

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

Date: January 22, 2008
Location: UC 171
Time: 12:30 pm – 1:45 pm

Present: S. Tardi, C. Williams, L. Gazzillo Diaz, J. Pinkston, E. Matthews, S. Selke, I. DiMaio, R. Wolk, G. Pope, C. Goldstein, M. Peek, K. Martus, B. Kollis, J. Carter, J. Najarian, S. Wollock, M. Turkish, P. Swanson, R. Soto, M. Innis-Jimenez, E. Martinez, D. Fengya, K. Louie, A. Montare, G. Furst, A. Hopp Scala, M. Giorgio, C. Simon, L. Cheo

Items distributed to the Council and General Membership:

- 1) December 20, 2007 General and Executive/Local Council Meeting Minutes
- 2) Letter of Agreement XV – Transition to Retirement Program
- 3) Financial Report

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 12:38 pm. Tardi welcomed back Chriss Williams who expressed his appreciation to everyone for all their thoughts and prayers during his recent illness (applause from Membership).

2. Adoption of the Agenda

A motion to approve the agenda was made by K. Martus and seconded by A. Scala. Approved unanimously.

3. Approval of Minutes of the December 20, General Membership and Executive/Local Council Meeting. A motion to accept the minutes was made by A. Montare and seconded by K. Louie. Approved unanimously.

4. Financial Report (V. Baldassano)

Investment counselor Vince Baldassano gave an update on our Local's investments and thanked the group for giving him the responsibility of handling the investments. Tardi noted that Baldassano has managed the funds very wisely over the years, and thanked him for his service.

5. Action Item -- Constitution Revision Ratification Vote

Tardi noted that Gazzillo Diaz presented the Constitution to the Membership (article by article) during the December meeting, and updates were made. She asked the Membership if there were comments or questions regarding the proposed Constitution. Hearing none, the Constitution was ratified unanimously with no abstentions. Tardi noted that Williams will now develop the Union's first set of bylaws.

6. **President's Report**

a. Membership Recruitment

Tardi announced that an effort is being made to increase the Membership, particularly among Adjunct Faculty Members. The co-chairs of the Membership Committee (Goldstein and Pavese), will send letters to individuals who are eligible to become Union members. Tardi said lists of prospective members will also be distributed to all Department Representatives, and she urged the representatives to discuss the list with department chairs or secretaries, check for accuracy, and then try to make contact with eligible faculty members as soon as possible. The Union Leadership will send a letter highlighting the importance of being a full member of the Union, rather than an agency fee payer. She noted that 85% of dues are automatically paid, but individuals must pay an additional 15% of the dues in order to be full card-carrying members and have voting privileges. A member requested that the Union Leadership make handouts available that address the virtues of Union membership. Tardi said the information will be provided.

A member questioned the current pay rate for Adjunct Faculty Members. Gazzillo Diaz checked that contract and responded that it is \$1100 per credit if they have taught at William Paterson for 15 semesters or less, and \$1150 per credit if they have taught at William Paterson for 16 semesters or more. Tardi stressed that members need to check their pay stubs because errors have been made recently, and anyone finding errors should contact the Union Leadership and the Payroll Department immediately. A member asked if an Adjunct Faculty Member who is a full payer at one NJ state institution must pay to be a full member at this institution. Tardi stated that they must pay full dues here in order to have voting privileges on our Local issues. A member stated that she does not understand the pay stub and asked if it would be possible for the Union to offer a workshop that explains it. Tardi said that the Union Leadership will ask a representative from the payroll office to do a workshop.

Tardi noted that the Council is planning to offer a workshop on the reclassification process for Professional Staff, as well as a workshop on the new health plans. Tardi noted that the workshop on health plans is a priority since members need the information prior to the enrollment period. A member commented that while people may have the idea that the staff members in the payroll department are difficult to deal with, the group that is there now is no problem at all. The member said that in prior years, payroll tried to keep things secret, but that is not the case now. Tardi stated that she did not intend to give the misconception that individuals working in that office are not cooperative.

b. Professional Staff Evaluations

Tardi asked Matthews and Selke to discuss issues and concerns regarding the Professional Staff evaluation process. Matthews stated that most of the evaluators seem to ignore the process until it's too late and it confuses the issues of the individuals who are being evaluated. Matthews said the Union wants Professional Staff members to be evaluated annually in order to develop an accurate history that will become a part of an individual's official personnel file. Matthew said that other issues with the process include supervisors ignoring the process, using the wrong process, and picking and

choosing what system they will use depending on whether or not they like the person who is being evaluated. Selke stated that Professional Staff members who receive a negative evaluation or have other problems with the evaluation process should notify the Union Leadership immediately for advice on how to respond. Tardi agreed, stating that the process is clearly delineated. The supervisor has a discussion with the candidate, and then writes a formal report and evaluation which the candidate has the right to respond to in writing. She said that beginning last year the form was put online, and it was designed to go up the chain of command after the candidate responded. Tardi described a grievance situation in which the supervisor violated the University policy by providing multiple evaluations of the employee in which the next level supervisor provided input. Tardi noted that according to policy, the next level supervisor is supposed to provide a “de novo” evaluation subsequent to the employees’ response to the supervisor’s evaluation. Tardi reminded the Membership that the Union’s primary interest is protecting each member and making sure all processes are equitable. She urged the members to always refer to their handbooks for official policies and timelines.

c. Professional Staff “NL” Clarification

Tardi stated that “NL” for the Professional Staff stands for “not listed.” It is a civil service classification used when professional employees on official assignment can be asked to go beyond the 35 hour work week without official compensation. Tardi said that administrators have come to erroneously believe that “NL” stands for “no limit” to the work week, and this is becoming more and more of a problem as downsizing occurs and the financial crisis continues. Tardi gave an example of how the Professional Staff members in one department were told to take over the responsibility of answering the telephone after the clerical staff was cut back. Taking over this new responsibility prevented them from getting their own work done, and the supervisor told them they must stay beyond their regular hours to complete their own work. Tardi said that as the policy stands right now, it is up to the individual supervisor to determine whether or not to be lenient when Professional Staff ask for comp time, and she noted that is the reason why the Union Leadership is working on an agreement to clarify this issue so it is equitable for all Professional Staff. She urged members who feel they are being abused regarding “NL” to notify the Union immediately.

d. On-line Teaching Payment

Tardi announced that the administration has finally paid the \$78,000 owed to individual members as per the online teaching agreement. She noted that for two years, the administration has failed to pay the one-time only additional credit that faculty members are to receive the very first time they teach an online class. Tardi said she realizes that the amount of dedication put into designing an online course is worth more than one credit one time only, however that was the amount stated in the contract. Adjunct Faculty members have not been included in the group who should have been paid and Tardi said she is still fighting for that because she believes that out of decency, our University should apply the same payment to all faculty (full-time faculty, Adjunct Faculty, and part-time faculty) as it relates to the development and teaching of online courses.

A member asked if Adjunct Faculty members are entitled to the three credits for

developing an online course. Tardi responded that it is her understanding that all faculty members should be given the credits regardless of the person's classification. Another member asked if the payment is the same amount for the summer. Tardi said the payment is based on the rate of pay specified in the contract. A member questioned when the one-time payment will be received. Tardi said it should have been included in the January 11th check. A member commented that this is another good reason to proceed with a workshop on how to read paychecks.

e. Update on Transition to Retirement

Tardi, Gazzillo Diaz, and Williams met recently with Provost Weil and Steve Hahn regarding the Transition to Retirement agreement. Tardi reported that only a few things were clarified. The so-called retirement sabbaticals are not included with the rest of the pool of faculty sabbatical leaves. Tardi said the Union will try to facilitate the clarification of the Transition to Retirement sabbatical and the types of projects that would suffice. She hopes the Provost will agree to improve upon what is in the contract, as it only provides the minimum standards. Tardi noted that some of our sister Locals have negotiated better agreements. Tardi said that a significant number of faculty members are ready to retire, but they are waiting to see what will be offered. She commented that the Provost seems "interested," but this issue has not yet been discussed with the President. Tardi said that some of the Librarians were upset that the Transition to Retirement agreement did not include them, and she noted that the agreement does not include the Professional Staff either. Tardi said that she thinks it should be applied to all groups, but that the Union Leadership is currently working on the agreement for the teaching faculty and will then try to expand the program to be accessible to the Librarians the Professional Staff. Tardi said the Union Leadership welcomes ideas that would make the agreement more attractive yet reasonable. She stated that someone already suggested getting paid for accumulated sick days and noted that the use of sick days is governed by the State and its position is that faculty can only use sick days for actual illness. A member asked for examples of what other institutions have negotiated in terms of this issue. Tardi responded that at this time, she cannot provide concrete examples. Gazzillo Diaz has been asked to assemble and review the retirement agreements at other institutions.

Tardi said she is concerned about next year's budget situation. She said the word "furlough" has been seen on white boards as a possible solution to the budget crisis, and she fears the administration will recommend implementing a furlough. She is also concerned that they will wait until the last minute before announcing it. Tardi stated that's why she has repeatedly requested that the President conduct a top-down evaluation of all administrators. She stressed that she doesn't want him to simply evaluate what are non-essential job titles, but rather, she wants him to look at duplication of roles and quality job performance. Tardi noted that she does not want to create hysteria, and she hopes it won't be as bad as anticipated. She stressed that a furlough would impact every employee on campus (including faculty), and she noted that if and when she asks for support, that Union members will attend a Board of Trustees meeting and state that no one can afford a week without pay.

A member asked what paycheck would be impacted by the furlough. Tardi said it could be the January break or spring break of 2009. She said the last time they discussed this it was going to be during the spring break, and she considered that to be a quick and dirty solution. Tardi stated that she doesn't want them to take money, period, and noted that while some people may have the ability to say they don't live paycheck to paycheck, many of our members are forced to live paycheck to paycheck. A member asked how much notice will be given. Tardi said she doesn't know and that she doesn't want that to be a solution to the budget issue.

f. U.S. Presidential Candidate Endorsement Discussion

Tardi said the AFT National has endorsed Hillary Clinton and she suspects the Council will also endorse Clinton. A member questioned what good this will do since the Council vote will not take place until after the NJ primary election. Another member asked if our Local can vote to support a party rather than a particular candidate. Tardi said she will call the Council and bring forth the various concerns of our Local, however, if the Council decides that they're going to take this vote and give money to a candidate, she does not want our members to feel that the delegates made decisions without consulting the Membership. She asked the Department Representatives to have a discussion within their department, take a secret ballot vote, and then email the department's position to the AFT Office.

A member said he would like to remind everyone that historically, the Union has sought favors for votes, and secondly, that the Union backed the current governor and we are now being charged 1.5% for our health benefits and have had the Friday after Thanksgiving taken away. The member said this demonstrates why we need to be more careful about endorsing people and sending money to them. Tardi said she agreed with the statement, but AFT National will be putting pressure on the Council to support Clinton. Tardi's concern is that she and the other State Delegates from our Local do not want to merely represent their own political view points; they want to represent the Membership and that's why the vote from the departments is being requested. A member stated that this is an important issue and there should be a vote of the Union representatives if we're going to make an endorsement. Tardi said that if we vote at this meeting, individuals in the department will be upset. She believes that we need everyone's input on how to vote. A member agreed, stating that he is not comfortable taking a stand without knowing how his department feels, especially on politically charged issues such as this. Tardi said she will call the Council, express concerns, get clarification, and send an email to the Department Representatives, telling them whether or not the vote is necessary. Tardi noted that sooner or later the Council will endorse someone and give money to them, and it will most likely be Clinton. Regardless of that, she would put forth a vote that that represents the views of our Local.

7. Adjournment

A motion to adjourn was made by K. Martus and seconded by A. Montare. The motion was approved unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 1:46p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jan Pinkston,
Recording Secretary
[Edited:]