

UICUF Representative Assembly Meeting
February 5, 2015, 2:00-4:00 p.m.

In attendance: Jennifer Ashton (VP-Chief Steward/English); Nick Christen (IFT Field Service Director); Lenny Davis (Bargaining Committee/English); Barbara Di Eugenio (CAT Engineering); Jeff Edwards (Staff Organizer); Giamila Fantuzzi (Rep/AHS); Ben Feigenberg (Economics); Abel Galvan (Rep/Business); Gerry Gorman (VP-NTT/Bargaining Committee/Nursing); Robin Grey (Rep/LAS-Humanities); Steve Guggenheim (Bargaining Committee/Rep/LAS-Natural Sciences); Robert Johnston (Rep/LAS-Humanities); Steven Marsh (CAT/Hispanic Studies); Scott McFarland (Executive VP/Bargaining Committee/English); Kevin O'Brien (Rep/Library); Joe Persky (Secretary/Economics); Victoria Persky (Rep/Public Health); Nadya Pittendrigh (CAT/English); Edward Podsiadlik (Rep/Education); Paul Preissner (VP-Tenure Track/Bargaining Committee/Architecture); Laurie Quinn (Rep/Nursing); Michael Scott (Bargaining Committee/Rep/Engineering); John Shuler (Treasurer/Bargaining Committee Chair/Library); Jeff Sklansky (CAT/History); Janet Smith (President/CUPPA); Milos Zefran (CAT/Engineering)

- 1) **“Circle Back.”** UICUF will work toward robust attendance and visible participation at the “Circle Back/UIC Forward” ceremony on 2/22.
- 2) **New chancellor.** Janet met with the new Chancellor. The meeting was cordial and productive, with the new chancellor wishing to reach out to faculty leaders—which included our union’s distinguished president. Janet impressed on him our strong belief that someone from the administration should be at the bargaining table who could actually make decisions--and that we would especially welcome his being at the table.
- 3) **CFHE/other training opportunities.** Michael Scott reported on his attendance at the Coalition for the Future of Higher Education conference last month in January. Michael reports that CFHE is a vital and important group with which we should maintain close connections. He also reports that we are “rock stars,” especially for keeping TT and NTT together. The main messages Michael received at the conference were a) we need always look toward remaining a “social movement” union, and we should work on getting student interns.

Nick then pointed out other important union training opportunities that we have budgeted to send representatives to. These include the AFT Higher Education meeting, March 3/15, 3/16, and 3/17 in Atlantic City and the AAUP Collective Bargaining conference on 4/18 in Cincinnati. Michael reports that the next meeting of CFHE will be in May; he’ll get more info on that. We particularly want to send members who are outside the leadership structure to attend so that we can expand our merry band of dedicated activists.

Jennifer also reported about AAUP's "One Faculty" initiative, which our alum organizer Dawn Tefft is centrally involved in. Most importantly, there is a National Adjunct Walkout Day on 2/25 that we will want to be involved in, at least through informational tabling. We will want to have enough people to staff tables in UH, West Campus, and SCE.

In terms of our other relationship with our "mother" institutions: Lenny pointed out that getting snail mail and email from AAUP and AFT continues to be a problem—this was popularly (but not uniformly) ratified. Janet will continue to look into that. John confirmed that Communications is working on a memo about AFT Advantages and other organization benefits.

- 4) **Mayoral election.** We had a limited discussion about the general issue of our union's involvement in politics, and specifically electoral politics. There seemed to be a general consensus that we should not move toward endorsing candidates until a) our membership base is significantly larger, and b) we have organized our membership around this issue. There is particular concern in the sciences about a move toward politics. So short of an endorsement, what can we do, especially when an avowedly pro-union mayoral candidate such as Jesus "Chuy" Garcia is running against an enemy of labor such as the incumbent? We can:

*do candidates' questionnaires. Jeff Sklansky (History), Robert, and Leon be working on developing this.

*Get our members information about what the candidates stand for and how to get involved in their campaigns if they so wish.

*Specifically in relation to the mayoral election: if there is a runoff election, use the annual membership meeting to gauge our membership for a possible movement toward more active involvement in the mayor's race. Presumably this would be preceded by a membership survey, either separately or in conjunction with the bargaining survey, about the union's role in politics.

- 5) **Treasurer's report.** John reports that we have \$93,000 in our accounts. We receive approximately \$84,000 per month in dues from the university and send back approximately \$59,500 per month to AAUP/AFT/IFT. The remainder of roughly \$24,500 per month goes to our reserves. We are committed to building up a strike fund of at least \$38,000 (and of the \$93,000, \$13,000 is already committed to that fund).
- 6) **Opening of window.** UH 2028 was so hot that Scott valiantly opened the small window to allow the subzero air to come cool us down.

- 7) **Bargaining update.** We have our bargaining committee largely in order: 10-12 people, roughly half of whom are newbies. They will be conducting the membership bargaining survey as well as working to prepare our members for what promises to be a very challenging bargaining environment. We will probably start bargaining in April or May, and our strategy will be tied to the expiration of contracts for a number of other campus unions. With such a new cast of characters (governor, chair of BOT, president, chancellor, provost, etc.), as well as smaller university cash reserves, we are likely going to need a strategy significantly different from last year's. Representatives need to work effectively with their members to get a good sense of what our most important issues should be. At the very least, we will want to press to have more uniform contract implementation, instead of the current babel of 13 different colleges often conducting widely different methods of implementation.
- 8) **Meeting with administration representatives about the budget.** We have waited to have this meeting, which is guaranteed in our contract, because of the changeover in top administration personnel. Yet because the budgeting process for next year is at this point so well-advanced, even without the chancellor formally in place, we need to move toward calling that meeting. We especially need to see what the administration tells us about *discretionary funding*—how much money is there, and what plans and commitments for spending it there have been and are. We plan to press hard on working to protect UIC from budget cuts as much as possible for reasons of equity—for example, more than half of our students are eligible for Pell grants, making us unique among top research universities. The status of the furlough money, which supposedly went back to colleges but has not been treated transparently in most colleges, also needs to be addressed. Before the meeting, Janet will circulate questions and concerns to the RA so that reps can comment.
- 9) **New gubernatorial executive orders.** Rauner has issued Executive Orders 15-08 and 15-09 relating to budgeting and ethics. Under their most expansive interpretation, they could mean that the governor would have to approve any new contract of ours. President Easter has proclaimed that the university will follow the orders, but Nick firmly believes that the governor does not have the constitutional authority to so bring the university under his authority. **He recommended that we hire a law firm that specializes in inter-governmental relation to generate an opinion about constitutionality issues. This will cost \$5,000 to \$8,000.**

We voted unanimously to do so.

10) **Grievances on deductions for pay during strike.** The Executive Committee has started to pursue a grievance (which would go straight to the provost because it is a general class action concern) about the administration's attempt to dock strike pay for those who reported being on strike in February, 2014. We believe that the implementation of this deduction is unfair and arbitrary. Most importantly—and at the core of the grievance—is that the money would be taken from 2014-5 salaries, which were fully and finally negotiated through contract and cannot be changed without further negotiation with the union. If the grievance goes to arbitration, it could cost us between \$5,000 and \$10,000. A vigorous discussion ensued, with those favoring pursuing the grievance believing that we needed to enforce our contract vigorously, given that the administration was so intent on chipping away at it around the edges. The counter-argument centered on concerns about the political resonance of fighting this particular fight in The Age of Bruce Rauner and Scott Walker. How might our pushing this issue play out in terms of public relations, when we could so easily be painted as classic union whiners who went out on strike but weren't willing to accept the consequences?

***** The assembly voted 7 Yes, 0 No, 3 abstentions to be willing to pay the money, if necessary, to pursue the grievance through arbitration.*****

11) **Fight for Fifteen.** We had an inspiring delegation from Fight for Fifteen come speak to us. Nancy Delgado, a McDonald's worker for 12 years, spoke about her poor pay and, even more, her fight for union recognition. Caleb Jennings, leader of the local Fight for Fifteen, spoke about the movement's plans. Most concretely, there are plans to bring 10,000 students to UIC as part of a global rally stretching from Brazil to our campus. We will be sending out information about this to our members, and we will especially be helping connect Fight for Fifteen workers with teachers who may wish to have them come visit classes.

12) **Organizing.** The most important actions our union needs to take at this point involve getting our membership numbers up. We need to be able to go into our negotiations showing that we are not declining, or even stable, but rather growing. We have a goal of getting the numbers up to 65% by the end of February, and Jeff has established concrete goals for each unit. He asked representatives to sign up for one hour a week of pounding the organizing pavement through the end of the month.

13) **Retro pay.** Simply put, the administration has messed this up 17,000 ways to nowhere. We are pushing the administration to supply us with further information so we can determine how many of the retro pay determinations are incorrect. We also need the administration to get more and better information out to faculty (particularly those who may be subject to substantial overpayments). One faculty member was overpaid

\$14,000, and several owe more than \$1,000. Most people, however, may not know about the option of paying over a ten-month period, and we are working to get the word out about that. We will push to get the two-week deadline to set up the ten-month payment plan extended. An email about this issue went out to all members on February 6th.

Submitted in Solidarity,

Robert Johnston