



KEAN FEDERATION OF TEACHERS

An Association of Professors, Professional Staff and Librarians

Local 2187, American Federation of Teachers

Kean University, Union, N.J. 07083

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KFT General Membership Meeting
Wednesday, October 3, 2007, HH-113

Business Covered:

The meeting began at 3:37 PM.

President María del Carmen Rodríguez welcomed everyone to the meeting.

I. Approval of Agenda

The agenda was approved as presented, with the addition of an item requested by Pat Gruytch. It was added under New Issues .

II. Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of March 28, 2007 were approved as presented.

III. President's Report

President María del Carmen Rodríguez welcomed new members to the union. The audience applauded the new membership. Membership was asked to recruit new members to the KFT. Joining the KFT costs only a little more but gives the power to help decide on important issues.

María del Carmen Rodríguez repeated that the nine colleges and universities overwhelmingly approved the new contract. In our local, the percentage in favor was 90.2%. Negative response to the contract was less than 10%. She then introduced Bennett Muraskin from the Council who has worked very hard on our behalf.

Bennett Muraskin reported that the salary scales on the contract were forwarded to OER. They must be approved by the New Jersey Department of Personnel. Once they are approved, they return to OER then OER gives the OK to the various Human Resources and Payroll departments to begin calculating the new salaries. It means that some employees will receive some retroactive pay. At the same time they also must subtract the 1.5% health deduction. For those in Traditional Plans and HMOs they will need to be refunded the premiums that have been deducted since July 1, 2007.

María del Carmen Rodríguez reported that she presented the proposal created by Bryan Lees, Chrysoula Fantaousakis and Charles Kelly for evaluating the President, the Provost and the Deans, to the State Council Executive Committee. There is no precedent of this ever having been done in New Jersey. So, this is developing history in New Jersey as we convince other institutions that it is a good idea to evaluate administrators. We believe that if evaluation of faculty is a good idea, it is also a good idea to evaluate administrators. We will treat them with extreme respect and integrity. The Executive Council loved the idea. It will be presented to the General Council on October 12th. There was general applause for this effort by the audience.

The Council is interested in developing an effort to support nursing programs in New Jersey so as to address the incredible need for prepared nurses in the state. Also, the Council President is interested in problems that arise at meetings of Boards of Trustees.

María del Carmen Rodríguez noted that a faculty member has sued the University and the KFT. She reminded the membership that we have had success with using the firm of Esquire McGovern to assist us. Unfortunately a previous appeal filed more than two years ago was successful and so the faculty member's appeal is going to the State Supreme Court. María del Carmen Rodríguez noted that she has received permission of the KFT Executive Council to continuing using this law firm. The only part that the plaintiff did not win was the ability to pursue the lawsuit against the KFT and the Council. It was the only part that he lost.

María del Carmen Rodríguez noted that there are flyers available for membership to participate in campus-wide meetings.

María del Carmen Rodríguez announced that Jon Erickson's legal proceeding was settled successfully. Bennett Muraskin noted that this unfair labor practice charge was settled positively. It was noted that the President did not accept the results of the departmental election. The case went to PERC at which a compromise settlement was reached. The Administration agreed not to veto any future appointments of him made by his department. It was noted that the President can say no to any elected chairperson. However, a reason must be given to the department. In the case of Jon Erickson, the settlement process found the reason to be invalid. So, although he was not reinstated as chairperson, the Administration agreed not to use this reason to disqualify Dr. Erickson in the future.

María del Carmen Rodríguez noted that members are asking about the dates of salary increases. Step 7 and below is yearly increase on your anniversary date. Step 8 and above is every year and one half but you get a new anniversary date. Those with these questions were referred to Human Resources.

On a personal note, María del Carmen Rodríguez reported that her personal health issues and corresponding therapy were successful. She thanked the members of the KFT Executive Committee for their support.

IV. Treasurer's Report

In the absence of Ellen Comerford, Jon Erickson explained that the financial statements and audits have been completed. We passed the audit. There is a 3% increase in stipends that certain KFT officers will be receiving.

V. Committee Reports

Local Negotiations. Charles Kelly reported that the Negotiations Committee has not had a formal meeting yet. It will be on October 16th. There will be many issues on the table.

Last semester was very contentious. One letter of agreement is pending—the transition from the classroom to retirement. Hopefully it will be approved.

Next one is course evaluation. The Provost has formed a task force. Our problem is that given the history of course evaluation, with the rush effort last spring, there are questions of whether the Administration is proceeding in good faith. The first meeting was last Friday. He presented a list of questions.

- How should the course evaluation be administered?
- What use will be made of the results?
- How will the results be used?
- Who will see the results?
- Where will the results be held?

It is meant to be a faculty committee with no administrators. The KFT observer is entitled to sit in meetings and observe. Charles Kelly reported on his experience in the area of evaluation. He clarified his right to speak and participate.

Charles Kelly noted that evaluation is tricky and everyone has their own ideas about it. He will be reporting back to the membership periodically. Target deadline is February. It will be piloted in the spring and will be fully operational in fall 2008. It was noted that KFT observers should be given the opportunity to participate fully on committees of which they are a part, as this is past practice at Kean University .

Other issues are

- peer evaluation
- course evaluation
- three vs. four-course load (such as is found in most of our sister institutions—Kean, Jersey City and William Paterson are the only ones with four-course loads)
- modification of range adjustment
- review of letters of agreements that have sunset clauses
- Presidential award, Foundation research award, etc.—every time one of these is given there is an obligation to have it negotiated
- the chair compensation issue
- promotion opportunities for librarians

Membership with other suggestions for issues were encouraged to bring them to the attention of the negotiations committee. He noted that the master contract now permits spreading a faculty member's load over the fall-spring-summer term.

He noted surprise that the Administration did not sign the classroom-to-retirement proposal. It was on the verge of being signed. He reported that the President is concerned about the maintenance and cost of long-term faculty. The transition would have eased them out but it was never signed.

Grievance. James Castiglione noted that he had participated in the hearings for Jon Erickson but the bulk of the work was done by State Council.

There were problems encountered by some untenured faculty that are being resolved.

There is a faculty member on sick leave who believes that their sick days have been miscounted. Membership was asked to check on theirs.

Several changes have been made to the Master Contract grievance procedure. The old 14-day time period to file procedural grievances for committees is extended to 21 days. Also the path to arbitration dealing with Step I procedures has been smoothed. He noted that the grievance committee has been vigorous and we are hoping for a successful year.

Bennett Muraskin reported on the subject of employees appearing to do work of normally done by members of the KFT but who are carrying management or CWA titles. He reported that at least four persons with management titles were transferred to CWA. Kean had several people in that title. Most other institutions did not have any. There are six positions where they are CWA but should be in AFT based on the work that they do. He will sit down with CWA and compare job descriptions, people doing similar work, history of previous personnel in these position, etc. to determine if the people should be moved into the AFT.

Jon Erickson reported on the upcoming political endorsements.

Linda Bradbury asked professional staff to check on any comp time earned since July 1, 2007. They need to make sure that they were credited properly.

V. Old Issues

There were none.

VI. New Issues

Response to Email. Pat Gruytch noted that she is a Professional Services director with 17 years experience in the KFT. She wanted to respond to the email sent out by María del Carmen Rodríguez earlier today.

After reading a quotation from the email, Pat Gruytch took issue with statements that our focus is not at the Graduate Level. She noted that several graduate faculty and administrators were present in the room. She stated that apparently this must be the Union's position on graduate education. She interpreted this sentence to read "the Union is denigrating to graduate programs." The Doctoral Program has been approved at every single level. There was a statement at the Board of Trustees meeting that gives a distorted view of the graduate program. The graduate programs do not compete with undergraduate programs.

Pat Gruytch noted that the statement of María del Carmen Rodríguez is very positive. However, the statement made to the Board of Trustees by KFT Vice-President James Castiglione is not positive. She noted that the graduate college is owed an apology. She then made a formal request that the KFT make a public statement to correct this image.

Jim Castiglione noted that he disagrees with the characterization of his statement. He noted that Kean is mainly an undergraduate institution and we need to provide resources to help our students. Pat Gruytch noted that this is not enough. She stated that if this is the Union's position on graduate education, it is not a positive one.

Victor Ortiz noted that he was at the Board of Trustees meeting. He stated that the intent of the statement made in the Board meeting may not have been malicious but it was interpreted by the Board as the position of the KFT. He suggested that the statement be retracted.

María Pérez noted that the statement did not represent the views of the Executive Board of the KFT. She reported that the statement was never deliberated by the Executive Board nor was it approved by them. She noted that this is symptomatic of one of the problems with the KFT. The Executive Board must be told what is going to be said at meetings of the Board of Trustees.

María Pérez added that the membership is told that these statements represent the Union but it turns out that they represent only one individual. Victor Ortiz suggested that such statements should be identified as the personal views of the presenter it should be stated to the Board of Trustees that they do not necessarily represent the views of the Executive Board of the KFT.

María del Carmen Rodríguez noted that the Executive Board/Membership meeting has intelligent discussion followed by conclusions about what is to be done, followed by votes to proceed. She noted that this is a democratic institution with ample opportunity

to express views and decide and that all meetings, both general and executive, follow Robert Rules of Order.

Jim Castiglione then stated that these were his personal views and suggestions and not those of him as a Vice-President of the KFT. Pat Gruytch noted that they were presented to the Board on Union stationery.

María del Carmen Rodríguez noted that Dr. Castiglione was representing her at the meeting. David Shani noted that if this was his personal opinion it must be clearly stated.

María del Carmen Rodríguez asked if there were any more comments. Toni Battistella noted that the Graduate College should receive an apology as a result of the statement made to the Board of Trustees. Gilda Del Risco noted that her work with the Graduate College indicates that their work should be recognized and membership should understand why she feels the way she does. María del Carmen Rodríguez noted that the issue will be taken under consideration by the Executive Council.

VII. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 4:35 PM

Respectfully submitted,
Frank Osborne, Secretary