St. John’s-AAUP Newsletter

**Fall 2013**

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**2013 SJU-AAUP Election Results**

In a mail-ballot election conducted by the American Arbitration Association between July 1-22, 2013, Frank Le Veness was re-elected President of the SJU-AAUP. He was opposed by Ray Ochs, Professor of Pharmacy.

The new representatives are as follows:

Vice President Somnath Pal (Pharmacy and Allied Sci)

Corresponding Secretary John Greg (Speech)

Recording Secretary Joan D’Andrea (Library)

Treasurer Granville Ganter (English)

Executive Council:

CPS Catherine Ruggieri (Economics)

Education John Spiridakis (Education)

Library P. Charles Livermore (Library)

Pharmacy Frank Barile (Pharmacy and Allied Sci)

Tobin Joseph A Giacalone (Economics)

At Large Charles Traina (Math)

At Large Edward Beckenstein (Math)

At Large William Keogan (Library)

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**Part –Time Health Care**

Following the terms of the 2011-14 contract, union representatives met with the SJU administration to work out a plan for health benefits for part timers. The administration was first able to meet only in December 2012, and again only at the end of the spring semester 2013, just prior to President Harrington’s announcement of his retirement.

At the last AAUP chapter meeting (Nov 4, 2013), chapter president Frank Le Veness reported that health care coverage assistance will be made available by the administration for eligible adjunct faculty. The university regrets that it is not a "plan," but it has set aside a substantial fund to assist those who need health care coverage. For those adjuncts who don't already have coverage via other sources, they will be able to apply by filling out a relatively simple statement of need. The administration has not yet created the necessary form.

In 2012 contract talks, the administration initially believed that it could offer full Oxford benefits to regularly teaching part-time faculty, but by Spring 2013 they determined that the costs would be higher than they were willing to pay. Estimates for full Oxford coverage for part-timers vary between 1 and 3 million dollars, even after a substantial contribution from part-time faculty (between $2500-4500 a year, per person). The administration also expressed concern about possible increases in Oxford costs across the board for all STJ faculty, should the risk pool grow by including part-timers.

Administration research on financing was complicated by impending changes mandated by Obamacare, which has both good and bad consequences for university planning. The good news is that most analysts feel that the “health care exchange” system will lower the cost of health care in the NY area, and create a greater variety of plans to suit different needs.

The bad news is that several alternative plans that STJ might have offered to part-time faculty are prohibited under new federal guidelines. These federal guidelines were invented to block employers from skimping out on paying for health care. Such alternatives were medical reimbursement accounts (HRAs), or flexible spending accounts (FSAs) where faculty could draw on a tax-free fund.

SJU-AAUP is not an expert on existing health care options but faculty may find the following information useful:

Graduate students who teach are eligible for health care through the university at $1574 a year. <http://www.stjohns.edu/services/financial/bursar/health.stj>

New York Empire Blue Cross offers an emergency health care plan (TraditionPlus) for individuals for about $2200 a year (rates vary). Contact Jessica Adkins at 877-934-8978 <http://www.empirebcbsdirect.com/jadkins><http://www.empirebcbsdirect.com/jadkins?oid=9254299&cid=&plans=NY_HMO,NY_TradPls,NY_POS>

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**Staten Island Reorganization Plan Opposed by Faculty**

At the close of the spring semester, the SJU-AAUP was invited to Staten Island to hear faculty response to a plan authored by Dean Gerald Ross to create a semi-autonomous Staten Island campus. The principal element of the plan was the creation of new departments which functioned independently of Queens, but those SI faculty would maintain their existing rights and membership at their Queens departments at the same time ([Ross Strategic Plan Apr 23](SI%20Strategic%20Plan%202013-2016%20v2%20Draft%20-%20%204-23-13.pdf); [Apr 8 Ross memo](Ross%20memo%20April%208.doc)). About 30 SI faculty attended the meeting and they were unanimous in their opposition to Ross’s plan. Moreover, several of the faculty who opposed the plan at the meeting were part of the SI Strategic Planning Committee Ross appointed to draft the plan.

The May 5 faculty meeting with SJU-AAUP followed a letter written by the faculty members who participated on Ross’s Strategic Planning Committee which voiced its dissatisfaction with Ross’s proposal. They wrote to Provost Mangione: Last Tuesday, April 23rd, Dr. Ross presented a one college plan to the entire SI faculty. At this meeting many faculty voiced serious reservations about the proposal because there are significant student, faculty, and operational issues that are not addressed in the plan.  The questions that were raised at this meeting, and afterwards, were so crucial that, if left unanswered, we believe that they pose significant challenges to the success of the Strategic Plan.  In light of this, we, the members of the SI Strategic Planning Committee, ask that all concerns stated by the faculty be addressed and resolved in writing before the process moves forward.

SJU-AAUP President Frank Le Veness, Corresponding Secretary John Greg, and Treasurer Granville Ganter attended the May meeting to hear faculty concerns about the plan. Granville Ganter reported the outcome of the meeting to the University Senate in an e-brief to the Senate on May 23.

The central issue driving reorganization of the SI campus has been attrition of students. Undergraduate enrollment has fallen 60% over the past 14 years, from 2057 students in 1998, to 827 students in 2012 (p. 33, Ross Strategic Plan). During the May meeting, SI faculty expressed a belief that a serious marketing had not been tried yet. One former SI Dean said that the one year she had been given a marketing budget, they saw their enrollment rise.

The Staten Island faculty also expressed their desire for a cabinet-level advocate for Staten Island with budgetary powers. Over the summer, the STJ administration announced the creation of a Vice Provost for Staten Island to take charge after Dean Ross steps down from Staten Island in the fall. The administration also plans to leave the existing 4 college model intact, and continue to develop interdisciplinary programs that might suite the smaller campus.

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**National AAUP Reorganizes; Julie Schmid New Executive Director**

Over the past year, the National AAUP has broken up into three distinct but related organizations:

1) the *AAUP Association*, which continues to be the flagship professional association

2) the *Collective Bargaining Congress (CBC)*

3) the *AAUP Foundation*

These three parts of the AAUP were divided in consultation with the IRS to avoid tax liability. Principal governance of the entire AAUP continues to reside in the Association’s National Council and Executive Board, but the CBC and Foundation have their own budgets and governing organizations that operate independently of the Association.

The transition has been underway for several years, and planning goes back many more years, but this last November (2012) the division was finalized and enacted by votes of the National Council and Executive Committee. Visitors to the AAUP website will now see an updated site that shows links between the 3 organizations.

The move was prompted by IRS codes that differently regulate charities, non-profit organizations, and labor unions. Previously, AAUP had advertised itself as one giant non-profit organization, but the IRS began to think otherwise in the late 2000s. In response, the AAUP drafted a letter of its intentions to the IRS, which was favorably reviewed by February 2012. The division, which had been planned under the assumption it would meet approval, was voted on in the June 2012 and November 2102 meetings of the National Council.

Individual membership dues to the Association do not change. CBC dues, paid largely by chapters that have a required “shop fee” structure are planned to increase slightly. This is not the case at St. John’s where faculty voluntarily join a union. Our chapter, SJU-AAUP, pays a nominal fee to the CBC to be a local chapter of the AAUP, about $300-400 a year. **Individual members of SJU-AAUP do not see any changes in dues**, however. Local chapter and national membership remains the same (about $250 combined).

The Executive leadership of the AAUP has wrestled for several years with the pragmatic details of the new 3-part structure, and feels generally confident that the business of the AAUP will go on unimpaired.

At the November 2012 meeting of the National Council, however, there were voices on the floor who argued that the 3 new bodies may begin to argue over access to staff resources (already overtaxed) and funding. Because the CBC and Foundation will have their own internal governance systems, some wonder if political tension may develop between the goals of the CBC (essentially a hardnosed union), the Foundation (a charity), and the Association itself, whose National Council and Executive Boards nominally preside over all AAUP policies, including those of the CBC and Foundation.

In other big news, over the summer 2013 , Julie Schmid was appointed Executive Director of the Association. Her experience as a local faculty organizer in Wisconsin greatly shaped her application to the AAUP. When she spoke at the June 2013 meeting of the Executive Council, she emphasized that AAUP needs to work on its face-to-face ground-level organizing on university campuses. She felt that “big union” organizational strategies alone were unlikely to help to AAUP increase its declining membership.

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**National AAUP Shifts to Two Year Election Cycle**

One of the principal revisions in the new AAUP Constitution is the election of officers on a biennial schedule. The move was motivated by a desire to do more work, and less electioneering. Another reason, voiced by outgoing President Cary Nelson, were its perennially contested elections, which took up huge amounts of AAUP time and resources. The 2011 election, for example, was successfully contested and resulted in a rerun election. The current SJU-AAUP Treasurer, Granville Ganter, was elected as a District 8 (New York) representative, 2011-13. The current New York representatives are Sally Dear-Healey, SUNY Cortland (<http://www.sallydearhealeyphd.com/>), and Anne Friedman (arfriedman@optonline.net) CUNY, Manhattan Community College.

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**Post-Contract Committee Work**

Three ad hoc committees were established under the provisions of the 2011-14 CBA contract

1) A committee on Student Evaluation of Teaching forms (SETs)

2) A committee on Realignment

3) The Labor Management committee to look into Health Care and Alternate Teaching Responsibilities for ICS faculty.

**Student Evaluation of Teaching**

The committee on student evaluation included Derek Owens (Vice Provost and chair), Jeff Fagan (Dean, SJC); Yiuxang Liu (Institutional Research); Jim Curley (Psychology); Pauline McGee-Egan (FA President, Business); Somnath Pal (Pharmacy); Granville Ganter (English). The committee met from March to May 2013, and issued its report at the end of May. Its work included interviewing two potential consultants (Keeling Associates from New York City; and AIMM Consulting from Orlando, FL); conducting a survey of full-time faculty; background research on the history of course evaluation forms; and research on providers of commercial software to improve student compliance. The committee also interviewed two commercial companies: the Educational Testing Service, and a Canadian company called eXplorance.

The committee concluded to create a new evaluation form in consultation with STJ faculty knowledgeable about such survey work in the early fall 2013. Intrigued by the software capabilities of eXplorance to mesh with Banner and STJ Central, the university has also contracted with eXplorance to run a small pilot program, with about 50 volunteer faculty, during the fall 2013 semester. The new questionnaire form has been developed, about half the length of the current form.

**Realignment**

The committee on the realignment of the college faculty and programs emerged from contract discussions for two reasons: the unions wanted to find a simpler way for course load parity than the current “alternative responsibilities” model in Appendix I in the current contract (pp. 92). The administration wanted to see if some sort of consolidation of programs, along the lines of the “merger” discussion several years ago which ended in committee deadlock. Members of this committee included Dean Kathleen McDonald (CPS); Dean Jeff Fagen (SJC); Joe Marotta (CPS), Linda Shannon and Joe Oliva, both of the university legal office.

The committee met two or three times in the spring 2012, and spent its time primarily clarifying which programs might be discussed. The synthesis of CPS English faculty, with SJC’s, for example, is the clearest and yet most politically charged candidate for realignment but the longstanding differences between both groups of faculty have posed a tough problem to address with simple realignment. Some other programs, such as ones affiliated with Business are straightforward and pose fewer problems. Other apparently duplicate programs, such as Economics (degrees offered in both TCB and SJC), actually do not pose alignment problems because the faculty are already all in TCB—it’s essentially a bureaucratic distinction that probably does not require realignment. Much of the first meetings were taken up by making all members on the committee aware of the range of these sorts of issues. The spring semester ended with the committee waiting to hear new information from university legal office.

**Labor Management:**

Part of the work of this committee is covered under the Part Time Health Care article in this newsletter. The other part of this committee’s business was to discuss alternate teaching loads for ICS (equivalent to the CPS alternative teaching responsibilities), but the discussions were never held. The Labor Management committee was created two contracts ago to resolve unanticipated contact issues but both the FA and AAUP feel that it has been underutilized by the administration.