

FWC/AAUP NEWSLETTER

Faculty Welfare Committee/American Association of University Professors

April 27, 2005

From the President:

The final two issues of the FWC Newsletter planned for this year will provide an update on initiatives that have been ongoing this year, and encourage us to reflect on the future of our institution. Though the discussion of faculty governance has taken on an increased importance this spring, the FWC/AAUP has provided support for a variety of individual and collective efforts across campus. We think you should all know about the work that is ongoing.

Kathryn Nantz
President, FWC

The Rear-View Mirror and the Road Ahead Martin Lang, retiring Professor of Religious Studies

Fr. Jim Coughlin sat ensconced, his bulky body Buddha-like behind his desk in Xavier Hall, functional Dean and Vice-President all rolled into one. But unlike the Buddha-image, he was talkative, jovial and open to whoever walked into his office. "Good idea? Let's try it". "Bad idea. Don't think it will work."

Communication was open and direct. Things happened fast. We didn't always get what we wanted but we did get a listening ear. Decisions were highly authoritative but benevolent. Canisius was the prime classroom building where the president, Fr. McInnis, sat in a modest office (Canisius 100) and often wandered down the corridor talking to anyone who was out there at the time. At lunch we all, administrators, faculty and staff talked together about everything, including what was next for the university. Admissions people told us how enrollments were going. John Barone (Provost) and Fr. Coughlin sat at tables with faculty and often lingered over a cup of coffee. That, in religious parlance, is called "table fellowship". There was fellowship. That's the way it was back then.

Things have changed. The facilities, by any standard, are superior. Students are better. Faculty is stronger. But there is little fellowship.

Fellowship opened the door to collegiality. The Salary Committee was first formed by a request of the faculty to have representation about how compensation was determined. That committee became a cornerstone for other collaborative efforts. Decisions became somewhat less authoritative. Fairfield started evolving into an institution run by committees with administrators present on the most important ones.

Of recent years that model has suffered gravely. For many of us, older faculty at least, a more authoritative style has re-surfaced without the fellowship. That famous Salary Committee is now being marginalized. Committee members have been reminded that they are *only* in an advisory capacity but even that has been reduced to almost nothing. In the latest conflagration about changing health benefits no advice from the committee was sought. But health benefits are a matter of crucial concern for faculty and all employees. This is clearly content for collaboration. Also, the tangled problems surrounding the various compensation plans represent, at core, a failure of collegiality, a genuine collapse of fellowship.

I propose that this needs immediate and emergency fixing. I cannot see how a small private college like Fairfield can meet the major challenges just around the corner if faculty and administration do not work in very close collaboration. Take a look at the growing gap between the tuition and facilities at public institutions and those at Fairfield. Our competition uses tax dollars and we use parent dollars. Now, in addition, our well-heeled and prestigious private competitors have come up with new policies that completely fund the education of their needy but academically able students. Others, less needy, can be lured by tempting "package offers". How do we compete? Will the faculty

of the future face sons and daughters of a wealthy elite who are not particularly strong academically? What will happen to the sons and daughters of working class people who in the past were helped into good jobs by a Fairfield education? This attention to the less fortunate is the famous “preferential option for the poor” proposed as part of the Jesuit agenda. Will the new wave of Asian and Hispanic immigrants find a place at Fairfield?

Major money to fuel the endowment is needed to begin to compete in this future world, These monies can not come from operating expenses. The endowment needs to be built far above present levels, a tough job for a young institution. Fund raisers do not have a very enticing program to sell, no more names on buildings, just money for endowments. Trustees may be distracted with matters that are more appropriately the province of day-to-day administrators. Lately, faculty have been told through intermediaries what the Trustees want from the faculty more than they ever have in the past.

Faculty, administrators and trustees need to work very closely together to address the challenges of the near future which extend far beyond finances. What will be the major educational thrust of a liberal arts college, a Jesuit college in the future? How will the old philosophy translate into twenty-first century learning? These are challenges that need to be addressed within the context of fellowship and fellowship now needs emergency fixing.

These reflections have come by invitation from the FWC on the occasion of my retirement so I feel I might add a personal note. Fairfield has been very good to me. As far as teaching is concerned I have always felt supported whether it has been in terms of facilities to aid in teaching or in terms of an excellent and always helpful staff. I have enjoyed going to my classroom every single day of my thirty-five years at Fairfield. I do not exaggerate and I think many feel the same way. We close the door, shut out the static and enjoy the experience of learning together with our students. I see the faculty remaining strong and generous though a bit mangled. As new faculty come on board I see them welcomed and accepted as friends. We have not lost the magic of this particular form of fellowship. In addition many give enormous amounts of time to serve on committees and take leadership roles. We can hardly ask for more. As far as I am concerned it has been a genuine privilege to be a member of this outstanding group of people. For that, I am very grateful.

**CENSORED! A Report on the AAUP Connecticut State Conference Spring Meeting
Marti LoMonaco, Department of Visual and Performing Arts**

Censorship and the arts was the focus of the April 14th meeting of the AAUP Connecticut State Conference at the Yale Graduate Club. For those of us from Fairfield, censorship was a hot topic since we were in the midst of questioning and protesting the abrupt cancellation of the “Love Makes A Family” forum on our own campus scheduled for later that week. Since I had the pleasure of having dinner with the distinguished guest speaker, Dr. Svetlana Mintcheva, Director of Arts Advocacy for the National Coalition Against Censorship (NCAC), I filled her in on our current campus crisis, with a promise to follow-up if and when we achieve resolution.

The NCAC, founded in 1974, is an alliance of 50 national non-profit organizations, including literary, artistic, religious, educational, professional, labor and civil liberties groups. Dr. Mintcheva’s talk surveyed the all-too-many instances of arts censorship throughout the U.S. and the NCAC’s role as an advocate for freedom of expression through direct intervention as well as by helping to organize educational programs, exhibits, lectures, and discussions on topics relating to censorship. With the help of Power Point, she presented numerous case studies but none were perhaps as powerful as the living example of censorship behind her right shoulder. Mintcheva was standing in front of a nude sculpture of a man, which was one of 25 such figures in an exhibition by AAUP State Treasurer, Susan Reinhart, a fine arts professor at Gateway Community College. Reinhart’s work was censored

by a New York state college president who objected to the proliferation of penises in her exhibition on his campus. This begs the question, "how many penises are TOO many?"

If you want to learn more about censorship or would like to contribute information on a censorship case, check out The File Room project at www.thefileroom.org. This interactive archive contains hundreds of cases dating from the 5th century BC to the present. You can reach Dr. Mintcheva and other NCAC staff members at www.ncac.org, phone 212-807-6222.

<p style="text-align: center;">SUMMARY OF FACULTY ATTITUDES SURVEY George Lang, Mathematics Department</p>
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The results of the FWC/AAUP sponsored survey are in. Again this year, the response rate was very high with 147 of the 229 full-time teaching faculty responding.

The survey showed a slight increase in satisfaction with facilities, with over 70% satisfied (answering "agree" or "strongly agree") with their office and lab space, while only 56% were satisfied with their classrooms. 86% find their job challenging and exciting, but the number who find it stressful has risen to 54%. Along the same line, the number who disagree with the statement my job is stressful dropped from 27% to 19%.

Only 18.5% were satisfied with the level of faculty participation in governance and 25% with the leadership shown by the academic administration. Just under 50% expressed satisfaction with the new president, a notable improvement. Perhaps not surprisingly, this question received the largest number of "neutral" responses on the survey; possibly a number of faculty are taking a wait and see approach.

The questions on community showed an improvement on the faculty's ability to have an impact on students and interact with colleagues. While 70% felt they had the resources to meet contractual obligations only 57% felt they had the resources to meet personal career goals. Support staff is judged to be attentive and helpful by 75%, a bit lower than last year. Feedback on job performance received low grades, in particular the number of faculty who feel they receive adequate feedback from their dean fell from 35% to 32%. Only 34% of the respondents are satisfied with their compensation.

The survey included an open ended comment section and just over one fourth of the submissions included comments. Those results will not be made public since some were in sufficient detail to compromise confidentiality. By far the most frequent comments were on the sad state of faculty - administration (a number included the Board) relationships. Two people mentioned, at length, the inappropriateness of the Board's business mindset in an academic setting. Consistent with the numerical responses the bulk of the criticism was leveled at the administration, which was characterized as having a business mentality, showing bias, and, most often, as reducing the role of the faculty in university governance. Others pointed out the problem without seeing a path to a solution. One comment claimed that faculty representatives "have not developed leverage or professional skills for negotiating the big ticket items." The issue of leverage was indirectly echoed in other comments calling for collective bargaining and stating "commenting will do nothing -- only action will bring change."

After criticism of administration/faculty/Board relations and faculty governance issues, comments on merit dominated the survey. A couple of respondents were clearly in favor of merit pay. One respondent said that the merit battle was lost and it was time to move on and one respondent

characterized those opposing merit pay in very harsh terms (closed mindset, counterproductive, uncollegial, pathetic), but a much larger number of respondents were extremely critical of merit pay and the current state of its implementation. Merit pay was referred to as a morass that continues to get worse and described as ill-conceived, utterly mismanaged, underfunded, distracting, creating hostility, a disaster, lowering morale, fulfilling our worst fears, punishing those who maintain high classroom standards, a waste of time, and “the biggest disservice to people in the University I have ever seen”.

Other concerns were expressed about personnel shortages, both faculty and staff, large class sizes, office size, and unequal stipends for chairs in different schools. One commentator mentioned concern over the renewed emphasis on the Catholic identity. The vast majority of the responses were submitted prior to the cancellation of the forum on same-sex marriage, a topic which triggered heated lunch room and email discussion, but would not have influenced the responses to this survey.

The survey was sponsored by the Faculty Welfare Committee, AAUP and was conducted on line. A link to the tables from this survey can be found on the FWC/AAUP web site www.faculty.fairfield.edu/fwc.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

PRE-MEETING BREAKFAST

The FWC will again sponsor a light breakfast before the annual committee reports and elections meeting scheduled for Tuesday, May 3, 10:00 a.m. in the School of Nursing Auditorium. This meeting is usually quite well attended by faculty from across campus. Plan to come to the meeting early to catch up with colleagues and get a good seat. We'll have things ready by 9:30. See you then!

REMINDERS

COMMITTEE REPORTS AND ELECTIONS – Tuesday, May 3, 10:00 – 12 ish. (Breakfast at 9:30) -- SON
PRESIDENT VON ARX ADDRESSES THE FACULTY – Tuesday, May 10, 4:30 -- SON
FACULTY RETIREMENT PARTY – Wednesday, May 11, 4:30 – 6:30 -- Quick Center
Please plan to attend all of these end-of-year events!

POST GRADUATION RECEPTION

The FWC will sponsor a reception for faculty following graduation. It will be held in CNS 15.

Please plan to stop by and toast the academic year after you turn in your cap and gown!

UPCOMING AAUP EVENTS

Annual Meeting -- June 9 - 12, 2005 -- Washington, DC
Summer Institute – July 21 – 25, 2005 – University of New Hampshire

If you are interested in the activities of the state or national AAUP, please contact George Lang. (lang@cs.fairfield.edu, x. 2517, Math Dept.) The FWC will defray expenses for faculty who are willing to attend workshops and meetings and then return to campus and share their experiences with others. For further information on any of these opportunities, see the AAUP website at <http://www.aaup.org>.

Next week: Updates from the Childcare Task Force, the General Faculty Secretary, and the Faculty Salary Committee.

Check us out at <http://www.faculty.fairfield.edu/fwc>