



## 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**

**July 22, 2021**

**3:30 pm-4:55 pm**

***Virtual (via Zoom)***

#### **I. Announcements**

- A. President Castiglione announced that Carey Brown was re-elected, by a margin of 2-to-1, as a trustee of the Board of PERS. Congratulations to Carey!
- B. C. Brown is the first AFT member and Kean employee on the PERS Board.

#### **II. Unemployment Update.**

##### **A. *President Castiglione reported the following:***

1. Some members have received benefits and others haven't (Pres. Castiglione and most of the KFT Executive Council have not), and the delays are not unique to Kean, nor do they result from the fact that we had furloughs as opposed to layoffs. We should recall that the furloughs contributed to saving 21 jobs. William Patterson University plans to lay off about 20-30 people in 2022. Our agreement, though not perfect, did prevent layoffs for 1.5 years (through Dec 31, 2021).
2. At some of our sister institutions, members have already received unemployment benefits; however, this is because they furloughed 6 months earlier than we did. They still experienced long delays within their own timeframe.
3. Rumors that Rutgers got special treatment are untrue; they could not because it is illegal for any group to get special treatment, special access, or dedicated staff at the unemployment office. Nor could the AFT have negotiated guaranteed unemployment benefits; that's not allowed. The main problem is that the system is simply overloaded.
4. One advantage of our late timing is that we can garner advice for navigating the system from our sister institutions. Here are some tips:
  - a) Keep trying: There is no substitute for persistence.
  - b) Nicole Ferree in HR is the University point person for helping members deal with the system, but she is very limited in what she can do to help.
  - c) In Senator Joe Cryan's office, Samantha Perez ([sperez@njleg.org](mailto:sperez@njleg.org)), who does constituent services, may be able to help.
  - d) If you live outside Sen. Cryan's district, reach out to your local state senator and/or assemblypersons.

- e) AFT-NJ & CNJSCL have reached out to Governor Murphy multiple times, so he and his staff are fully aware of our problems, and they are doing all they can with an overloaded system.
- f) Out-of-state residents should contact Sen. Cryan or Nicole Ferree for advice.

**B. Members' Comments and Questions:**

1. Some members contacted Sen. Cryan with success, some without success. One member contacted Assemblyman John Bramnick with success (AsmBramnick@njleg.org).
2. Some members received instructions for ID verification, which worked for some but not others.
3. Some members had success calling 761-2020 and working through the menu until given the option to speak to a person. Others got that far and never could speak to a person.
4. Members asked if there is an expiration date for applying for benefits. (Pres. Castiglione said that he will check.)
5. Members who were unemployment fraud victim have had multiple issues; some have been resolved, others have not.
6. Many members said that the Montclair PowerPoint was helpful.
7. One member cautioned that he was told to certify every week until receiving the benefit; others countered that this was wrong information.
8. A member reminded that on Fridays all SSNs can certify.

**III. Fall Reopening Concerns.**

- A. President Castiglione noted that ProStaff have returned to campus already, and he asked for feedback from them.

**B. Members' Comments and Questions:**

1. Virtual instruction: If a student refuses to come to campus, are we required to provide virtual instruction? The Administration is not clear on this.
2. Masks: Can we require students to wear masks in a room without proper ventilation? Are we allowed by law to ask students to wear masks in situations we deem hazardous?
3. Can faculty request rooms with windows?
4. Can faculty teach remotely if desired?
5. Vaccine exemptions: How can we tell who has an exemption and who does not? The honor system does not work. The Delta variant poses grave concerns. Can vaccine-exempted students come on campus without masks?
6. Class sizes/caps: Some classrooms struggled to fit students even pre-pandemic, but course caps have not changed. Will caps be adjusted?
7. Communal offices: In some Kean offices during normal times, dozens work and hundreds pass through each day. What is the plan for these spaces?
8. Preemptive advice: Faculty should have OCIS copy all classes into Blackboard for the Fall to be ready for a return to virtual if infections soar.
9. Vaccine effectiveness: An NJ.com article reports on 49 fully vaccinated people in NJ who have died from Covid. This should be part of the discussions about Fall planning. Link: <https://www.nj.com/coronavirus/>

[2021/07/49-people-who-were-fully-vaccinated-have-died-of-covid-in-nj-heres-what-we-know.html](https://www.njtu.edu/2021/07/49-people-who-were-fully-vaccinated-have-died-of-covid-in-nj-heres-what-we-know.html)

10. Cleaning: Are deep-cleaning procedures still in place at Kean for Fall?
11. LMS: Canvas will be the LMS for Fall 2022.
12. Risks to ProStaff: ProStaff are most at risk because they work in communal offices and are on campus at least 35 hours a week. Their offices should be redesigned and the CampusClear app should be reinstated.
13. Do vaccinated Pro Staff have to work in offices with unvaccinated personnel?
14. Will unvaccinated employees have to wear masks?
15. Faculty who cannot vaccinate due to a health condition: Can they teach remotely? Members should inquire with HR about existing procedures for requesting these types of accommodations.
16. What is the protocol for reporting positive COVID tests?

#### IV. Treasurer's Report.

##### A. *Reva Narasimhan reported the following:*

1. We finished the year with a small surplus. We received a PPP Loan for fiscal year 2021, which helped balance the dues-deficit from furloughs. However, the budget is somewhat abnormal because of this and other one-time variables caused by the pandemic. The State Council gave us a small refund for furloughs on the dues we pay to them, which helped. We saved money on parties, refreshments, and office supplies during pandemic.
2. If we get more members, we'll be in a better position going forward.

##### B. *Responses:*

1. Dan Gover asked if our membership has declined.
2. Pres. Castiglione replied that although our membership rate has remained stable, the US Supreme Court's Janus decision caused our revenues to drop significantly as we lost the agency fees formerly paid by nonmembers. Thus, we should try to get new members to join. We've signed up several new Pro Staff recently; we must work on new Faculty this Fall. Pres. Castiglione emphasized that member recruitment is everyone's responsibility and asked all attending to talk with new employees as they arrive.

#### V. Local Negotiations Report.

##### A. *Frank Argote-Freyre reported the following:*

1. We signed a retirement incentive / separation package that gives people more time to apply. This is the key language: *In consideration for their agreement to retire, AFT eligible unit members who opt to separate by December 31, 2021, shall, as soon as reasonably possible following December 31, 2021, receive a lump-sum payment equal to*  
*Salary of \$115,000 or higher – 40%*  
*Salary of \$100,000 or higher – 30%*  
*Salary of less than \$99,999 – 25%*

The language is flexible enough so that you can retire anytime between now and December 31 to get the benefit, subject to the University's approval.

2. We are experiencing a “Deans Gone Wild” phenomenon, whereby deans are creating programs without discussing terms and conditions with the KFT (for example, CLA Dean Jonathan Mercantini’s Summer Research Fellows program). The programs may have beneficial elements, but compensation and terms have not been negotiated. We are now in negotiations on the Summer Research Fellows Program.
3. We are trying to create a Labor-Management Committee so that a mediation process can happen before (and possibly obviate) the filing of grievances.
4. We are working on a proposal for revising the faculty promotion process and the University Promotion Committee By-Laws, which relates to the goal of achieving R2 status, based on recommendations from a committee of volunteers led by Drs. C. Bellitto & S. Polirstok. Thankyous to them.
5. We are also reviewing the recommendations in Dr. Elizabeth Hyde’s report from the R2 Committee and considering contractual language so that the R2 process can begin but with fair terms and conditions for our members and appropriate support for research and scholarship.
6. Pro Staff promotions: For years, the previous President did not promote Pro Staff and gave few to Faculty. The University is now reviewing 6 years of applications for reclassification by Pro Staff and trying to get them moving. There is now an online form to apply for reclassification, and people should apply as soon as possible. In addition, the KFT is pushing the University to announce a number of performance-based promotions for Pro Staff.
7. Environmental study of Hutchinson Hall (leaks & mold): requests have been lodged with the University and we will continue to follow-up.
8. Art History: The University is waiting for Dr. David Birdsell, the new SVCAA, to start (on Aug. 1) so that he can help decide the future of the program. Our goal is to help it thrive in perpetuity.
9. Lecturers LOA: This was submitted in February, but (as with other pending proposals) we are awaiting Dr. Birdsell’s input.

#### **VI. Additional Member Questions & Concerns**

- A. Regarding questions about the furloughs, Pres. Castiglione reported the following:
  1. Recap of our negotiated cost of living salary increases:
    - a) The 2% cost of living increase for this fiscal year was given to Pro Staff on July 1 and will be given to Faculty on Sept 1.
    - b) The fourth and last 2% across-the-board increase will be given to Pro Staff in April and to Faculty in June of 2022.
    - c) The second 2% across-the-board increase, which we agreed to defer last year due to the pandemic, will be given to Pro Staff next July 1 and to Faculty next Sept 1, again of 2022.
  2. Furlough agreement:
    - a) There has been some talk of revisiting the furlough agreement in view of the State’s reported budget surplus. At the recent Council Executive Committee meeting, Pres. Castiglione proposed, and the

Council agreed, that we reach out to the Governor with a 2-pronged approach:

- (1) Ask to renegotiate the deferred 2% raise to implement it this year instead, one year early
  - (2) Ask the Governor to use some of the State's reserve money to fund special projects at State colleges and universities for students, tech, research, DEI training, etc.
- B.* Kean received a lot of money from the CARES Act: \$13 million, of which 50% (\$6.5 million) was direct aid to students. In addition, Kean received more money from the American Rescue and Recovery Act. Related to this, the KFT will ask the University to have greater transparency about its finances going forward.
- C.* Members asked if there is an anticipated pay date for 21SP and 21SU workbooks and overloads. F. Argote-Freyre replied that those who did workbooks and had overloads should make sure that their supervisors know of it so that they can get paid, so members should check with their supervisors first and contact the KFT office if they encounter problems.
- D.* F. Argote-Freyre also reminded members that the University has stressed that it has no wish to return to virtual instruction this Fall.
- E.* Carey Brown thanked everyone for supporting his PERS election and for putting their trust in him to protect our pension. Pres. Castiglione gave this link to an article about C. Brown's election: <https://njafICIO.org/carey-brown-re-elected/>

**Meeting adjourned at 4:55 pm.**

**Respectfully submitted by:**

**Shannon Case, KFT Secretary**