

General Union Meeting
Nov 13
Minutes

The minutes of the Oct 9th GUM were circulated. Rich said he received a request for the minutes to be circulated before the meeting. The main issue is that since the minutes are approved at the General Union Meeting, until that happens they are only a draft. Problems may arise if we have multiple versions of the minutes circulating. We are going to discuss the issue of posting the minutes in the Officers Group and with the Executive Board. Clearly, there are pros and cons of minutes being circulated before the General Union Meeting. The minutes of Oct 9th GUM were passed unanimously.

NJ Gubernatorial Election

Rich said he is not happy with the outcome of the election. The silver lining is that the legislature is under Democratic control. That combined with Governor Christie's national ambitions makes it unlikely that any major new anti-union legislation will be attempted. The greatest fear was that he would attempt to pass "Right to Work" legislation, but it's doubtful that will happen now. The attacks on unions, however, are likely to continue for political reasons, with the main targets being NJEA and CWA. The NJ Constitution is unclear on what happens to the governor, if he leaves to run for President. One possibility is a special election. COPE funds have proved to be very useful in supporting contestants favorable to the unions.

Reappointment

Several cases have come to light of DPAC not properly following the personnel procedures. In many instances, department chairs and deans also do not understand the process. The provost is focusing on scholarly impact, so illustrating your scholarly impact has become critical. The Provost has also spoken about a Social Media Matrix, but it is not clear what he means.

A faculty member who had been denied promotion to full professor had an hour-long meeting with the provost. During the meeting the Provost the faculty member's Google Scholar page was consulted. The provost ultimately reversed his decision based upon the data.

Kathy said that meeting in person with the Provost could be helpful. In response to a question about the timing of the meeting with the Provost—before or after the review—Rich said that it helps if the Provost knows the individual. Vanessa said that the papers presented in support of reappointment and tenure should be able to provide a clear picture of the applicant. Rich advised that the language used should be kept as simple as possible. Another question pertained to the role and value of external letters of review. Vanessa said that external letters could only help. Kathy suggested that it is good practice to document suggestions made during meetings with supervisors. It is called "contemporaneous notes," and can be helpful in the future. It applies to both faculty and staff.

Librarian Issues

Kathy said in the library they are working on a proposal on promotions and reappointments. Personnel guidelines in the library have not been revised since 1978 and need to be spiffed up. There is also an ongoing search for an outreach librarian. The President and Provost recently met with the librarians, and one of their questions was: when are we going to stop buying books for the library?

Professional Staff

Jennifer announced that there would be an orientation on Jan 15th, at noon, for professional staff. This orientation is for new staff and colleagues who have not been in the union. Debra Davis from the Council would be at the workshop. The professional staff recently had a meeting on multi-year appointments.

Faculty Issues

A faculty member asked a question about the policy regarding attendance in department meetings scheduled during the Winter Break: Is one required to participate in a department meeting during the break? Rich said that while the administration cannot force faculty or staff to come to a meeting, the Winter Break is part of the academic year, which ends at Commencement. For instance, there should not be any expectations of attendance in a meeting organized in June.

Vanessa reported that during the past month she referred two faculty members to Kathy for DPAC-related issues. She announced the upcoming faculty promotions workshop on Dec 5th. Other issues that have come up include faculty who have four course preps, and in one instance even five. There is also a proposal made by the administration to conduct teaching evaluation every semester for all faculty members.

Rich and Vanessa attended a session of the new faculty orientation where they represented the union and spoke about its role in the university. Of the fifteen faculty members who attended, eleven signed the membership cards, while two had signed the cards prior to the meeting.

Vanessa reiterated that if faculty members are experiencing any workplace issues, they should speak to her. In cases where the issues are grievable, she would refer them to Kathy. Kathy spoke about the role the Local plays in these cases. Faculty members are assisted in crafting responses, and provided advice as they go through the steps of the grievance process. Parking issues have again been raised, and the Parking Services appears to be handing out a lot of tickets. In this they are being helped by the new scanning technology they are using.

Kathy expressed concern that in many instances, unit members are being supervised by individuals from their own unit. We have made a list of these cases and there are sixty people who are in this position. In case of people on multi-year contracts, their supervisors from the same unit cannot sign off on their evaluation. The definition of a supervisor can be found in the contract under the multi-year clause. In some cases the deans may serve as supervisors. Vanessa asked if this affects the chair's review of faculty for matters of reappointment and promotion, to which Kathy said no.

Senate Issues

David said that the Senate is going to go over its history in order to bring the constitution up-to-date with past constitutional amendments included.

On a different note, David said that skateboarders and pedestrians should not be sharing the same space, and this is something that the Senate or the Campus Safety Committee should take up.

Negotiations

Rich reported that the union is in the midst of protracted negotiations over the widest range of issues in its recent history, for both faculty and staff. Among others, some of the issues are related to performance-based promotions and external letters of support. One of the questions pertaining to the latter is: Would the letters be confidential? This is an important question because these letters could seriously affect someone's chances of promotion. Even in universities where external letters are required, they are usually not confidential. Regarding teaching evaluations, three out of nine state colleges in our sector use an outside service to survey the students. Rich said there would be a committee to resolve this issue and Vanessa would be on it as the Faculty Coordinator. The committee would have six members, including three faculty members and three administrators.

Rich said one of the goals of using a standardized survey is to enable comparison. Bill Sullivan said that the issue should be brought to the membership for a vote. Rich said that the membership would ratify the negotiated agreement. Some other concerns related to online teaching evaluations are: potentially low response rates with online evaluations and its impact on faculty morale.

Treasurer's Report

The union will undertake a review of its finances which is required for us to be seated at the AFT National Convention. In cases where the union membership is more than one thousand, an external independent audit is required. Since we fall under this threshold, a review would suffice. We are moving forward by forming an internal review committee.

President's Report

Rich said he wants everybody to come to the Senate meetings and to the Board of Trustees meetings. It should be an interesting experience, to see how they conduct business.

Jennifer announced that preparations are under way for organizing a pizza party for students staying in the dorms over the Winter Break. Care packages are also being assembled for distribution. This year, the union is soliciting cash contributions, so that we can have uniformity in the packages. Last year there was a lot of variability in the content of the care packages. Last year there were about a hundred students who attended the party; this year we expect more.

New Business

There has been an appeal from Kean University for support, because of the situation that has developed there. Among the nine people that went up for tenure, eight have been turned down. It is important to recognize that we are not Kean, and our situations are highly dissimilar. For instance, at Kean, seventy-five percent of their courses are taught by adjuncts. Rich said that we would explore opportunities for solidarity.

Bill said that the problem at Kean is political. Vanessa asked if we could issue a statement of solidarity.

A question was asked about potential intellectual property issues surrounding migration from Blackboard to Canvas. Rich said that the statewide master agreement has strong language related to intellectual property rights of faculty. Vanessa said that social media can be integrated easily with Canvas, and this raises potential issues with respect to sharing and privacy. Blackboard, our current online instructional platform, goes away in August.

Mike Heller said that OIT has hired forty students to help faculty migrate content to Canvas. All the courses would automatically be created in Canvas.

Rich adjourned the meeting at 4:02 pm.