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THE VOICE

KFT'S OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER

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MASTER CONTRACT NEGOTIATIONS UPDATE

02

**A message from our KFT President
Dr. James Castiglione**

Master Contract negotiations with the State of New Jersey began in the spring semester and are expected to continue well into the summer. As we have so many new colleagues, hired over the last 2-3 years, who have never experienced Master Contract negotiations, I want to provide a little background on the negotiations process generally. Then, I will describe the state of the negotiations at this time including the main proposals from both sides and discuss how members can support our negotiations team.

Democracy in action: Our bargaining team's structure and approach

Our statewide union is called the Council of New Jersey State College Locals (CNJSCL) or the College Council for short. The College Council is composed of delegates distributed proportionally from all nine of the locals at the 4-year public colleges and universities based on the number of members at each local.

Our statewide negotiations team, however, is structured so that each local has a more equal say: each local gets three (3) delegates to the statewide bargaining team. In addition, the top three elected officers of the College Council Executive Board serve on the bargaining team. I can personally testify that our bargaining team has a diverse collection of voices representing faculty, professional staff, lecturers and librarians and includes a mix of veterans of multiple negotiations and newer colleagues who will be future leaders of our Union.

Our bargaining team's priorities at statewide negotiations come from the statewide membership. To understand members' issues and priorities, we conducted a survey of the membership in the fall semester, input which our statewide negotiations team has used to craft proposals to present to the State.

Our statewide negotiations team functions in a highly democratic manner. Issues are raised and discussed in depth in internal caucus meetings, usually resulting in consensus on conceptual proposals. The concepts are then turned into specific language, which is then reviewed by the full bargaining team for modification and final approval before presenting to the State. In the event of significant disagreement, which is rare, votes are taken on competing proposals and the approach is determined by majority rule.

How are Master Contract negotiations conducted?

As of the drafting of this report, our Union's statewide negotiating team had met three times with the State's negotiating team, on February 17, March 31, and April 21, with more sessions to come in June. The State's negotiations team is led by the Director of the Governor's Office of Employee Relations (OER) and OER's legal counsel. In addition, there are support staff from OER and representatives from some of the college presidents.

At this time, both sides have exchanged a number of initial proposals. I am pleased to report that we have already come to what is called a "tentative agreement" on about a dozen items. Admittedly, these items are relatively smaller issues – the "low-hanging fruit" of Contract negotiations – but they represent real progress.

Of serious concern are a number of proposals that the State's team made at our most recent negotiations sessions, including proposals to:

- Extend the work period for faculty by re-defining the academic year to June 30th
- Remove Chairpersons from the bargaining unit
- Reduce the notice period for retrenchment (layoff) for AFT employees from a half-year to a quarter-year
- Increase the cap on the number of lecturers at a college from 35% of the number of faculty lines to 45%

Our bargaining team has submitted all but a handful of our proposals to the State and we have, in turn, received the majority of the State's proposals. Among the proposals that we have submitted to the State are the following important items:

- Providing Professional Staff with guaranteed 4-year contracts
- Expanding the list of Contract articles that apply to Lecturers
- Strengthening the retrenchment (layoff) Article in our Contract
- Making locally negotiated Letters of Agreement subject to binding arbitration
- Expanding the Tuition Reimbursement Program to cover graduate degrees and certificate programs
- And, we have also submitted our main economic proposal: salary increases in the four years of the Contract of 5%, 5%, 4%, and 4%, and the addition of a thirteenth (13th) step to the salary guide.

Members should keep in mind that the nature of any negotiation is that we usually cannot get everything that we ask for. There are likely to be some tradeoffs, but we always seek to defend and expand the professionalism of all our members.

Members can support our statewide negotiations team

There are a number of actions that members can take to support our statewide negotiations team:

- Talk to non-member colleagues and ask them to sign a membership card. Union power at the negotiating table comes from a strong, unified membership.
- Sign a COPE card to make voluntary donations to the KFT Committee on Political Education. Email the KFT office to sign up.
- Contact your state legislators to urge them to press the State for a fair Contract settlement.
- Let us know any thoughts or ideas that you have about increasing our leverage at negotiations.

Our statewide Master Contract not only ensures our livelihood, but it also serves as a bulwark protecting our rights and our professionalism, empowering us to do the best possible work for our students. Our working conditions are our students' learning conditions. By standing together in solidarity, we can achieve the best possible Contract, for the betterment of all.

CNJSCL SECRETARY Q&A WITH ANA WETZEL

We are pleased to report that this Spring KFT member Ana Wetzel was elected to the position of Secretary of our state-wide union, The Council of New Jersey State College Locals (CNJSCL). Congratulations, Ana!

Q: What made you want to run for this position?

A: As a current delegate of the CNJSCL from our KFT local, I wanted to become more involved and provide more representation on issues that impact us all and learn more about what the council does.

Q: What does this position entail?

A: This position entails serving as the Secretary for the Executive Committee of the CNJSCL. This includes taking minutes, attending their executive meetings, and any other duties related to this position.



Q: What are you looking forward to most about this new position?

A: I am looking forward to meeting current and new members, learning more about the Council, and learning about the issues facing our University and sister Universities.

Q: Is there anything else you'd like to tell us regarding your new role?

A: A Union gets its strength from all its people. Getting involved and serving is how we can be united and get fair representation.

COPE UPDATE

Mr. Walter Mack

This is an election year in New Jersey, in which both the State Assembly and State Senate are up for election. To help advocate for higher education and labor concerns, we attended fundraisers for Senate candidate Raj Mukherji of the 32nd legislative district and Senator Joe Cryan of district 20 this Spring.

Sen. Cryan is a key player in the push for the State to gain more oversight of the State Colleges and Universities. Lack of oversight was a key element behind the financial crises at William Paterson University and New Jersey City University, which has, in turn, led to the following bills currently under consideration:

- The first bill (A-4970/S-3406) requires public institutions of higher education to submit an annual fiscal monitoring report to the Secretary of Higher Education and undergo a comprehensive audit every three years. The bill provides the Secretary the authority to appoint a State monitor to directly oversee an institution's fiscal operations and governance if the institution's audits indicate problems.
- In conjunction with the first bill, the second bill (A-4971/S-3407) requires all public institutions of higher education in New Jersey to post a copy of their annual fiscal monitoring report and audited financial report or statements to their website in a manner understandable to the general public.
- Under the remaining bill (A-4967/S-3436), governing board members of public institutions of higher education will be required to complete training programs that clarify their role and duty as board members and the role of the board with respect to the financial management of the institution. Under the bill, the training requirements will be a condition of serving on the board.

Sponsors of one or more of these bills include Senators Joseph Cryan and Vin Gopal, as well as Assembly members Mila Jasey, Pamela Lampitt, John McKeon, and Reginald Atkins.

Please contact your local legislators to lobby to strengthen and move all three bills. We here at Kean University do not want to find ourselves in the tenuous position that William Paterson and New Jersey City University find themselves in, where they are faced with layoffs and financial instability.

In closing, this will be an active campaign year and your COPE chair and union will lobby on your behalf and make sure that our views are heard, and our rights protected. In addition, I would ask that you consider contributing to the KFT's COPE fund. Please make your voice heard by voting in the primary and general elections this year.

LOCAL NEGOTIATIONS UPDATE SPRING 2023

Dr. Frank Argote-Freyre

The most important accomplishment of the 2022-2023 Academic Year was the agreement creating a path for professional staff promotions. For two decades no promotions were offered to deserving professional staff, but the agreement signed between the KFT and the University on April 18 establishes an orderly annual process.

As part of the agreement, a committee of 5 professional staff will review applicant portfolios and make recommendations to a managerial committee that will then make recommendations to the president of the university. The final recommendations of the president go to the Board of Trustees at the December meeting, and the promotions become effective as of January 1.

The KFT urges those interested to begin assembling their portfolios. All professional staff on multi-year contracts with at least five years of service are eligible to apply. Applicants must submit a resume, a self-evaluation, and support letters. The deadline for submission of promotion materials is July 3rd. For additional details please consult the letter of agreement.

In other news, the KFT recently signed an agreement offering a stipend for members of the University Promotions Committee [UPC] reviewing promotion applications for faculty members at Wenzhou Kean. Each UPC member will receive 0.05 teaching credit hours, approximately \$90, per application. Prior to review by the UPC, faculty members that conduct a WKU peer observation or write a summary letter/report on a WKU faculty member who will receive 0.375 teaching credit hours of pay per applicant.

There are still many other issues before the negotiations committee including a new lecturers agreement, summer compensation for department chairs and associate chairs, the future of i-sections, and the process for external reviews for faculty members seeking promotion. We expect negotiations to go on through the summer on these and other important issues.

GET TO KNOW A MEMBER AT LARGE!

By: Christina Mastroeni

Let's welcome Jesenia Holguin!

Jesenia came to the Kean community in 2018. In 2021, she moved into the Nursing department, and she currently works here today. She enjoys the people she works with and she loves her work revolving around admissions.

A day in the life of Jesenia sounds exciting, as no two days are the same! She spends her time interacting and communicating with students (both incoming and current), she works with faculty and shows support to faculty in her department. She's also had the chance to work with other departments within the college, such as Physical Therapy and Physician's Assistant.

As far as her background with union work, she started as a KFT Delegate to our state-side union the CNJSCL in 2023, after a conversation with our union president (Dr. James Castiglione). While looking forward to the new role, she was a little nervous at first.

She expressed her enjoyment in fulfilling the role of a delegate. She likes the interaction she has with our colleagues and members from other locals. However, Jesenia didn't think she would be this active in the union. She mentioned that many people join when something happens to them at work. She said she also spoke with Walter Mack prior to joining the union. "I don't think [Walter] realizes it, but he's fallen into a mentor role for me."

In this union position, Jesenia looks forward to the future, most particularly gaining insight for change for faculty and staff. She'd like to be seen as a voice for staff and "fighting in their corner."

Jesenia also spoke on understanding the importance of a union, and she hopes many staff and faculty will too, regardless of their position.

Outside of her time at Kean, Jesenia loves to read. She has two young boys to entertain. She likes to take time outside of work for her family.

KFT WISHES ALL FACULTY, LECTURERS, AND STAFF
**A SAFE & HAPPY
SUMMER!**



Kean Federation of Teachers

local 2187 - executive council directory 2021-2022

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