

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

Date: April 20, 2010
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, M. Mwaura, G. Pope, M. Williams, K. Martin, K. Martus, K. Smith, B. Kollia, D. Joslin, J. Najarian, S. Wollock, R. Rimmer, R. Soto, R. Pardi, L. Gazzillo Diaz, E. Gonzalez, E. Martinez, S. Betts, D. Fengya, T. Newman, K. Louie, J. Peterman, A. Tesfaye, A. Montare, D. Hill, G. Furst, E. Sabogal, J. Matthew, R. Kearney, S. Karibi-Whyte, R. Martinez, C. Simon, D. Potacco, L. Hamel, A. Schaefer, B. Diamond, R. Verdicchio, D. Miller, D. Nacin, R. Schwartz, K. Wagner, B. Duffy, M. Rosar, T. Clancy, G. Andreopoulos, M. Arteaga, J. Heavey, C. Hong, P. Whiteman, S. Rienstra, O. Ricaldi, M. Ellis, N. Magaldi, B. Mason, T. Finnegan, P. Jackson, J. Parras, S. Thompson, J. Bernstein, M. Sebetich, N. Pakizegi, K. Makarec, C. Donaghy, N. Kalb, R. Cauthen

Items distributed to the Council and General Membership:

- 1) March 25, 2010 General and Executive/Local Council Meeting Minutes
Letter of Agreement IV -- Health Insurance Retirement

Corrections made to the March 25, 2010 minutes

Due to clerical errors, Donna Fengya's name was omitted from the list of Executive Board candidates listed in the minutes, and Rosa Sota's name was omitted from the list of those present at the March 25, 2010 meeting.

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 12:38 pm.

2. Adoption of the Agenda

A motion to adopt the agenda was made by K. Martus and seconded by B. Duffy Approved unanimously.

3. **Approval of Minutes of the March 25, 2010 General Membership and Executive/Local Council Meeting. A motion to accept the minutes was made by A. Montare and seconded by K. Martus. Approved unanimously.**

4. **Action Items**

a. 2010-2012 AFT Executive Board “Vote”

With no individuals running in opposition of the slate of candidates for the Executive Board, the Recording Secretary cast one vote to elect the candidates for a two-year term (applause from the Membership).

President’s Report

a. Fiscal Crisis Update

Tardi stated that President Speert announced his suggestions for closing the University’s budget gap at the campus-wide meeting earlier this month, and his suggestions included a possible three week University closure. Tardi stated that although the Union Leadership has a strategy for dealing with the closure idea, however, the strategy cannot be revealed at this point due to political reasons. Tardi stated that Speert recently hosted a meeting for the campus union leaders, and stated during that meeting that an increase in student enrollment can help avert a potential closing. Tardi recommended that the Union and Administration negotiate an agreement regarding faculty participation in recruitment efforts. She proposed that faculty members could participate for no compensation at first, with the understanding that as soon as the economic situation improves, faculty will be compensated for student recruitment. Tardi noted that in the past when the Union provided proposals that deal with service similar to ART, the Administration’s response has always been no. Tardi further noted that the Provost is aware that faculty participation in recruitment efforts increases the conversion rate, but he does not want faculty involved if compensation is required. Tardi stated that the President said he will negotiate an agreement for recruitment if compensation for advisement is put back on the table. Tardi refused, stating that there will be no trade off, and the faculty will not be held hostage. Tardi told the Membership that we need creative ideas that will increase revenue. She stated that she is continuing to ask for top-down accountability. For example, she questioned why an administrator’s salary is not reduced, when that person’s role and responsibilities are diminished. She further stated that she is concerned about the President’s plan to hire 23 new faculty members at this time. She noted that while she is supportive of new faculty, she is more concerned about the current faculty and professional staff. She feels the Administration should examine the new positions very closely, to make sure they are absolutely necessary. Tardi noted that last year, prior to the AFT Memorandum of Agreement, she questioned why other universities were allowed to use their reserves, but William Paterson could not. This year, the University community is being told that “some” of the reserves will be used. She further questioned why Steve Bolyai, the VP of Administration and Finance, chose not to freeze departmental budgets this year as he has in the past, yet took \$1,000,000 from reserves for those budgets. Tardi stated that she strongly disagreed with the woman who stood up at the President’s meeting and thanked him for saving jobs. She said it would be one thing if the Administration has exhausted all means to avoid this fiscal crisis, but that’s not the case; a closing is a quick and dirty solution to the problem, and it doesn’t address the real problems at the University.

Tardi stated that she doesn't know if the State will try to negotiate a new agreement. She noted that the Leadership of our Local did not want to sign the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) last July, but we had no choice because we did not have the support of the legislature. Tardi said that some members have complained that the self-directed furlough days did not demonstrate a negative impact on the University. She explained that while that is true, many members of our bargaining unit could not afford to be unpaid for an extended amount of time, and since we were going to take the hit, the Leadership decided to work out an agreement that would permit flexibility regarding the paychecks in which furlough days would be reflected. Tardi noted that every single member of our bargaining unit at every sister University in the Council had the same number of furlough days. When negotiating the MOA, our Local's leaders fought hard to insure that the administrators would have the same furlough and pay freeze as the unit members. The administrators at William Paterson received the same number of furlough days as the faculty and staff, but at other universities, the presidents chose not to impose the same number of days on their administrators that were imposed on faculty and staff. Tardi assured the Membership that the Executive Board members are on top of this fiscal crisis issue, and are trying to generate ideas for increasing revenue to the University. She encouraged members to bring forth concrete suggestions.

Questions and comments from members

A member commented that he believes we will be here at the same time next year, talking about the same thing, and he expressed disappointment that the Administration cut nothing and did not consult with anyone prior to the President's meeting. He also pointed out that the proposed closing amounts to a bigger percentage of salary for 10 month employees. The member further stated that he doesn't believe the Administration has any clue how to get the University out of this situation, and questioned why we should just "roll over" and not demonstrate our dissatisfaction. Tardi noted that one problem has been that faculty and staff members have gone out of their way as professionals to meet the ever expanding University needs despite the furloughs. She noted that members have been changing their furlough days in order to accommodate the needs of the students and the University, and that there has been no slow down of work, so it appears that business as usual has been occurring. She stated that there is no oversight body of the University presidents and/or Board of Trustees members. They have autonomy. A member asked if there is a way that the Union members can organize. Tardi said that departments can organize and be creative, but she noted that it is illegal for the Union president to make recommendations that could be seen as violating the MOA since her signature is on the MOA. Tardi said it is frustrating that she can only present issues to the members of the Board of Trustees at open, public meetings where it is difficult to be frank and discuss issues about Administrative accountability. A member asked if the incoming president is on board with President Speert's ideas. Tardi said she listened carefully to President Speert's remarks, and he initially made a point of taking responsibility for his recommendation for University closure, but then later said the new president and the Board of Trustees will be making the decisions. Tardi

noted that based upon our State contract, the decision regarding any campus closure must be made prior to Dr. Waldron's starting date in August. A member stated that when people are on furlough, they should not be on campus nor should they be doing any university related work. The member stated that in her case, this means the students get their quizzes back late. Tardi stated that no one should work on furlough days on or off campus. A member asked when the Administration will announce if there will be furlough days in the coming year. Tardi responded that President Speert cannot issue furlough days. He stated that he can only issue a University closing, and we will know if this will occur after the State budget is passed. According to the contract, the president must announce a University closing 195 days prior to the intended date of closure. Tardi noted that we are slated to receive our contract increase, and are not slated to have furlough days in the next year. A member stated that if the furlough issue does come up, departments should decide as a group not to attend events and meetings. The member said that currently, the impact of not working on furlough days is felt only by the member, and that a coordinated effort within the department would make an impact on the University. Tardi stated that an individual can make an impact because if enough individual students are complaining that their needs are not being addressed (e.g. quizzes not being returned in a timely manner), the BOT can see the negative impact of furlough days on the students and the University as a whole; however she agreed that a coordinated effort could have a more significant impact. A member commented that the University is in the process of a transition, and this is an opportunity for the new president to show that she is dynamic and cares for the faculty. The member asked if the Union can request that the new president meet with the faculty and professional staff to discuss the future of the University. Tardi responded that we can certainly ask, but the new president is under no obligation to meet with us. Williams commented that he feels it is shameful that President Speert's answer to the problem is to close the University and hope for a better future. Tardi stated that the Union Leadership and the Membership can come up with ideas. A member suggested that our AFT Membership meet with the Board of Trustees and the incoming president to share ideas and recommendations to assist in closing the WPU budget deficit. Tardi said that winter session was one idea that was brought to the attention of the Board and proved to be successful. She noted that other universities are trying new things that are successful and we can try and emulate those ideas, but the problem is that we needed the ideas yesterday because according to President Speert, our budget was cut by 25%. She noted the Union is working on a rally that will take place to reinstate the Millionaire's Tax, and hopefully get the money put back where it belongs; however, there are no assurances that it will be put back. Tardi said that each year when the budget crisis hits, she has always suggested sending the associate deans back to faculty. She said that while she is not diminishing the role of the colleagues who engage in this role, but she feels that in difficult times, administrative restructuring needs to occur. Tardi questioned whether in this fiscal crisis, is it responsible to hire 23 new faculty members. She also wants the Administration to engage in a top-down review of administrators, particularly those who make \$100,000 per year or more.

While many of those administrators deserve the pay they are receiving, there are certainly those who have not successfully fulfilled their designated roles and responsibilities. Tardi also stated that the fund raising methods on this campus need to be examined. Comments from faculty indicate that they would be more willing to donate to the University, if they were more respected.

A member stated that she supports the idea of having a coordinated effort regarding furlough days. Tardi said to put this in perspective, one should think of it as multiplying the number of our members times 7 furlough days at 7 hours per day, to get the total number of hours missed. That is a significant number and it should make an impact on the work output that can be accomplished. Tardi noted that if the Board of Trustees members do not recognize the negative impact of furlough days or University closings, furloughs and closings may be the first rather than the last option whenever there is a fiscal crisis.

A member stated that William Paterson receives less funding for the budget than compared to the other State universities. Tardi noted that there is a formula for the funding provided. A member asked what percent of our salary will be lost if the University is closed for three weeks. Tardi responded that the figure is 5.8% for 12 month employees and is significantly higher for faculty members who are ten month employees. Tardi reiterated that the closing is one suggestion, and the Union is not accepting it as being the only way to solve the fiscal crisis. A member stated that William Paterson should be bringing in many more international students. Tardi agreed, stating that this issue comes up every year at Senate meetings but is never resolved.

Tardi said that our Union Leadership is proactive and warned last year that we would be right back in this fiscal situation this year. A member stated that while she was glad to have self-directed furlough days, they do not seem to be very effective from the students' perspective, because they see the absence of one or two people as not being substantial. A member stated that we should take advantage of opportunities in the coming year to take collective action. A member stated that there is a leverage point coming up with commencement, and that would be a great time for faculty members to take a stand, and demonstrate discontent to the Board and the Administration. Tardi expressed concern regarding faculty duties and obligations, and also expressed concern with disrupting our students' graduation. A member stated that it is not written in the contract or handbook that faculty must be on the field. A member questioned if there is a new position designated as commencement coordinator. Tardi noted that this position has existed for many years. Tardi said that the VP of Negotiations is going to submit a request for everyone's released time to determine who is getting paid at the University. A member commented that tickets are now being issued for graduation, and they contain barcodes that will be scanned. The member asked if "big brother" is watching. Tardi stated that the Administration expects faculty members to attend graduation. Tardi said that we can attempt to address our issues with the Board of Trustees, but the budget won't be officially announced until June or July. Tardi said she is willing to do what the Membership wants, as long

as the Membership stands behind her and the Executive Board. A member suggested that faculty attend commencement, but refuse to go on stage. Tardi stated that she thought this was a better statement, since it shows concern and support for our students, while at the same time, expresses discontent with the proposed fifteen day closure to resolve the fiscal crisis. A member stated that faculty should attend commencement and distribute information leaflets. Tardi suggested sending a letter to the BOT, inviting them to attend a meeting with our Membership, and then if the Board refuses, the absence of faculty on the platform could be the response. By a straw vote, members unanimously supported attending a meeting with the Board of Trustees. A member stated that she likes the idea of providing information and educating people who are attending commencement. Tardi stated that she believes commencement is not the time to “educate the public,” because the audience includes parents who are focused on their child’s graduation. She would favor a written statement explaining why faculty are sitting or standing with the students and not on the platform, but not a detailed, educational leaflet. A member stated that she thinks distributing information indicates that the faculty is working in good faith to raise a valid point. The member further stated that it would serve as a building activity for the future; a way of building community support. A member suggested not attending the ceremony but staying on the periphery. Another member stated that he supports the idea of attending commencement, but sitting on the field with the students and leaving the platform empty. He said this will show respect for the students, yet still make a point. Tardi said she fears an attempt to make a statement at commencement will alienate the public by politicizing their children’s graduation. A member stated that not everyone knows what the word furlough means. Tardi agreed, stating that the public does not understand and that educators have been demonized. The public thinks that faculty members make enormous amounts of money and only work a couple of days per week. Tardi further stated that the public image is totally distorted, and it’s going to be very difficult to break that down at one commencement.

R. Pardi made a motion that if the Board of Trustees members refuse to meet with members of our bargaining unit, that faculty members attend commencement, but sit with the students rather than be seated on the platform. K. Wagner seconded the motion.

Discussion: A member stated that this action may be prohibited by safety rules. A member stated that this action should be precise, and he would like to have this broken into two motions: 1) Contact the board of trustees and give them one week to respond. 2) If they refuse to meet, then we recommend not participating in the platform at commencement.

The motion carried with one nay vote.

b. Health Plan proposal

Tardi noted that there is a new health plan proposal by Bret Schundler that if

passed, will make our retiring members pay for health insurance at the prevailing rate that is in the contract. Tardi noted that we do not believe there is overall support for this in the legislature. Tardi explained that members are currently protected by whatever tier they are in, and when planning to retire, they must provide three months notice in order to get the benefits. Tardi stated that she is checking into the legal ramifications and will report back to the Membership. She noted that anyone who is preparing to retire should contact Diane Kaiser in Human Resources.

c. AFT Local Voting Results and AFT Affiliation Council Voting Results

Tardi reported that our Local voted not to affiliate with the expanded AFT New Jersey, and although we had 14 delegate votes at the Council meeting, the Council voted 70 to 35 in favor of joining the group. A member asked if Rutgers's is also a part of the group and Tardi said yes.

5. **Adjunct Faculty Report**

Pavese reported that adjunct faculty members will not be impacted by a potential University closing or by the pension. Pavese announced that a rally is being planned on 5/22 in Trenton to protect public services and demand restoration of the Millionaire's Tax. The Council is spending \$20,000 on buses to transport people to the event. He asked members to send an email to the AFT Office if they want to attend.

6. **V.P. for Grievances Report**

Williams reported that he is assisting someone who was notified of intention to non-reappoint by the President. The person was successfully retained for another year.

7. **V.P. of Negotiations Report**

Guerrieri reported that the ART Pilot Program has officially been converted to policy (applause from the Membership). She reported that she and Donna Fengya are currently working on a compensation policy for internships and boatload courses, and asked the department representatives who have information that is pertinent to those two issues to send an email to the AFT Office. She also reported that she is meeting with members to review the current contract and identify issues of concern. She noted that anyone who would like to identify a contract issue should send an email message to the AFT Office (aft-office@wpunj.edu).

8. **Adjournment**

A motion to adjourn was made by D. Fengya, seconded by L. Gazzillo Diaz and approved unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 1:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jan Pinkston,
Recording Secretary
[Edited:]