

Faculty Welfare Committee/AAUP

Excellence in Education

Collegial Discussions Continue...

The Faculty Welfare Committee/AAUP Executive Committee continues to monitor the situation with regard to the collegial discussions taking place between the Faculty Salary Committee and the administration. In this newsletter, we provide a summary of events that took place since the last newsletter and events that are planned.

Monday morning: Members of the Faculty Salary Committee and faculty members on the Academic Council Executive Committee met with President von Arx, S.J., at the request of the Faculty Salary Committee. President von Arx reported that the administration is working to re-draft the administration's proposal concerning the 95th percentile, and that he hoped they would have language to share with the FSC at their next scheduled meeting on Tuesday afternoon. The Faculty Salary Committee suggested, in broad outline, a proposal to keep a 95th percentile-based benchmark but eliminate the administration's stated concern of an unbudgeted expense in April if any rank falls below the 95th percentile, which the President asked to see in writing.

Monday afternoon: The Academic Council held an emergency meeting which had been requested by the Faculty Salary Committee in order to re-open discussion with the Committee on Conference with the Board of Trustees regarding their meeting with the Academic Affairs Subcommittee of the Board on Thursday. The Council (1) agreed on information that the Conference Committee should discuss with the Board:

- Maintaining average compensation at the 95th percentile is an ongoing contractual commitment that cannot be changed unilaterally;
- The 95th percentile benchmark is a crucial tool for attracting and retaining the best new faculty members;
- This benchmark has been a longstanding basis for negotiation, not least of all in 2009 when faculty agreed to move benefits out of the *Handbook* and begin to pay a part of health care premiums based on the steadfast promise of an ongoing commitment to the 95th percentile;
- Since NEASC noted serious concerns with governance at Fairfield in 2007, there has been an enormous effort on the part of all parties to renew collegiality and regain trust. To a large degree, our efforts have been successful. But the renewed trust is extremely fragile and already damaged by the current situation. Our five year interim report to NEASC, currently in preparation, will need to accurately reflect the current state of trust;
- Collegial collaboration is critical for the long-term success of the University;

(2) authorized the Conference Committee to provide copies of this week's FWC newsletters to all members of the Board, and (3) authorized the Conference Committee and the Faculty Salary Committee to continue to discuss matters as the week progresses and modify the information to be presented, if needed.

Tuesday afternoon: The Faculty Salary Committee has a regularly scheduled meeting with the administration. The President informed the FSC chair by email that they will have a revised proposal in written form to present at that meeting.

Thursday: The Board of Trustees has one of their regularly scheduled meetings. Our Committee on Conference with the Board of Trustees meets with the Academic Affairs Subcommittee of the Board; liaisons from other *Handbook* committees meet with other Board subcommittees. Typically, it is at the March meeting that the Board approves the budget for next year.

Friday: The General Faculty have a regularly scheduled meeting at which a report from the Faculty Salary Committee and a report from the Committee on Conference with the Board of Trustees are on the agenda. The Faculty Welfare Committee has scheduled a meeting of the full membership immediately following the General Faculty meeting.

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.

The Faculty Welfare Committee/AAUP Steering Committee remains cautiously optimistic about some aspects of the current situation and decidedly pessimistic about others. We are optimistic because the administration has pulled back from what the Faculty Salary Committee perceived as a unilateral attempt to break a contractual commitment to maintain compensation at the 95th percentile. We are decidedly pessimistic about the alarming reductions in benefits for the 2012-13 Memo of Understanding which were proposed to the Faculty Salary Committee by the administration for the first time about one month ago.

The approval of an Memo of Understanding by the faculty should *precede* the approval of the budget by the Board of Trustees. This is stipulated in the first paragraph of the current MOU which states, "After collegial discussions, the Faculty Salary Committee and the Administration have agreed to recommend to the General Faculty for ratification and to the Budget Committee for inclusion in the budget that they submit to the President and the Board of Trustees the following compensation package." The FSC and administration should have agreed on a MOU before this Thursday's Board meeting at which the Board will approve next year's budget. The President and SVPAA assure us that the budget can be amended by the Board in June, but we remain concerned that the overall "compensation figure" approved by the Board in March will be unalterable; in that case, our only input will be shifting the cuts from one inadvisable place to another. Cut benefits drastically and keep a small salary increase or cut benefits less drastically for a small, surely below CPI salary increase?

Budgets are planning documents that reflect an institution's priorities going forward, and the current budget proposes deep cuts to benefits. The FWC Steering Committee's position is that the budget should look at the big picture and see how best to support our core academic mission. The prestige and quality of recently hired faculty across the institution is acknowledged and appreciated by all. Deep cuts in benefits will seriously harm our ability to attract and retain this caliber of faculty which, in turn, will have a negative effect on our core academic mission.

- The FWC/AAUP Steering Committee is a standing subcommittee of the FWC/AAUP consisting of the elected officers and at-large members of the FWC Executive Committee and the members of the Faculty Salary Committee.

Faculty Welfare Committee/AAUP Executive Committee: Rick DeWitt (President), Joe Dennin (Vice President), Bill Abbott (Secretary), Rona Preli (Treasurer), At-large members Jocelyn Boryczka, Susan Rakowitz, Deb Strauss, Kate Wheeler. Membership Director: Vacant. Newsletter Editor: Irene Mulvey.

Faculty Welfare Committee/AAUP
Rick DeWitt, President
Philosophy Department
Fairfield University
1073 North Benson Road