

Faculty Welfare Committee/AAUP Excellence in Education



Fairfield University Workers United FORUM ON CAMPUS LABOR April 21, 2016

Workers on campus came together in solidarity to discuss labor issues on our campus, and to connect as workers. There were representatives from UNITE HERE Local 217, SEIU Local 32BJ, International Union of Operating Engineers Local 30, and the Faculty Welfare Committee/AAUP. We heard from student-workers, contingent faculty, and more.

Members of the FWC/AAUP Executive Committee were pleased to be charter members of *Fairfield University Workers United*, and we look forward to continuing in partnership with our fellow workers.

The Forum ended with a petition supporting workers, and signatures are still being collected. For more information, contact Action Committee Co-Chairs Jocelyn Boryczka or Sonya Huber. If you would like to be involved in planning *FUWU events*, or just get on the mailing list to stay informed, contact Jocelyn or Sonya. Spread the word about *Fairfield University Workers United* to others on campus. Together we stand, supporting each other to make a better and more just campus.

We've asked speakers at Thursday's Forum to provide us with their remarks to print in our newsletter.

Remarks by Paul Lakeland.

A couple of decades ago there was a push on campus, led by students, for justice for our custodial workers. The students occupied Bellarmine and hung a banner out of the window, that said: "Practice the values you teach us to live by."

These words on the banner remind us that as a Jesuit and Catholic institution, bound to the vision of the human person and human society integral to Catholic social teaching, we have to use the principles of that teaching to inform ourselves and, when necessary, to use it in acts of self-criticism. With that in mind I want to make just three points.

1. LABOR

Catholic teaching on labor is longstanding. 120 years ago Pope Leo XIII stated that "Workmen's associations" (i.e., unions) are "the most important" of all "institutions and organizations which afford opportune assistance to those in need.... It is to be greatly desired that they should multiply and become more effective."

In the over 100 years since the pope's words, no council, no pope, no synod, no episcopal conference, no bishop has ever rescinded or challenged these words. In documents and statements far too numerous to mention here, the Magisterium has amplified and strengthened its support not only for the numerous rights that natural law confers on all workers, but also for the essential role that labor unions play in securing these rights. Here is just one example:

In 1965 at the Second Vatican Council, Catholic bishops from all over the world spoke of the essential right of workers to form unions:

"Among the basic rights of the human person must be counted the right of freely founding labor unions. These unions should be truly able to represent the workers and to contribute to the proper arrangement of economic life. Another such right is that of taking part freely in the activity of these unions without fear of reprisal."

A thought: do we just tolerate unions or actively encourage them? Catholic Social Teaching would suggest the latter is what we should be doing.





The event was dedicated to the memory of our colleague Gisela Gil-Egui, a passionate supporter of workers' rights and justice. #missed

2. THE COMMON GOOD

Each of us here shares a calling to work for the common good. Fifty years ago, the Second Vatican Council defined the common good as "the sum of those conditions of social life which allow social groups and their individual members relatively thorough and ready access to their own fulfillment". They promoted the idea of distributive justice, that justice requires sensitivity to the needs of different populations, and stressed a special concern for the least advantaged members of society.

A thought: how does this fit with institutional policies that seem to disrespect the less affluent members of our community and benefits policies that seem to place the burden where it should not be. Catholic Social Teaching favors the "preferential option for the poor and the marginalized." The less powerful members of a community should have their voices heard and their needs respected.

3. THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF CHURCH-RELATED INSTITUTIONS

In the words of the US Catholic bishops in 1986: All the moral principles that govern the just operation of any economic endeavor apply to the Church and its agencies and institutions. Indeed the Church should be exemplary.... All church institutions must also fully recognize the rights of employees to organize and bargain collectively with the institution through whatever association or organization they freely choose.

A thought: Being "exemplary" means not just doing what is legal, but modeling what is ethical. When monies collected from employees have not been needed for the purposes for which they were collected, they should either be returned or held to be used for that purpose in subsequent years. Anything else may be legal but I doubt that it could be described as ethical. In fact, to pull a word from the complex lexicon of theologians, it looks to me very much like *theft*.

-Paul Lakeland is the Aloysius P. Kelley, S.J., Professor of Catholic Studies, and the Director of the Center for Catholic Studies

Reprinted below is Friday's email from the Chair of the Faculty Salary Committee to the General Faculty:

DATE: Friday, April 22, 2016 at 6:09 PM

FROM: Chris Bernhardt, Chair, Faculty Salary Committee

RE: Email from "Faculty Announce" with Subject line "Healthcare Frequently Asked Questions"

Some members of the faculty received an email on Thursday night from "Faculty Announce" and with the Subject line "Healthcare Frequently Asked Questions." We are not sure to whom this message was sent. We have had reports of full-time, tenured faculty not receiving the message, and reports of at least a couple of part-time faculty receiving this message. We also have no idea from whom the message was sent since although it begins, "Dear Colleagues," it is not signed.

The FWC has contacted the Collective Bargaining Congress at National AAUP, on behalf of the FSC. Their experts have begun analyzing the situation here. They have already provided several initial analyses – heavily laden with charts and tables. The FSC and the faculty members on the HCC are compiling this mass of information into readable chunks, and will be sending detailed information about each of the points raised in the administration's mailing as soon as possible, probably early next week. In the meantime here are some initial comments from the FSC.

I have heard that Fairfield University medical costs are not increasing, and in fact may be decreasing. Is this true?

We all know that health care costs have been increasing. However, these costs are being shifted to employees. The important question is how much is the university paying each year. This amount has been decreasing over the last several years.

How does the 80/20 cost share work, how do we budget for it, and what happens if actual claims differ from the projected claims at the time employee cost shares are set each for January?

The specialized software that the consultant uses to set premiums resulted in a surplus of \$2.7 million last year. It is on track to generate a large surplus again next year. If the university was an insurance company, and not self-insured, these enormous surpluses would not be allowed. Employees are paying 20% of these surpluses, but the university is pocketing the entire amounts.

More and more universities and companies are adding HSAs as medical plan choices; what are the benefits of using an HSA?

Nobody is arguing that we shouldn't have an HSA. The administration is pushing to eliminate the PPO and have just the HSA. According to the Mercer survey nobody else offers just an HSA.

Will proposed changes in the 2017 medical plan result in less net compensation for me when combined with a 1.5% salary increase?

Remember that compensation is salary plus the value of benefits. Take-home pay for employees with families on our plan will be cut if they have a salary of less than \$115,000. They will also have higher deductibles and co-insurance is going to be added. It is hard to believe that the increase in health costs will mean that their total compensation will increase. But even if it does, that would be an increase in computed value, not in money that employees can use to feed their families or save to pay for college tuitions.

It is true that the premiums remained about the same going from 2015 to 2016, but remember that the deductibles – the amount you have to pay before the insurance kicks in – increased substantially. They increased by \$500 for a single person and \$1000 for a family.

Why would the university consider keeping employee premium contributions at the current 20% cost share while charging a higher rate for dependents?

As noted above, most employees with families will receive pay cuts. The effect of this change will mean that faculty with lower salaries will receive larger pay cuts. This is incredibly regressive.

A comment from the Chair of the FSC.

At the meeting of the FSC with the administration last week, I pointed out that four out of the five members of the FSC would receive pay cuts under the new plan, while the administrators would receive pay increases. This is caused by the fact that administrators earn over \$115,000 and my colleagues do not. The administrators took great exception to my remark. They were angry. They said that they were not interested in lining their own pockets, but in doing what was best for the institution. But the fact remains...

We have been meeting all academic year. The administration has only just presented us with this proposal. We have had less than two weeks to consider it. (This "last, best and final offer" is in fact their second offer. The first had the elimination of the PPO.) If the administration feels that their proposal has merit, it should be presented to both the HCC and the FSC.

Why is the administration presenting this proposal at the end of the year? Why is the administration insisting that we vote on it before it can be properly considered? Why is the administration circumventing both the HCC and the FSC?

As noted the faculty members on the HCC will be in contact next week. For a good background and a more in-depth look at the history and proposed changes we again suggest reading the [minutes](#) from the last General Faculty Meeting.