

Faculty Assembly/Union Meeting Minutes

04/14/15

Alton Auditorium

4:30 – 6:00 pm

The meeting never formally adjourned from last Thursday so it was still technically in session. Rodger Jackson acted as presiding officer.

Motion to withdraw the motion on the floor from last meeting. There were no objections. The motion was withdrawn.

The floor was opened for other business.

Rodger Jackson introduced the materials presented through email and opened the floor for discussion. The executive committees of both the senate and the union met on Friday. They identified three themes of concern and worked on resolutions addressing those themes.

Item 1: Shared Governance

The theme with the greatest unanimity from both groups addressed ways shared governance is conducted at Stockton. The proposed resolution is asks for two seats for faculty on the Board of Trustees. New Jersey statutes as interpreted by all other institutions do not permit faculty or students to be present when substantive matters are taking place. However, other institutions have faculty members on the Board of Trustees who can only vote in open meetings. This resolution is a demand to be in closed door sessions of the Board of Trustees, which contradicts forty years of tradition of higher education in New Jersey. The resolution would be put forth in electronic referendum. The Board of Trustees might say they do not have the power to make these changes, but then the union and senate could take up the issue in the future.

In addition, many people want to disagree with the characterization put forth by the administration that faculty wanting to pursue alternatives to Showboat is equivalent to a “cut and run” attitude toward Atlantic City. Not agreeing with mission as the president has put forth is not the same as abandoning Atlantic City.

Discussion of the resolution on shared governance:

Discussion included suggestions for modifying the resolution to specifically include staff. There was also debate regarding the word “demand”, which some faculty suggested should be replaced with less forceful alternatives. Another suggestion replaced “lack of clear and deliberate communication” with “deliberate lack of clear communication”.

The legality of having faculty on the Board of Trustees is unclear, but Rutgers has two non-voting members and there is nothing in guidelines that clearly precludes it. This is an opportune moment to push for structural changes. The resolution specifically asks the Board to amend its bylaws in order to allow faculty to be members. Board members are officially appointed by the governor, but the Board sends names up for approval. Student board members get elected and they have one voting member who is not part of closed sessions.

Other faculty commented that it is a problem that there is no witness in the room when the Board makes major decisions, and that faculty were not included in the search for a president until SFT leadership insisted.

There was a motion and second to turn the resolution into a referendum item to be placed into an electronic forum for all Stockton faculty to vote on.

The process and timeline for voting was discussed. Pros and cons regarding allowing more people to respond versus whether the vote should happen immediately were discussed. Some were concerned that events were unfolding quickly and a more immediate response would be advantageous. A compromise was offered such that the vote could be taken and then lead to an electronic referendum to affirm the result of the vote.

The motion to vote by electronic referendum was withdrawn.

There was a motion and second to vote on the resolution.

There was a motion and second to allow for a follow-up request for the senate and union members to endorse the vote by this body through a referendum.

The vote was called on the first motion to vote on the resolution. All in favor except two abstentions. Motion carried.

Vote was called on the motion to put out a referendum on the resolution. All in favor with one abstention. Motion carried.

Item 2: Faculty comment on the President's conduct.

Rodger Jackson introduced three versions of a resolution commenting on the President's conduct, including censure, a vote of no confidence, or a vote of no confidence with demand for resignation. The floor was opened for discussion.

Discussion included the time pressure of the end of the spring semester and the possibility that waiting on this resolution could be more effective than issuing it immediately. Other faculty commented that there still needs to be more faculty representation directly with the President and that nothing short of expressing the outrage faculty feel at the moment is acceptable. Faculty expressed concern for the students and their parents, especially regarding housing. Some faculty felt it was important to demonstrate that the faculty is not on board with the President's plans. Other faculty suggested future presidents should be evaluated with COACHE surveys. Other faculty reminded everyone that the President has made significant gains for the university and that he does not vote on the Board so the Board members share responsibility for these decisions. There is also ambiguity about which Board members voted, abstained or were absent from the decision-making process, and to what extent the President controls their opinions on important matters.

Discussion also included reference to more general diversity problems on campus, the fact that higher education operates more like a business than it has in the past, and that voting on this might do damage to the university overall. Another concern noted the current personnel situation as a complicating factor, in that Stockton is currently seeking a Provost, Dean, Board member, etc.

There was a motion and second to vote on these items as part of an electronic referendum either through the Association or through Stockton. Majority in favor, 9 against. Motion passed.

There was a motion that all three choices and “none of the above” be available on the referendum.

There was a suggestion to frame the three options with yes and no responses for each, with faculty voting separately on each one.

There was a motion and second to move the censure option off the ballot in order to make a more forceful statement.

It was suggested that keeping all three options on the ballot would serve the purpose of seeing how upset people are.

Vote to eliminate censure from the ballot: Nays carry. The motion did not pass. All three options to be kept on the ballot.

There was a motion for an electronic referendum with all three options presented as yes/no choices.

There was concern that this would split the vote, and that new faculty might not be familiar with definitions and implications for all three choices. Presenting instructions and explanations along with the options was suggested. Some faculty argued against presenting all three questions as it would indicate a lack of unification among the faculty.

Vote on whether to have all three options presented on an electronic referendum as yes/no choices with accompanying explanations. Majority in favor. Motion carried.

There was a motion and second to adjourn the meeting. Motion passed.

Respectfully submitted by Jennifer Lyke, Secretary of the Faculty Senate