

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

Date: February 19, 2008
Location: UC 171
Time: 12:30 pm – 1:45 pm

Present: S. Tardi, C. Williams, J. Pinkston, M. Mwaura, Ed Matthews, S. Selke, F. Pavese, R. Wolk, J. Wilkerson, G. Pope, G. Guerrieri, J. Carter, J. Najarian, R. Soto, J. Peterman, J. Felson, D. Catarina, A. Scala, J. Matthew, M. Giorgio, R. McCullum, E. Goldstein, K.H. Kim, E. Antoniou, M. Rosar, A. Cheo

Items distributed to the Council and General Membership:

- 1) Minutes from the January 22, 2008 General and Executive Board Meeting
- 2) 2008-2010 Executive Board Nominees
- 3) Document entitled “What Your Union Has Recently Done for You”

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 12:41 pm.

2. Adoption of the Agenda

A motion to approve the agenda was made by S. Selke and seconded by G. Pope.

Modifying agenda items:

Tardi requested a modification in the agenda, adding “D. Safety Conditions” under the President’s report. The change was approved unanimously.

3. Approval of Minutes of the January 22, 2009 General Membership and Executive/Local Council Meeting Minutes

A motion to approve the minutes was made by E. Matthews and seconded by A. Scala. Approved unanimously.

4. President’s report

a. State Budget Concerns

Tardi said she discussed concerns about the budget situation with President Speert. He said all State universities will take a considerable hit because higher education falls under discretionary funds. Tardi said the President made a commitment to prioritizing and maintaining jobs on campus, and indicated that he will not lay off administrators like he did last year. Tardi said the Governor is set to announce the budget on 2/26/08 and President Speert has agreed to hold a meeting with the Executive Board to discuss the ramifications of budget cuts. Tardi said the State AFT Council is pressuring the Membership to support the Governor’s toll plan.

Tardi questioned what the governor will give us if we support the plan, and if he will agree not to layoff any members of our bargaining unit if it passes. Tardi said she anticipates a hiring freeze and that the Union Leadership's first priority is to maintain the individuals already on board.

b. Community College Agreement Implications

Tardi discussed the new Community College agreement that states that students who graduate from community colleges and enter four year colleges and/or universities will not be required to take any additional General Education courses. Tardi said we have not fully explored what this agreement means, but initially it seems that we will need less faculty, specifically less Adjunct Faculty. Tardi said that the Senate should discuss this matter and the implications for our University.

A member stated that this also has implications for the GE revisions that are currently underway, and noted that the University has long-serving adjuncts whose jobs will be threatened. Another member stated that the administration should concentrate their recruiting efforts on international students in order to bring in additional revenue. Tardi said the Admissions Director indicated that her department does not recruit international students.

Tardi stated that she does not expect the branding campaign to change anything because it identified information already known to members of the University community. William Paterson used to be known as providing a quality education at a reasonable cost, but we have now become students' second or third choice, with Montclair being selected as the number one choice. Tardi noted that clearly the focus is on numbers rather than quality, and that is evident since the quality of the students seems to be declining. Tardi stated that she is fearful of what this means for our institution, especially since other State institutions seem to be growing or maintaining enrollment while we are declining.

A member stated that he frequently raises this issue in the Senate and hopes the Union and Senate can work together on this serious matter. Tardi responded that the Union's role is very limited and that this University needs a strong Senate. Tardi noted that she was against enlarging committees within the Senate because it is difficult to get people to participate. She said an additional problem is that the reasons people are motivated to join the Senate in the first place is to participate in a service opportunity that will benefit them later when they apply for retention, tenure, and/or promotions. Tardi noted that the people in these positions are often junior faculty members who are the most vulnerable. Tardi said that in order to be effective, the Senate needs strong individuals who cannot be intimidated and that is the reason why departments should be careful when they vote to put people in these roles.

c. Membership Update

Tardi thanked Frank Pavese, Ellie Goldstein, and AFT State Council representative Mark Heter for their work on increasing the Membership numbers. She also thanked the Department Representatives for their help and noted that the Union will send talking points to the representatives to distribute along with the membership cards. She reminded everyone that the number of members we have is an indicator of our strength.

d. Safety Concerns

Tardi discussed the recent snow storm and questioned why the University remained open. She noted that several people fell and this issue falls under Conditions of Employment. Tardi said she contacted the President and expressed her concerns. A faculty member expressed her concerns regarding the unsafe conditions of the University and was told by Lou Poandl that there is “plan” in place. Tardi said she told the President that if the University is not safe then it should be closed. She encouraged the Membership to speak up and voice their concerns because the more the Membership responds the more effective the Union can be in their work. A member stated that she notified facilities that many of the sidewalks were still dangerous on the morning following the storm. Tardi encouraged the Membership to send emails to the administration and copy her. A member said that someone in his department fell and asked if that person should contact the Union. Tardi said yes. Another member stated that in the past his colleagues have been injured and they did not pursue Workman’s Compensation. He reminded the Membership that they do have an absolute right to make a claim and get compensation. Tardi agreed, stating that if someone is injured, one way to get the administration to recognize that is to ask for compensation. She said the members should not feel bad about filing for Workman’s Compensation when they are injured because it is an employee’s right. She stated that the University should have been closed or at least had a delayed opening to protect the faculty, students, and all employees. She said in the future when weather conditions seem bad, people should call the Provost’s office and express their concerns.

J. Peterman made a motion that the administration provide the Union Membership with a contact name and number for when dangerous conditions exist (for example deteriorating weather) to get a recommendation of whether to remain open or not. Discussion continued on the matter and Tardi said she will explore the options that are available and report back at the next meeting. She said she will insist that there is a mechanism in place for the Membership to express their concerns about dangerous conditions. Selke made a motion to table the previous motion until the next meeting which was seconded by J. Peterman and approved unanimously.

Williams added that in light of what occurred at Northern Illinois University, he would like to encourage faculty and staff to utilize the Connect-Ed emergency contact system. Tardi agreed, stating that the system has been tested and is effective. She reminded the Membership to encourage all members of their department to subscribe to the system.

e. Nominations

Tardi stated that as per the new Constitution, the slate of nominees for the 2008-2010 Executive Board can be announced at today's meeting. The slate includes President, Susanna Tardi; Vice President for Negotiations, Gina Guerrieri; Vice President for Grievances, Chriss Williams; Professional Staff Co-Representatives, Ed Matthews and Shari Selke; Adjunct Faculty Representative, Frank Pavese; Librarian Faculty Representative and Communications Officer, Robert Wolk; Treasurer, Muroki Mwaura; and Secretary, Jan Pinkston. Tardi announced that Linda Gazzillo Diaz has decided to leave the Executive Board due to family obligations, although she will remain active in our Local and will continue to serve as our State Delegate and Union Representative. Tardi stated she would like to personally thank Gazzillo Diaz for the commitment and dedication she has put forth over the years. Gina Guerrieri is being nominated as the new Vice President of Negotiations. Tardi noted that Guerrieri has been an excellent Union member and that she has great ideas, passion, and commitment.

A member suggested that the Union representatives write to Gazzillo Diaz to thank her for her service and welcome Guerrieri. Scala, Goldstein, and Wolk will draft the letters.

Tardi stated that a vote to approve the slate of nominations for the 2008-2010 Executive Board should be taken today and if approved, the actual vote on the nominations will take place at the April meeting. Tardi said that although she feels the present group works very well together, she reminded the Membership that everyone has a right to run for a two year term on the Executive Board. She invited anyone with nominations to come forward.

A vote to accept the nominations was made by J. Peterman and seconded by A. Scala. The motion was approved unanimously.

5. Adjunct Faculty

Pavese stated that there have been recent breakthroughs in the Senate regarding the Adjunct Faculty. Adjunct Faculty members were previously excluded from the administrator's evaluation process and they are now included. In addition, Adjunct Faculty members are also being included in the discussion on the GE revisions. Pavese reminded the Membership that one Adjunct Faculty member can serve as a department representative and he expressed his disappointment that

more Adjunct Faculty members not stepping forward and getting involved. He asked that the Department Representatives contact their Adjunct Faculty members, make them aware of Senate council seats that are open, and encourage them to participate. Pavese also commented on the health insurance plans available to Adjunct Faculty members, noting that they pay more than the COBRA rate. A member stated that the health insurance issues were discussed a departmental meeting and that the State claims that Adjunct Faculty members are a “riskier” group.

Pavese stated that 63% of Adjunct Faculty members are driving the GE program, and expressed his disappointment that input from Adjunct Faculty members was not included in the branding campaign. He said one issue is that Adjunct Faculty members do not have William Paterson email accounts and people do not know how to get in touch with them. Pavese said he thinks this is an issue that should be addressed in the Senate.

Pavese said that on a more positive note, department chairpersons are standing up to the administration and indicating that they are not willing to “bump” good, long-standing Adjunct Faculty members. He said there have been several times when Adjunct Faculty members were depending on teaching a class, only to have it taken away from them at the last minute.

Tardi noted that the Administration has managerial prerogative when scheduling Adjunct Faculty. She said attempts have been made to add agreements to the contract that establish seniority rights, but the Administration continues to view Adjunct Faculty members as contingency labor with limited rights. She added that during contract negotiations, the State negotiators referred to Adjunct Faculty members as “bedpan changers.”

Pavese added that after 16+ semesters, Adjunct Faculty members do receive more compensation, so there have been acknowledgements of the jobs they do. He added that there has also been a change in the frequency of observations and these are “little chips away at the big block.”

A member suggested that one possibility might be to discuss this issue at the Chairs Council and come up with a good faith proposal stating that the chairs and scheduling committee will do their best to schedule in a way that is reasonable and equitable.

Tardi stated that she would be happy to attend a Chairs’ Council meeting to ask that Adjunct Faculty members do not get bumped at the last minute. Tardi noted that we did have a chairperson who took a very strong stand and said no to bumping Adjunct Faculty members at the last minute. This chairperson then worked with colleagues to fill the full-time person’s class. Tardi stated that some chairs have the tendency to believe that the Union is interfering in their business and this is simply not the case.

6. Grievance Report

Williams reported that he has filed two grievances. One issue involves a Professional Staff supervisor who is not following the appropriate evaluation procedure. He said there are other problems with evaluations that stem from the online process that is currently in place, and the Union Leadership is working to resolve these issues.

7. Negotiations Report

Tardi reported that proposals have been submitted to the Administration and there has been no reply. She noted that the Office of Employee Relations (OER) is involved.

Tardi discussed “Weingarten Rights” which gives members the right to Union representation in the event that they are ever called in on an HR matter that involves allegations by a co-worker or supervisor. Tardi noted that the member has every right to reschedule a meeting and have Union representatives present. A member questioned if this applies when a member is called in to testify against someone else. Tardi clarified that this applies anytime a person is called into a meeting where allegations are involved, and she advised the Membership not to speak to anyone about the matter before notifying the Union. She noted that she is not looking to impede any investigations, but that she is simply trying to ensure a fair process for all. Williams added that even if a person is guilty, they have the right to Union representation to ensure that their rights are not being infringed upon.

Tardi stated that she spoke to the President about the Transition to Retirement program and for the first time he seemed interested, although he indicated that he does not think the OER will permit the Union to negotiate a better agreement than the one in the current contract. A member questioned if there is any consideration of the Professional Staff and Librarians in the Transition to Retirement Program. Tardi replied that the Union Leadership believes that it should be offered to all members, but they will first attempt to work it out for all faculty members before requesting that it be extended to all the Professional Staff and Librarians. A member commented that there is already a precedent for better plans at other universities. Tardi noted that the other agreements are not significantly better.

8. Old Business

Tardi reported that the Council did not contact us regarding the support of political candidates. She stated that Montclair has put together a resolution insisting that the National AFT come up with a process for assuring that each Local has a say in the matter and that action is taken before the state primary.

9. New Business

Selke reported that Debra Davis from the State Council will present a Reclassification Workshop for Professional Staff on Tuesday, March 4 at during common hour. An email will go out with more details.

Tardi stated that one of our members, Bruce Gionet, is in need of sick days. A moment of silence was observed in memory of Ana Gomez and Evelyn Gonzalez's husband. Following the moment of silence, a member commented that it would have been nice if the administration had made a campus-wide announcement regarding the loss of members of the campus community. Tardi noted that she will **once again** discuss this issue with the administration.

10. Adjournment

A motion to adjourn was made by S. Selke, J. Matthew. Approved unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 1:50 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Jan Pinkston,
Recording Secretary
[Edited:]