

# AAUP at NYIT

Editor:  
Christopher Moylan

AAUP at NYIT, Inc.  
Newsletter

Volume 1, Issue 4  
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## Upcoming Events

### OW/CI General Meetings

Thursday, February 16, 2012

Thursday, March 15, 2012

Thursday, April 19, 2012  
(Elections)

Thursday, May 17, 2012

All meetings:  
Free Hour  
HSH Lecture Hall (Rm.130)

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### President's Message – Manhattan Chapter President, Ellen Katz

I would like to wish all our colleagues, a smooth end to the semester, happy holidays and happy new year.

### President's Message – OW/CI Chapter President, James Fauvell

Happy Holiday Season Everyone! As we begin the final month of the fall semester, there are several important issues that we need to take note of.

### On-line Student evaluations for the fall semester

The Administration has agreed not to send out on-line student evaluations this semester. In return, the NYIT AAUP Joint Council and the Administration will begin negotiations immediately on the distribution procedures as well as the parameters by which the evaluations will be used and analyzed. We hope to reach agreement on this before the spring semester evaluations are sent.

### Institutional Support of Research and Creativity (ISRC) Grants

Many of us have voiced concern over the \$200,000 ISRC grant provided by NYIT this year for the support of research and creative activities. After a long discussion with Provost/Vice President, Rahmat Shoureshi, the Joint Council is convinced that the administration understands and is committed to its contractual obligations on this matter. As the Collective Bargaining Agreement states on page 41:

*Preference will be given to proposals that are likely to result in some sort of permanent advancement of the field (e.g., a published paper, an art show, or a funded grant), and to proposals that involve students in the faculty member's scholarly/creative activities.*

This year, Vice President Shoureshi will appoint a new committee of faculty to review and recommend how the money is distributed among us. The list of appointees will be sent to all faculty members soon after the committee is formed.

*Again, according to the contract ...the committee members will be active scholars or creative artists, tenured, representative of the different scholarly/creative approaches at NYIT, and will have themselves previously received an internal or external grant. To the degree practicable, at least two committee members should be new each year, and at least two should be experienced committee members. The committee will recommend how the funds available should be allocated among the applicants, with the VPAA making the final decision.*

### **The Virtual Learning Sub-committee**

A new Senate/AAUP subcommittee has been established called the Virtual Learning Sub-committee. Its function is to review on-line and DL learning issues dealing with quality assurance, course development, course contents and delivery, as well as adherence to CBA. The sub-committee is chaired by Stan Silverman, with membership including: Jim Fauvell, Larry Silverstein, Mike Uttendorfer, Jeffrey Feinsilver, Hattie Arnone and Fran Glaser.

If you have issues concerning your on-line assignments, please alert one of the people listed above.

### **Life Insurance**

Human Resources at NYIT has informed the Union that there has been an error in the calculation of the life insurance value for certain Union members. HR will contact affected members individually by November 28, 2011 and the proper adjustments will be made effective January 1, 2012. Please contact our Executive Director, Deborah Tibrewala if you have any questions about this.

**Teaching schedules** – The CBA states on pg 20: *Teaching schedules and course assignments shall be made reasonably and fairly and with consideration for departmental and individual faculty needs and with timely notification to the faculty.*

Please let us know if you are not given your spring teaching schedule by the end of the fall semester. It is more than reasonable to expect your course load for the spring by then, leaving you ample time to prepare for each of your classes.

### **Final Call for Committee members**

With contract negotiations just around the Joint Council of the AAUP at NYIT is still seeking volunteers for the following committees:

- Academic Governance
- On-line teaching
- Student evaluations
- Research, Grants and Scholarly works
- Medical Insurance
- Retirement benefits
- Personal Procedures (Hire, tenure and promotion)
- Legal Representation
- Global programs

Please email AAUP Executive Director, Deborah Tibrewala at: [dtibrewala@optonline.net](mailto:dtibrewala@optonline.net) to volunteer.

## Joint Council Members

### Manhattan:

Ellen Katz,  
President

Percy Griffin,  
Vice President

Dean Winokur,  
Secretary

Steven Billis,  
Treasurer

Felisa Kaplan,  
At-Large

Katherine Williams,  
At-Large

### Old Westbury/CI:

James Fauvell,  
President

Laurence Silverstein,  
Vice President

Tricia Nicholes,  
Secretary

Shin-R Lin,  
Treasurer

Yael Roitberg,  
At-Large

Christopher Moylan,  
At-Large

Stanley Silverman,  
At-Large (CI)

## About Student Evaluations

By: Jim Fauvell

There has been a lot of discussion among the faculty about the role of student evaluations in the development of our professional lives. Let me clarify what most of us already know. Student evaluations are about feedback and improvement, and should never be used punitively as evidence against a faculty member.

Most members of the faculty would appreciate evaluations that would help to improve their craft. If there were a system in place that offered good feedback that we could use, we would appreciate it. Anything else arouses suspicion. Why do administrators want to see these evaluations? Here's why they should not. My belief about the current student evaluations process at NYIT is that it is driven almost entirely by grades. It encourages teachers to be less challenging in their classrooms and invites us to inflate grades in order to get better scores. Student evaluations are a driving force behind grade inflation, and that is a serious threat to Higher Education.

As documented in Donald H. Naftulin's now famous paper entitled "A PARADIGM OF EDUCATIONAL SEDUCTION," a professional actor was hired to deliver a non-substantive and contradictory lecture. He did it in a very entertaining and enthusiastic style. The students (an audience of professional educators) were told they were listening to Dr. Myron Fox, an expert on the application of mathematics to human behavior. They were then asked to rate the lecture. Dr. Fox received highly positive ratings, and no one saw through the fact that nothing was taught. This led to the discovery that student ratings of educators depend largely on personality variables and not upon educational content. The authors programmed an actor to teach charismatically and non-substantively on a topic about which he knew nothing, and he was rated as excellent (Naftulin Pg. 1).

What might this teach you? Maybe, just maybe, we should be focusing our evaluations solely on things students know about, such as: Are grades returned in a timely fashion? Do we show up on time? Do we adhere to our posted office hours? If questions like that do not feel empowering enough to our students, maybe we should consider having them write evaluations in the form of an essay. Certainly most of us would agree that the written comments from students are the only thing of value in the present Student Evaluations. The numbers seem meaningless.

In any event, we must remember that student evaluations are about feedback and improvement and should never be used punitively as evidence that a faculty member should be denied tenure, not renewed or fired. Our faculty feels that is not the case. We have been trying to discuss this with the Administration since the last contract. As we go into new negotiations, we should remember the words of Howard Beale in the movie Network, "I'm a HUMAN BEING, God damn it! My life has VALUE! So I want you to get up now. I want all of you to get up out of your chairs. I want you to get up right now and go to the window. Open it, and stick your head out, and yell, 'I'M AS MAD AS HELL, AND I'M NOT GOING TO TAKE THIS ANYMORE!'"

Translated and applied to our careers at NYIT: Sorry my students, my reason for teaching, my livelihood, you are not the authorities in my classroom. I am. We as faculty have been entrusted with your education, and it is our responsibility to make it a successful, enlightening and thought-provoking experience. Education is not purely a business. Students are not just consumers. Faculty make education work by prodding students to think.

Scheuller, ironically, (if not perfectly accurately) says about Socrates, who is usually thought to have been one of the world's "Great Teachers," nevertheless received rather low marks from his "students" on his final teaching evaluation. At a time of life when most of us would long since have retired, Socrates was evaluated as a teacher and giver of wisdom. The Athenian jurors at his trial met his request for a pension by voting to put him to death...( Schueler pg. 345)

We must find a system where students can give constructive criticism, and where we, the faculty, mentor each other to keep ourselves current and interesting, to keep ourselves, above all, good teachers.

Naftulin, Donald H., John E. Ware, and Frank A. Donnelly, "The Doctor Fox Lecture: A Paradigm of Educational Seduction," *Journal of Medical Education* 48 (1973): 630-5.

Schueler, G. F. "The Evaluation of Teaching in Philosophy," *Teaching Philosophy* 11 (1988): 345-8.

### **ISRC Grants**

By: Chris Moylan

Statements by Vice President Rahmat Shoureshi concerning the ISRC research grants have offered several approaches to the criteria for funding. At Provost-Faculty Conferences on October 11 and 13, Dr. Shoureshi announced that preference would be given to cross-disciplinary projects with some prospect of additional support from outside sources. As Dr. Shoureshi explained in an email message to faculty on October 13:

Preference will be given to proposals from multiple disciplines with multiple Principal Investigators, and to proposals that include a mix of junior and senior faculty, including faculty from NYCOM and global campuses. NYCOM and Global faculty are invited to participate in ISRC-TLT projects as Co-Investigators or as project Consultants.

The emphasis on group projects is not part of the language in the current Collective Bargaining Agreement. Neither does the current contract make any provision for global faculty. Dr. Shoureshi also stipulated that preference would be given to multi-disciplinary projects involving a mix of junior and senior faculty. This change in approach prompted some faculty members to revise proposals that they were about to submit for consideration, attempting to work within the new criteria.

The practical difficulties of these new requirements quickly became evident. Putting aside the fact that the requirements appear to be at variance with the contract, many projects, particularly those in the Humanities, do not lend themselves to group

work or a multi-disciplinary approach. If a college is to employ literary scholars, philosophers, and the like, then one would think that the college would support the kind of scholarship they do. A more theoretical, if nonetheless important, concern raised by some faculty is the possibility that ISRC grants might be awarded for multi-year, group projects, thus reducing the available pie to slivers, or crumbs.

On November 9, Vice President Shoureshi sent an email to the faculty revising his approach to the ISRC grants, without acknowledging faculty response to his earlier messages. In this, latest communication, he welcomes both single person and group proposals, and mentions that the lead investigator for any funded project must be tenure-track, full time. The message, which employs the pronoun 'we', does once again assert that "we would like to see more collaborative efforts in both pedagogy and scholarship," but leaves the realization of this preference for a future date. Given what was at the time the looming deadline for proposals (the deadline has since passed) it is unlikely that faculty who revised their original proposals would have been able to re-revise them.

All this should be seen in relation to the amount of money involved; two hundred thousand dollars by the end of the current contract. A research institution, such as NYIT aspires to be, requires grant funds many times that amount if it is to be worthy of the name. Research is one of the three main criteria used to evaluate faculty for reappointment, tenure or promotion. Again, one would expect the Institute to encourage research in all disciplines. Support for research requires donor support for endowed chairs, laboratory facilities, new buildings and capital improvements, and so on. Determining how best to obtain such donor funds might be a long-term collaborative project for faculty and the administration. Meantime, it will be helpful to sort out the criteria and methods of submission for these grants.

## **Contingent Faculty**

By: Chris Moylan

The status of contingent faculty has been much in discussion on the national and state levels of the AAUP lately. The discussion is, to some degree, a response to recent economic and political pressures on academia, and in particular on instructors at all levels. Budget constraints in academia have led to faculty reductions and give backs, increases in class size and course load requirements, greater demands for service work by junior faculty, and increasing reliance on contingent faculty. Given these economic challenges and the proliferation of non-traditional venues in academia—online teaching, off campus assignments in business settings, distance labs and global campuses—one can easily envision a time when the norm in academia is a multi-media, multi-campus scramble for low paid temp work without benefits or security.

In this scenario, tenured professors begin to resemble union trade workers—carpenters, plumbers and the like—a labor elite enjoying high wages and good benefits relative to others, but constantly threatened with economic pressures posed by an oversupply of competing nonunion workers. In academia the oversupply partly has to do with differences in qualifications for required for tenure track as

opposed to contingent positions, and partly to do with broader social and economic conditions. Often, though certainly not always, contingent faculty are not required to have doctorates, publications, or much experience, although many contingent faculty do have all these credentials. But we know how things go. In a bad economy a lot of people, including those with doctorates, of course, are looking for work and will take poorly paid, temporary positions if necessary.

From the perspective of tenure track and senior faculty, contingent faculty pose a dilemma. Contingent faculty pose a threat, albeit an artificial one, to tenured faculty, yet contingent and tenure track faculty are colleagues and peers. First to the threat: the greater the reliance on contingent faculty, one might argue, the greater the temptation for administrators to diminish the role of full time faculty by eliminating full time lines or leaving open lines unfilled, merging departments, offering early retirement and so on. Accrediting agencies have long been seen as a bulwark against pushing this trend too far, but accrediting agencies and supporting state regulations are subject to the same sorts of political and social pressures that encourage this trend. There are colleges in the U.S. staffed entirely by contingent faculty.

With that said, this academic version of class warfare should be seen as contrived and, in the long run, self-defeating. Retention and institutional well-being require investment in faculty and the nurturing of a learning culture specific to a given institution. The world should know what an NYIT student looks like, and an NYIT professor looks like, and not in relation to the trivializing idea of a 'brand,' but as representatives of an institutional history and ethos, an attitude and a way of doing things that comes to mind when one says NYIT. Relying on temp faculty to develop this ethos is just as absurd as relying on tents to convey institutional stability instead of steel and glass or traditional brick and ivy. NYIT will build institutional stability not with a fugitive army of instructors moving from campus to campus with a tenure track professorate that is respected within an intellectual home that we can truly feel is our alma mater.

## **OH SB-5 is Overturned**

By: Chris Moylan

On November 7, the electorate in Ohio voted by an overwhelming margin to overturn OH SB-5. Media reaction to the vote emphasized its implications for national elections in 2012. The implications for labor, however, were much more immediate. With OH SB-5, the Republican Party in Ohio, with the assistance of the Koch brothers and other conservative donors from around the country, succeeded in denying public employees the right to collective bargaining, along with basic union rights. This was part of a nationwide campaign to eliminate effective union representation in public employment, including unions in public universities. Since public employment is one of the last union strongholds in this country, the intention of this campaign clearly was to destroy the union movement.

We should be clear about what this would mean; turning back time a century or so to when unions were widely, though not uniformly, outlawed and such now assumed union achievements like the forty hour week, paid holidays, child labor laws and work place protections were yet to be won. Walmart is the utopia of the Koch-and Fox News right. A combination of national fundraising and local door-to-door organizing prevented the Walmart model—no unions, no worker protections, no oversight in cases of abuse (locking workers in at night), meager to no benefits—from holding sway over public schools and colleges. Such a prospect was simply too much for the voters of Ohio, as it was for the members of the Joint Council here at NYIT who donated \$100 per person to support the repeal effort.

The repeal of OH SB-5 was a victory, but this victory should be kept in perspective; the vote to overturn OH SB-5 returns the lot of public sector workers in Ohio to what it was in, say, 2009: not a comfortable place, with the possibility of layoffs and painful givebacks still quite real. Difficult struggles await in Wisconsin, Michigan and the vast California state college system, but people everywhere are paying attention and contributing their time and resources to defending social justice, and that has to be good for all of us.

## **Meeting of the National Council of the AAUP**

By: Chris Moylan

The National Council of the AAUP, the governing body of the national union, met in Washington November 19 and 20. Much of the Council's time was given to the budget, personnel issues, committee reports and technical details of running the national organization.

The budget report was exhaustive, demonstrating in minute detail the union's success in handling financial challenges during a period of economic distress in the country. In the context of the budget, various council members conveyed the concern they encountered among the membership that they see a direct return on their investment of dues in the national AAUP. Given the constant work national AAUP staff dedicate to work in the field organizing and assisting union chapters and advocacy groups, this concern was a matter of some frustration among some; what more could they be expected to do was the sentiment... I gave a few examples of my encountering problems obtaining information from the national office in phone calls or email correspondence—not to overlook examples of extremely helpful responses from national—and this opened to some discussion of the ongoing efforts at national to improve this aspect of service to the general membership.

A report was presented offering a long list of organizing efforts at campuses around the country, some of these efforts showing great promise, others encountering conflicted responses among faculty reflecting the political climate of a given area and the complexities of state legislation, campus professional and interpersonal politics (relationships among schools, deans and faculty, different campuses and so on).

There was a report on the process of reconstituting the AAUP national into three branches: a union, along the lines of any national union such as the AFL-CIO, an outreach and advocacy organization, and a grant giving organization. This process,

which has been underway for some years, is approaching the last few hurdles of government approval.

The last four hours or so of the meeting were given to brainstorming and discussing how the national AAUP might work more closely with student groups and graduate students to address national issues of concern to everyone involved in education: student debt, police violence on campus, cutbacks in support for public higher education, cutbacks in financial assistance, political attacks on unions, problems with assessment, problems with the spread of corporate approaches to higher education, and so on and on. I argued that the times required the national AAUP to assert its role as a vanguard labor organization, given its potential resource of energy and expertise among graduate students and academics, and that silence or passivity could only be construed as complicity in such circumstances. Others volunteered their experiences with Occupy Wall Street and the protests at UC Davis and elsewhere. There will be a national day of action in the Spring, it turns out, around issues in higher education. More information on this will be forthcoming in future editions of the newsletter.

## **AAUP-at-NYIT Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) Negotiation Process: Part II.**

By: Larry Silverstein

Here beginneth the Second Lesson:

1. In the previous issue of our AAUP-at-NYIT Newsletter, we considered, in broad strokes, some of the basic history, issues and processes which surround the project of negotiating a Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) between AAUP-at-NYIT, and NYIT Administration. This lesson will continue the story, and focus upon a few more specific details, and the process of preparation for the negotiation. (There is no intention to be comprehensive; instead we are considering selected highlights.)
2. As noted previously, our Joint Council CBA Negotiating Team is comprised of the thirteen members of the Joint Council, or as many of us as can commit over a period of months to regularly attending the weekly, and sometimes even more frequent, caucuses and negotiating sessions. We will be assisted by our AAUP Counsel, Ms. Beth Margolis, and by consultants who specialize in institutional financial analysis, benefits packages and governance issues.
3. The process is complex, and proceeds simultaneously along several different dimensions. The key issues are universal, and reduce essentially to:
  - (1) Wages and other compensation;
  - (2) Benefits (medical/dental coverage, etc.);
  - (3) Personnel Concerns (such as reappointments, tenure, promotions, and performance evaluations);
  - (4) Governance (including academic administrative structures and responsibilities; curriculum issues; academic quality; evaluations, etc.)

4. We are confronted, this year, with particularly formidable negotiation challenges, but also, we hope, with an opportunity for new beginnings. As you are aware, there has been a reconfiguration of NYIT's upper administration. As a consequence the NYIT community has welcomed a new Vice President for Academic Affairs (VPAA), Dr. Rahmat Shoureshi, and a (newly created) Chief of Staff, Mr. Peter C. Kinney III.

They, in turn, will be facing your Joint Council, which is a body of your colleagues whose long collective academic experience at NYIT is coupled with our corporate memory of NYIT's evolution. This gives us an intimate and detailed knowledge of NYIT's current strengths and weaknesses, and its virtually infinite advantages and possibilities. Given enlightened administrative leadership, and a well-nourished symbiotic relationship between faculty, staff and administration, which has yet to be fully developed, we hope to go forward together to create a remarkable institution. It is within our grasp, if only we are wise enough to realize it. Establishing a much-needed and more effective partnership will be one of our negotiating goals.

This year also we are pleased to have one of our energetic Joint Council members, Chris Moylan, directly and actively connected (and representing AAUP-at-NYIT) at both the New York State, and National levels, to AAUP Councils and Committees, and to policy-making bodies. We anticipate that these upper-echelon connections through Chris will, among other benefits, assist us to become more effective negotiators.

5. Regarding NYIT's overall financial health, there was good news conveyed by President Guiliano at our last Academic Senate Meeting, when it was noted that NYIT (in contrast to the situation at some other comparable institutions) is NOT in financial distress. Indeed, President Guiliano was proud to announce ambitious plans currently underway to begin the process of building the first-ever NYIT dormitory facility. Moreover, despite pending closures of our campuses in Jordan and Bahrain, there are serious intentions to enhance our global programs and presence. We are further informed that our overall enrollments are reasonably stable, and that NYIT's general financial posture appears to be satisfactory.
6. The various initiatives described above raise obvious issues of academic management and governance (which are partly within the traditional purview of faculty and professional staff), as well as of finances and long-term fiscal stability which are part of the Administrative managerial portfolio. As major stakeholders in the institute's prosperity, the AAUP-at-NYIT will be paying close attention to the way in which these initiatives are conducted. As mentioned above, we are in the process of engaging consultants to provide expert advice, analysis and perspectives about NYIT finances and benefits issues. With an NYIT budget which approaches \$300,000,000, your Joint Council has concluded that due diligence and prudence on our part requires a careful and expert examination and interpretation of all negotiation scenarios. These can only be properly supplied by well-credentialed consultants with special knowledge and expertise.

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7. A current, and on-going, AAUP activity, as we move closer to the beginning of the active negotiation process, slated to begin early in 2012, is to gather, process and prioritize lists of potential negotiating items and positions. This is not only desirable, but absolutely essential if we are to effectively represent our membership. The process has already begun, as various members of the OW/CI Executive Committee have reached out to Faculty and Professional Staff for their input. But it needs to be continued and amplified. We encourage faculty and staff, both singly, and as disciplines and departments, to communicate to members of the Joint Council (listed in the left margin of this Newsletter) your items and concerns for our forthcoming CBA negotiation.
8. Moreover, we are in the process of gathering details about CBA's which have been recently negotiated at neighboring and/or comparable institutions.
9. So, in summary, our negotiation season is about to commence. We, your Joint Council, anticipate collegial but intense discussions with NYIT Administration. We would benefit from the active support and encouragement of our membership. But do not take it amiss if we are reluctant to discuss specific details of the process, as it evolves. It is not possible to conduct effective negotiations in a fishbowl, or under a bright spotlight. Rest assured, however, that if we get into deep and difficult waters, or reach an impasse, we will call upon you, our membership, for your advice, experience, and moral support.
10. Our next Newsletter will elaborate further upon our preparations, and refine some of the details of the process, in addition to reporting any progress in establishing a negotiation timetable, milestones, and schedules for various deliverables.
11. Here endeth the Second Lesson.