

Faculty Welfare Committee

Excellence in Education



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A Message from the FWC/AAUP President:

This issue of the FWC Newsletter considers an essential issue for all of us--what is our role as the faculty of the University and how do we best exercise that role? You will find an update here on the University's Blue Ribbon Committee on shared governance, as well as info from the AAUP and from Fairfield University's past to create a context for understanding the current discussions. Please don't hesitate to provide input to the representatives on the Blue Ribbon Committee as they deliberate these important issues.

Kathy Nantz, President, FWC/AAUP



From the FWC/AAUP Executive Committee:

These are exciting times. Classes are in full swing and the campus is humming with all the activities of scholarship and teaching. As a faculty member, you probably don't have time to look up from what you're doing at this very instant, but take a moment to reflect. We think you'll agree that we've got great students, good support and terrific colleagues. As you may know, the FWC/AAUP has been tracking faculty attitudes for a number of years with an annual survey. We'll run the Faculty Attitudes Survey again this year and report on the results in an upcoming newsletter.

Adding to the activity, President von Arx, S.J., has empaneled a Blue Ribbon Commission (BRC) on institutional governance charged to review, consider and make recommendations that will lead to better collaborative, collegial shared governance. We applaud this initiative; it's always a good idea to look at something as fundamental as governance. And, we couldn't agree more with President von Arx, S.J., when he writes that "collaboration is essential to resolution of this significant issue." We look forward to significant collaboration and input into what should be a thorough, thoughtful, and transparent process.

Please take the opportunity to meet and hear from the outside members of the BRC on Friday 2/8/08 at the General Faculty meeting. Keep up-to-date with the faculty members that have been appointed to the BRC. Come to the Brown Bag Lunch on 2/13 at noon in the FDR on shared governance. And, check out our article on Effective Shared Governance on page 3.



FWC AND AAUP NEWS AND EVENTS IN BRIEF

UPCOMING FWC AND OTHER FACULTY EVENTS:

**MARK YOUR CALENDAR FOR
A GALA RECEPTION
SPONSORED BY THE FWC ON
FEBRUARY 8 IMMEDIATELY
FOLLOWING THE GENERAL
FACULTY MEETING!!**

February 13 at noon in the FDR:

A Brown Bag Lunch sponsored by the FWC on Effective Governance. Join FWC leaders, Professors Betsy Bowen, Rick DeWitt and Kathy Nantz, to learn and talk about collegial and collaborative shared governance. Read the AAUP's Statement on Government of Colleges and Universities at <http://www.aaup.org/AAUP/pubsres/policydocs/contents/governancestatement.htm> and a variety of others articles in the May/June 2005 issue of *Academe* devoted to shared governance at <http://www.aaup.org/AAUP/pubsres/academe/2005/MJ/> Bring your lunch and the FWC will provide desserts to go with your ice cream!



**A Wednesday in early
March at noon in the FDR:**
Join Professors Shannon Harding
(Psychology) and Bob Epstein

(English) and probably others for a Brown Bag Lunch sponsored by the FWC on the juggling act needed to balance work and family. (Watch your email for the date.) Learn about strategies to stay "on course" when you are raising young children. How do other faculty members deal with children who are sent home sick from school? How do you find a good day care? How do you strike a good balance between work and home when each demands so much of you. You *know* we'll have desserts to go with your ice cream.

FWC Full Chapter Meeting on 4/13:

Your FWC/AAUP Officers and Executive Committee meet frequently to conduct FWC/AAUP business on your behalf, but we are planning a meeting of the FWC for elections and reports on April 13 immediately following the General Faculty meeting, and *preceding* the FWC-sponsored gala reception. An agenda will be distributed at the meeting, but you can mark your calendar now.

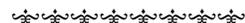
Faculty Family Picnic and Softball Game in the spring:

We would love to get faculty families together in the spring for an event for all! We are tentatively planning a picnic and softball game for the Thursday of Senior Week. More details will be in the next newsletter, but, in the meantime, we thought you might want to start oilin' up that glove.

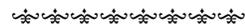


RECENT FWC AND AAUP NEWS AND EVENTS:

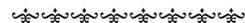
Professors Ruth Ann Baumgartner (English) and Irene Mulvey (Mathematics) are members of the Connecticut State Conference of the AAUP which meets monthly to discuss issues of concern to state chapters. The November meeting took place on the UConn Stamford campus where we welcomed three members of the CT Board of Governors (BOG) of Higher Education, the state's coordinating agency for CT colleges and universities, for a discussion on BOG's mission, strategic plan and views on a variety of issues facing institutions in CT. In addition to Jane Ciarleglio from the Department of Higher Education, we met BOG members Bob Robins, (former President of Tulane University AAUP Chapter), and Brian Flaherty (Fairfield U class of '87), Vice-Chair of BOG.



Thanks! to Marsha Alibrandi for a great discussion at the FWC Brown Bag Lunch on 11/14/07 about the Spellings Report and the impact of government oversight on higher education.



Thanks! to Jocelyn Boryczka for a terrific discussion at the FWC Brown Bag Lunch on 12/5/07 about feminist pedagogy and how its collaborative nature enables and enhances free inquiry.



Get involved

Effective Shared Governance

Shared governance describes a process by which all stakeholders – faculty, administration, trustees, staff and students– have an opportunity to participate in decision-making. It has been a foundation of American higher education for decades. It is also a topic that is guaranteed to generate strong opinions from a variety of voices. The NEASC Visiting Team heard some of these strong opinions and observed, correctly we suppose, that there are “contrasting narratives” on governance at Fairfield and they urged that the narratives be reconciled.

As the FWC/AAUP, our particular focus with regard to governance is the central role that faculty should play in the shared governance environment at Fairfield. Our opinion is based on years of experience as faculty leaders at Fairfield and involvement in the AAUP at local, state and national levels, and is informed by the AAUP’s Statement on Government of Colleges and Universities. The principal argument here is that different issues fall under the purview of different constituencies and, while open and early communication among interested constituencies is essential, it is the constituency under whose purview an item falls that should have the central voice in the setting of policy and decision making.

Among the items that fall under faculty purview are personnel issues involving hiring, tenure and promotion. As scholars, we are uniquely qualified to judge the qualifications of our peers. Indeed, peer-review is the foundation of academic scholarship. Of course, these prerogatives come with equally important responsibilities. Peer review of colleagues must be open, fair and honest, allowing for due process and following approved policies and procedures. We all appreciate the faculty effort that goes into hiring, mentoring, and review of colleagues.

Furthermore, our position as scholars in our respective fields appropriately gives us the singular expertise to determine all aspects of curricular policy, from the design and content of individual courses to the graduation requirements for different degrees. By extension, faculty should have a leading voice in any aspect of any policy that affects academics.

Now that President von Arx, S.J., has appointed a Blue Ribbon Commission to study governance, it is a good time to reflect on the current climate

surrounding shared governance at Fairfield. Faculty can and will argue that our governance structures are fundamentally sound, although nothing is above a little fine-tuning and tweaking for improvement. We have a system of checks and balances designed to get as much input into our decision-making processes as possible. Sound governance structures, such as ours, are essential, but in order to move forward most effectively, an atmosphere of mutual respect and trust must be fostered. This can’t be mandated; it’s earned through the very difficult work of collegial collaboration. Within our current governance structures, there is ample opportunity for constructive dialogue, but faculty and administration must be willing to initiate conversations and carry them forward and through legitimate shared governance venues.

Occasionally, faculty and administration will disagree. This is inevitable, of course. But, honest disagreement stemming from different perspectives and points of view does not indicate broken governance. New structures and revised procedures will not make honest disagreements go away. Only through the hard work of debate and discussion, can disagreements be fully aired and thoroughly explained and understood. Each side must be willing to justify their position with a detailed rationale backed up by facts and research. In a higher education environment, where we live by scholarship and research, it is sensible and appropriate to allow as many relevant opinions and voices into the decision-making process as possible. Every affected constituency must explain their point of view and understand the other points of view, particularly in regard to how proposals advance the mission of the University and current planning efforts.

Such discussions may result in one side being persuaded to a consensus viewpoint, or in a compromise stronger than either of the competing positions, or in a majority prevailing over a dissenting minority. Regardless of the ultimate outcome, this process of deliberatively and thoroughly addressing divergent perspectives is essential, not obstructionist. There is no evidence that allowing thoughtful debate and discussion to take place disadvantages the University in any way. On the contrary, all members of the community, even those in a dissenting minority, are more likely to accept and embrace new

policies and decisions when they feel their viewpoints have been carefully and respectfully considered. This process does not make us less nimble as an institution; working together as colleagues should make us a stronger and more cohesive institution.

In short, this is the faculty’s “narrative”: governance structures are fundamentally sound and provide appropriate input and oversight by legitimate faculty representatives on items that fall under faculty purview. At this point, quite frankly, we do not understand the administration’s narrative. It’s understandable that the NEASC team detected different narratives because the section of the Self-Study on governance was written with no faculty input and probably was not consistent with what they heard from the faculty once they got on campus. In particular, the Self-Study acknowledges that governance structures have served the University well in many instances but that “some circumstances frustrate administrators.” Well, we look forward to learning more about these contrasting narratives as the work of the Blue Ribbon Commission on governance unfolds.

We hope that the BRC looks at institutional governance in the broadest possible sense, including the staff and student perspectives since these are significant stakeholder constituencies. With all the talk of assessment, we suggest that formal assessment of administrators could be a way to evaluate how effectively governance structures are being utilized by involved constituencies. We look forward to a healthy debate and discussion on ways to improve communication within and between constituencies. As scholars within a community devoted to teaching and scholarship, and as significant and long-standing contributor/stakeholders in the institution, we will insist that faculty continue to have their rightful voice on issues that fall under faculty purview.



The AAUP’s
Redbook:
Policy Documents
and Reports

VISIT:
www.aaup.org



The Faculty Welfare Committee/AAUP at Fairfield University is an ad hoc committee of the General Faculty and an affiliate of the national AAUP. Any member of the General Faculty at Fairfield may join by contacting the membership chair or any officer. Dues are set annually by the membership and can be paid in semi-annual installments or deducted from each paycheck. The FWC/AAUP promotes the professional and economic interests of the Fairfield University Faculty. All our activities are open to all members of the faculty and are funded by our dues-paying members.

From the Archives:

In June, 2001, Fairfield's Board of Trustees passed a resolution forming a committee to address the issue of university governance. The mandate to the committee, contained in the June 7 resolution read as follows: "to review the governance structures and procedures of the University and to make such recommendations to the Board for changes it deems proper and appropriate." The committee membership was Roger Lynch, Chair of the Board, Fay Vincent, Academic Affairs Subcommittee Chair, Pres. Kelley, S.J., AVP Grossman, and elected faculty representatives Professors L. Katz, G. Lang, K. Nantz and J. Thiel. The final paragraph in the faculty representatives' report to the AC follows: **"We remain concerned that the Board and senior administration seem not to have an accurate understanding of**

the good will, dedication, and generosity of the Fairfield faculty, and of the genuine spirit of collegiality that has existed and continues to exist among its members. We believe that this spirit, too, must be credited when Fairfield's many successes are counted. The university can only suffer when this spirit, misnamed and wrongly characterized, is even regarded as counterproductive to Fairfield's mission."



The National Archives, Washinton, DC.
Our documents are not there (yet).

Faculty Welfare Committee/AAUP
Kathryn Nantz, President
Department of Economics
Fairfield University
1073 North Benson Road
Fairfield, CT 06430

Mailing Label Here