

General Union Meeting
October 8, 2014
Minutes

A motion was made to approve the minutes of Sept 10 GUM. It was seconded and passed unanimously.

Homecoming

Homecoming is Oct 18, and the Local will have a table at the event where Local 1904 water and swag, such as pens, Frisbees and first aid kits will be given to students, alumni, staff, faculty and friend. It is a good day for a family outing and for kids to have fun with the games and rides that are available. Kathy said that the library would have its new Archival Reading Room open to the public. Rich said that a faculty/student ID would allow a free entry to the football game in the afternoon. David Benfield announced that the Philosophy and Religion Department would be organizing an event to honor its faculty retirees.

Outreach

Paul Martinez (in the library) is doing a book drive for Irvington schools. Donations of new or gently used books (of school age) can be made. Books can be dropped in his office in the library.

FMLA

The Federal act is currently marking its twentieth anniversary. There will be a workshop held on Nov 3, 12:00-1:30 pm in SC 419 dedicated to all the issues surrounding FMLA which covers leave taken for sickness, birth, placement of adoption, and to take care of a sick relative.

Upcoming Elections

Mike Heller is running in Bloomfield for Board of Education, and the Local COPE committee approved a contribution to his campaign (from COPE funds).

Among the ballot initiatives are an initiative by five more cities in NJ (following in the footsteps of Jersey City and Newark) to put the provision of earned sick leave on the ballot for Nov 3 election. These cities are: Irvington, Montclair, Passaic, Paterson and Trenton.

Cory Booker did not receive the AFT endorsement because of his record on public education. Among the Congressional races that are tight are: 3rd district where Aimee Belgard (D) is challenging Bill McArthur (R) and 5th district where Roy Chu (D) is running against the incumbent Scott Garrett (R).

Union members can help in mobilizing workers by going on Labor Walks. The walks are scheduled between 8:30—noon on Saturdays, and the Council would pay volunteers \$100 for their participation.

Rich said that in his four years as the Local president, he has become aware of how important political relationships are and how they help us during negotiations as well as other times when political influence is needed.

Department Bylaws and Procedures

Ken talked about the need for every department to have Procedures and Bylaws that help that set the standards for fulfilling contractual obligations. This can only be done if the procedures stipulated in the contract are followed. For instance, the DPAC should consist of 3-4 members. Departmental bylaws govern personnel and other issues, and it is important that departmental procedures are consistent with the provisions of the contract. New or revised Bylaws are looked over by the union, Provost and Jerry Cutler (VP HR) so that they are consistent with the statewide contract and LSPA.

Rich said that any problems with personnel actions are difficult to address in the absence of relevant departmental procedures. Distinguishing the role of university and union, Rich said that the overall policy structure is controlled by the university whereas specific procedures to achieve policy goals have to have Union input.

Ken said that he would be sending out a memo reminding departments to be sure their Bylaws are up to date. Rich said he could provide sample departmental bylaws to help in the process of crafting new ones or updating old ones if necessary. Ken said that the functioning and procedures of departments should be transparent. It is advisable for departments to have committees to look after specific functions.

Maughn announced that three workshops on reappointment, tenure and promotion have been scheduled. These would take place on Dec 4 (1-3 pm), Feb 11 (12-2 pm), May 5 (12-2 pm) in the ADP center (UN 1143).

Maughn spoke about the requirement, as per the contract, for the faculty to have three office hours (of 60 min duration) every week. The time spent answering student emails does not count toward officer hours. However, there is no requirement that the office hours be scheduled on three separate days of the week. For hybrid/online classes, there is no requirement for the office hours to be held in the office.

There was a Professional Staff Orientation that took place toward the end of September. A performance-based promotion is scheduled for Oct 16. On Dec 17, there would be a holiday luncheon.

Meiling said that the librarians have met and finalized the list of items for negotiations. The personnel procedures in the library are outdated.

Bill announced that a meeting of the Executive Board and a Stewards Workshop would take place on Nov 11, 9-12.

Kathy said that she has fielded many questions from professional staff about reappointment. Lots of people contact the Union to get advice, but it is important to know that the Union does not have standing in many cases. For instance, a recent question was about maternity leave and its effect on tenure clock.

Vanessa noted that we are in the reappointment/tenure season. She reminded everyone that the personnel process could be halted in the event of an impropriety. The faculty member applying for reappointment/promotion also has the right to see and respond to his/her evaluation. Kathy said that she should be contacted if there are any real or perceived contractual violations.

The tenure process in place also applies to administrators who would be going up for tenure. If there is an interpretive issue concerning the process, the AVP contacts Ken and it is worked out in a mutually acceptable manner.

David Benfield reported on the ongoing deliberations in the University Senate. Among the issues currently on the table are: student verification for federal aid, plans to make campus smoke-free, plans to revise the constitution and expanding the constituencies represented in the Senate. David also brought up the issue of the need for Ebola preparedness on campus. Ken suggested that the issue be handled by the Workplace Committee.

Ken provided an update on negotiations. The Union has been trying to get Jerry Cutler to answer when he would start negotiations. Ken said that on the issue of Instructional Specialists, he is optimistic. An issue that has recently emerged is the limit on teaching online courses. CHSS has decided to implement a policy of restricting individual faculty members to teaching one online class per semester (a policy that was on the books but had not been implemented). The last minute nature of the changes has had a disruptive effect on faculty teaching schedules for the coming spring semester.

Ken said the administration wants to make the entire process of personnel action electronic. He expressed reservations that this might lead to an incomplete process, and that the union needs to be consulted to avoid any problems. Rich agreed and added that the Union is not categorically opposed to a proposal, but wants to see it before it takes a position.

Among other issues Ken mentioned the administration's proposal of online teaching evaluation of tenured and tenure-track faculty. Online evaluations are already being done for adjunct faculty. Ken said he was hopeful of finalizing the issue of donated sick leave.

Jennifer reported that the Professional Staff Negotiating Team had finalized the list of items for negotiations. The team wants the items to be dealt with collectively and not in a piecemeal fashion. Ken thanked the team for the work it had done to finalize the list of negotiation items.

Mike provided an overview of the Local's financial health. The last financial year was extraordinarily expensive for the Local, mainly due to the legal expenses that were incurred. In the previous year (2012-2013), the Local ended up with a surplus of about \$66,000, whereas there was a deficit of \$29,000 last year (2013-2014). The Local would be approaching the National and the Council for reimbursement of the legal expenses. Rich said that the Union would be presenting a budget to the Executive Board. He summarized the Local's overall financial situation as good, especially considering the AFTNJ membership fees that would have kicked in this year.

The Local is moving ahead with implementing the recommendations of the financial review committee that conducted a review of the union's finances. Among the changes to be implemented: Moving from cash to accrual accounting and a change in the fiscal year to coincide with the calendar year. Rich said that the Local has an accountant on retainer, but expressed confidence that there is not a dime that is out of place.

The AFT calendars would be mailed out soon. Rich and Bill attended a meeting of all major public employee unions of NJ to discuss the issue of negotiability of healthcare. The current law would sunset on June 30, 2015, and, thereafter, we should be able to negotiate our healthcare benefits. The ideal solution would be to cap employee healthcare contribution at 1.5% of salary, a highly unlikely outcome.

Old Business

When students were removed from Blackboard for overdue balances, David registered objections to this encroachment of administrative functions in to the academic realm at ATC meetings where this was discussed. Subsequently, he articulated his concerns in the recorded proceedings of the Canvas review committee, in the hope that the same practice would not be repeated once the University switched to Canvas. David said he was therefore chagrined to see that, in fact, students in arrears were removed from Canvas, without even advance notice to the faculty. In response to both this occurrence and the survey inserted in to all course Web spaces on Canvas, David brought a motion on integrity and security of Canvas course Web spaces to the ATC for referral to the Senate. The motion is on the agenda of the November 17 ATC meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:05 pm.