

## Faculty Welfare Committee/AAUP Excellence in Education



### A Great Day for Fairfield University and Faculty Solidarity

#### General Faculty Meeting.

Over 200 faculty members participated in an emergency meeting of the General Faculty on Tuesday, May 31, about 120 were physically present, and the rest had officially assigned colleagues to vote as their proxy. Materials for the meeting were sent out in advance of the meeting. These materials, a nine-page comprehensive document, indicated that things had been in flux right up until mid-day on the morning before our meeting. In light of this, the Faculty Salary Committee (FSC) did an incredible job of getting such a complete and comprehensive document out in advance. (See [faculty.fairfield.edu/gfs](http://faculty.fairfield.edu/gfs))

Professor Bob Epstein, a member of the FSC made most of the presentation for the committee. He went through the document quickly but thoroughly. Most faculty members had the materials printed out in hardcopy or were following along on an electronic device. After the informational sections, Prof. Epstein paused for questions. In the context of discussing the desirability of a multi-year contract, a stated goal of the administration that was strongly supported by the FSC, Prof. Beth Boquet made an important point. Specifically, that reaching agreement on a three-year contract, when (except for one exception in 1990) we have only ever had one-year contracts, would naturally be expected to take a lot longer than reaching agreement on a one-year contract. Prof. Epstein replied that the FSC agreed completely and had been optimistic when, in September, the administration suggested that a

multi-year contract could be completed before the end of the December.

Accordingly, the FSC's first proposal was for a three-year contract, and was presented in early November. Despite meeting weekly and starting very early in the Fall, the administration's counter-proposal (its first actual proposal) was not presented to the FSC until February, calling into question their optimistic goal of wrapping things up by December.

Following questions, the faculty moved on to the actions. Prof. Epstein turned the podium over to Professor Mark Demers, another member of the FSC. (Prof. Epstein apologized for an ill-timed but important family obligation, a middle school Award Ceremony. Well done, Nathaniel Epstein, on receiving the Geometry Award. The FWC/AAUP congratulates you!) Prof.

Demers continued through the motions, and answered a wide variety of questions. Seven motions that had been sent in advance were all passed, without amendment and by either unanimous or near unanimous votes. An additional motion, made from the floor by Professor Patricia Behre, Chair of the Committee on Conference with the Board of Trustees, also passed unanimously.

### **Collective Faculty Action: Protest March**

The FWC/AAUP had surveyed FWC members over the weekend. Over 60% of the respondents were strongly in favor of collective faculty action following the GF meeting. The FWC had had an organizational meeting right before the GF meeting so that immediately following adjournment, faculty members gathered behind our *Faculty Fight for Fairfield* banner and marched from Gonzaga to Bellarmine. It was a beautiful day for a stroll (people in the back) or a march (people in front).

The mood was one of solidarity. Faculty fighting for Fairfield. Faculty demanding that the centrality of our core academic mission takes precedence in all of our decisions and, especially, in decisions on resource allocation and budgeting.

The group gathered in front of Bellarmine for brief speeches, some chanting, and just to enjoy the feeling of good old solidarity with colleagues and friends, old and new -- all ranks, all schools, most departments. We are Fairfield's faculty and we were there to make a statement.

Our plan had been for the FWC/AAUP Vice President to deliver one of our flyers "Abide by the Contracts You Signed, and Respect Our Contractual Processes" to President von Arx, S.J., or to his office if he was not in. What a surprise when we turned to that part of our action to find the door to Bellarmine had been locked!!!



## **Fairfield University faculty locked out of Bellarmine Hall**



This inspired a new round of chanting (for those inclined to chant): LOCKED OUT! *Sym-bo-li-sm!* LOCKED OUT! *Sym-bo-li-sm!* LOCKED OUT! *Sym-bo-li-sm!* LOCKED OUT! *Sym-bo-li-sm!* LOCKED OUT! As well, it helped to explain the fact that there were two security vehicles in the lot when we arrived.

Intrepid Professor of Management Cheryl Tromley (Professor Emerita as of today) walked around and entered the building through the Bellarmine Museum and made her way up to the foyer in order to open the door for the FWC/AAUP Vice President. Prof. Tromley was met in the foyer by a security guard who informed her that he had been directed to lock the door, that he could not unlock it to allow Prof. Boryczka to enter, and ushered Prof. Tromley out. We did not find out who directed that the door be locked.

Inexplicably, an elderly gentleman who drove up was allowed in by Public Safety.

Given this turn of events, we had a few more brief spontaneous speeches. Prof. Irene Mulvey noted that she had been on an investigating team for AAUP at a school which is likely to be put on the AAUP censure list at the next annual meeting. When the investigating team was being escorted to a meeting on campus, a faculty member pointed to a building and said, “Our President’s office is in there. Now, it’s always locked, and you need to ring the bell to enter. Then you’re escorted to your appointment by a security guard.” Is this what we’re coming to at Fairfield? Faculty locked out of Bellarmine? Senior administrators not even willing to have us in their building? How can we possibly move forward together in this atmosphere? No connection. No contact. No discussion. This isn’t collegiality.

It was suggested that we could each mail a copy of our flyer to the President since we were not able to have one delivered by our representative. We took some group photos behind our banner in front of Bellarmine. And, we marched off, in solidarity and collegueship.

### **What’s Next?**

There were any number of excellent ideas discussed at our organizing meeting for actions to take at the June 2 Board of Trustees meeting, the June Orientations sessions, Alumni Reunion Weekend, move-in day for freshman, and *lots* more ideas for the Fall. We appreciate all the ideas, and encourage any member with anything to offer to contact FWC/AAUP Action Committee Chair, Jocelyn Boryczka (pictured above). We are considering a silent vigil protest at the June 2 Board meeting, but may decide to let our General Faculty near unanimous votes speak for themselves regarding faculty strength and unity. We fully expect that the members of our Board of Trustees will consider thoughtfully the material we sent them. Do watch your email for information or for another survey.

Reprinted below is the email sent by Prof. Boryczka to all members of the FWC this morning, because no one can tell the story better than Jocelyn:

Dear FWC Members:

What an incredible day yesterday! More than 70 faculty stood together in solidarity for our governance process, for our FSC, for 50 years of procedure that have given us an MOU. I planned on delivering to the President's Office the flyer stating: "Abide by the contracts that you signed, and respect our jointly-approved process." I was LOCKED OUT. Public Safety locked the door and after it was opened told us he was called and could not let us in. One person who "had an appointment" was admitted.

Bottom line – Administration literally LOCKS FACULTY OUT of a public building during regular business hours. What a sad state of affairs when doors are literally closed on discussion with faculty by the Administration.

What a great show of solidarity by and for faculty as we move forward and continue to stand for shared governance and a process that works.

We will be in touch as the day moves forward about next steps. In the meantime, post pictures from yesterday – I include a picture in the attached documents of our great FWC [reprinted on page 1 of this newsletter]– share widely.

Thank you to each member of the FWC – those of you who were there yesterday and all of you who were there with us in spirit!

In solidarity,  
Jocelyn

## **FWC/AAUP awarded grant from the National AAUP Collective Bargaining Congress!**

In a somewhat ironic bookend to the day, President Rona Preli was informed late yesterday that the grant application that the FWC/AAUP submitted to the National AAUP Collective Bargaining Congress in March has been approved!

**Senior administrators may lock us out, symbolically and literally,  
but our AAUP colleagues from all over the country have our backs.**

Our grant application was specific in seeking financial assistance for legal fees, newsletter expenses, and publicity and public relations expenditures. In writing to FWC President Rona Preli, Collective Bargaining Chair Howard Bunsis wrote, "My colleagues on the AAUP-CBC Executive Committee and I stand ready to help you and your colleagues protect the strong AAUP chapter that you have built at Fairfield University. The manner in which your group has stood together to support faculty voice is something we are very proud of."