

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

Date: November 20, 2007
Location: UC 171
Time: 12:30 pm – 1:45 pm

Present: S. Tardi, L. Gazzillo Diaz, J. Pinkston, F. Pavese, R. Wolk. I. DiMaio, J. Wilkerson, G. Pope, K. Martus, G. Guerrieri, S. Wollock, R. Soto, M. Innis-Jimenez, E. Martinez, D. Fengya, A. Montare, K. McNeal, K. Chen, A. Holpp Scala, E. Goldstein, K.H. Kim, A. Cheo, L. Rivela, D. Van Boerum, S. Rienstra

Items distributed to the Council and General Membership:

- 1) October 16, 2007 General and Executive/Local Council Meeting Minutes
- 2) Agreement between The William Paterson University of New Jersey and AFT Local 1796 Pertaining to Guidelines for the Observation and Evaluation of Adjunct Instructors

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 12:37 p.m.

2. Adoption of the Agenda

A motion to adopt the agenda with one modification (to begin with an announcement) was made by K. Martus, seconded by G. Pope. Approved unanimously.

3. Approval of Minutes of the October 16, General Membership and Executive/Local Council Meeting. A motion to approve the minutes was made by A. Montare, seconded S. Wollock. The minutes were approved with one modification by Pavese regarding the Adjuncts Faculty agreement.

4. Announcement

Tardi said that due to the sensitive nature of the October 16, 2007 meeting minutes, an executive summary of the minutes was distributed to the Membership. She noted that Members seeking more information should contact their Department Representative or stop by the Union Office in Hunziker Hall, room 100.

5. President's report

a. Safety Issues

Tardi said she is concerned about safety issues on campus. She has requested a copy of the engineer's report regarding the structural safety of Shea Auditorium in a collegial way four times and has never received a copy of the report. She will submit an official request in writing. Tardi said she is concerned that we are not addressing safety issues on this campus as a unified body.

A member asked if the safety issues were really resolved and if this is a Senate issue or a Union issue. The member asked if the Union can pass a resolution directed at the Faculty Senate. Tardi responded that this makes it appear that it is the President of the Union going against the Chair of the Senate. Tardi suggested that members go back to their departments and find out how the department senate representative feels. Tardi noted her disappointment that the senate representatives did not question the engineer's report at the Senate meeting when campus safety issues were discussed.

She described an incident that occurred on campus in which a male student allegedly touched a female professor inappropriately, and sent her two sexually suggestive email messages. The student was initially removed from the female's class and put in a male's class. Tardi said this was not an adequate solution. Tardi and Gazzillo Diaz met with Speert, Weil, Sherman, Watts, and Horvath to express displeasure over the handling of this incident. Tardi said Glen Sherman's department hosted a "webinar" on safety issues and that 24 faculty out of 370 participated. She does not consider that to be a success. Tardi noted that the safety issue constantly needs to be brought to the attention of the faculty.

A member asked who decided on the punishment for the student. Tardi said Watts, Sherman and Martone decided after the family was called and the student signed a waiver. Tardi said the main issue here is the safety of our Members, not empathy toward the student's family. Gazzillo Diaz added that the student is no longer on campus because he did not pay a bill, not because of disciplinary action.

Tardi said that if something happens in class, the faculty member must file charges or the University cannot do anything about it. She said in this case the professor was upset and embarrassed, and filed a police report but refused to sign a formal complaint.

A member asked if this is the first time in William Paterson's history that an incident like this has occurred. Tardi said that incidents like this often go unreported. Another member stated that it was not published in the school newspapers. Tardi said her main concern is that the problem did occur, the length of time it took to resolve the problem, and the manner in which the whole thing was handled. She noted that when incidents occur, there are two point people to contact: Glen Sherman of the Counseling Center (for incidents involving students), and John Polding of Human Resources (for incidents involving employees).

Tardi described another recent incident involving a threat from a student that was written on a Blackboard discussion board. Tardi stated that it should be made clear to students what kind of behavior is appropriate on this campus. She reiterated that faculty and professional staff should contact Glen Sherman when they encounter problems with students because the staff members in his department are trained to deal with those issues. Faculty and staff are not trained counselors and are not protected legally like counselors are.

A member stated that faculty may be hesitant to do anything because they fear future

harassment by the student. Tardi said all incidents must be reported. Another member stated that he has been telling the faculty members in his department for years to never close the door when they are in the office with a student, male or female. A member stated that these are alleged incidents and are not incidents until they are reported. Tardi said reporting and publicizing these incidents increase faculty and student awareness of what is and what is not acceptable.

Gazzillo Diaz said it is also important to report incidents because students may have a pattern of problem behavior in other classes that will not be identified unless it is reported. Tardi said the Administration discussed forming a task force that will identify problem students and determine if they should be followed. Tardi said she feels the Administration should ask for input from faculty and staff who work with the students first-hand prior to implementing a program. She noted that William Paterson needs to be more than a “process” institution.

A member asked if records are kept of these incidents. Tardi said the police keep records and she hopes the Administration keeps records. A member asked about the point of filing a report. Tardi responded that according to the Administration, criminal charges cannot be filed unless a formal complaint is signed. Students have a right to know they are being investigated while faculty and professional staff can be investigated without being notified.

Tardi said she is confident that future situations will not be mishandled because Speert was upset that no one told him about the matter. Tardi asked members to notify her of any incidents, stating that the information will be kept confidential.

A member stated that this is not the first time something like this has occurred, and it won't be the last time. He said that a few years ago two faculty members from Women's Studies set up a program to establish what was and was not allowed, and what would end up in a hearing. Another member stated that the University did away with the Harassment Policy so matters can be handled through the hierarchy. A member stated that faculty and staff members are responsible to the Administration who can do whatever they want but the faculty members do not hold the Administration responsible. The member went on to state that the Administration will never be held accountable until a program is put in place to evaluate them and make the information public. He said no one can stop a Union from doing that. Tardi noted that the State Council is working on legislative action regarding the evaluation of University Administration, and she serves on the Senate committee that is revising the evaluation forms for the Administration. She said she wants to ensure the forms are methodologically sound. Tardi stated that we are moving in the right direction, but noted that the members of the Board of Trustees are not required to take the Senate evaluations into consideration. Tardi further stated that the Faculty Senate, which is the seat of faculty power on academic issues, has become marginalized over the years. Tardi said an example of this is that an academic plan is coming out in December and it has not been reviewed by the Faculty Senate.

A member stated that there should be a memo sent to the Board of Trustees now. Another

member questioned the resolution last year to create an Administrative report card. Tardi stated that each Local is going to be doing that as part of the State Council, and every State institution will be doing something in terms of evaluating administrators. Tardi said she wants to work toward cleaning up the Senate evaluation form so it can be implemented in the spring.

Tardi urged members to vote in the upcoming Senate elections, and recognized those present at the meeting who are running for various positions: Goldstein, Van Boerum, Montare, Martus, and Kim. She urged people to vote and support those who will serve on the committee with fairness. Tardi also urged everyone who participates in the committees to protect the process, reminding the members that we have control over the processes.

b. Adjunct Faculty Evaluations Agreement

Tardi stated that faculty members are being asked to take on more and more responsibility. The fact that we participated in the evaluation process for 15-20 years was held against us. Tardi said there are people involved with assessment or advisement initiatives that should be given some kind of release time. The coordinator is given release time but others who are involved are getting nothing. A member asked what is meant by assessment coordinator. Tardi replied that in her college, the person organizing the assessment for each department is getting release time. She said an inequity in release time for assessment coordinators is something the union can address. She urged members to inform Union Leadership of such inequities. A member stated that the Dean of the College of Humanities and Social Sciences said assessment coordinators can get released time if they have a report to do for Middle States, which is a lot of work. Tardi said that members of the assessment committee are doing an enormous amount of work and should therefore be given some form of compensation, either release time or overload. Initiatives such as assessment or advisement should be rewarded with release time. Tardi noted that the upcoming GE revision is a perfect time to model the College of New Jersey teaching load. A member stated that she serves as Co-Chair of the NJ Consortium of Women's Studies, and her impression of the 4 credit course is that adequate work is not being done in the courses. She encouraged the members to think about the 4 credit courses. Tardi said the College of New Jersey simply changed the 3 credits to 4 credits per course with the option of expanding the course. Tardi said she is concerned about the politics of the GE revision, and noted that if we are going to engage in this, we should do it holistically (academic content and quality and course credit value). A member asked how that would impact the employment of the adjuncts. Pavese expressed concern that it would negatively impact Adjunct Faculty by requiring fewer classes. On behalf of the Adjunct Faculty, Pavese thanked Tardi for fighting so hard for the agreement concerning the evaluation of Adjunct Faculty (applause from Membership).

A member asked if 4 credit courses have more content and/or longer hours. Tardi said currently our students must have 128 credits to graduate. Most universities have decreased their General Education requirements and only require a total of 120 hours for graduation. Tardi said that is one of the reasons why our Administration is concerned. She said currently, with tuition and fees, William Paterson is more expensive than

Montclair. Tardi noted that we were previously able to market ourselves as being a “good bang for the buck,” but that’s no longer the case. A member stated that he saw a report indicating there is a substantive difference in the 3 and 4 credit courses. Tardi said this Leadership has tried to be very fair by considering the factors that simultaneously benefit the student body, alleviate the faculty and staff burden, and maintain respect for Adjunct Faculty. She feels that now that ART is resolved, we have a chance to move forward on an Alternate Assignment program that allows us to seriously engage in initiatives such as assessment and advisement. She noted that our University selected the area of assessment for Middle States evaluation. She noted that assessment should be ongoing, not something thrown together at the last minute. Tardi noted that we are engaging in process to look good for Middle States, rather than focusing on results leading to improvement.

A member stated that statistics show that 26% of the students are leaving William Paterson and he wants to know why. He said he heard students complain that no advisers are available. Tardi said that in defense of our faculty members, students are also responsible, and there must be student empowerment as well. A member questioned if the ART process is finalized. Tardi clarified that the agreement is finalized, but it is a pilot program for two years. A member said as far as science courses are concerned, it would be better to get 5 credits one semester and 1 during another semester. Tardi said she tried, but the Administration refused. She said that hopefully in the pilot program, people will identify problems and when the process is reviewed, this is something that can be changed.

A member stated that there are problems with Banner. She said every single day she has different advisees and different alternate pin numbers, and her students are incredibly distressed. Tardi requested that members notify the Provost about these issues and copy her. Gazzillo Diaz said transfer students were not assigned to advisors.

6. Professional Staff Update

Tardi said that Professional Staff are required to work the day after Thanksgiving or take a vacation day or use comp time. Those who choose to work will be required to participate in the CARES program and safety programs in the library.

Tardi said the professional staff election is being extended.

A member asked why in the Sabbatical Leave election there is only one at-large member and the other committees have two at-large members. Tardi responded that the Faculty Senate is in charge of the election process while the policy and procedures are the Union’s responsibility.

7. Action Items

a. Tardi said she and Gazzillo Diaz have covered for Chriss Williams who has been on medical leave this semester. They have taken care of several grievance issues and conducted various workshops. Tardi said the members of the Executive Board work as a team and while she and Gazzillo Diaz do not expect to be paid for it, they would like for Williams to receive normal pay. This was agreed upon by consensus of the Membership.

Tardi further stated that Muroki Mwaura has taken a medical leave of absence from the Treasurer's position for the remainder of the semester. Ed Matthews has agreed to fill in for him. Mwaura will be paid up until the last day that he worked and Matthews will be paid for the remaining time. This was also agreed upon by consensus.

A. Holpp Scala made a motion, seconded by F. Pavese to send Mwaura a get well gift. The motion was approved unanimously.

AFT Leadership noted an overpayment to the AFT National. Thanks to an audit conducted over the summer by Mwaura and Matthews, our Local received a \$25,000 credit for overpayment of membership dues for the past two years.

8. Adjournment

A motion to adjourn was made by S. Wollock, seconded by A. Montare. Approved unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 1:50 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Jan Pinkston,
Recording Secretary
[Edited:]