

Faculty Welfare Committee

Excellence in Education



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The FWC continues to accept pledges to our **FWC Litigation Fund**, which will be used only if legal action is required with regard to the current governance situation. **Pledges to donate** to the fund can be sent to FWC Treasurer, Rick DeWitt. We are hopeful that a legal challenge will not be necessary but feel the need to be prepared.

From the Executive Committee:

As things wind down, the FWC Executive Committee would like to thank all our members for their support this year. It has been a *very* busy year for your colleagues on the Faculty Welfare Executive Committee.

We began the year with our very successful Recruitment Drive/Dues Increase project and we are happy to report that we have more members now than we had in September. We end the year with an extraordinary meeting of the General Faculty on Thursday, May 14 to consider proposals that could change significantly Fairfield's governance, the annual collegial discussions, and our *Faculty Handbook*.

In keeping with our mission, to promote faculty welfare, broadly defined, the FWC has held Brown Bag Lunch Discussions and two Open Meetings to facilitate conversations and help faculty understand the proposals and their consequences. We have put out a record-breaking number of newsletters this year to inform and educate the faculty and to provide a forum for faculty who wanted to share their point of view on the matter. In this last newsletter of the academic year, we have 4 more opinion pieces, News and Events, From the Archives, and some critical definitions that everyone needs to know. Thanks to *all* the faculty members who took the time to share their thoughts and concerns at this critical time. As we look forward to the GF meeting on Thursday, 5/14, the Executive Committee suggests you keep these thoughts in mind:

◆ The changes being proposed are complicated, substantive and interrelated. Read the packet for the meeting (available at www.faculty.fairfield.edu/gfs, click on Item 6) and talk to people in order to understand the proposals.

◆ Every faculty member needs to be aware of the issues at stake and needs to be aware of the arguments in favor of and against the proposals. (See the last 2 issues of this newsletter under Miscellaneous Publications at www.faculty.fairfield.edu/fwc).

◆ Faculty need to be at the meeting on Thursday. Faculty need to understand the motions presented. Any member of the faculty should ask for clarification at any time on any of the proposals, on any of the motions, and on procedure.

◆ If you have questions about voting by proxy or an absentee ballot, contact Faculty Secretary, Irene Mulvey

◆ The Academic Council considered and voted on all the motions to be considered on Thursday. The Council's votes are included in the packet for the 5/14 meeting. Read Council minutes at www.faculty.fairfield.edu/gfs click on Item 5.

◆ The Academic Council considered and approved an alternative motion concerning cost-sharing of health benefit premiums, MOU clause on money into the base for faculty who have not yet accepted cost-sharing, and merit pay. See page 22 of the packet for the 5/14 GF meeting (www.faculty.fairfield.edu/gfs Item 6) and talk to people until you understand *everything*.



Have a restful and productive summer.

FWC AND AAUP UPCOMING EVENTS / NEWS

UPCOMING FWC, AAUP AND OTHER FACULTY EVENTS:

GENERAL FACULTY MEETING

**Thursday, 5/14, 2:30-4:00
SON Auditorium**

The General Faculty will consider complex, interrelated proposals having to do with the *Faculty Handbook*, the Memo of Understanding, the Benefit Plans Overview booklet, and merit pay at a GF meeting on 5/14. (Helpful definitions are on page 4.) The agenda and materials for the meeting are online at www.faculty.fairfield.edu/gfs (click on Item 6). In addition, the Academic Council considered many of the proposals at meetings on 4/20, 4/27 and 5/4. Minutes for all these meetings are available online at www.faculty.fairfield.edu/gfs (click on Item 5). If you have any questions or want any more information, contact any member of the Academic Council, the Faculty Salary Committee, the Academic Council Subcommittee on Governance, or the FWC Executive Committee. The best possible outcome will be if educated faculty members cast informed votes and the FWC would like to do whatever we can to make that happen. Talk to someone.

FACULTY FAMILY PICNIC AND SOFTBALL GAME

**Thursday, MAY 14
4:30-7:00 PM
Women's Softball Field**



The FWC will host a softball game and picnic for all faculty, faculty families and friends. Take the opportunity during that brief moment between grading and Commencement to visit with colleagues and talk about summer plans. **Bring the family - there's lots of activities for all ages!** We do realize that we will have just come from a faculty meeting at which substantial and controversial proposals will be considered. But, if brothers Dom DiMaggio (the Little Professor) and Joe DiMaggio (the Yankee Clipper), pictured above, can realize that playing good baseball trumps even the Red Sox-Yankee rivalry, then maybe there's hope for us, too. Bring your glove or a lawn chair (or both).



AAUP Summer Institute Macalester College St. Paul, MN July 23-26

AAUP's premier resource for sharpening members' leadership skills and training them in the arts of faculty advocacy. Packed with interactive workshops and seminars. We have at least 5 members attending this year. Join us! It's a great learning experience and a great way to work together as faculty and plan the FWC year ahead. Scholarships are available for first-time attendees. Contact any member of the FWC Executive Committee.

RECENT FWC, AAUP AND OTHER FACULTY EVENTS:

We only have space to report briefly on a couple of items. We'll have full reports with photos in the fall.

Connecticut State Conference/AAUP Annual Spring Meeting

A remarkable turnout from Fairfield! Official presentation of the George E. Lang, Jr. Award to our colleague, Bob Epstein. Congratulations, Bob! Full report in the fall.

Fairfield FWC invited to Ohio State Conference Annual Meeting Four chapter leaders were invited to present a workshop at the Ohio State Conference Meeting on advocacy chapters. Full report in the fall.

Perspective from a new colleague

As a recent hire to the Fairfield University faculty, I feel compelled to share my perspective with our senior colleagues on the fiscal and governance proposals facing a vote by the general faculty. My offer to join you as a faculty member at Fairfield included a series of benefits and provisions that I accepted in good faith. I am now being asked to waive these benefits and provisions for unclear reasons, and, worse, waive a large degree of say in guiding future decisions on these very issues.

We have heard relatively little in the way of positive argument in favor of the substance of these proposals. The most compelling case we have heard is a version of the “turn the other cheek” argument. This is a high-minded claim that by accepting these proposals, we can preserve shared governance and show thereby that we can play in the sand-lot more nicely than the other kids. Claiming this moral high ground is possible only for those faculty with a large portion of their careers behind them, those faculty who do not share the fragility of my position as a recent hire.

It is not the Faculty Welfare Committee’s place to endorse one position or another. It is only for us to provide a forum for consideration of our own interests. In such consideration we need not be swayed by the

president’s insistence that all proposals be treated as a package, or by the trustees’ insistence that the package best suits some unspecified fiscal interests. Let us consider instead whether achieving a peaceful settlement in the face of a loaded gun is worth the price we would pay. That price, from where I stand, includes welcoming the youngest among us to Fairfield by retracting the terms of our hire and inviting us to share in career-long financial uncertainty and administrative powerlessness.

-Name Withheld Upon Request



Concerns About Changes to the Faculty Handbook

Before I made a decision about the proposed “package” on which we have been asked to vote, I wanted to know what other Jesuit institutions do regarding inclusion of benefits policy in their Faculty Handbooks. I looked at 26 Jesuit Institutions in the U.S. Nineteen had statements of faculty benefits included in the handbooks. One did not. Several

handbooks were inaccessible to non-university personnel.

When I was offered the position at Fairfield, I was considering a position with another university. Before I accepted an offer, I read both Faculty Handbooks to compare faculty responsibilities, tenure guidelines, and benefits. I wanted to know if TIAA-CREF was listed and what the retirement contributions, health and dental benefits were. If the benefits had not been included the Faculty Handbook, I honestly might have decided not to come to Fairfield. I assumed, incorrectly it seems, that the policies articulated in the *Faculty Handbook* represented the basis for my contract and future employment.

While I am concerned about the impact on current faculty should the proposed Faculty Handbook changes be made, I am also concerned about our ability to be competitive and recruit new faculty. The omission of benefits policies from Fairfield’s Faculty Handbook may indicate to some candidates that “shared governance” on critical faculty issues is merely a phrase and not a reality. I know that is the way I would have interpreted such an omission.

-Name Withheld Upon Request

**ACADEMIC
FREEDOM
FOR A
FREE SOCIETY**

Faculty should act responsibly.

I was a member of the Faculty Salary Committee during the years that we developed many of our current documents. These include the format for our current MOU and the BPO, and modifications to the Handbook. These were extremely tumultuous years when we had a new senior administrator who had come from the business world, who was not used to the collegial give and take of academic life, and was determined to shake things up. The parallels to what is going on now are remarkably similar, where the trustees are playing the role played in the past by the administrator.

We knew that the documents we were preparing were important and likely to stay in effect for many years; so we took great care in making sure that the wording was exactly correct. Much of the credit

is due to Rick DeWitt and Dennis Hodgson, but we also made extensive use of our attorney. The process was slow as both the faculty and the administration ran every change through counsel, but we ended up with documents that have served the faculty well.

I really appreciate the hard work put into the current negotiations by the Governance Subcommittee. They have been given the unenviable task of trying to modify the Handbook, MOU and BPO under what they have perceived as a strict deadline. However, it is important that the changes we make to our current documents are carefully considered. The administration has made extensive use of its attorney who has made many changes in the current draft plan. However, as I write this, the faculty still has not consulted an attorney with anything close to final language. Fortunately, the Academic Council instructed the Faculty

Welfare Committee to seek our counsel's guidance, but it looks extremely unlikely to me that the whole 52-page package can be vetted in a week or two. I suggest that we concentrate on a couple of the most important items and make sure that we have the correct language for these. I think that the most responsible way we can act now is to just consider this subset of items and to tell the trustees that there is just not time for us to finish the whole package. The administration should be able to tell the trustees that we have worked on everything in good faith and that we are willing to continue work on this material next year. If the trustees decide to vent their wrath upon us, then so be it. At least we know that we have acted sensibly and responsibly.

**-Chris Bernhardt,
Mathematics**

Yes, this will be on the final: Review and know the following definitions.

GF: The General Faculty is all full-time faculty members at the rank of Instructor or above and a number of administrators with faculty status. See the *Faculty Handbook* I.A page 1.

AC: The Academic Council is the executive arm of the GF, empowered to consider, make decisions and make recommendations on any matter of academic concern that falls within the purview of the GF, except for matters specifically referred to the GF (i.e., amendments to the *Handbook*, changes to the core curriculum and, by historical precedent, ratification of the MOU.) See *Faculty Handbook* I.B page 5.

MOU, BPO and annual Contract Letter: These are your contract documents, they are all linked together and reference the *Faculty Handbook*. The Memo of Understanding (MOU) specifies overall salary increases, salary ranges, a commitment to the AAUP's 95th percentile, and other items. The Benefit Plans Overview booklet for Full-Time Faculty (BPO) is included as an appendix to the MOU and outlines a variety of faculty benefits. The Contract Letter is a document you sign each year that specifies your salary for the year and, among other things, that the terms of the MOU (and BPO) will remain in effect until superseded by a subsequent MOU. Copies of all these documents can be found at www.faculty.fairfield.edu/rdwitt/FWC/Publications.html

FHB: The Faculty Handbook is an agreement between the faculty and the Board of Trustees. Changes or amendment require approval by both the General Faculty and the Board of Trustees. See *Faculty Handbook* I.A.8 on page 3.

FSC: The Faculty Salary Committee is a *Handbook* committee of five faculty members elected for three-year overlapping terms. More info at www.faculty.fairfield.edu/gfs/ (click on Item 7) or in the *Faculty Handbook* on page 17.

FWC: The Faculty Welfare Committee is an ad hoc committee of the GF and an affiliate of the national AAUP.

Dear Colleagues,

Clearly the package of benefits and *Handbook* changes under discussion is not perfect. It might even be awful. Bright people of integrity and experience are in disagreement over whether it is the best available option, and it is hard to know how to vote. As a new member on the Salary Committee, here are my thoughts.

To start, it is important to acknowledge that the Board seeks to impose part of this package –cost sharing for health care-- under the threat of unilateral action. This is morally infuriating and I fully empathize with my colleagues who will stop consideration of the package on this basis alone.

However, I do still think that on balance a vote for the proposal is wiser than one against. A vote against would be emotionally satisfying, but in my judgment rejecting the proposal would not be best for the faculty or the university as a whole. There are no good options before us. The question is which option is less bad, and this is difficult because we do not know what the alternative to the package might be.

Still, the package on the table would seem likely to be “less bad” than some scenarios, and I would ask opponents to explain what they believe will happen. For me, one potential advantage of the package is that it stands some chance of maintaining our salaries at the AAUP’s 95th percentile. The Board is under no real obligation to keep our average salaries at this level. They have only guaranteed it in our yearly Memo of Understanding, which they can, and may very well, reject if we reject the health care cost sharing. It does not seem ridiculous to imagine that if we vote the package down, the Board would implement the health care cost sharing anyway, and do so without the \$2,000 offset to our salaries. This would undermine the *Handbook* as our government document, put us below the 95th percentile, and make the

faculty appear intransigent on an issue of financial importance that the staff has already been made to accept.

Prof. DeWitt and others have correctly pointed out that in order to keep our salaries at the 95th percentile, the Board would have to put any money taken out of benefits back into salaries, and this is true. This is really our strongest protection. However, why would they honor it? Effectively reducing our salaries by 10% of the cost of healthcare would seem a great way to save money in the short term. They might return us to the 95th percentile slowly (meanwhile claiming “financial exigency” since we are facing a potentially frightening budget shortfall), and even then they could opt to give this chunk of money back to the faculty via the merit plan –and thus return it to the salary pool unevenly across the faculty. The average would be achieved, but not immediately and at more potential risk to equality. I would want the money in our base salary now –and the same for everyone-- rather than hope it comes back later, and I say this despite the obvious point that over time health care costs will rise faster than the cost of living.

Again, nobody knows what will happen if we do not approve the package we have negotiated, probably not even the Board, but I cannot imagine it will be very positive for the institution or us. If we were in a stronger legal position, I would argue that we should fight. My understanding is that the cost of a legal battle would be exorbitant, and it is unclear what chance we have of winning. Maybe this is pessimistic. I would be thrilled to be wrong.

On the other side of the ledger, the “cost of living” agreement in the merit plan strikes me as a bright point in our negotiations. We have long maintained that any merit system that funds some of us via a pay cut for others (in other words, a standard “raise” below the cost of living) is absolutely unacceptable. We have

finally won this point, though at the cost of a number of other changes that the Board wanted and we did not. If we manage to maintain our institution’s commitment to the 95th percentile, and if we can limit the degree to which merit unfairly rewards some at the expense of others, we might move into the future having put the most contentious issue of recent times behind us. This would be a valuable step forward.

Finally, there are a number of other considerations that I do not have space to explore here. For instance, adding administrators as voting members of faculty committees is ridiculous. I understand the logic of getting the administration involved in committee work early in the decision making process, but this could be accomplished as *ex officio* members. I can’t imagine that administrators would ever win a vote (there are not enough of them on the committee), so this seems intended to irritate the faculty, satisfy the NEASC report, or both. My irritation over this sort of thing does not rise to the level of rejecting the proposal outright.

This is hardly a ringing endorsement. I realize that in some ways a vote for the package represents a triumph of hope over experience. I found the negotiations with the administration this year to be cordial and honest and I would hope to build on them. I would be particularly interested in exploring how we can minimize the cost sharing for newer faculty and families, but of course this would be a discussion the faculty would have to undertake on our own before we presented it to the administration.

Mostly, I suppose that I am new enough to hope that we could have an institution that does not run purely on acrimony and recrimination, and I am willing to take a chance to achieve that. I might be wrong, but I am voting to try. The package on the table is, I believe, the best we can do in difficult times.

-Dave Crawford, Sociology

FROM THE ARCHIVES: Snippets unearthed by the Secretary of the General Faculty...

The Mission of the
AAUP:

*to advance academic
freedom and shared
governance, to define
fundamental professional
values and standards for
higher education, and to
ensure higher education's
contribution to the
common good.*



Faculty Welfare
Committee/AAUP
Executive Committee:
Kathy Nantz (President),
Joe Dennin (Vice-
President), Bill Abbott
(Secretary),
Rick DeWitt (Treasurer),
at-large members Bob
Epstein, Marcie Patton,
Cheryl Tromley, Kate
Wheeler, and Membership
Director, Betsy Bowen



Faculty picketing
Bellarmine Hall
Spring 1993
(Photo credits R.DeWitt)

