

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

Date: March 26, 2009

Location: UC 171

Time: 12:30 pm – 1:45 pm

Present: S. Tardi, C. Williams, G. Guerrieri, J. Pinkston, E. Matthews, S. Selke, F. Pavese, R. Wolk, G. Pope, M. Williams, K. Martin, G.S. Sharma, K. Martus, K. Asada, J. Carter, J. Najarian, S. Wollock, P. Swanson, S. Alon, R. Soto, L. Gazzillo Diaz, J. Cho, E. Martinez, S. Betts, D. Fengya, K. McNeal, G. Furst, D. Caterina, A. Holpp Scala, R. Kearny, C. Simon, J. Hutchison, R. Martinez, E. Goldstein, M. Rosar, L. Emiola, L. Refsland, M. Giorgio, P. Jackson, T. Finnegan, D. Miller, D. Van Boerum, J. Heavey, S. Rienstra, D. Potacco, N. Kalb, R. Cauthen

Items distributed to the Council and General Membership:

1. February 19, 2009 General and Executive/Local Council Meeting Minutes
2. Letter and Resolution to the Membership regarding fiscal crisis
3. Letter to Gov. Corzine regarding fiscal crisis
4. Sample salary table
5. Agreement on Departmental Assessment Initiatives

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 12:36 pm.

2. Adoption of the Agenda

Tardi requested to modify the agenda to add “d” Safety Issues under the President’s report. A **motion to accept the agenda with the modification was made by K. Martus and seconded by A. Holpp Scala. Approved Unanimously.**

3. Approval of Minutes of the February 19, 2009 General Membership and Executive/Local Council Meeting. A motion to accept the minutes was made by G. Pope and seconded by J. Najarian. Approved unanimously.

4. President’s Report

a. Fiscal Crisis Update

Tardi stated that it was her recommendation that AFT join with CWA in taking a stand against the wage and increment freeze, as well as a possible furlough. She noted that joining with CWA is not only a good Union move, but in terms of strategy, there is strength in numbers. Tardi said the Governor is still pushing for a zero wage increase, but he has moved from the position of straight give-back (no increase in salary) to discussing a deferment, possibly a deferment regarding pensions. Tardi said she is concerned that the Governor stated that a deferment would be based on economic recovery; she wants to know exactly how the State defines economic

recovery. She noted that during a Channel 7 interview, the governor did not mention a deferment regarding pensions; he stated that he wants a straight give-back. Tardi said our Local and the AFT Council is standing firm. Tardi reminded the Membership that our Local has passed two resolutions, one stating that we want the State to honor our current contract, and another that was copied to the legislators, reminding them that our focus is on the students and the State should provide increased funding for higher education.

A member stated that CWA is picketing on campus during the second week of April and questioned if AFT will be joining them. Tardi responded that we have not been asked to join CWA in their information picket. Another member asked how the Union is dealing with the poor public image. Tardi said she spoke to the President of the State Council about this and that is one reason she wrote the resolution and asked President Speert and Sue Godar to sign it. She wants other State universities to model what our Local has done to demonstrate that we are genuinely interested in our students and that the Union and the Administration are not pitted against each other. Tardi noted that it is very dangerous to mount a publicity campaign during a crisis because it only makes us appear to be self-serving. She said we need to highlight our achievements and commitment to student success all year long. A member asked where the students stand on this issue. Tardi stated that President Speert has contacted students and asked them to support the request for more funding of higher education, but she doesn't think they understand much beyond that. Tardi said she wants to meet with the President of the SGA to explain our position. Tardi noted that while President Speert has gotten students to send email messages in support of "Nine Strong for New Jersey," she sees that as a red flag because she wants the students to fully understand the various Union issues. A member stated that CUNY is scheduled to host a rally on April 22. Tardi stated that if our Membership wants to take the lead, the Executive Board will help organize and publicize a rally, but she stressed that everyone must be willing to participate.

A member commented that the remarks President Speert made at a recent Senate meeting as well as the recent email he sent seemed to allude to the fact that "something is coming." Another member asked what this might mean for the individuals with one-year appointments. Tardi responded that the Administration will not know anything concrete until June when the final budget is known, but they have already started considering what measures can be taken. She reminded the Membership that the idea of a furlough two years ago was announced on July 5th at a Board of Trustees meeting. Tardi said she spoke out against the furlough and urged the Board to consider revenue enhancing options such as a winter session. The Board responded very positively to the recommendation and the winter session has proven to be lucrative for the University. She said she is very fearful that they are once again considering a furlough. She further stated that one year lines can be replaced with adjunct faculty labor which happens to be the lowest paid group. A member commented that the Women's Studies Department had only three lines filled. Tardi said she is very concerned about the diminishing number of tenure track lines. A member asked if President Speert mentioned ART during the Senate meeting. Tardi said he did say a brief sentence about it and she called Dr. Jemmott to clarify and was told that it could impact the travel budget. Tardi indicated that she is quite concerned about jobs, promotions, and range adjustments for next year. She stated that there are not enough to go around now, and that negotiating increased awards will be even more difficult. A member asked if the fiscal crisis will impact the ART that was already awarded for 2009. Tardi said she thinks that if ART has already been awarded it will be honored. She hopes the Administration will

make every attempt to live up to the commitments they have made in signing the ART agreement. She added that the administration may try to modify the agreement in the future. Tardi said that while the University is committed to supporting research, this fiscal crisis will hit everywhere. She said they can't significantly increase the students' tuition since it is already high. A member asked if a representative from the Union has been invited to attend the President's expanded council meeting. Tardi said that she was invited. She commented that she has a good relationship with the President and she has always been given a head's up, but the problem is that he won't even know what action will be taken regarding the fiscal crisis until the actual budget is put in place. A member asked if there is a plan in place in case more State funding is lost, and if that will result in program cuts and the loss of under enrolled departments. Tardi responded that this question overlaps with "b" (the General Education Revision Update).

b. General Education Revision Update

Tardi stated that she wears a Senate hat, a Union hat, and she is a professor. She said that in regard to the GE revision, it's fine to say let's look at what's best for the students, but she is very concerned when she hears senators saying that our students do not need language. One of her concerns is about the faculty members who teach in the language department. A member stated that he does not think this is the forum to discuss the issue. Tardi responded that it certainly is a Union issue because it deals with the terms and conditions of employment. She reminded the Membership that tenure does not guarantee a job for life, and if a department is cut, the faculty members in that department are cut. Tardi said that the University made commitments to people when they brought them on board and those commitments should be honored. She noted that it would be one thing if they had been warned in advance, but they were not, and the language department was expanded. She stated that furthermore, from an academic perspective, we are ridiculed by other countries and considered to be "uncultured" because we speak only one language. In a global society, being bilingual or multilingual is extremely advantageous for employment. A member commented that the same thing applies to science, because only one science course is required in the new GE proposal. Tardi agreed, stating that she doesn't feel that our colleagues in the Senate completely understand the consequences of the decisions they make. Tardi noted that most William Paterson students are first generation college students and many of them will never go on to graduate school. A member stated that he agrees that the GE Committee has not looked at the impact that the new proposal will have on FTE's. The member also stated that he wants to go back to the discussion about the budget because \$3.6 million must be found somewhere in our budget, yet we need to say we're not giving back anything. Tardi responded that the President will not know anything until the budget is passed. She feels that the Administration is hoping the federal government will provide additional funding and that we'll have a significant increase in the number of students attending William Paterson. She further stated that while we are being given information that the number of applications are up, the conversion rate is what is important. A member stated that one of the deans said that the number of accepted students is down compared to this time last year. Tardi commented that the statistics vary so drastically in the manner in which they are presented, that she doesn't know. She said history indicates that during times of economic crisis many people go back to college, and perhaps that is what the Administration hopes will occur. A member commented that enrollment at community colleges is up and the tuition is lower. Tardi stated that we already anticipated that would occur since the law was passed stating that students entering a four year State university with an Associate's Degree will have any outstanding GE courses waved except for upper level

electives, GE courses required by the major, and graduation requirements. Tardi said that it is likely that parents will look at community colleges and see that they cost less and that the stigma has been removed, so they will send their children there. A member stated that when Middle States visited William Paterson ten years ago, they asked for a more transparent budget process. The member said that in those ten years, she is yet to see this occur, and she wonders if the Administration is accountable. Tardi responded that the Administration is not accountable. She said back when Mel Edelstein was President of the Senate, he put pressure on the Administration to form a budget committee and Union leadership was a part of that committee. Tardi noted that the committee met one time and never met again. Tardi said she requested to be put on the budget committee and even though the Provost agreed that she should be on it, she was never contacted. A member stated that the Senate has a budget committee that has met 4-5 times and has contact with the VP of Finance. The member said he is sure the committee would not mind if Tardi attended the meetings. The member also added that the chair of the Senate budget committee has been invited to the Provost's expanded council meeting. Tardi said she doubts if we will get any concrete information at that meeting because she believes that President Speert is attempting to boost morale right now. She doesn't believe the Administration has any concrete solutions; everything, including a furlough/closing is under consideration. A member asked how we can make a difference and get a response from the Administration. Tardi responded that when the President has meetings, everyone has an opportunity to ask questions. A member stated that tuition at other institutions is going up and Rowan, for example, is hiring 10 new faculty lines. Tardi stated that William Paterson is very lean because we have not been replacing people at the same rate, and this applies even to the professional staff. Tardi said to a great extent we are all essential employees, and if they cut any of us, they are really going to endanger this Institution. A member asked if it is appropriate to request another meeting with President Speert and the VP of Finance. Tardi said she thinks that is appropriate. She further stated that the GE Committee was promised something like "if you build it, we'll give you the money." She wants to know exactly where the money is going to come from because the Administration is talking about cutting existing programs while building a new one.

A member stated that if the new GE proposal is accepted it will require a great deal of faculty development and it will cost a lot of money. The member further stated that advisement will be a problem. Tardi stated that First Year Seminar will require 60 sections taught by fulltime faculty members and she wants to know who is going to teach the other courses. She further stated that if you teach a course that you like and have been teaching for years, there is a chance under the new proposal that you may no longer get to teach the course. She said we need to ask more questions about the proposed GE revision and get more answers. A member stated that he feels it is a good idea to contribute something in regard to the recent email sent by Marc Schaeffer so the administration cannot come back and say that no one contributed anything. Tardi said she is torn about that because the ideas that are submitted via email do not get publicized. Tardi said she likes the other member's idea about having another meeting where we are given some possible scenarios. A member stated that the meeting needs to happen now because if we wait until there is concrete data, it will be too late. Tardi said, not only that, but if we wait too long, we won't have time to come up with any ideas. A member asked if the Union Leadership has compiled the annual list of ways to enhance revenue. Tardi said yes, but there are not a lot of innovative ideas on it. A member stated that he liked the idea of meeting with President Speert as a group and he questioned if this email invitation might be used as a mechanism for requesting a meeting. He

said if everyone in the Union requested a face to face meeting with the President, perhaps he could explain some possible scenarios for what might occur when the budget is known.

A. Holpp Scala made a motion for a resolution to request that President Speert meet with all members of the University community during the month of April. K. Martus seconded the motion and it was approved unanimously.

D. Fengya explained the sample salary table that was included in the packet.

c. Legal Issues

Tardi stated that would like to request funding for legal fees for a colleague who is facing possible detenuring. She noted that it is a very sensitive matter and she is not able to go into specifics at this time. She explained that she hopes the Membership will trust her on this matter because everyone knows she is very careful with the Membership's money.

K. Martus make a motion to approve up to \$1,000 for legal fees. R. Martinez seconded the motion and it was approved unanimously.

Tardi stated that there is another matter of concern that has to do with one of our colleagues at Kean University. The Kean Administration is mandating 8 office hours per week and requiring faculty to have teaching schedules three days per week. The matter went to the State Council Grievance Committee and was under consideration to go to arbitration. The Committee voted not to take the matter arbitration. The Kean faculty member involved contacted Tardi requesting our Local's consideration regarding this issue. Tardi noted that she would like to get our Local's opinion on what position our delegates should take on this issue. A member asked how the Administration at Kean can be allowed to force teaching three days per week and mandate 8 hours of office hours. Tardi stated that the contract does not specify the number of teaching days per week nor does it mandate a specific number of office hours per week. On our campus, the Administration and the Union have appropriately focused on the teaching needs of the department and the availability and accessibility of faculty to work with students and attend meetings. Tardi further stated that the Union at Kean lost control many years ago. She noted that the Administration on our campus respects the Union Leadership because the faculty and professional staff stand behind us, while at Kean, the Union became weakened and is considered an enemy in some ways. She said the President at Kean is a dictator and has been getting away with it. Williams stated that the Grievance Committee did its work and there is nothing in the contract that makes them think they could win in arbitration. He further stated that we want to support Kean because we feel they are being wronged, but the fear is that it might give the Administrations in our University and at our other sister Locals the ability to attempt to impose these unreasonable requirements. A member asked if all the Unions can come together as a group. Tardi said that we do come together at the negotiations table and each representative supports the feelings of their own Local. A member stated that since we have a provost and a dean who came from Kean, they're used to weak Union leadership and it's important to send them a message. Tardi stated that's not the point. Tardi further stated that there is a meeting coming up in April and this individual is going tell the Local that he wants the delegates to overturn the decision of the Council Grievance Committee. Tardi said that if we support the decision to go to arbitration, which we have the option to do, we will be going against the

Council Grievance Committee. A member stated that it sounds like the likelihood of success is very unlikely, and the possibility of other administrations taking advantage of that case is high. A member asked if there are options as far as supporting and strengthening the Union at Kean. Tardi stated that many grievances and unfair labor practices have been filed by Council in support of Kean and Montclair. She said that Kean has the most grievances and unfair labor practices file, and noted that in the past our Local has supported many of their issues. She said that ethically speaking, the issue is a good one, but if it goes to arbitration and Kean loses, our Local and our sister locals could suffer the same consequences as Kean. She further stated there is the right thing to do and then sometimes, there is the prudent thing to do. A member asked if it makes sense to make this the topic of negotiations for the next contract. Tardi responded that there are many issues that we choose not to take a hard stance on because once you lose and it goes to arbitration, the decision is written in stone.

K. Martus made a motion to overturn the decision of the Council Grievance Committee and move forward in supporting Kean. There was no second.

A member stated that some untenured faculty members are complaining because they are told they cannot have a two-day schedule, but other people in the department do. Tardi said there is nothing in the contract about a set schedule. It has to do with a faculty member's visibility, accessibility, and the needs of the department, and there is no magic number. Tardi stated that she will be more than willing to provide the correct information to deans who are insisting that there is a schedule required by contract.

Tardi said the Administration is forming a safety task force. She said an incident occurred just prior to spring break that involved a student who allegedly threatened the lives of 8 faculty members. Tardi noted that the process was handled very inappropriately and she is once again insisting on the formation of a safety task force.

4. Treasurer's Report

Matthews gave a report on the proposed budget for 2009-2010 that will be voted upon at the next meeting. A member commented that it was a very clear report (applause from the Membership).

5. Professional Staff Update

Selke reported that the NL study is continuing and although there were numerous problems at the beginning, they have been reduced. She said the supervisors seem to be having more problems with the study than the professional staff. She reminded the professional staff not to be intimidated, and that they should contact her if they are experiencing any problems.

6. Negotiations Update

Guerrieri noted that the signed Assessment Agreement is included in packet (applause from the membership). She stated that persistence paid off and she thanked Linda Gazzillo Diaz for laying the groundwork. Tardi also acknowledged Williams' contribution in negotiating this agreement. Guerrieri stated that the documents will be sent out to everyone via email. She encouraged everyone to read it carefully because it is retroactive to the fall of 2007.

7. Grievances Update

Williams said he is working with a professional staff member who is having problems with the NL study. The supervisor blamed the problems on the study.

8. Adjunct Faculty Update

Pavese announced that he is planning a meeting for all adjunct faculty members on 4/3/09. He said he has been focused on contacting all adjunct faculty members about the pension changes. The payroll department extended the deadline to allow him to contact about 100 more who were previously enrolled in PERS but did not respond to the information.

A member asked about the status of the dependent information that was requested by Human Resources. Tardi said we have no information on the matter yet, and that the Membership should gather the information and hold onto it until they receive further instructions from the Union.

9. Adjournment

A motion to adjourn was made by J. Matthew, and seconded by E. Goldstein. The meeting adjourned at 1:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jan Pinkston,
Recording Secretary
[Edited:]