

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

Date: February 19, 2009
Location: Valley Road, Rooms 1016-1017
Time: 12:30 pm – 1:45 pm

Present: S. Tardi, C. Williams, G. Guerrieri, J. Pinkston, S. Selke, M. Williams, J. Knaus, M. Mwaura, P. Swanson, D. Van Boerum, C. Simon, G. Furst, J. Cho, F. Pavese, S. Betts, T. Newman, R. Cauthen, S. Karibi-Whyte, K. Asada, G. Pope, L. Refsland, E. Goldstein, M. Turkish, P. Jackson, R. Wolk, R. Schwartz, L. Weiland, D. Catarina, T. Ramin, G. Andreopoulos, T. Snyder, B. Haroian, A. Panayides, S. Nassiripour, J. Carter, B. Mason, R. Soto, I. DiMaio

Items distributed to the Council and General Membership:

- 1) January 20, 2009 General and Executive/Local Council Meeting Minutes

- 1. Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 12:37 pm.

- 2. Adoption of the Agenda**

Tardi asked to amend the agenda to include 4 g. Clarification of Teaching Schedule Requirements. **A motion to accept the agenda as amended was made by G. Pope and seconded by R. Schwartz.**

- 3. Approval of Minutes of the January 20, 2009 General Membership and Executive/Local Council Meeting. A motion to accept the minutes was made by G. Pope and seconded by E. Goldstein. Approved unanimously.**

- 4. President's Report**

- a. Governor's Proposed Increment and Wage Freeze Update

Tardi stated that a meeting will be held tomorrow in Trenton regarding the fiscal crisis, and she expects the State to try to "sell" the wage and increment freeze. She noted that while the two-day furlough for State workers that was recently discussed in the news does not apply to our group, it is possible that President Speert could attempt to implement a furlough during the spring or winter breaks. Tardi said at this point, we are not even entertaining the prospect of a wage and increment freeze. She urged the Membership not to fall into hysteria over the rumors that are circulating, and to remember that we have a very strong Union that will not back down. The Membership will be updated on what transpires at the meeting by email.

Comments from members

A member asked if the federal stimulus package will help New Jersey. Tardi said she thinks it will benefit New Jersey, but questions how much money will filter down to higher education. A member commented that we should not lose sight of the fact that we already gave back last year and we have given our fair share. Tardi agreed, stating that there are many things at this University that should be tightened up. A member asked if the proposed wage freeze would impact adjunct faculty members. Tardi said yes, that it will impact all members of our bargaining unit. A member asked Tardi if she feels the State will cut a certain amount from education, but will be willing to negotiate what parts of the budget are cut. Tardi said the governor has recently stated that he feels the State universities do not well serve the population we were meant to serve. This, along with the fact that higher education represents the largest percentage of discretionary funds in the budget, is a cause for concern. She further noted that the stigma that was once attached to community colleges is disappearing. State universities must now accept an associate's degree in lieu of our General Education requirements. Tardi questioned why parents would want to spend the money to go to a four-year university, when their child could complete the first two years at a community college. Tardi said she is very concerned about enrollment because the numbers do not add up. The administration reports that the number of applications is up at William Paterson, but it is the conversion rate that really counts. This can possibly be attributed to the fact that the application fee has been waived, resulting in an increase in applications, but not necessarily an increase in enrollment. A member asked if our funding will be decreased by a certain amount, regardless of whether it is taken from salaries or some other area. Tardi said she thinks the amount is fluid, depending on how much comes from the federal government and how much pressure can be placed on legislators. She further noted that the largest part of the budget is salary. The member said he asked this question because if the amount is fixed, then in some sense, our action can control how the money is distributed. Tardi said she does not believe members of our bargaining unit will be laid-off or fired on a large scale, although a few people in their first or second years could be at risk. She noted that various departments in service-oriented areas are already understaffed and have not been replenished, which has led to us having image and customer relations problems. Tardi said the most important thing to remember is that we should not even entertain the idea that we are willing to accept wage and increment freezes and/or furloughs. She further stated that while she is certain the governor will decrease funding to higher education, her job is to see that it has the least impact on students and members of our bargaining unit.

b. President Speert Address

Tardi stated that it was no coincidence that President Speert held the recent budget meeting. She noted that you don't get to be president as long as he has been president without having political savvy. She stated that she thought the purpose of the meeting was to quiet rumors, and believed that it also raised questions about the University's lack of vision. She said the discussions over the new GE plan are a good example of the lack of vision at this University. She

reminded the Membership that every faculty member should be present when the GE proposal goes before the Faculty Senate on 3/24. A member agreed, stating that everyone should attend the GE information meetings and participate in the conversations. Tardi stated that one member of the GE Committee summarized 26 outstanding questions regarding the GE proposal. The document was sent to the GE committee and the administration, but many of the issues have yet to be resolved. A member asked if the document can be circulated to the Union Membership. Tardi said she will ask the person for permission to do so. A member stated that everyone should attend the next GE forum on 2/26. Tardi commented that we need to look at what is best for our current students and what will improve the quality of our Institution. Tardi stated that she feels we are ignoring the fact that many of our students are first generation college graduates.

c. Revenue Enhancement

Tardi asked for suggestions to increase revenue for the University. A member suggested that we should consider offering retraining programs, since many people are suffering job losses related to the poor economy. Tardi stated that a few faculty members offered to write proposals for certification programs, but the Provost wanted specifics before he would consider the idea. Tardi stated that she would be willing to offer a concept proposal, but would not be willing to put in many hours of work and then have it be denied. A member stated that this is the role of a community college. Tardi said in the area of Sociology there are certifications required in assessment, criminal justice, and social work, and perhaps we could offer some of the required courses for those certifications. A member stated that the Office of Continuing Education is already offering similar programs through workforce grants, and they are trying to develop relationships with other departments in the University. Tardi stated that the bottom line is that we need to find something that demonstrates to the Board of Trustees that faculty members are doing everything we can to help. Tardi said anyone with ideas should forward them to the Executive Board, so we can have a meeting with the administration and put the ideas on the table. Tardi said various projects are underway (i.e. the Continuing Education initiatives), but their purpose is not well publicized. She further stated that better inter-department integration is needed, as well as more outreach. Tardi said she is more than happy to devote part of a Union meeting to this topic if it will help move the University forward.

d. AFT New Jersey

Tardi stated that she is concerned that AFT National is putting pressure on the Council to become a part of AFT New Jersey. She noted that this move would cause a substantial increase in dues and would result in a loss of strength at the Council and Local levels. Tardi further stated that she does not feel we will gain anything from joining with the group because the needs of those in higher education will be subjugated even further by those in other professions.

e. State Delegates

Tardi stated that she is proud to announce that our Local has the largest number of delegates because we have the largest number of members in the Council, even more than Montclair and Rowan (applause from the Membership). A member commented that it is still important to encourage the Membership to attempt to bring in even more members. Tardi agreed, and encouraged everyone to make contact with new faculty and professional staff members by giving them a Union card that they can sign and return to the office.

f. Scholarships

Our Local will be giving a substantial amount (\$5,000) in scholarships this year. The forms, criteria, deadlines, and other information will be emailed to the Membership. Tardi noted that we rarely have the kind of response that we would like to have, and she encouraged the Membership to tell students about the scholarships.

g. Clarification of Teaching Schedule Requirements

Tardi said that contrary to information that is being circulated by some deans and others, there is nothing in the contract that mandates the number of days that a faculty member must teach per week. Tardi stated that as long as the needs of the department are met and faculty members are accessible to students, there is no mandated teaching schedule. Tardi said the issue is that there are a few of our colleagues who are not accessible in meeting their duties and responsibilities as faculty. Rather than addressing those individuals, some deans would rather address the problem in broad strokes. Tardi said the Provost agrees that problems are to be addressed by the chair (and preferably by the dean), with the individual faculty member. Williams mentioned that the Kean University campus is in turmoil because the president doubled office hours and implemented a four day per week teaching schedule. A member asked if there are guidelines regarding the teaching schedule. Tardi responded that there are clear roles and responsibilities of faculty in the Faculty and Professional Staff handbook. Another member asked what is meant by “being accessible to students.” Tardi responded that this means you must have office hours and take appointments. Williams noted that this could also mean you can be accessible at home by email and Blackboard. A member stated that her dean told the chairs to tell faculty that they must teach at least three days per week. Tardi stated that this is not correct and there is nothing that states how many days per week a person must be on campus. The chairs must identify the needs of the department and see that those needs are met, and the faculty must act appropriately and serve the students.

5. Professional Staff Officer’s Report

Selke announced that Professional Staff members who are participating in the NL study should have received an email from John Polding that included links to a tracking form. The form should be completed online, printed and given to the supervisor. It is the supervisor’s responsibility to sign it and send it to Human Resources. Selke said if anyone has problems with this process, they should

contact her. There was also another link to an authorization form which is helpful but not mandatory. Selke reported that 39 Professional Staff members out of a total of 158 are participating in the study.

6. V.P. for Grievances Report

Williams reported on the letter recently sent to the Membership by payroll, regarding the audit on dependents for state health benefits. Williams stated that although the response is mandated by state law, there is still a question about the manner in which the audit will take place. He advised the Membership not to submit a response at this time. Tardi noted that members should get their documents prepared. A letter of clarification will be sent to advise everyone on the process. A member commented that he originally thought the email notification was a scam.

7. V.P. for Negotiations Report

Guerrieri reported that we are close to an agreement with the administration regarding compensation for assessment coordinators, and the administration has agreed to look at previous compensation and provide retroactive compensation where necessary. Tardi commented that this has been an ongoing process for nearly two years now, and the agreement is an enormous coup (applause from Membership).

8. Adjournment

**A motion to adjourn was made by S. Selke and seconded by R. Wolk.
The meeting adjourned at 1:49 p.m.**

Respectfully submitted,

Jan Pinkston,
Recording Secretary
[Edited:]