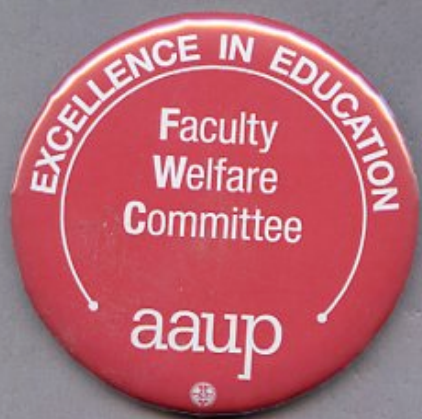


Faculty Welfare Committee/AAUP Excellence in Education

e-newsletter

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From the FWC/AAUP Executive Committee:

Like nearly every faculty member we talk to, we are dismayed that it is May and we have not reached agreement with the administration on a 2015-16 MOU/BPO. We wholeheartedly support our colleagues on the FSC and thank them for their tireless work.

We were surprised that the regularly scheduled Thursday meeting between the FSC and the administration did not take place last week. We understand that conflicts with meetings arise from time to time, but having to reschedule this meeting at the last minute indicates to us that the administration and Board do not see any sense of urgency in reaching agreement so that faculty contracts can go out in June as usual, and faculty can continue with the business of teaching and research that drives this University. We, along with the FWC Action Committee, note that there are any number of administration initiatives currently underway that have significant faculty involvement; Fairfield 2020, core revision, Commencement, and our upcoming NEASC accreditation are only a few of the items that come to mind. Many of us are questioning our continued participation in these initiatives, given the lack of any sense of urgency on the part of our administration and Board to reach agreement on an MOU. We admire the patience of the FSC and defer to their judgment but, at this point, we are convinced that no progress will be made without faculty action.

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Members:

Wear your chapter button every day.

Get chapter t-shirts ready for Wednesday.

Update from the Faculty Salary Committee:

Thanks to all who were at the GF meeting on May 1 (International Workers' Day and the Feast of St. Joseph, the Worker) to hear our report. As we presented on 5/1, we received this latest proposal from the administration on 4/16:

- 1.5% salary pool - *all as standard merit in exchange for the faculty agreeing to create an appropriate faculty/administration committee to determine if there is a mutually agreeable post-tenure review system to replace the current merit pay system, with the goal of having a new system (if agreement can be reached) in place for 2016-17.*
- *An additional salary increase of 1% (before standard merit is awarded) across-the-board as a percent of salary (not the mean).*
- Maintain University's contribution to retirement at 9%
- No change to chair stipend
- Health insurance changes Health insurance changes (same as on 2/25):
 - Eliminate all PPO plans
 - Continue only the HSA plans
 - Increase the deductible on the HSA plans by \$500/\$1,000 to \$2,000/\$4,000
 - No increase in subsidy for HSA provided by the University (remains \$1,000/\$2,000)

The FSC provided this counter-proposal on 4/29:

- Salary increase of 1.5%, distributed all as standard merit;
- Additional salary increase of 1% as described in [administration's] memo of April 16, 2015;
- Health Insurance: no changes in health insurance for calendar year 2016 in exchange for an agreement to work with the administration beginning immediately (through the Health Care Committee and the Faculty Salary Committee) to study the advisability of eliminating PPO plans and continuing only the HSA plans.

Why no further merit in the FSC proposal? Because *all* faculty have fallen below the increase in CPI by 3.5% since the last time further merit was awarded in 2008. Nobody should get further merit unless we are all keeping up with the increase in the cost-of-living. This is a basic issue of fairness. It is unconscionable to ask faculty to compete for "further merit" awards when those awards result in their colleagues staying behind the increase to CPI.

Why no changes to health insurance in the FSC proposal? Lots of reasons, but primarily because (1) there are still too many unknowns about the implications of the changes proposed by the administration; (2) the changes have not been thoroughly vetted by the Health Care Committee, a committee jointly created last May to address the growth of health care costs, a shared concern; (3) we are not at all confident that the changes will have the desired effect on health insurance costs.

We are in contact with the attorney funded by your FWC dues to review the process and the implications of not having an MOU before the end of the academic year. We hope it doesn't come to this (again) but, as we noted on 5/1, this has happened at least twice in the recent past.

We are meeting with the administration Monday 5/3. We will report to the FWC EC immediately afterwards on 5/3, and we will report to the GF on 5/5.

Update from the Health Care Committee:

Thank you to all members of the General Faculty covered by the Memo of Understanding/Benefits Plan Overview who responded to the survey put out jointly by the HCC and the FSC. In just the first 72 hours, we had a remarkable response rate of 60%. If you haven't completed the survey yet, we would like to hear from you; the survey will remain open until Friday, May 8. The information on the survey will be used in conjunction with the research we are currently doing in order to carry out the charge given to us by the GF at the 4/17/2015 GF meeting "to study the changes to health insurance proposed by the administration to the FSC on April 16, 2015 and prepare a written report to be sent to the FSC and the GF on the pros and cons of these changes and on the financial implications of these changes for the University and for employees." We hope to have a preliminary draft of our report soon. In the meantime, we appreciate the FWC EC providing space in the newsletter so that we may share some of the trends that the survey data highlighted, some of the information we've uncovered in our research, and our preliminary thoughts.

Survey Information.

- Many respondents have done careful research into their health insurance options and costs, and know that they will be financially worse off on the HSA. Other respondents are happy with the HSA, but there is wide agreement that an HSA is not for everyone.
- Many respondents pointed out that the administration is simultaneously making the HSA less attractive (by increasing the deductible without increasing the subsidy) and proposing that it be the only option. There is widespread worry about what the administration will propose for the HSA in the future, if it were the only option.
- Currently (calendar year 2015), the University provides a subsidy that covers 2/3 of the deductible for faculty on the HSA. This is not unusual for employers providing an HSA. Survey respondents want the University to continue to cover 2/3 of the deductible, since that is the reason many opted for the high deductible plan in the first place.
- Many respondents had concerns about cash flow problems that they would be at risk for with an HSA. The very high deductible might need to be paid early in the year, but the University's subsidy is paid in two installments (January and July).
- Many point out that an HSA, or any high deductible health insurance plan, is supposed to have lower premiums than a traditional plan. We will recommend that next year's FSC and HCC address this with the administration.

Preliminary Thoughts from the HCC.

The survey confirmed what the FSC has tried to convey to the administration – the administration's proposals for health insurance are not clearly defined. Originally, the administration seemed surprised to learn from the FSC that not everyone is eligible for an HSA. At a subsequent meeting, the administration told the FSC that people not eligible for an HSA would be able to have an HRA. We do not know, and we do not think the administration knows, exactly who is or is not eligible for an HSA. Our survey pointed out that there may be several categories of people not eligible for an HSA. Moreover, we are deeply concerned that there are individuals who have been allowed to open HSAs by our HR department who are not eligible and may be subject to IRS penalties. Faculty members on the FSC and the HCC have been approached by individuals who are confused about their eligibility for an HSA and we have no idea how to answer their questions. All we know is that the administration's proposal involves an HRA but we have been given nothing in writing by the administration on an HRA. If they have a plan, they haven't shared it with us. If they don't have a plan, then they cannot expect faculty members to vote for changes to health care that include an HRA. The administrative team has told the FSC that if we switch to an HSA/HRA-only model there will be winners and there will be losers. How many winners? How many losers? How much will the losers lose? We have asked, but the administration team doesn't seem to know, or care. We have been told that if we move to an HSA/HRA-only model, that our health care premiums *should* drop. When we asked what the expected change in premiums would be, they told us they had no idea, and wouldn't predict in any event. Any other time we made major changes to health insurance, we took the time to understand completely the changes and all the implications before making any decisions. We need to do the same thing this time.

The Faculty Welfare Committee/AAUP at Fairfield University is an *ad hoc* committee of the General Faculty and an affiliate of the national AAUP. About 70% of the full-time faculty at Fairfield are members of the FWC. If you aren't a member, please consider joining. The FWC promotes 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. To join, contact any member of the Executive Committee.

Update from the Faculty Welfare Committee/AAUP Action Committee:

The FWC/AAUP Action Committee, which I am currently chairing, takes its direction from the elected leadership of the FWC. We continue to support our colleagues on the FSC and hope it is obvious to the administration that the FSC has near unanimous faculty support. We are all dismayed that we do not have a 2015-2016 MOU/BPO yet, but we continue to support our elected FSC colleagues. We understand that the FSC still holds out hope that an agreement will be reached in the collegial discussions before the end of the academic year. We, however, do not share their optimism. When it is necessary to show the administration, the Board of Trustees, and the wider community our support for our elected FSC colleagues, the FWC Action Committee has organized a list of actions to take place at upcoming events to demonstrate our unequivocal and strong support for the FSC and our faculty governance processes. If you would like to join the FWC Action Committee email list, contact me.

-Prof. Jocelyn Boryczka
Politics Department

FWC/AAUP Executive Committee: Rona Preli, President; Jocelyn Boryczka, Vice-President; Bill Abbott, Secretary; Irene Mulvey, Treasurer; At-large members Betsy Bowen, Sonya Huber, Anna Lawrence, Deb Strauss. Membership Director: Stephanie Storms.

Rona Preli, FWC/AAUP President
GSEAP/Canisius Hall
1073 North Benson Road
Fairfield, CT 06824