

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

Date: March 27, 2008
Location: Valley Road 1010-1111
Time: 12:30 pm – 1:45 pm

Present: S. Tardi, L. Gazzillo Diaz, D. Catarina, C. Williams, R. Wolk, I. DiMaio, D. Fengya, J. Carter, S. Wollock, A. Scala, M. Giorgio, J. Parras, S. Betts, C. Simon, L. Hamel, J. Wilkinson, A. Montare, K. Louie, G. Guerrieri, C. Goldstein, C. McCollum, R. Cauthen, L. Razzore, L. Farber, G. Pope, V. Vicari, F. Pavese, C. Williams, E. Martinez, K. McNeal, J. Matthew

Items distributed to the Council and General Membership:

- 1) Minutes of the February 19, 2008 General and Executive/Local Council Meeting
- 2) Slate of 2008-2010 Executive Board Nominees
- 3) Document entitled “What Has Your Union Recently Done For You?”

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 12:46 pm.

2. Adoption of the Agenda

A motion to approve the agenda was made by S. Wollock, and seconded by A. Scala. Approved unanimously.

3. Approval of Minutes of the February 19, 2008 General Membership and Executive/Local Council Meeting

A motion to approve the minutes was made by J. Wilkerson and seconded by D. Caterina. Approved unanimously.

4. Treasurer's Report

M. Mwaura presented the projected 2008-2009 budget. Tardi stated that the proposed budget was put together by the Executive Board and then presented to the Budget Committee (Esther Martinez, Rey Martinez, Al Montare, and Ken Schneider). Tardi noted that Jane Hutchinson has resigned from the Budget Committee due to too many other obligations.

During the budget presentation, Mwaura asked the Department Representatives to be sure and cash their checks. He noted that there are outstanding checks from five years ago that are no longer valid and need to be cancelled. Tardi urged the representatives to be cognizant that checks must be cashed within a certain time frame or they are no longer valid.

A. Scala made a motion that the Treasurer check with the bank to determine how long checks are valid, and then if a person does not cash the check within that timeframe it will not be reissued. The motion was seconded by A. Montare.

Discussion: A member stated the individuals who currently have outstanding checks should be notified. Tardi said that members should recognize that this could result in new checks having to be reissued with stop payments on the old check, resulting in additional costs to the Union. This could be costly to the Union. Tardi stated that the representatives have the responsibility of cashing the checks. Another member suggested that the checks be directly deposited into the representatives' bank accounts. Tardi said that will cost the Union money and we try to save money wherever possible. Another member suggested cancelling the checks and charging the person for the \$25.00 cancellation fee.

Following the discussion, the motion to check with the bank and determine how long checks are valid and not reissue them passed unanimously.

A motion to accept the proposed 2008-2009 budget was made by A. Scala and seconded by C. McCollum. The motion was approved unanimously.

5. Executive Board Reorganization/Nominations

Tardi announced that there are modifications to the 2008-2010 slate of officers for the Union Executive Board. As Tardi stated at a previous meeting, Linda Gazzillo Diaz is leaving the Executive Board for family reasons, but plans to remain active in the Union. Tardi noted that she cannot thank Gazzillo Diaz enough for her dedication over the years. Tardi stated that an additional change involves the Treasurer's position. Muroki Mwaura will be going on sabbatical and will also be involved in teaching in Africa. In order to establish continuity, he has also resigned his position, but will continue to represent us at the Council level. Tardi explained that Ed Matthews and Shari Selke have each served halftime as Co-Professional Staff Representatives and that Matthews is willing to take the role of Treasurer, with Selke assuming the role of fulltime Professional Staff Representative. Tardi noted that Matthews is well prepared to take over the Treasurer's position since he has previously served in Mwaura's absence and has assisted him with various projects.

A motion to accept the nominations was made by A. Montare and seconded by M. Giorgio. Approved Unanimously.

Tardi asked for nominations from the floor. Hearing none, she explained that if there would have been nominations from the floor, the individuals would have had ten days to submit at least five endorsements from individuals who have been members of the Union for at least 30 days. The election will be held at the next meeting.

6. President's Report

a. Board of Trustees Retreat

Tardi discussed a recent Board of Trustees (BOT) meeting that she attended. She stated that while it is clear that the Board is trying to make plans for the University, one problem is that they are "planning to plan." Tardi stated that the

meeting was especially problematic since she and Sue Godar, the Chair of the Faculty-Senate Committee, were seated in a corner away from the table and were told they were not allowed participate in the discussion. Tardi said her silence ended when one member of the BOT suggested that faculty take a cut in salary. Tardi told the BOT that she thinks they should consider cutting some of the layers of the administration. She said President Speert reminded the BOT that faculty members cannot take a cut in salary due to the contract. Tardi reminded the Membership that there is nothing to stop them from implementing a furlough which means that everyone, including faculty, staff and the administration would work one week without pay.

b. State Budget Consequences for WPUNJ

Tardi stated that 26 part-time faculty members received letters from the President stating that they will not be rehired. Tardi stated that according to President Speert, the halftime clinical faculty members have been rehired and others will be considered for rehire on a case by case basis. Williams said he has contacted all 26 individuals by email. He said he also spoke with a number of them directly and accompanied them to a meeting with President Speert. Williams stated that he directed them to the webpage that details the process and he will meet with them to discuss strategies and talk about what happened in the past. Williams commented that the President needs to be made aware how valuable these part-time faculty members are to the University. He noted that they are teaching classes that fulltime faculty members cannot teach and that replacing them with Adjunct Faculty members is not an option. Williams further noted that these individuals are running important areas departments, and when they are gone, there is no one who can step in and replace them. Williams said that during the meeting, the part-time faculty members let the President know exactly what they do, talked specifically about the value they provide, and let the President know that letting them go is not the best way to save money at the institution. The President told them that by contract he is obligated to alert them by a certain date, and there is a possibility that once the budget becomes clearer, he may be able to rehire them. Williams said he thinks that eliminating people who are directly touching programs is a terrible solution to the budget crisis.

A member inquired if halftime clinical faculty members are involved. Tardi stated that anyone impacted by this would have received a letter by now. Tardi stated the budget situation can get worse. She said the State is consolidating hospitals and that is a sign that the State universities may take another big hit. Tardi suggested the Union try and come up with a plan to increase revenue, and she encouraged the Membership to put forward their ideas. She said the President is interested in faculty and staff input about additional revenue, as well as where potential cuts could take place.

Comments from members

A member stated that he lived through this at another university where they had furloughs that they promised to pay back and they ended up losing entire

departments. Tardi said that's one reason she is fearful of the way things are going, and she pointed to the branding campaign. She noted that she has been trying to figure out the identity of William Paterson for 15 years and she's still not sure certain about it. Tardi said her fear is that at some point in the future a governor will make the determination that all State universities are not necessary; consolidation should occur. Tardi also pointed to the new agreement with State community colleges that essentially puts them on the same plane as we are. Tardi noted that people tend to think we're indestructible and that positions cannot be eliminated, but the truth is that they can eliminate departments which would endanger all employees. Tardi said this is one concern that we have in common with the administration because when cuts occur, fewer administrators are needed. She told the Membership that last year she went before the BOT and pleaded for them to not take money away which resulted in the implementation of the winter session that now generates a significant amount of revenue for our institution. A member asked if it is legal to have something like a "finder's fee" for students, similar to how "headhunters" for large corporations operate. Tardi stated that part of the problem we have is that there is no thread that ties everything together at William Paterson. A member asked if there is a way to make alliances with local high schools and teach classes for high school seniors and give them credit at William Paterson. Another member stated that more students translates to more revenue and that the University needs to seriously seek to increase enrollment. Tardi said this can be a double-edged sword because they are working to fill seats and are concerned with the body count, but are losing standards. She said the question becomes why is Montclair and Kean growing, and William Paterson is not. A member commented that accepting under prepared students can be a good thing, however, they do have to meet the mark. The member said we need to be aware of our mission as a public institution. A member stated that community colleges do provide education for a lot of students, and we should not see them as an enemy. Another member suggested renting out the rec center. He said prior to the construction on the student center, the University rented the rec center for \$3,000 per day for several different programs each year, and this year there has only been one rental. Tardi stated that this was an excellent suggestion and she would look into this further. Another member commented that the quality of the facilities and a nice atmosphere also attracts students to other universities.

c. School Board Endorsement

In the interest of time, Tardi asked to move the agenda so the Membership could discuss endorsing Marie Hakim as a candidate for the Clifton School Board.

A motion to endorse Marie Hakim for the position on the Clifton School Board was made by D. Fengya and seconded A. Montare. The motion was approved unanimously.

The discussion about increasing revenue continued with C. Williams suggesting that the University should find a way to create an asymmetrical semester, possibly over the summer, where distance learners could work on their own schedule.

Tardi said she thinks it's a good idea, but that technical support might be problematic. A member questioned the University retention rates. Tardi stated that they are not as good as they should be and that we need to keep all the students that we have. Tardi said there is a new retention initiative that is being worked out by the administration. A member suggested that faculty members should get in touch with high schools and mentor students because open houses are not enough. Another member suggested increasing our presence at local community colleges because they already have a physical infrastructure in place. A member suggested cohort programs in conjunction with area businesses. Tardi encouraged all Department Representatives to go back to their department and discuss ways to increase revenue and cut costs at the University.

7. V.P. for Grievances Report

Williams reported a member has been accused of harassment and the Executive Board feels that the Union should pay for the individual to meet with an attorney and go through a hearing before an administrative law judge. Williams said this has been common practice in the past, and if more funds are required after the initial stage, the matter will be brought back before the Membership for approval. Tardi noted that \$4,000 has been budgeted for attorney fees, and there is a possibility that the AFT National defense fund will cover the cost. Tardi said our attorney thinks that dismissing the individual is excessive punishment. A member asked if the individual is tenured and if we have insurance. Tardi stated that the answer is yes to both questions. A member expressed concern at not knowing the extent of the harassment. Williams said that generally we believe our members are telling the truth, and consider a person to be innocent until proven guilty. Tardi said the incident happened during a class with 25 students and there is no consistent point of view about what took place.

A motion was made by J. Matthew to authorize up to \$1,500 for attorney fees for the member. It was seconded by C. McCollum and approved unanimously.

8. Adjournment

A motion to adjourn made by A. Montare and seconded by C. McCollum. Approved unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 1:54 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Jan Pinkston,
Recording Secretary
[Edited:]