



KEAN FEDERATION OF TEACHERS
An Association of Professors, Professional Staff and Librarians

Local 2187, American Federation of Teachers
Kean University, Union, N.J. 07083
Phone 908 737-3925 Fax 908 737-3929

KFT General Membership Meeting
26 February 2003: 3:40 pm
University Center Little Theatre

I. President's Report

*R. Katz reported that Barbara Hoerner, Chief Staff Representative of the State Council, who had replaced Tom Worth in that position, would be retiring in December 2003. A new Chief of Staff has been hired by the name of Steven Young. He has 25 years of experience with the American federation of Musicians-AFL/CIO. He is a graduate of the Berkeley College of Music. He is to begin in the position on April 1.

*R. Katz indicated that the last State Council meeting before the first negotiation meeting with the State was two weeks ago. The demands for the Master Contract have been finalized.

*R. Katz reported that at the last meeting of the Communications Council, Interim President Esposito and President Elect Farahi were both present. He stated that he indicated to the President that there is a need to meet with all campus groups to discuss alternative plans a, b and c before anything is presented to the Board and that all representatives from such groups should be at the table when the final figures are in. President Elect Farahi stated that there is a priority to retain all positions and that he still intends to have some new hires. He suggested that all positions should be protected and that administrators should get together to come up with grants to fund present positions on campus.

Discussion ensued. There seems to be no planning and planning that takes place occurs behind closed doors. It appears that the Board is holding the whip and the administration is playing into it. Salary increases can't be taken into account because the Master Contract probably won't be signed until September or October, so the increases in salary cannot be taken into account since we don't know what they are yet. What President Elect Farahi's salary will be has not yet been announced. Given that he has less experience (having not been a Dean or Provost) than the previous two

presidents, if his salary were to be determined as ours is, this would and should be taken into account. Given the budget deficit, he could model saving money by accepting a lesser salary. The new President of Rutgers, McCormick, was the most vocal of the NJ college/university presidents regarding the Governor's cuts in the higher education budget, despite having just gotten a salary twice that of the previous president. Is it possible that Gov. McGreevey is playing hardball to try and get a tax increase by legislation? Legislators want a tax increase, but Gov. McGreevey has so far said no. He doesn't want to raise taxes like Jim Florio.

II. Treasurer's Report

*E. Comerford stated that at the meeting, it was announced that the last payment for this fiscal year due to the University from the State would not be received. That makes a \$1.7 million deficit for this fiscal year. There is another \$4.8 million deficit for fiscal year 2003-2004, including an anticipated 5-7% increase in expenses amounting. This is a total of \$12 million. The administration had indicated that a 20% increase in tuition is out of the question, so other options are being explored. At the 3/15/03 Board Meeting, it is planned that options will be presented to the Board. The final impact remains to be seen. Next week, on 3/6/03, a student protest by Rutgers students with Kean students is planned in Trenton. Discussion ensued. There will be other tuition hike protests after that. Our students need help to become educated about this issue. Teach-ins are a possibility. An article from The Chronicle of Higher Education indicates that there has been a decline nationwide in the amount of money the states allocate to higher education. New Jersey is in the lowest 1% in higher education funding. We rank 47th out of the 50 states in per capita funding for education in the U.S.

*E. Comerford stated that the administration must look at what's been spent year to date and then look at contractually what can't be touched (salaries and debt service). The rest will come under scrutiny to see where cuts will come from.

*E. Comerford indicated that with the new academic building, Kean was sued and that lawsuit is not yet settled. There is \$1.7 million in reserve and was set aside for new construction. This money cannot be touched for other purposes. There is a total of \$500,000 in other reserves, a special "restricted" reserve. No new building can proceed until the lawsuit is settled. It may take some time before what's left of the money is released. That's why the administration claimed that there was no surplus. The bonding arrangements for the new academic building require money to be held in

reserve. The building is being paid by University bonds. The capital fees the students pay go toward debt service (currently \$7 million) instead of state appropriations. If these are 20-year bonds, they have to be paid back or refinanced. President elect Farahi said the situation is critical.

Discussion ensued. It was asked if this is so, and if the administration even wants to move employees from regular lines to grant-funded ones, will all this building be stopped? The administration wants us to help them with alternatives. The idea of using grants to support positions is ludicrous. It is only one way. But it is the first. The money isn't coming in this year. Classes are difficult to schedule because of lack of space. Once a project is scuttled, it's hard to put back. We can't have the infrastructure fall down around us. To completely stop construction is a mistake. Hutchinson, Willis and Vaughn-Eames have infrastructure problems, problems that have been going on for years. We need to look at where we want to be in 10 years. In some instances, the law requires that the construction on campus requires that the job be given to the lowest bidder. It could be that there is a low quality of work being done, as in the New Academic Building. There is two other unions on campus and we need to think about them also. We don't want them laid off. With more buildings, we'll need more workers. The labor unions need to hang together. The order of priority should be students first, institution next and us last. Everyone needs to be included in the discussion of this issue. If people have some input, we'll reach a better solution. We need communication. Those with ideas should bring them forward. We need solution that cannot come about from any one group alone. A more acceptable solution is one made together.

III. Master Contract Negotiations

*R. Katz stated the first meeting with the State for Master Contract Negotiations will be 3/21/03 in Trenton. Our chief aim is to protect our health benefits and pension. The major issue is getting rid of NL for Professional Staff. Another demand is a three course load for faculty. The State Council will be silent until contract language negotiations are complete. The contract will be retroactive to 7/1/03 once it's settled. It will probably take all Spring and Summer. Our financial stand is that we won't accept a 0% salary increase. There is a possibility that we will work with no contract. Normally, every contract is settled after July 1. Our Governor is nominally pro-labor. One of the main issues is that we do not want to absorb more than 25% of the increased in health benefits cost increases. The State Health Benefits Board decides health benefits for state employees. We don't want a diminution of benefits. Loss of salary increases can be made up, but not so for health benefits. We also want an increase in eye and dental coverage. In regards to Professional Staff, strong contract language is needed for "comp" time.

IV. Local Negotiations: New Agreement for Librarians

*D. Casale reported that Interim President Esposito signed a memo of understanding on 2/13/03 that binds Librarians, Administration and the Provost to a good faith effort to put it into effect. The Librarians worked to draft by-laws specifying governing procedures and processes to in effect get them concurrent faculty rights. D. Casale stated he commends President Esposito for signing it. He wants to act and act promptly and in good faith. There will be a meeting with V.P. P. Connelly on Friday to begin to discuss a draft for Professional Staff rights.

V. The Next University Administration

*R. Katz stated that Dr. Farahi has said that he's not going to award friends only nor will he hold grudges. We'll see what happens. He's a pragmatist and doesn't hold to loyalties. He'll adjust to the situation on ground and doesn't have set ideas. He negotiates what is in front of him, so there may be room to negotiate. He knows what's going on, that the Administration is too large. He talked of protecting the labor unions. We insisted that the Administration put in writing what the budget situation is. This seems to have made a dent. We need to understand it so we can communicate it to students. We should explain to the students the fact that the State doesn't fund higher education anywhere near 100%. Even graduate students may be unaware of what's going on. Many of them have tuition waivers from their jobs or from graduate assistantships. Both Interim President Esposito and President Elect Farahi stated that increasing enrollments only brings in more money up to a point. It then comes to the point that the cost of services provided to an increased number of students outstrips money brought in. The State pays for 7,300 FTEs. We have increased enrollment to 7,800 and then again to the present enrollment of 8,449 FTEs. Any number above the 7,300 is money to pay for other things. The inflection point seems to be 8,300, for services provided and money brought in. Two faculty members have told R. Katz that they have 31 students a piece in writing intensive classes. The Administration has stated that there will not be a push again to increase enrollment. From here on in, tuition will increase. R. Katz stated that there are 16-17 faculty vacancies. Probably six new faculty will be hired. There will also be additional retirements. In terms of communication with the campus community, we will see if the next administration is genuine in doing what President Esposito is doing now. It seems that he found out that what was done before did not work. If people are included in discussion, rumors will not abound.

*R. Katz indicated that as a Union, we need to move our interests forward. There is a learning curve in dealing with crises. There will also be one with dealing with the new President. We're asking for information regarding budget issues and if it's forthcoming, that's a positive sign. President Esposito did say that the administration did not have all the answers. If we find information is not forthcoming, then we deal with them differently.

*R. Katz stated that the administration has indicated that there is a budget surplus of about \$500,000. The snow removal this season amounted to \$500,00. Certain expenses have been budgeted for. Travel expenses and other budget categories may not be completely spent by the end of June. There may be a \$1.7 million cut for this fiscal year. They'll probably find ways to deal with the deficit with discretionary funds. Our salaries account for 54% of the budget. If there are few new hires and some retirees, this will free up some money. There may not be many retirements due to the incentives to retire last year. The average salary for faculty is \$66,000. There are 374 faculty members (full-time). Discussion ensued. We don't know what Governor McGreevey is planning. No constituency is happy with McGreevey. We are the aggressive Union in the State. At a meeting, Gov. McGreevey said "we are going to hear from God now" when N. Yovnello was going to speak. The Governor is going to the AFT convention in Florida. N. Yovnello told him that he needs to sit down here with us in N.J. The African-American community is very disappointed with Governor McGreevey. Regarding an e-mail from President Esposito about anonymous letters against him and S. Kubow, R. Katz stated he did not know what the letters were about.

Meeting adjourned at 4:57 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Linda Bradbury, Secretary to the KFT.