

## KFT Position Paper on the Tenured Faculty Research Initiative

The KFT's position on the administration's Tenured Faculty Research Initiative (TFRI) is guided by the following principles:

- all terms and conditions of employment are negotiable
- opportunity and treatment must be fair and equitable
- negotiations must be open and follow due process
- Letters of Agreement are subject to the democratic approval of the membership
- shared governance and academic freedom are to be protected

The initial TFRI proposal was developed by the KFT to meet the need of senior faculty members who had not received release time for research in a while and wished to re-invigorate their scholarship. As the apportionment of release time for research activities falls under our terms and conditions, TFRI is a negotiable item (see existing Letters of Agreement # 27, 76 and 100). When an item is negotiable, it provides us with greater control over our work environment than when management dictates policy. Negotiated agreements ensure high standards, fairness and accountability. One need look no further than the existing negotiated RTR and UFRI programs to see the success of this model.

The proper approach to negotiations is to conduct them with transparency in formal negotiation meetings: having regular progress reports to the general membership, providing opportunity to discuss negotiated agreements and vote for their approval. In this open and democratic way are we more likely to get comprehensive agreements that are responsive to the needs of our membership. The administration's initiative proceeded through back room discussions without the knowledge of the KFT Executive Council, and as a result has been seriously compromised.

Some of the ways in which this proposal has been compromised:

1. Shared governance of our workplace is undermined when the award-making process is wholly in administrative hands.
2. There is no peer review by committee at the university level, in contrast to our original proposal, which placed the program under the auspices of the existing RTR Committee.
3. In the absence of this peer review, academic freedom would be compromised, as faculty would be susceptible to pressure from the university to pursue avenues of scholarship it deems valuable.
4. The current structure pits department against department, harming faculty unity.
5. Administrative control leaves no check on cronyism and favoritism.
6. While faculty committees are imperfect, they are more likely to promote fair and equitable treatment.
7. Finally, in the absence of a negotiated agreement, the longevity of the program is threatened. The administration is free to cancel the program at any time it wishes.

The KFT is pleased that the administration agrees with the KFT's longstanding position that programs like this that are good for the faculty are also good for the university. If the administration is serious about establishing a TFRI program based on merit, they will sit down at the negotiating table to work out a Letter of Agreement. It should be easy, after all, as their initiative is based on our original proposal. We acknowledge the value of some of the administration's ideas, such as targeting awards to each of the colleges, though we would suggest a proportional, and hence more equitable, distribution.

So let us come to the negotiating table. The KFT is committed to any opportunity for intelligent, open dialogue. Let's hope the university's administration is as well.

*James Castiglione*

## AFT Higher Education Conference

This year's AFT Higher Education Conference, "*Making Our Values Count: Advancing Equality, Education and Economic Security in Challenging Times*," was held on April 15-17 in Minneapolis jointly with the AFT's Committee on Civil, Human and Women's Rights. The Kean Federation of Teachers sent two delegates to the conference, Cristina Damiao and James Castiglione. Cristina will discuss sessions she attended in an article to appear in the next edition of *The KFT Voice*.

In the aftermath of the recent KFT presidential election, there has been much discussion over the issue of "values." Certainly, the work that we do as higher-education employees has tremendous value not only to our students individually but to their families and communities, and most broadly to the citizenry of the state of New Jersey and ultimately the nation. Furthermore, many of us have opted to make a career in higher education not out of greed for money or power, but because of a deep-seated commitment to education, opportunity and social justice. Perhaps we don't talk often enough about our values, and how they inform our work.

One consequence of not speaking out more forcefully about our values is that the rhetoric of our values is being used against us in cleverly disguised political attacks on higher education. The so-called "Academic Bill of Rights" couches the politicization of academia under the banner of liberty and diversity. "Intellectual diversity" is being used by some states

to try to legislate quotas of Democrats and Republicans in university hiring and promotion decisions. These legislative attacks on our values of faculty governance and academic freedom have not been introduced in New Jersey's State Legislature, but your KFT and AFT stand prepared to fight them if they do appear.

The conference hosted a number of sessions and workshops that centered on the theme of "Making Our Values Count." One such session, "Faculty Control of Work on Campus," discussed ways for unions to strengthen structures of shared governance.

"Best Practices for Building Member Activism" identified ways that other locals have tapped into the vast reservoir of expertise contained within their membership. The AFT will soon have "Best Practices" publications for faculty and professional staff.

The workshop, "Higher Education Unions and the Media," emphasized good media relations to help communicate our values to a wider audience.

"Scholarship of Teaching and Faculty Accountability" discussed the Boyer-4 Model of scholarship and the use of portfolios in retention and promotion processes. The KFT has long held that these approaches are well-suited to teaching-centered universities such as Kean.

The conference also emphasized fighting the "student-as-customer" paradigm to help students see themselves as learners, not as consumers. We need to articulate our values and issues of interest to our students. In building coalitions with students around the many values we share, we can more effectively "Make Our Values Count."