

Report on University Welfare for Faculty Senate, November 18, 2009

By Senator Jack Fiorito, UFF-FSU President

Good afternoon!

Collective Bargaining

There was one bargaining session since our last Senate meeting. We appeared to be near a stalemate. It is nearly time when we should be beginning negotiations for the next academic year rather than trying to wrap up negotiations for this year. Our UFF faculty team proposed a settlement package that would essentially preserve the status quo, meaning no changes in summer teaching pay, no changes in sick leave payouts, and no major UFF-proposed changes. Please note that promotion raises, winter holidays, and some other matters have already been resolved through Memoranda of Agreement and would be part of the settlement. The UFF team made clear that it favors extension of paid parental leave. Bargaining matters are detailed more fully at the “Bargaining News” web page, www.uff-fsu.org/cbac. Our next bargaining session is on Monday, December 7th at 2pm at the FSU Training Center. An Administration response to the UFF proposal is expected. Senators are most welcome to sit in.

Consultations

Last week we met with Provost Abele at a President’s Consultation. We discussed two main issues, layoffs and use of student perceptions of teaching for evaluation. Plans to lay off 62 faculty, including 21 tenured faculty members, are unfortunately still on track at this time. The Provost’s comments on student teaching perceptions were more encouraging. Provost Abele said he agreed completely that student perceptions should be considered as only one piece of evidence in teaching evaluations, consistent with the Faculty Senate’s 2003 resolution. He encouraged inconsistencies with this view to be called to the attention of the Dean of the Faculties. Late last month we met with Dean Rowe in a Provost’s Consultation. We discussed textbook order deadlines and other matters, but what remains most prominent in my memory is that our UFF chapter submitted a check for over \$1700 to cover estimated administrative costs associated with our request for selected high-level administrator correspondence concerning layoffs.

Facilitation and Grievance Issues

The UFF Chapter’s grievance over layoffs is moving forward. Step 1 meetings with Deans have been concluded. A Step 2 meeting with the Provost will be scheduled as soon as possible.

Professor Matthew Finkin’s Visit

Our luncheon this past Monday was well attended. Professor Finkin’s draft remarks are available at the UFF-FSU web site (www.uff-fsu.org). His comments on tenure and academic freedom remind us that tenure serves academe and not just tenured faculty. By encouraging academic freedom and free speech directly for tenured faculty, tenure helps create an atmosphere of open deliberation at all levels, even for assistant professors and non-tenure track faculty. A

recent report from the Board of Governors suggests that FSU doesn't "get it," to be blunt. We seem to be the statewide leader in layoffs of tenured faculty. I can't help but think there is some irony in the Board of Trustees meeting at the "Chainsaw Al" Dunlap building this Friday. (My English Department colleagues may disagree. When Alanis Morissette popularized a song about irony several years ago, I heard a radio program in which several English professors said the term was misused. There must be some irony in that at least.) Chainsaw Al was well known for slashing employment at companies he ran. If our Trustees are concerned about faculty layoffs, it is certainly not apparent from the Trustees' agenda. So rather than irony, perhaps the location of the Trustee's meeting at the "Chainsaw Al" building is entirely fitting.

I would like to propose a resolution for the Senate's consideration.

Whereas the faculty-to-student ratio at The Florida State University is already far too low, and

Whereas, tenure is a critical institution underlying academic freedom and academic free speech for all faculty members and the broader academic community,

The Florida State University Faculty Senate urges the Board of Trustees to direct the Administration to reconsider plans to lay off faculty, especially tenured faculty, and to consider and if possible adopt alternative methods to resolve the University's budget crisis.

Questions?

Thank you for your time.