

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

Date: January 20, 2009
Location: UC 171
Time: 12:30 pm – 1:45 pm

Present: S. Tardi, C. Williams, G. Guerrieri, J. Pinkston, E. Matthews, S. Selke, L. Mbogoni, G. Pope, M. Williams, K. Martin, K. Martus, K. Asada, J. Carter, J. Najarian, S. Wollock, S. Alon, R. Soto, R. Pardi, E. Martinez, S. Betts, T. Newman, K. Louie, J. Peterman, K. McNeal, G. Furst, A. Holpp Scala, J. Matthew, R. McCollum, C. Simon, C. Smith, R. Powers, A. Cheo, S. Ogden, E. Phadia, J. Parras, D. Sheffield, C. Ku, B. Su, P. Ryan, R. Meyer, B. Gorski, P. Chen, R. Pevour, M. Reynolds, M. Rosar, D. VanBoerum, D. Potacco, M. Rodriguez, C. Sohor, D. Owens, C. Goldstein, M. Giorgio, B. Mason, T. Clancy, K. Hilberg

Items distributed to the Council and General Membership:

- 1) December 16, 2008 General and Executive/Local Council Meeting Minutes
- 2) Agreement regarding the 2007-2008 Sabbatical Committee Recommendations Concerning Applications for Full Year Sabbaticals

1. Call to Order

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

2. Adoption of the Agenda

A motion to modify the agenda to begin with a discussion on online courses was made by K. Martus, and seconded by J. Peterman. Approved unanimously.

3. Approval of Minutes of the December 16, 2008 General Membership and Executive/Local Council Meeting. A motion to accept the minutes was made by K. Martus and seconded by J. Peterman. Approved unanimously.

4. President's Report

Tardi stated that today's inauguration is a momentous occasion for our country, and she wishes Obama the wisdom to carry out the commitments that were made during the campaign. She cautioned against believing that we no longer need to focus on equality in this country, and reminded everyone that we, as an academic community, need to continue our commitment to achieving equality.

a. Online Courses

Tardi stated that the Provost let her know in December that he was cancelling under enrolled spring courses early due to the economic situation. Although she

asked him to delay cancelling classes since she felt the course enrollment would likely increase as the semester got closer, he proceeded to cancel them anyway. When it turned out that additional courses were needed at the beginning of the semester, a few were added, but the entire process led to much confusion and disappointment. Tardi said this situation demonstrates that we need a much better mechanism of course scheduling, especially if we are trying to improve our image and offer better “customer service.” Tardi further stated that she expressed her concern to the Provost that course cutbacks would be done in an equitable manner which means that prior to cancellation, each course should have been examined separately, with no favoritism being shown by the deans or the provost. She reminded the Membership to report any inequities to the Union Leadership immediately. Tardi said she received an email from a member who teaches online and was asked take 5 more students into a course. Tardi noted that online courses are capped at 20 students but some experts consider them to be more effective when there are 16 students. She said that the last time the Administration attempted to break caps, faculty members threatened to withdraw from teaching online courses. Tardi reminded the Membership that there is nothing in the contract stating that a faculty member must teach online. The Executive Board will put in an information request for the caps and enrollment of the spring 2009 online courses to determine if there are problems.

Comments from members

A member asked if the Union can make a statement to the University expressing concern about the diminishing number of course offerings. The member stated that 7 classes were cancelled in her department in December, and by the beginning of the semester, her department needed the classes. Tardi said she told the Provost to allow the registration window to remain open longer but he was not willing to listen. Tardi said she will make another statement regarding the premature cancellation of classes, but she feels it may be more effective if it comes from individual faculty members (especially department chairpersons), and students. Tardi stated that the Administration needs to know that they are disappointing students. Tardi commented that it is very difficult to get the Administration to realize that we have a “field of dreams” at William Paterson where we are constantly starting new programs that will never fill and cutting other programs that could successfully run. A member stated that she suddenly has 10 more students in her in-person class, and asked about increasing enrollment of in-person courses. Tardi stated that individual departments can make recommendations about class size, but the actual number of students allowed in a class is determined by managerial prerogative. A member commented that there is only so much physical space in a classroom and classes that are over populated create safety concerns. A member suggested that we should encourage students, perhaps through SGA, to organize and protest over class sizes. Tardi stated that while this was once an activist campus, that is no longer the case, and trying to organize students and make them appreciate that their voice matters is not easy. A member commented that small class size is one of the things that is highlighted in advertising by William Paterson. Tardi stated

that class size is relative because compared to some of our sister institutions, even class enrollments of 45 are considered to be small. Tardi stated that when the provost came on board, he noted that there were courses that had only 2 or 3 students, and faculty members were brought on board specifically to teach those courses despite the fact that they had a consistent pattern of low enrollment.

Tardi noted that she needs suggestions from the Membership on ways to increase revenue to the University. She stated that during the last fiscal crisis, she suggested implementing the winter session and it has proven to be successful.

b. Wage Freeze

Tardi read a letter from David Beckett, Director of the Governor's Office of Employee Relations, concerning the Governor's proposal to eliminate the increment and freeze wages as of the first pay period after July 1, 2009. Tardi stated that she considers this to be a quick and dirty solution, and she feels that the letter is an attempt to instill fear. She noted that the Communication Workers of America (CWA) was the first bargaining unit to be asked to renegotiate the contract and they are standing firm. Tardi said she consulted our Local's attorney, and the Governor does not have the right to break the contract unless the Supreme Court rules in his favor. He does, however, have the right to layoff and fire people. Regarding members of our bargaining unit, the Governor could provide less funding for salaries which would then put the onus on the university presidents to resolve the fiscal issue by possibly considering layoffs or by firing people. Tardi stressed the importance of looking at the consequences for our entire group. She said that while tenured faculty cannot be dismissed unless an entire department is eliminated, the Administration can increase a faculty member's workload significantly. Untenured faculty risk being let go as do adjunct faculty members who are the most vulnerable group. Tardi said the CWA is maintaining the position that the State negotiated a contract and if financial circumstances were better than expected, the Unions would not have the right to go back and ask for more because a contract was negotiated and everyone must abide by it. Tardi stated that she has a list of all the administrator's salaries at this institution, and while some are underpaid, and others are fairly paid, she finds some of them to be amazing. She noted that the list is public information and is available by request. Tardi said that for years, the Union Leadership has asked for a top-down review to establish accountability in our Administration. In her personal opinion, she thinks that before the Governor is allowed to target our constituency, he should hold the University Administration accountable. A member asked if the discrepancy in administrative pay also occurs at other campuses. Tardi responded that it also occurs at other universities and that Rowan has the largest number of administrators earning over \$100,000 per year. She stated that she has had discussions with President Speert about issues with the Administration, and he understands there are problems because individuals have not been properly assessed by their managers and therefore it is difficult to eliminate them. Tardi stated that another problem with the wage freeze is that even if we do "roll over" and accept it, the governor will not guarantee that he

will not layoff any members of our bargaining unit. Higher education has the largest amount of discretionary funds, and she feels that the State universities will be hit hard as he takes away the funding and leaves it up to the President of each university to jockey the funds around.

Selke noted that she is concerned about the professional staff. Tardi agreed, stating that she considers professional staff to be necessary and essential employees. She said offices have already been cut and she doesn't know how much lower they can go without running this Institution into the ground. Tardi said she feels we are less vulnerable than some of the institutions, but it depends on the amount of money the Governor wants to provide to each university for the salaries. She noted that raising tuition significantly is not a viable option because we have already priced ourselves out of the market.

Comments from members

A member asked if the Administration is facing the same issues. Tardi responded that while the governor says there is a managerial freeze on pay, President Speert has not implemented a freeze because all of the administrators here have already received their raises. A member commented that many college presidents declined to accept raises this year. Tardi stated that President Speert now makes \$290,000, so he did not decline his, and usually if the President of an institution gets a raise, the rest of the Administration also receive a raise. A member stated that usually during times of economic difficulty, enrollment in institutions of higher education increases. Tardi responded that we are anticipating for that to occur and she has heard comments that more middle class families will send their children to State colleges and universities. Tardi stated that she is not counting on an increase in enrollment to solve our financial problems, especially since we have image problems. Williams noted that William Paterson is an expensive school compared to other State colleges, and when parents look at the image and the cost, William Paterson will not make the top of the list. Tardi stated that enrollment in community colleges will be increasing and we now have to accept all GE courses from community colleges, so in essence we're saying that attending a community college for the first two years is as good as attending the first two years here. In addition, the funding cuts impact us more severely than community colleges. A member stated that William Paterson started over 150 years ago and weathered the great depression so it might be interesting to see what steps were taken then. Tardi commented that back then we didn't have the layers of administration that we have now. She noted that we have some very good administrators on campus who deserve a high salary for what they do, but there are also administrators who make high salaries and we cannot identify what their responsibilities are in relation to their high salaries. A member stated that it is also important to focus on the amount of hours that faculty and professional staff members put in per week. Tardi said the Union Leadership agrees with this and keeps it in mind when we go to the table to negotiate promotions. She said the problem is that the Governor seems to care little about higher education workers. During negotiations, the chief negotiator for the State compared adjunct faculty members to bedpan changers.

Tardi said that although we think logically about fairness and equity, we have to deal with people who want a quick and dirty solution to a balanced budget. Selke noted that we need to be cooperative and demonstrate that the Union wants to work for a better NJ. Tardi stated that you can be nice, but you also have to stand strong. She said fear cannot stand in the way of us standing up for what we deserve. She noted that we are already two years into the contract, and it will soon be time to start negotiating for the next contract, therefore it is important to be in a strong position. She said it is dangerous to just “roll over” because that sets a precedence, and leads us from a position of strength to a position of weakness. A member asked what we are going to do to organize strength and rally, and make the campus community aware of these issues. Tardi replied that it is a double edge sword because higher education is not seen in a positive light. She said that we need to constantly try to improve our image, instead of waiting until the contract year or a time of crisis to show the contributions that we make to higher education. Tardi stated that CWA has held their position and we should stand with them because they have the largest number of members and are the strongest Union. A member asked if it would be appropriate to make a motion that our Local wants the State to abide by the negotiated contract. Tardi said it would be appropriate.

A. Holpp Scala made a motion that the William Paterson faculty, adjunct faculty and professional staff supports the position that the State must abide by its negotiated contract. A. Cheo seconded the motion.

Discussion: A member asked if a vote to renegotiate the contract would be necessary. Tardi said she will have to get clarification on the process, but she would like to hold the position that we are not even entertaining reopening negotiations. A member stated that she supports the motion, however at the same time, she is aware of the reality of the situation and how vulnerable some of us are. Tardi agreed, stating that she is concerned about members of our bargaining unit who are not tenured (a secure position for the most part), but there is no way to secure the position of other members of the bargaining unit, especially since the Governor will not guarantee that jobs will not be cut back or eliminated. Tardi further noted that she will take the motion very seriously, present it to the Administration and the Council of New Jersey State Locals, but noted that she cannot build any promises regarding job security. A member asked if it is possible to attach a resolution. Tardi recommended a resolution stating that “all the employees in the AFT 1796 Bargaining Unit are essential to this University and to cut any member will endanger the quality and future of this University.”

The motion and resolution were approved unanimously. Tardi was given approval by Membership to formulate the exact wording of the resolution, making sure to include the statement that members of our bargaining unit are essential and that we support the CWA position. Tardi noted that she will distribute the motion and resolution to all members of the University Community as well as the AFT Council.

5. Revenue Enhancement and Expense Control Recommendations

Tardi encouraged the Membership to try to brainstorm on ways to increase revenue at the University. She told the representatives to go back to their departments and tell all members that if anyone has ideas they should let her know and she will make a pitch to the President and the Board of Trustees.

6. Compensation Study

Selke stated that the deadline for professional staff members to commit to participating in the NL study is Friday, 1/23. She said that so far there has not been a very good response, and she cautioned that if more professional staff members do not volunteer, it will appear as though our Local does not care about the NL issue. She said that even if things are going well in your particular area, you should volunteer and demonstrate your support for all the areas. Tardi noted that the study will require very little work on the staff member's part and can be completed on University time. It will be the supervisor's responsibility to approve it and forward it to Human Resources and to the Union. Tardi agreed with the importance of participating in the study, stating that our Local is the only local in the State without an NL agreement. She further commented that if do not have a significant number of professional staff participating in this study, it is very likely that we will not be able to address this issue in the future. The position of the State will be that our Local had the opportunity but chose not to take advantage of it. She also noted that you do not need your supervisor's approval in order to participate, and once you begin the study you must stay in it for one year. The study will begin on 2/13 and even people who do not put in extra hours should participate.

7. Adjournment

A motion to adjourn was made by J. Matthew, and seconded by A. Holpp Scala. The meeting adjourned at 1:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jan Pinkston,
Recording Secretary
[Edited:]