

FWC Newsletter

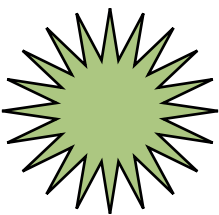
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From the President

Kathryn Nantz, Department of Economics

Welcome to academic year 2006-2007! This edition of the Newsletter will bring you up to date on a variety of initiatives we have been working on and provide you with information about exciting events coming up this fall. The FWC has been busy and we look forward to seeing you at our events, at general faculty meetings, and around campus.

For those of you who are new to campus, the Faculty Welfare Committee was formed in the early 1990s to support our Faculty Salary Committee, which carries out “collegial discussions” with the administration over salary and benefits. It is the local chapter of the American Association of University Professors (AAUP). Its mission now includes support of faculty governance and defense of academic freedom. Our dues (most faculty are members) have enabled us to engage the services of legal counsel, compensation experts, and health care consultants as well as tap into the vast resources of the national AAUP. Through the years, we have sponsored a variety of informational programs and social events to build a more engaged and collegial community. We look to all members to bring their enthusiasm and ideas to the FWC and to let us know when there are issues that we should explore.

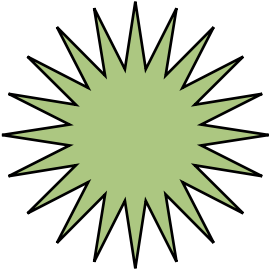


FWC to Co-sponsor Panel at Jesuit-Feminist Pedagogy Conference

The Faculty Welfare Committee will be co-sponsoring a panel as part of the Jesuit-Feminist Pedagogy Conference that Fairfield University will host in October. The panel, “Voicing Feminist Issues on Jesuit Campuses: When Academic Freedom and Jesuit Culture Collide,” will take place on Saturday, October 28, 5:15-6:30 PM. The registration fee for the conference has been waived for Fairfield faculty members, thanks to the Office of the Academic Vice President.

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Faculty Survey Results

George Lang, Department of Mathematics and Computer Science

For the third consecutive year the FWC/AAUP has sponsored an online survey of faculty attitudes. The response rate was again high with 2/3 of the full-time teaching faculty responding. 50 of the 133 respondents added comments, elaborating on the quantitative section of the survey.

► Overall workplace satisfaction

Although there was a slight decrease in satisfaction to 67% (those answering "agree" or "strongly agree") with the cleanliness and maintenance of office and lab space, there remains a high satisfaction rate with those facilities. Classrooms could not muster a majority agreeing with their adequacy or maintenance. Canisius classrooms, in particular, were cited as being in need of repainting and looking like storerooms.

87% of respondents agreed that their job was challenging and exciting. More problematic, however, the percent reporting that their job is stressful has slowly risen through the years of the survey from 48% to 54% to 56%.

The responses to questions on community continue to be positive. By and large faculty are satisfied with their ability to have an impact on students' lives and to collaborate and interact with each other. While faculty feel they have adequate resources to meet contractual obligations and are happy with the support staff, a quarter of the respondents do not feel they have the support to meet their personal career goals.

Specific support needs included additional staff, especially for faculty in Canisius. Calls were made for an Office of Sponsored Projects to coordinate and manage all granting efforts as well

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as an immigration lawyer to assist as we hire more international faculty. Additional time was cited as an issue both for furthering research and for department chairs. In this category, the need for reduced teaching loads is not the only issue; other challenges mentioned include time spent in evaluation and the growing number of *ad hoc* committees and workshops.

► Governance and Administration

In the section on Governance and Administration only one statement has majority approval: "A collective bargaining unit at Fairfield would be helpful for faculty." 59% of respondents agree with the preceding statement. 46% disagreed with the statement "I am satisfied with the leadership shown by academic administrators," while only 27% agreed. As in previous surveys, "neutral" remains a significant response to the administrative satisfaction question, as it does with the question on leadership shown by the President, where 31% remain neutral. On that question, 44% are satisfied with the President's leadership and 25% are dissatisfied.

Relationships among the administration, board, faculty continued to draw comments. One characterized the faculty and administration leadership as living in parallel universes. Two commentators cited a continuing level of distrust by faculty leaders, others targeted the Board, the deans, or the administration in general. While many comments reflected dissatisfaction with past actions only one, a reference to "the coming attack on health benefits", indicated distrust with an ongoing initiative.

Academic freedom was listed by one commentator as an essential concern which must be placed on the top of the University's agenda. Three others specifically singled out the cancellation of the forum on same sex marriage as an issue.

► Compensation and Evaluation

41% agreed that they were adequately compensated while 31% disagreed. The one majority vote in the section on evaluation and feedback was the 55% disagreeing with the statement "I am satisfied with the way my performance is measured."

This year merit pay clearly dominated the comment section. The few pro-merit voices heard in past surveys remained silent this year. The views were colored by last year's funding level with

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a number of comments indicating that the merit program had turned into a punishment program. Specific complaints ranged from multiple comments that one of the top leaders on campus failed to get additional merit to a faculty member with multiple publications failing to receive sustained merit. The funding level itself was called mean-spirited with similar comments leveled at the merit program itself and individual decisions. Merit was referred to as "a damaging issue," "a FAILED experiment," "chaotic," "a farce," "mismanaged," "under funded," "divisive," and "an absolute nightmare."

Finally, the quantitative data and a number of the comments indicate that there is wide support for the comment "I have the job of my dreams and work with some of my closest friends...Negative responses above should not be taken as complaints, but constructive criticism."

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

Check This Out!

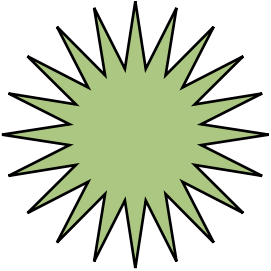
www.aaup.org The official site of the American Association of University Professors. Information on everything from academic freedom and accreditation to diversity and distance education.

www.faculty.fairfield.edu/rdewitt/fwc/ The Faculty Welfare Committee website, containing information about becoming a member and about workplace issues on our Fairfield campus.

<http://anthem.com> The site can be frustratingly slow, but it does place all information about our medical plan, coverage, and prescription options (including mail order for maintenance drugs) at your fingertips.

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Housing Mortgage Assistance for Fairfield University Faculty

Jocelyn M. Boryczka, Politics Department

Buying a house in or around Fairfield County is an expensive proposition. In Fairfield itself, the average cost of a home is \$560,000; in Connecticut, the median cost is \$247,400. Many universities and colleges around the country struggle with high housing costs that impact both recruitment and retention. Job candidates--whether new faculty, burdened with student loans and moving costs, or senior faculty, particularly those coming from less expensive housing markets--increasingly factor housing costs into their decisions about accepting positions. Additionally, current faculty may take new positions in better housing markets where their salaries offer more buying power. To address this growing problem, several Jesuit universities and colleges, such as LeMoyne and Canisius, offer mortgage assistance programs to their faculty.

At Fairfield University, a subcommittee of the Faculty Salary Committee formed during the 2005-2006 academic year to investigate various options for housing assistance and to discuss the matter with the administration. Affordable housing represents a pressing issue on our campus, particularly with housing costs in Fairfield County rising 17.5% and faculty recruitment at high levels throughout the university. From a broader perspective, housing assistance plays a part in the university's strategic plan, which references the need for Fairfield faculty to live in closer proximity to the university in order to develop connections between living and learning for the students. The Housing Mortgage Assistance subcommittee focused its initial efforts on a plan to help full-time untenured and tenured faculty with initial down payments, often the major

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obstacle for first-time home buyers.

The subcommittee met with representatives from the Bank of America during the spring semester and at a larger open meeting for faculty and administrators this summer. A formal relationship may develop between Bank of America and Fairfield University in the future. In the interim, Bank of America already offers a “Community Commitment” program that can assist faculty hoping to buy a new home in this difficult market. This program, designed for those with low to moderate incomes (for which many Fairfield faculty qualify in this county), requires the buyer to make a \$500 minimum contribution towards their loan and to attend a financial education training class. Qualified buyers are then exempt from paying personal mortgage insurance, often a savings of \$200 a month, and can choose to put \$0 down on the purchase of a house. All faculty employed at Fairfield are eligible, including those with work visas and citizenship in other countries. Interested faculty can contact Bank of America and inquire about their “Community Commitment” program or contact Jocelyn Boryczka (jboryczka@mail.fairfield.edu) or Beth Boquet (eboquet@mail.fairfield.edu) for further information.

This “Community Commitment” program, however, only represents a first step in the direction of Fairfield University addressing this pressing issue. The Faculty Salary Committee plans to continue to work with members of the administration on plans that offer housing mortgage assistance to faculty. As the process moves forward, we invite your participation and welcome your comments.