



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

Nov. 1, 2021

3:30-4:31 pm

CAS 106 and Virtual (via Zoom)

I. President's Report

A. *Various Task Forces.* President Castiglione reviewed the following:

1. *Task force to review a return to a departmental structure with an elected faculty chairperson.* Dr. Birdsell wants recommendations by March. The Chairs will be phased in, possibly as early as next Fall, but there are many issues to sort out (departments without enough faculty, implementation schedule, and more).
2. *Task force to look at clinical faculty (a Faculty Senate committee).* The KFT has appointed Dr. Norma Bowe to serve on that committee.
3. *Middle States Self-Study.* The self-study has been drafted. The University is looking for feedback and will schedule open forums about it (the first one, for faculty, is Nov. 8).

B. *Unemployment Update.*

1. Pres. Castiglione said that many members have not received their benefits. He encouraged members to write to the governor or to their state senator and ask specifically for their case to be escalated. (Reva Narasimhan put the NJ State Legislator Directory Finder URL in the Chat.)
2. A member asked what to do if you live in NY. Pres. Castiglione responded that anyone who lives outside of NJ should contact Sen. Joe Cryan, Legislative District 20, and identify as a Kean University employee and KFT member.

C. *KFT Voice Newsletter.* Pres. Castiglione stated that a hard copy of the *KFT Voice* has been published and should be in mailboxes soon.

D. *Public Service Loan Forgiveness Program.* Pres. Castiglione explained this Federal government program as follows:

1. Anyone who works in public service and has qualified student loans can get some portion of them forgiven (the portion is everything left over after 10 years of payments have been made). Betsy DeVos improperly rejected 98% of applicants, so AFT sued and won a strong settlement, as follows:
 - a) All rejected applicants will be automatically reviewed
 - b) Previously non-qualifying student loans payments will now be counted
 - c) Those who don't get their loans forgiven can still get into a better loan program that will lower their payments.

2. The deadline to apply is Oct 31, 2022. (Reva Narasimhan put a link to the information in the Chat: www.meetsummer.org.) Summer is the company AFT has hired to work with members on their applications for the program.
3. This settlement is for AFT members only, and it is another example of the benefits of having a national union.

E. Membership Recruitment.

1. Pres. Castiglione stated that recruitment works better when close colleagues speak to non-members in person.
2. David Joiner thanked new members for joining and encouraged members to continue talking to colleagues since a strong membership is the key to a strong union that gets things done.

II. COPE Report – November 2nd Elections.

- A.** Walter Mack spoke about candidates whom the KFT has endorsed, in particular Kean faculty member Dr. Dennis Klein (Teaneck BOE). He reminded members that supporting people who support labor helps us in the long run.
- B.** W. Mack also encouraged members to contribute to the COPE fund.
- C.** Pres. Castiglione added that this election is very important because we must elect candidates who support labor. He noted specifically the importance of the Responsible Collective Negotiations Act (S-3810/A-5862), stating that whereas K-12 teachers have a law that prevents the imposition of last-best-offers during negotiations, we do not have a comparable one, and this legislation will starkly improve our future ability to negotiate by taking imposition of last best offer off the table and by opening up the number of negotiable issues. This bill may be brought up for a vote in the legislative session after

III. Treasurer's Report. Reva Narasimhan shared the Fiscal Year 2021-2022 Budget document, which was approved by the KFT Exec. Council at its most recent meeting.

- A.** R. Narasimhan explained that
 1. Revenues were negatively impacted by the US Supreme Court's Janus decision and by retirements and the lack of hiring during the pandemic year. The KFT Executive Council made numerous cuts over the last year including reducing stipends, leaving some positions vacant, and cutting spending on non-essential activities. Nonetheless, we are projecting a deficit for this year about which she made the following points.
 - a)** we received a \$3700 dues rebate from AFT National due to loss of revenue due to the furloughs
 - b)** we budgeted \$10,000 for legal fees, but might use less
 - c)** stipends remain reduced but we have filled several vacancies including the Secretary, Publicity Comm, Delegates, etc
 - d)** we have budgeted money for refreshments and food at meetings and parties, though at dramatically reduced levels from the past.
 - e)** we have a small surplus from last year to put toward this year's expenses.
 - f)** we are currently projecting a \$19,000 deficit

g) that deficit can be eliminated if we raise our membership rate so we urge all members to talk with non-member colleagues about joining the union.

2. The KFT gets only 1/3 of member dues, while 2/3 go to the State and National unions.

B. Pres. Castiglione reiterated that post-pandemic expenses (such as food) have driven up costs somewhat, but we are being frugal and will try hard to stay within the proposed budget.

IV. Local Negotiations Report. Frank Argote-Freyre reported the following:

A. The KFT has reached an agreement regarding payments for faculty doing WKU portfolio reviews: 0.375 credits per portfolio (submit documents to the dean's office to get paid).

B. The KFT has reached an agreement on revised By-Laws for the University Promotion Committee. The biggest change is an agreement that untenured faculty who are awarded tenure will receive promotion to Associate Professor at the same time.

C. The Local Negotiations Committee will meet with the Administration next week to set priorities for upcoming negotiations:

1. Art History faculty (the most urgent)
2. Lecturers LOA (there will be a separate meeting for Lecturers to discuss the LOA and get feedback)
3. ProStaff (the ProStaff Committee is drafting a promotions proposal)
4. Tenured Assistant Professor Promotions (we are looking for an expedited path to Associate Professor for the 40-50 faculty in this category)

V. Questions and Concerns.

A. Emily Filardo recommended that faculty get some compensation also (even a small sum) for doing the reviews of WKU faculty portfolios (not the lengthy assessment activities), since WKU faculty are not Kean employees and even a quick review is a duty that may not be covered by the master contract.

B. A member asked where the Union stands on providing promotions for all of the Assistant and Associate Professors who were passed over in prior years.

1. Pres. Castiglione reiterated all that he had stated before about how this is one of our priorities: to negotiate a mechanism for all tenured Assistant Professors to be promoted and thus achieve a measure of equity with the new faculty who become Associate upon receiving tenure.
2. Pres. Castiglione added that the situation is less straight-forward for Associate Professors who want to apply to Full Professor, as the process exists, but that a part of the mechanism should be additional support for faculty conducting research, which bears on this. He stated that the KFT needs feedback from members for how to do this, especially creative ideas beyond course release time. He also asked for creative ideas for addressing the backlog of promotions to Full Professors caused by the career-hampering policies of the Farahi administration.
3. F. Argote-Freyre added that addressing the injustices of the past will be a long, complex process, but we're working on it.

4. Emily Filardo added that we are in a crisis with respect to committees (and in future, elected Chairs) because we don't have enough Full Professors. All concurred.
- C. A member asked if ProStaff will be included in these promotion discussions.
1. F. Argote-Freyre reiterated all that he had said before about this being a high priority for the KFT.
 2. Matt Halper mentioned the "two Keans" problem, saying that we must figure out how to help people advance in an accelerated fashion so that we don't end up with "two Keans": one Kean with those promoted under the old system, and another with those promoted under the new system.
 3. Pres. Castiglione added that ProStaff can apply for promotion in the form of a Reclassification if their job duties have changed; if their duties have not changed, they can pursue the performance-based promotion procedure. Since the latter has not worked well in past, it is a central point that the Negotiations team is working on right now. A draft Proposal is circulating internally, and once it's revised, they will start negotiating this Fall, possibly in the next few weeks.

VI. **Old Business:** None.

VII. **New Business:** None.

VIII. **Meeting adjourned at 4:31 pm.**