

General Union Meeting
May 7, 2014
Minutes

The meeting began with an announcement of this year's Local student scholarship recipients. Six scholarships were awarded; Jennifer read out their names. One recipient, Marissa Renali could not make it to the meeting. Jennifer thanked the Scholarship Committee members for their time and effort in reviewing the applications and making recommendations. Our collective bargaining unit, the Council, is funding two scholarships this cycle.

Providing background to the scholarships, Rich said that two \$250 scholarships were created in the 1990s by faculty members who gave away their measly raises to fund these scholarships. He reminded everyone that donations can be earmarked to the BKMUW Scholarship through the University Foundation.

A motion was made to approve the minutes of the April 9 GUM, which was unanimously adopted.

Local Elections

Paul Martinez, the Elections Committee chair read out the names of the elected officers and delegates. Rich thanked the committee for conducting the elections. Other members of the committee were: Louise Davies and Brian Adams.

Ballots were handed out for the ratification (of the various agreements arrived at with the administration) vote. The changes to the LSPA were ratified with a vote of 25 yes and 1 no. Rich provided a recap of the Higher Education Conference that took place recently in Baltimore. The conference was attended by 7 union officers and one member, and provided an opportunity to interact with union people from all over the country and to find out about the issues being confronted in other institutions and places.

Vanessa reported that the tenure and promotion workshop that took place on May 6 was attended by 17 participants. Among those present were several faculty members who serve on DPACs, and they provided good feedback on the personnel procedures in place in different departments across campus. Vanessa said she hoped to organize another workshop focused on tenure.

Maughn Gregory, who is the new Faculty Coordinator and Susan Hagen, the new Professional Staff Coordinator introduced themselves. An announcement was made that Krystal Woolston, who was a finalist for the National AFT's Everyday Hero award, won with a majority of votes in her category.

Meiling Chow said that there was nothing to report from the library.

Kathy reported that a professional staff member chose to resign when confronted with the possibility of disciplinary action. She had also received faculty queries about promotion. Kathy has been working with Jennifer on reclassification procedures. She also fielded queries about transition to retirement and performance-based promotions. An Instructional Specialist was assigned four different preps over the summer. She was able to resolve the issue. Other questions that Kathy was asked include the advance notice that one is required to serve the university before resigning.

Rich noted that the Local's costs for defending members have been rising exponentially.

David reported that the Senate would meet one more time before the summer break. A book award would also be given. At the next meeting the Tobacco Taskforce would present a report, and the Senate would vote on its recommendations. The recommendations would then be forwarded to the administration. David encouraged everyone to participate in the Senate meetings and said that they it has been very good about recognizing guests.

Bill said that he voted no on the Tobacco Taskforce on the question of prohibiting smoking on campus.

David said that the Senate is also expecting a report from the Academic Affairs Council about Student Rights Handbook. The Council decided the language about discrimination was not current (most of the language of the handbook pertains to terms and conditions of work). Rich said that the Union hopes that the outdated language would be updated and the negotiable language would be changed.

In response to a question about the social media policy, Rich said that the document, along with the comments of the Senate, is currently with the Provost.

Negotiations

Ken said that a lot of questions have come up related to Instructional Specialists. The union is trying to get the relevant information from the administration to find out what is going on. Regarding modifying the Students Rights Handbook, Ken felt that the administration's main objective is not enhancing students' rights. With respect to any changes in the handbook, the contract would take precedence.

Another issue that has come up recently is about the furloughs that all university employees took a few years ago. According to the contract, employees upon their departure from the university, were to receive three days worth of Personal Leave Bank pay if they didn't otherwise use the PLB days, and there was no sunset clause attached to this provision. A faculty member, who recently retired, brought it to the attention of the union that he was not getting paid the three-days' pay. When the union made inquiries as to why he was not getting paid, the administration failed to provide a clear explanation. On further investigation, it was determined that there were 300 employees whose Paid Leave Bank balance, erroneously, stood at zero (the correct number is 21 hours is for most faculty). Faculty members cannot use their paid leave unless they have exhausted their sick leave. Rich said that the union is trying to get the administration to do an audit to get to the bottom of the problem. In a way the administration's lack of clarity on this issue is understandable because of the substantial amount of money at stake (\$300k-\$1 million). Ken said that anytime a money-related mistake is made it is very problematic.

Ken said that it was reported to him that a dean has asked for the numbers in a particular DPAC vote. The contract clearly disallows this.

Jennifer said that the administration is not applying the contract about who the immediate supervisor should be for professional staff. According to the contract the supervisor should not be a member of the same bargaining unit, but this stipulation is often violated. Jennifer said that the union has asked department chairs to provide letters of recommendation for staff if they happen to be in the same unit. We would also be providing definitions of who the immediate supervisor is for every staff member. This is going to be one of the items on the list of negotiable items.

Mike said that we voted to affiliate with AFTNJ. As of May 2014 the union is paying 68 cents per member per month in dues. According to the conditions of our affiliation the dues would increase to \$1 per member per month, but this would not affect our bottom line. Currently we pay approximately 40% of the AFTNJ dues and remaining 60% is paid by the Council.

Rich said that faculty and staff who get NJ Transit bus passes through the University received their passes two weeks ago but were informed that the University failed to deduct for summers for, possibly, the last 4 years. And they want that money to be paid. Payroll has made a lot of mistakes in the last 3-4 years. There are instances of people who have been underpaid. A suggestion was made to organize a webinar on paystub reading.

Rich said that for the next three weeks he would be going to court in connection with the detouring case that is underway.

Old Business

Jennifer reported that of the seven applications for performance-based promotions, two were successful.

Bill said that the mayoral election in Newark would take place on Tuesday. Jeffries, one of the two candidates has received big money to open charter schools. Several of the Local's members have participated in phone banks and in labor walks on Saturday mornings supporting Ras Baraka. This Saturday, Randi Weingarten is coming.

Bill announced that the next General Union Meeting has been scheduled for June 25, from 12-2 pm.

Vanessa said that the Provost is making demands on the adjuncts about using Canvas for posting course content and for grading assignments. Bob Noonan is well aware of this, and is preparing a response. Ken said that this is less about pedagogy and more about control.

The meeting was adjourned at 4 pm.