

NOTES ON THE APSCUF LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
APRIL 11-12, 2008
GRANTVILLE, PENNSYLVANIA

Elections Signal Change at the Top for APSCUF

APSCUF delegates swept out of office three of four officers including incumbent APSCUF President Pat Heilman in close voting at the April Legislative Assembly in Grantville. Lock Haven's Steve Hicks won the presidency on the third ballot over Heilman and Burrell Brown (CUP). KU's Helen Bieber, (who ran unopposed for Secretary) was the only incumbent officer to survive what was widely seen as a referendum on APSCUF state leadership's performance during last year's contract negotiations. Combined with a series of reform proposals adopted by the assembly, the vote signals changes designed to distribute power and influence toward the chapters (and chapter presidents) rather than toward statewide officers while strengthening the union overall. In theory, such an approach both broadens representation (not all campuses can be represented by statewide office) and brings key decision making closer to the members. Elections were also held for members of the budget and audit committees. KU's Paul Quinn was the top vote getter among five candidates seeking three positions on the budget committee. Congratulations Helen and Paul!!

Consultant's Report

The Assembly also received the report of consultant Allen Brawer. The report offered several suggestions for strengthening the union's position in future negotiations, including hiring a professional negotiator, shrinking the size of the negotiations team to 3-4, establishing the chapter presidents as the negotiations committee, and moderating discussion lists to reduce appearing so divided in public. The Assembly referred the report to both the Executive Council and the chapter presidents to recommend such potential actions as might be warranted. The inclusion of chapter presidents in the process is itself a reform in the way APSCUF has typically dealt with such issues and allows the membership to make its views more clearly known.

Dues Increase Debated

The Assembly also debated whether to bring a proposal for a ¼ percent dues increase (from 1 to 1.25 percent) specifically directed to the strike fund before the membership for a vote. Some delegates questioned current expenditures (including assemblies); many were sympathetic to the need to increase dues to fund strike preparations and so on, yet questioned whether members would find the case for a dues hike compelling. Other questioned the fairness of across-the-board flat rate dues hikes (which are regressive, hitting those at the bottom hardest), and some suggested exempting temporary faculty from any dues increases. It was noted that even with the increase, APSCUF's dues would be considerably lower than those of most other professional unions in the state (rates of three percent or higher are not uncommon). IUP's John Henry Steelman pointed out that "strong unions have large strike funds" and

that what we can do (making COBRA or mortgage payments for striking members, for example) is determined by how big the strike fund is. Eventually, proponents of the increase were encouraged to tie it to specific spending proposals so members would better know what they were voting on. The issue will be revisited at the September assembly.

President's Report

In her President's Report, Pat Heilman told the assembly that there have been \$105 million dollars in cost overruns associated with PASSHE's implementation of the SAP information management system, and noted that SAP was a major campaign contributor to Pennsylvania legislators. She also reported that PASSHE managers were awarded five percent raises which were justified as being the same as "what faculty got." (PASSHE equates step increments with general pay increases.) Heilman noted that fully 54 percent of APSCUF faculty are not on steps, and that 4.4 percent would be a more equitable increase. Further, management raises are pooled, so that individual managers may actually receive increases of ten percent or more.

Negotiations with Staff

APSCUF-KU President Mike Gambone reminded the assembly that our strength as a union depends on how we treat our staff, and pressed for reform in the way APSCUF approached contract negotiations with the staff. A proposal to establish a negotiating team including past APSCUF President Bill Fulmer to represent APSCUF in talks with the newly formed staff union (APSCUF-SO) was rejected. Instead, the chapter presidents put forward an alternative process. The chapter presidents will meet in June, the negotiations committee will include a labor attorney, former chapter president, former chapter grievance chair (recommended and selected by statewide grievance committee) and the personnel committee chair (currently Dave Obinger). The Chapter presidents selected KU's outgoing chapter president, Mike Gambone, as the former chapter president on the committee.

The chapter presidents outlined a process under which a tentative agreement would go to the Executive Committee (possessing a veto and governed by a simple majority). If approved, the agreement would be forwarded to chapter presidents to review with a requirement of 9/14 votes for approval.

Health Care Cost Containment Committee

The APSCUF Executive Council released to the Legislative Assembly a document titled, "PASSHE Health Care Management Program 'Lifestyle Returns Requirements'." It describes the oversight framework required to qualify for reduced health care premiums by participating in the "wellness program." Please look for this document to appear on the APSCUF-KU website in the near future!

Domestic Partner Benefits

Domestic partner benefits through the Health and Welfare fund are now in effect. The proposal at the November assembly to apply the benefits retroactively was adopted. It was noted, however, that the IRS requires taxes on domestic partner benefits (personal income tax). Legal counsel requested a private letter ruling. The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania has said such benefits are excluded from Pennsylvania local and state taxes. It was also reported that PASSHE is claiming a difference between annuitant and beneficiary eligibility and that this is a new thing that is subject to grievance.

Other Business

A motion authorizing one student representative from each campus to attend APSCUF assemblies was approved. A motion to require a mandatory 7-year review of investments was approved. A motion to change the organization's name failed. The Leadership Workshop will be held May 6-7.

ELECTION RETURNS (UNOFFICIAL)

<i>President</i>	First Ballot	Second Ballot	Third Ballot
Burrell Brown (Cal)	24	18	x
Heilman (IUP)	34	34	49
Hicks (LHU)	47	52	55
<i>Vice-president</i>			
Campbell (EUP)	29	19	
Condrary (SRU)	30	31	
Walters (SRU)	46	55	
<i>Secretary</i>			
Helen Beiber (KU)	98		
<i>Treasurer</i>			
Chris Hallen (BU)	54		
John Henry Steelman (IUP)	51		

<i>Budget Committee (Three Seats)</i>	
Paul Quinn (KU)	78
Cliff Johnston (WCU)	74
Eric Hawrelak (BU)	53
David Chambers (IUP)	33
Itzi Meztli (SRU)	31
<i>Audit Committee (Three Seats)</i>	
Mary Jane Kuffner Hirt (IUP)	101
Stephen Hgyei-Mensch (Clarion)	87
Beth Mullany (Cheney)	94

Respectfully submitted,

Glenn W. Richardson Jr.
APSCUF-KU Delegate