



The KFT Voice

Editor: Bryan Lees

KEAN FEDERATION OF TEACHERS

An Association of Professors, Professional Staff and Librarians

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Photo: American Ethnologist

"In the totalitarian state a trade-union is an instrument used by the government to enforce duties, not to assert rights.... Our trade-unions [in the USA], on the other hand, are solely the instrument of the workers themselves. They represent the workers in their relations with the government and with management and they are free to develop their own opinions without government help or interference...."

—Eleanor Roosevelt

The Struggle for Human Rights, 28 September 1948, Paris, France

YOUR RIGHTS: The Heart of Our Union

by James A. Castiglione, President

Our Union's leadership team was re-elected this past spring on a platform composed of the time-honored academic values of integrity, professionalism, accountability, and shared, democratic governance. Our focus on democratic governance is to be expected, as a teachers' union; yet, all unions are, at their heart, among the most intrinsically democratic institutions in America.

The AFT's Model of Democracy

Our Union, the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), is known in particular for its commitment to 'small d' democracy via the practice

of local autonomy. Local autonomy is a governance structure in which an individual AFT Local has maximal control over its own affairs. This allows the Union leadership to be more quickly responsive to and representative of member concerns and distinguishes the AFT from our sister union, the National Education Association, which takes a more top-down approach.

Opportunities for democratic engagement within our Union abound. As mentioned above, we just conducted an election of KFT officers this past spring. By contrast, when was the last time

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YOUR RIGHTS ARE NOT EXPENDABLE

by Jacqueline Keil, Grievance Officer

The KFT Grievance Committee has, unfortunately, been very busy. I say unfortunately since your rights are being violated on a routine basis. Any channels of constructive communication with the Administration have shrunk, in disregard of our rights to negotiation and due process. Please forgive the bulleted list, but given the volume of activity, it is the most efficient way to convey information.

- There is a pending hearing about the non-reappointment of a professional staff member who, after years of outstanding reviews, received an abrupt change in evaluation.
- There has been a hearing about the ongoing issue of professional staff promotion. As you have read in the past, there have been no performance-based promotions for professional staff, in spite of the Administration's earlier promise to provide one promotion per year. We are waiting for more accurate documents from the Administration to help resolve this issue.
- We are currently working on the issue of arbitrarily raising course caps both at Kean USA and Kean China. At the beginning of this semester, numerous sections of courses in Kean China were overloaded by as much as 50% which violates the terms and conditions of faculty employment. We have put the Administration on notice and filed a demand for extra compensation on a one-time basis for the unilaterally increased workload.
- We have a hearing scheduled for "mandatory" training sessions for January and the related issue of additional compensation for such "mandatory" training. Bennett?
- There have been some issues regarding the A-328 process. First, there is a faculty member who is disputing an evaluation of being found deficient in the area of scholarship.
- Related to the above is a faculty member who was found to be deficient in the area of scholarship, but then was initially denied travel funds to attend and present at an international conference. This faculty member contacted the local and was ultimately able to receive some funding. Awarding travel funding for conferences appears to be arbitrary and capricious and not in accord with any established policy.

Victory! The KFT was able to:

1. Amid the confusion about recent A-328s, extend the deadline for those who were tenured in September of 2009.
2. Settle a case where a faculty member who had 4 course preps will now have 2 for the next semester
3. Obtain compensation for a faculty member who taught one week of overload, and then had it taken away.

Defending you rights is a vital part of our local Union and the entire academic community. The Grievance Committee needs and welcomes your help and information. We need volunteers who can advocate for the rights of Pro Staff and information about those who have been denied travel funding for professional conferences. We also need for you to keep us informed of the specific details of your every concern. Know Your Rights: Review Your Contract! And always feel free to contact me at the KFT Office. All information is strictly confidential.





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faculty and staff got to vote on the continued service of the university's officers, including President Farahi? Probably, it was the non-binding 92% vote of no confidence from a couple years ago. Another example of direct democracy is contract ratification. Our Master Contract is subject to approval or rejection by a vote of the full membership—you decide. How often does the Farahi administration give you the opportunity to vote on approval or rejection of its proposals or give your representatives the same opportunity through our codified governance procedures?

Shared Governance = Quality Education

The values of integrity, professionalism, accountability, and democracy did not become rooted in academia by chance. Rather, they result from centuries of effective academic practice, a finding confirmed by modern researchers employing rigorous, scientific methods.

Richard Ingersoll, a sociologist at the University of Pennsylvania, who has studied K-12 schools of various

types for many years, concludes that schools in which teachers have a greater say in how the school is run have lower rates of teacher turnover and better teaching and learning climates. Most importantly, each of these trends is associated with greater student learning. (Kahlenberg and Potter, "The Original Charter School Vision," *New York Times*, August 30, 2014) Surely this correlation between increased shared governance and increased student learning extends into post-secondary education as well, even much more strongly, where curricula and academic programs are the responsibility of the faculty.

Similar arguments can be made for our values of integrity, professionalism, and accountability. We embody these values not simply because they are the right things to do, but because they are the effective, proven values, without which there can be no truly world-class education.

Recently, The Kean Administration rescinded a host of new parameters for course scheduling—parameters that were imposed without

campus-wide consultation. The Kean University Senate stalwartly defended principles of academic governance and the KFT defended our terms and conditions of employment while guiding a respectful outcome. Through the vigilance of both bodies, future transgressions must continue to be addressed with cooperative effort.

Our Master Contract Values and Protects Your Professionalism

Our Union supports these values directly via safeguards for professionalism built into our Master Contract and locally negotiated Letters of Agreement, protections we would not have if we were not a unionized workforce. Following are some examples of how our Contract protects the interests of our students and the educational quality of the institution:

Three-Course Prep Maximum

Our Master Contract forbids the Administration from creating teaching assignments for faculty with more than three (3) course preparations except under unusual circumstances. This ensures that

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faculty have the time necessary to devote to scholarly and service activities, and that they have enough time to properly serve the students.

Academic Freedom and Copyright Ownership

Academic freedom is enshrined in Article V of our Master Contract covering rights and responsibilities pertinent to research and publication, classroom instruction, and professional and citizenship-related activities. Further, Article XXXIII – Copyright Ownership – is one of the strongest clauses protecting intellectual property rights of any contract in the nation.

Course Limitations on Enrollment (Course Caps)

It is obvious – except perhaps to corporate-style administrators – how increased class size can degrade the academic experience due to the additional workload associated with it. A grievance filed last year challenging unilateral increases in class sizes resulted in the restoration of course caps in every example brought forward. This represents yet another way that our Master Contract empowers us to protect the integrity of the classroom and the quality of the education that we provide our students.

Human Dignity is Not Expendable

The values of academia represent and defend the fundamental struggle for human rights and human dignity—for all people at every economic, social or professional level. Several faculty have noted to me the relevance of Ken Burns's new documentary "The Roosevelts," recently aired on PBS. Burns studies the lives of Teddy, Franklin, and Eleanor Roosevelt and identifies a unifying theme: their willingness to overcome the narrow interests of their privileged upbringing and be the vanguard of efforts to expand and enshrine basic human rights and dignity for all, not

just an elite few.

Eleanor Roosevelt's Declaration of Human Rights serves as an inspiration. Faculty, who find themselves in the privileged position of having tenure, have an obligation to speak out and act in support of the dignity of a sound, affordable college education for our students who, overwhelmingly, do not come from a position of privilege. This can be done in many ways, but one concrete way is to model for our students, via Union activism, the kind of workplace democracy that they themselves aspire to in their own lives and careers.

Let us take inspiration from the Roosevelts' and our own Union's historic commitment to democracy, and recommit ourselves to these principles that we hold so dear and that are so important to quality education and the betterment of all.



Eleanor Roosevelt (1884-1962) | Time.com

"Where, after all, do universal human rights begin? In small places, close to home – so close and so small that they cannot be seen on any maps of the world. Yet they are the world of the individual person; the neighborhood he lives in; the school or college he attends; the factory, farm, or office where he works. Such are the places where every man, woman, and child seeks equal justice, equal opportunity, equal dignity without discrimination. Unless these rights have meaning there, they have little meaning anywhere. Without concerted citizen action to uphold them close to home, we shall look in vain for progress in the larger world."

—Eleanor Roosevelt

In Our Hands, delivered on the 10th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1958

OUR RIGHT TO NEGOTIATION

by Pat McManimon, Local Negotiations Chair

Local negotiations this semester have been difficult as the issues are complex and refer not only to Kean, Union, but the Ocean and China campuses as well.

The lecturer reappointment calendar has been approved and lecturers should be informed of the timetable to submit their reappointment requests. SIR II's will be completed by hand again and not electronically this semester. Further issues regarding the SIR II's remain open.

One issue close to resolution is the policy to determine that the Senate is the body to conduct the lottery for membership on the Academic Integrity Fact Finding Committee. Agreement was reached on most other issues regarding this policy. The committee is an investigative body determined by lottery from the faculty. Each college will have representatives on the fact-finding committee selected by lottery which will be conducted by the Senate. The timetable for completion and notifications were negotiated and the final version will be available in December/January.

Several issues that are specifically important to faculty are compensation for the mandatory training imposed unilaterally by the Board of Trustees, the academic calendar for 2014-2015, and advisement. The training required by the Board of Trustees must have compensation negotiated. Since this is a pressing issue to the membership, any news regarding this topic will be shared as quickly

as possible. There has been no determination of what the training will consist of and further, although dates have been reserved, the actual schedule has not been set. Once the Negotiations Committee is aware of the exact dates and number of hours, we can then begin negotiation for specific compensation.

The academic calendar issues have not been brought to the table officially, but there was preliminary mention of the Administration's need for flexibility in scheduling the calendar. Presumably this means either an earlier start to the academic year, or forfeiting a holiday, or both. The membership will be given details as the Administration proposes a calendar.

The Union has made a proposal to alter office hours. The proposal is to have one office hour per class

during non-registration periods and during the weeks of active registration to increase office hours for advisement to 8 hours weekly. This was initiated at the November 26th negotiations and awaits a response from the Administration.

There also remains an unsettled issue about whether faculty can work overloads. The Administration stated at the November negotiations that there was not a hard cap on overloads. The KFT will monitor this situation from for compliance with a grievance won by the KFT affirming the flexibility of overload caps.

Finally, there are issues in conducting peer review observations on the Wenzhou-Kean campus. The Administration has requested that administrators, who previously held faculty positions, be permitted to conduct the peer observations. There is a proposal to allow the peer observations to be conducted electronically by uploading a video to the Kean site and have peers evaluate the professors through this medium.

If you have any issue that should be placed on the Negotiations Committee agenda, please feel free to contact the KFT office.





Photo: www.zazzle.com

WE ARE EXPENDABLE!

by Bryan Lees, Vice President

Not all the news from our China campus has been encouraging. Not only is there political upheaval against religious rights of the inhabitants of Wenzhou, but also there are academic challenges for our colleagues working within the University. As you know, our leadership team is in the process of trying to build a structure to enhance communication and outreach with our Wenzhou colleagues. However, their apparent isolation invites abuses, reports of which do not often reach our own shores.

A shocking example was recently received from a Kean-Wenzhou faculty member in the Department of English who resigned in August 2014. In his letter of resignation he cites disregard both for human dignity and academic integrity as causes. He reports: "When the President decided he would not tenure anyone last year, the news came to many tenure-track

professors as a shock. When the President visited us in Wenzhou last December, he put words behind his actions, essentially letting us know how unimportant, how "expendable" we teachers are.... [and] the morale of the faculty plummeted. We went from being 'pioneers' to basically nobodies."

"Another reason behind my decision [resignation] has to do with academic integrity. I feel strongly that we are being dishonest with our students. In fact they are not ready to take college credit courses in their freshman year. At least 90 percent or more of them belong in an IEP (Intensive English Program) for their first year.... I have given several of my groups portions of the TOEFL and have not yet had one of them score above low intermediate to intermediate level. Yet, in their sophomore year, we are mandated to teach a Shakespeare play."

Student under-preparedness is an issue that Kean-USA faces as well. In

a public statement to Kean's Board of Trustees at its May 2014 meeting, Richard Katz, another professor in the English department stated:

"I've taught the freshman World Literature General Education course regularly over the past 30 years. This spring I have 2 sections. For the first time in my career I am having to fail almost one-third of the students in those classes. This is astonishing. Recently admitted students are not only less academically prepared, but less psychologically prepared for college."

Student under-preparedness impacts our terms and conditions through our work load, class size and consequent class evaluations. Disregard for human dignity and human rights is also a recurring threat to our academic careers. Whether in China or in the USA, neither your dignity nor your rights are expendable and are not to be subject to disregard or arbitrary interpretation.

HONORING SERVICE, PAST & PRESENT

The past year brought much to discuss, but we would be remiss if we did not acknowledge the retirement of two Members-at-Large of the KFT Executive Council: Susan MacLaury of the Department of Physical Education, Recreation & Health, and Tony Velez of the Department of Fine Arts.

Susan's wise counsel and Tony's talents and passion for unionism contributed greatly to our leadership team. Both stepped forward to serve our membership with distinction and integrity and we thank them for their stewardship these past several years.

Also, our long-time Office Manager, Norma Hall McFadden, retired from her position after 18 years of dedicated service. Norma was an expert at keeping the office functioning smoothly, and was a tremendous resource to current and past KFT Presidents, and to the thousands of KFT members that she served, aided, advised and interacted with over her nearly two decades in the office. We miss her and we thank her for her dedication and support.

Also joining us this year is our new Office Manager, Ms. Kiona Daniels. Kiona comes to us with nearly a decade of administrative, secretarial and office managerial experience as well as a familiarity with unionized work environments. She has an ebullient personality and is fitting right in smoothly.



2014-2015 KFT OFFICERS



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James Castiglione
Department of
Chemistry & Physics



Vice President:
Bryan Lees
Department of
Chemistry & Physics



Vice President:
Linda Bradbury
EEO/EOC Office



Vice President:
Pat McManimon
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Dan Gover
Department of English

Matt Halper
Department of Music

Richard Katz
Department of English

Jacqui Keil
Department of Political Science

Cathy Londino
Department of Media & Film



KFT HOLIDAY PARTY
Monday, December 15
3:30 p.m. to 6 p.m.
Downs Hall

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