people begin applying. Tardi stated that an individual may apply for a maximum of 12 credits (up to 3 credits each semester for a two year period). Accountability will be accomplished in the year-end report. Tardi note that if there were problems with the ART budget, the committee and the administration would look at the previous ART accomplishments of each candidate. According to the administration, last year no one

was turned down for ART because of budgetary reasons; it was because proposals did not meet the criteria. A member asked if a person can find out why their proposal was turned down. Tardi indicated that candidates have a right to contact the Associate Vice President and Dean of Graduate Studies and Research to ask for clarification. A member asked when the program will be implemented. Tardi responded that it will be implemented in 2008. Tardi noted that a system needs to be established for determining what kinds of projects warrant 3, 6, 9, or 12 credits, and the negotiation team will work with the Provost to determine the scope of the projects. Tardi said the next step will be to deal with the service component of the Alternate Assignment Program.

c. Promotions and Range Adjustment Policies

Gazzillo Diaz stated that members have suggested changes in the make-up of the Promotion and Range Adjustment Committees. Currently members are permitted to vote for individuals who are not at their rank, but above their rank. Tardi requested that Gazzillo Diaz indicate who was proposing the changes, noting that these changes are not suggested by the Executive Board, but were requested by two members. Gazzillo Diaz stated that the revisions were recommended by Jean Levitan and Vince Parrillo, both members who served on the 2006-2007 promotion committee. The issue arose because some promotion committee members expressed concern that the current structure could present a conflict of interest.

Membership comments

A member questioned whether this would involve revisions to the Professional Staff process as well. Tardi stated that if revisions were made to one process, it would be recommended that revisions be made to the Professional Staff process. A member stated that it is beneficial for a colleague to observe the process and to know how it works so that he or she will be prepared when applying. This member further noted that individuals who are perceived as “juniors” should be commended rather than penalized for wanting to serve on these committees. Gazzillo Diaz responded that some feel it gives them an advantage over others at their rank. A member commented that it is always a mystery regarding who is awarded and who served on the committee. Tardi said it is public information, and it is provided in *The Inclusive*. The member stated that not everyone reads *The Inclusive*. Tardi replied that the Union Leadership would be more than happy to publicize the information in an email message. A member commented that there is an academic tradition that a person does not serve on a committee for a position for which the person does not hold (i.e. full professors vote for those eligible to become full professors.) C. Williams stated that the problem is that there are a number of faculty members who have served and put in their time, but the administration offers so few promotions that they never receive a promotion. He said it is not fair to penalize those people by not letting them serve on a committee simply because there are insufficient roles. A member commented that our own members vote for committee members, so if you don't think someone should serve, then don't vote for them. Tardi suggested that we list the rank when people are nominated. A member stated that it is not a good idea to adopt a proposal that discriminates against the members of our own Union. Tardi suggested that there is no urgency to this issue and that it be taken back to the department and further discussed at a subsequent Union meeting.

7. Adjournment

A motion to adjourn made by A. Montare, and seconded by J. Najarian. Approved unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 1:49 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Jan Pinkston,
Recording Secretary