



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

Monday, March 9, 2009

CAS 106

3:20 pm – 4:30 pm

Note: this General Membership Meeting was rescheduled from the previous Monday, March 2, due to cancellation of classes because of snow.

President's Report

President Castiglione announced to KFT members that he needed to rearrange items on the agenda to accommodate State Council Representative, Steve Young. Agenda items 2 and 3 (Wage Freeze / Furloughs and Health Benefits respectively) were discussed first, and after, the discussion returned back to the President's report.

Wage Freeze/Furloughs

First, President Castiglione provided a context for the discussion of item 2 and 3 on the agenda. He reported that at a meeting on February 20, 2009 with David Rousseau, State Treasurer, and David Beckett, Director of the Office of Employee Relations, to layout the budget for the State of New Jersey, it was revealed that at the end of this fiscal year (June 30, 2009) the State of New Jersey is anticipating a total deficit of 2.8 billion dollars. This deficit does not include the 0.8 billion dollars in expected new spending due to the increase in layoffs and applications for Medicaid. In order to deal with the unexpected new spending through the current fiscal year, the State implemented 1.3 billion dollars in State spending cuts.

Further, the State's budget situation for fiscal year 2010 is quite grim. The State anticipates an additional 3 billion dollars in spending for fiscal year 2010. The additional spending is considered essentially mandatory: 650 million dollars in K-12 spending; 300 million dollars in increase debt services (includes construction /capital improvement projects at State Colleges and Universities); and 490 million dollars in salary increases, etc. New Jersey is facing a 7.5 billion dollars budget deficit for the upcoming fiscal year; therefore it has no other alternative but to make more severe cuts in its spending. The State did report that it expects 2+ billion dollars in stimulus funds from the Federal Government to help offset that deficit.

For fiscal year 2010, there is language built into the Stimulus Bill stating that if the State accepts Federal Stimulus funds then it must maintain its public college funding at the previous levels. There has been no decision on whether or not there will caps on increases in tuition and fees. The State also reported that

there had been no decision made yet on furloughs for the Colleges and Universities as it was unclear how it could properly apply to higher education.

The State sent a letter to the State Council indicating that it would like to meet and engage in discussions about how to deal with the State budget situation. The State AFT is not in any negotiations with State. The position of the AFT is that we have a Contract and our intent is to maintain the terms and conditions of that Contract. The AFT is coordinating with other large unions in the State to present a proposal to the Governor's office offering suggestions as to how to deal with the State's budget crisis.

Steve Young, from the State Council Office, reported that the State of New Jersey will receive between 14 to 17 billion dollars over several years from the Federal Stimulus Plan but not all of that funding will go to Higher Education. For example, Medicaid will receive 2.2 billion dollars. State Council is waiting to see what the Governor's budget proposal looks like on 3/10/09. The Governor has very little discretion in what he can do and not do. The first thing the Governor must do is pay the interest debt on bonds. The Obama Administration was able to get the State Fiscal Stabilization Bill through both House and the Senate and that may help States with their budget deficits: an additional 1.3 billion dollars have been allocated to States over the next two years. Out of the 1.3 billion dollars, 86% of it has to be dedicated to Education K thru 16 (includes higher education). Based on this allocation, 361 million dollars is dedicated for underprivileged children and 1 billion dollars for students with special needs. Additional money will be allocated for the Unemployment Fund. The State Fiscal Stabilization Bill is very complex.

Even with the additional funding from the State Fiscal Stabilization Bill, New Jersey will still have a 5 billion dollars budget deficit for the upcoming fiscal year. The United States Department of Education is still finalizing rules for States to access funding. In joint union meetings with CWA, CWA recognized that it will take a hit in permanent layoffs in this economy. The permanent layoffs are in addition to State proposed furloughs. The Unions want to maintain their Contracts with the State. The AFT is willing to loan the State, for a time certain, negotiated pay raises without interest for one year to prevent furloughs and layoffs. Under the Retrenchment Article in our Contract, during fiscal emergencies the Governor can cut wages, but the cut cannot exceed 3% and must be paid back within two years. At this point, the State Council is not sure what will be done, but we should know more after the March 16th meeting with the State.

President's Report cont.

President Castiglione urged KFT members to help the State Council by getting involved in three ways. One, go to the "Get Active" web link at the State Council web site (see handout) and send a letter to your NJ Assembly people and Senators urging them to honor our Contract. Two, send the KFT examples of managerial waste so that we can let the State know where wasteful spending is here at Kean to help make the case for savings without furloughs, etc.

Three, the Draft Resolution which states the KFT's position on the State budget crisis and its proposed wage freeze and furloughs was read by President Castiglione. A motion was made to accept the Resolution, and it was seconded by J. Erickson. A vote was taken and the motion passed unanimously. The Resolution will be forwarded to the Governor and the State's Commissioner of Higher Education, Jane Oates.

President Castiglione urged KFT members to read for clarity Article 41, page 90 on “Retrenchment” in our lavender color hard copy Contract. There is language in the Contract that speaks specifically to fiscal year emergencies and under what conditions the Governor is allowed to withhold negotiated salary increases.

Announcements: A settlement was reached in grievance case of the KFT Observer to the University Promotions Committee—the KFT Observer can review promotion files in the presence of the UPC Chair. This restoration of the KFT Observer’s role is a major victory for due process and fairness and provides our members with significant protection for their rights in the promotion process.

Settlement reached in the Unfair Labor Practice charges on the office hours policy—old office hours are restored. Faculty office hours are 5 hours spread over 3 days and faculty chairpersons office hours are 8 hours spread over 5 days. The return to the previous office hours policy takes effect after Spring Break and runs the entire 6 week negotiations period.

In reference to the Faculty Senate Elections, it appears that the Faculty Senate is engaging in its own interpretation of the Letters of Agreement regarding elections for those committees. Both the Faculty Senate and the Administration must adhere to Letters of Agreement or violations are inevitable. Therefore, the Administration cannot exercise a hands-off policy in this process, it must deal with the impropriety. The KFT will continue to put pressure on the Administration to correct errors in the process.

V.P. L. Bradbury reported that all Professional Staff and Librarians were charged a full day for the Snow Day on March 2nd if they did not come to work. She is waiting to hear from the State and the KFT Attorney on the legality of charging the entire day when the University was closed for half the day.

State Health Benefits Plan Audit

Steve Young reported that the State Council met with both the Director of OER and the State Director of Human Resources regarding the Aon letter. The State Council asserted the letter explaining the audit for verification of eligible dependents was not clear and poorly constructed. The State said it will be forthcoming with more information and agreed to improve the confidentiality procedures.

Adjournment

4:40 pm

Respectfully submitted by

Eleanor McKnight, Secretary

Handouts:

President Castiglione statement to Board of Trustees Meeting, March 7, 2009
Get Active - Council of New Jersey State Colleges Locals – AFT “Honor Our Contract”
KFT Draft Resolution