

Faculty Welfare Committee

Excellence in Education



Tom Regan, S.J., at Commencement 2007
(photo credit: Jean Santopatre/Fairfield University)

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Academic Freedom
for a
Free Society

From the Executive Committee:

At this time of year, those of us who live by the academic calendar will find ourselves reflecting on the year gone by. We file away class materials with notes on what worked well, what didn't work, and what improvements we might make the next time we teach this material. With summer just around the corner, we plan new projects and look forward to being able to engage more deeply with our ongoing work now that the daily routine of classes, class preparation, office hours, and grading lets up. We on the FWC/AAUP Executive Committee would like to take this opportunity to reflect on the year just past as well. We have been very busy with all sorts of activities: Brown Bag lunch discussions, gala receptions, newsletters, etc., but it's important to think about how *well* our activities have served our constituents and how we might do better next year.

Let's begin with our objectives. Our FWC/AAUP constitution clearly lays these out: "[to] promote the professional and economic interests of the Fairfield University faculty. These interests include, but are not limited to, academic freedom, tenure, the economic status of the faculty, and faculty governance."

Starting with our Faculty Family Picnic and Softball Game in the fall (the only event at the University where all faculty families and friends can get together socially and connect) and continuing with our gala receptions after faculty meetings, we have provided an opportunity for faculty members from all across the University to meet and have meaningful conversations. This year, with our Brown Bag lunch discussions on (1) shared governance, (2) balancing work and family, (3) implications of the Spellings Report, (4) Feminist pedagogy and free inquiry, (5) choosing a Handbook committee, as well as our series of newsletters, we've tried to inform faculty on current issues – with the ultimate goal of helping to start meaningful faculty conversations that will help us make good decisions as a faculty. Sometimes, newer faculty members may feel as though they've wandered into the middle of a conversation that's already been going on for years. And, in a sense, they have. And, we all did at one time or another. We urge all faculty members to catch up on this conversation. Truly understanding the issues we face as a faculty is our best way forward.

To this end, the FWC/AAUP will continue our work next year to promote faculty welfare, very broadly defined, and we urge faculty members to make the effort to be informed. Our Faculty Welfare Committee website (faculty.fairfield.edu/fwc) has our constitution, archived newsletters, and a link to the national AAUP site (aaup.org). The Faculty Secretary's website (faculty.fairfield.edu/gfs) has the Faculty Handbook (contact the AVP's office for a hardcopy), the Journal of Record (a list of policy decisions approved by both the faculty and the administration) minutes of Academic Council meetings (the AC is the executive arm of the General Faculty), and General Faculty meetings. Watch your email for the agenda for General Faculty meetings. These agendas need to go out 10 days in advance (per the Handbook) for good reason since questions can be answered and conversations can be taking place during those 10 days; it's our personal responsibility to be well-informed.

Next year, watch your campus mail for our FWC newsletters and do contact any member of the Executive Committee at any time with any questions or input. If you have an idea as to how we might be more effective, we would like to hear it.

Have a wonderful and wonderfully productive summer!

FWC AND AAUP NEWS AND EVENTS IN BRIEF

UPCOMING FWC, AND AAUP EVENTS:

Thursday, May 8 from 6:00-9:00 at the Graduate Club in New Haven:

We're looking forward to this year's annual CT State Conference/AAUP spring meeting - a dinner meeting at the Yale Graduate Club featuring a panel discussion on the effect of the "war on terror" on the academy. FWC/AAUP members received an invitation/flyer by email. Highlights of this meeting will be our own Prof. Jocelyn Boryczka as one of the three invited panelists and the awarding of the first annual CSC-AAUP award in honor of our colleague, George Lang. For info, contact CSC-AAUP members Irene Mulvey or Ruth Anne Baumgartner. The FWC will subsidize the cost of this event for members.

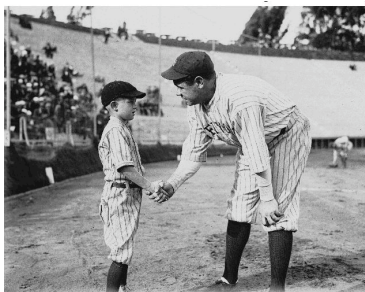
AAUP Summer Institute 2008 at the University of RI in

Kingston July 24-27: A great opportunity to meet faculty members from all over the country and to learn

about effective shared governance. So close by this year in neighboring Rhode Island. Interested? Contact an FWC officer.

94th National AAUP Annual Meeting, June 12-15 DC: Read all about it at www.aaup.org.

May 15, Thursday of Senior Week: Faculty families and faculty friends softball game and picnic this afternoon. Details will be sent by email. As always, the softball game is *way* optional.



Babe says: "Bring the kids!"

And now, continued from our last issue...More stories of merit pay AND faculty reactions to our last General Faculty meeting...

Our Department spent a great deal of time drafting a plan. When Dean Snyder asked for further differentiations, we complied. Last year I served, together with the Department Chair, as the Committee to evaluate the annual reports and recommend merit awards. We did our best to be fair and correct in our judgments. Could any member of my Department have known what the dollar amount of the award for his/her work would have been? No. And last year, for once, there had been an effort to fund merit. This year the funding of the merit program is so minimal that it is not even possible to make the differentiations that our plan calls for. In order to make any sense at all, merit plans must be a) funded and b) consistent and c) transparent. Those who are indeed "meritorious" should be acknowledged and known, because they are the examples for others. Otherwise, what is the institutional value of a merit system? So far, the energy and angst expended on merit has not been justified.

More on p. 3

MOU 101: What's all the fuss about?

The Memo of Understanding (MOU), the document that the faculty accepted at the last faculty meeting, is one of several interrelated documents that govern faculty salary and compensation. The MOU is the focus of annual discussions between the Faculty Salary Committee and the administration. Among other things, it lays out the details of each year's salary increases. Prior to the imposition of merit pay, all you needed in order to figure out what salary would appear in your new contract was your current salary and the new MOU. Now things are a bit more complicated, but it is still the case that, as the MOU states, "all individual, annual letters of appointment will be in accordance with the compensation provisions of this document and with the Faculty Handbook".

Those individual letters of appointment are what we generally refer to as our contracts - the two page letter that you sign in June. The contracts link to the MOU with this line, "The terms referred to in the Memo of Understanding on Faculty Salary and Benefits, [year] , will apply from [date] and continue until superseded by a subsequent Memo of Understanding."

And, our benefits are linked to the MOU in two ways. The MOU references the "compensation provisions of the Faculty Handbook". It's the Handbook discussion of benefits that specifies (along with information about life insurance, TIAA/CREF, etc.) that, "the University provides, at no cost to the faculty member, an enhanced Health Care Plan," and goes on to describe the benchmark for such a plan. The specifics of the benefits package are spelled out in a booklet entitled "Benefits Plan Overview," which is available from Human Resources, and is an Appendix to the MOU.

The MOU determines your salary and has connections to your individual contract, our Faculty Handbook, and our Benefit Plans Overview booklet. Now, you know what all the fuss is about.

Merit Pay Five Years In: Stories From All Around the Campus

*Continued from our last issue...
More stories of merit pay AND
faculty reactions to our last
General Faculty meeting...*

Merit is not working in my department or in general. It is extremely frustrating. The Board and the Administration stubbornly refuse to admit that the current system just does not work. For merit to have even a chance of working, the amount of dollars involved must be significant. We have yet to see any year when money for merit was significant, but we have seen many years when it is downright trivial. When merit amounts to 1 to 2 pre-tax dollars per day, it is very hard to see how it will change behavior. I do not expect merit to "go away" but why not admit the current system needs to be fixed, and in a major way? Besides the lack of significant funding and the random nature of funding for merit from year to year, the plans do create changed behavior. But I fear these changes are unintended consequences, not changes in ways the Board seems to think we need. For example, some plans in my school create incentives for faculty to change textbooks from year to year, even if the current book being used is ideal. As far as I know, no one is actually doing this, but the incentive is built into some of the plans. I do know that some faculty members now run for University committees that they don't really care about, simply to gain service for merit. It seems to me it was better when faculty ran for committees because they really cared to serve on them. People used to be willing to do what was needed to be done simply for the good of the institution. With merit pay, we think of every single thing in terms of its merit pay value; which changes the institution in a fundamental and undesirable way.



The University says it can raise the faculty salary pool by only 3.5% next year.

OK. Let's assume that's true. And the cost of living is 4.1%.

Then, there's *only one fair thing to do*:

Raise each faculty salary by 3.5%. It's a small de facto pay cut of 0.6%, but faculty can bear it together.

Yet the Board and the Administration refuse this fair solution. They take 1% of the salary increase pool and

divert it to Merit Awards. For some. The remaining faculty fall further below cost of living with a 2.5% increase. The Orwellian name for that 2.5% is *sustained merit*. The true name is *bigger pay cut*.

Look at the effects of this institutional action. The sustained-merit faculty, as handy scapegoats, are each being forced to pay roughly \$800 tribute to the Merit God. (This \$800 is roughly the 1% increase on the average faculty salary.) Merit-awarded faculty are expected to drink up this pool of \$800 tributes, also in the name of the Merit God, even if they feel guilt.

Why must we play this mean little game? It's not right. Faculty members don't want to take \$800 from their colleagues in order to appease the Merit God. There is no mention of the Merit God in our Mission Statement. Instead, there is a reference to "the God-given dignity of every human person". Institutional scapegoating is not a Jesuit value.



I am willing to bet that my department spent more time and energy developing a merit pay plan than any other department. At some point, we sent the plan to our Dean and he indicated that our thresholds were too low and suggested how they should be changed. Some department members objected to this input, but we did, in fact, change the thresholds to those suggested by the Dean. Last year, we applied our Dean-approved plan with our Dean-approved thresholds and sent the results to the Dean. The Dean lowered the merit levels of more than 50% of the department members by either one or two levels. Our results did not rank order the department members, but only said which individuals had passed which thresholds. When we objected to the AVP that our Dean-approved plan and Dean-approved thresholds were being ignored, the AVP dismissed our objections because, he claimed, the Dean had agreed to our rank order (which didn't exist) and had moved individuals down only one level.

There are so many problems it's hard to know where to begin, but suffice it to say that merit pay at Fairfield is opaque and unfair. It's in need of a major overhaul, beginning with an exploration of whether or not the University is willing to fund it appropriately. Fairfield faculty work

hard and are deeply committed to this institution. What we get with merit pay is a reminder every year that we are unappreciated and undervalued. Merit pay has affected essentially everything in a negative way. Major overhaul or, better yet, get rid of it.



I am beginning to wonder if the Fairfield faculty has lost its courage. Ever since the administration forced a merit system on the faculty we have, much like lambs being led to slaughter, meekly accepted each year's MOU even though these MOUs have given us next to nothing. In addition, the administration ignores the principles guiding merit though both the faculty and the administration agreed to them and the administration has made no effort to remedy the very flawed merit system.

Now the latest gambit by the administration is to attempt to get the faculty to make a disastrous change in our handbook guarantee with respect to health care. What, in effect, the administration is offering is for the faculty to agree to never-ending increases in health care premiums and in exchange the administration will consider some formula making it possible for competent hard working faculty not to lose too much of its buying power with each new MOU. Make no mistake: if we give up our current system to cost-share for health care premiums for the plan the administration proposes, it is possible some individuals may make a profit because some of that money could go to individual merit awards, but there is no doubt that the faculty as a whole will pay a heavy financial price for the change. There is no doubt that if the administration continues to insist on a merit system that it refuses to adequately fund, the faculty must take steps to create a reality that doesn't punish hard working faculty so that a few can enjoy larger raises, but let us not do this on the backs of our fellow faculty members. I support continued discussion with the administration - but discussion designed to achieve equity, not exploitation.

Get involved

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. If you aren't a member, please consider joining. We promote the professional and economic interests, broadly defined, of the Fairfield University Faculty. All our activities are open to all members of the faculty but we are funded entirely by our dues-paying members.

From the Archives:

Journal of Record:

Committees shall report recommendations* to the Secretary of the General Faculty, the appropriate administrator, and the Academic Council. The Council Executive may decide to invite the Chair of the reporting committee to attend the first reading of the proposal. If the Chair is not invited to the first reading of the proposal, the Council itself may decide to invite the Chair to the second reading, at which second reading the Council shall discuss and vote upon the issue. The Academic Council will then forward the recommendation, if approved and/or revised, to the appropriate administrator, who shall respond within fifteen (15) calendar days to the Academic Council with his approval or objection to the recommendation. The disposition of the matter shall be reported to the General Faculty through the minutes of the Academic Council. The General Faculty, as in all matters, may address the recommendation in the General Faculty Meeting which immediately follows the Academic Council decision, and may overrule the Council. Once approved the recommendation will be entered in a Journal of Record by the Secretary of the Faculty.

*Committees will not report specific nonpolicy decisions such as recommendations for promotion or sabbatical.

AC: 03/18/1985
amended AC: 04/25/1988



Executive Committee: Kathy Nantz, President; Joe Dennin, Vice-President; Bill Abbott, Secretary; Rick DeWitt, Treasurer; Betsy Bowen, Membership; and at-large members: Marcie Patton, Cheryl Tromley, Kate Wheeler, Bob Epstein. Newsletter Staff: All of the above plus Irene Mulvey and Susan Rakowitz.

Faculty Welfare Committee/AAUP
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