



UFF-FIU Chapter Meeting Minutes April 2, 2021

In attendance: Martha Meyer, Amir Khoddamzadeh, Suchi Mishra, Marc Weinstein, Deanne Butchey, Heather Blatt, Eric Dwyer, Alexander Kroll, Naphtali Rishe, Maria Reid, Lorna Veraldi, Debra Davis, Teresa Lucas, Judith Bernier, Tiana Solis, Charles Shields, Thomas Breslin, Jacob Berglin, Rachel Ritchie, Peter Clarke, Rebecca Christ, Rosa Chang, Gene Rosenberg, Eric Scarffe, Agatha Caraballo, James Burns, Trudy Gaillard, Brian Hillen, Umut Calgar, Melanie Morales, Maria Lovett, Mihaela Pinte, Debra Davis, Elizabeth Scarbrough, Tim Downey, Fereshteh Toosi, Josh Papacek, Tania Santiago Perez

I. Approval of Minutes from Fall 2020 meeting

Motion to approve minutes from Fall 2021 meeting: Charles

2nd: Maria Reid

Minutes approved unanimously

II. Approval of Agenda

Motion to approve agenda: Lorna

2nd: Maria Reid

Agenda approved unanimously

III. Legislative Affairs Update

<https://feaweb.org/news/take-action>

SB 84 is about changes to FRS/Retirement. This bill would destabilize the Florida Retirement System and hinder recruitment and retention by eliminating the

pension option for new FRS members, forcing all new hires into a 401(k)-style retirement plan.

We are monitoring two sets of bills that are working their way through the legislative process: zombie bills and union busting bills.

SB 1014/ HB 835 target education unions, the aim of this bill is to decertify unions. This bill contains numerous provisions that take away educators' freedom including requiring the elimination of dues deductions for education unions and higher education unions to have 50% membership density or risk of decertification. It will require union members to sign up on a yearly basis. It is very problematic and creates administrative issues for the union.

SB 48 is the K-12 voucher's bill about educational scholarship programs. It expands education savings accounts as a back door to funnel more public dollars into private schools without the eligibility restrictions of other voucher programs. It also merges the Hope Voucher with the Florida Empowerment, and Florida Tax Credit Scholarship Program. New name: Florida K-12 Education Funding Tax Credit Program. (EFTCP).

SB 264/ HB 233 would require Florida's public colleges and universities to administer an 'intellectual diversity' survey every year with results to be published by the State Board of Education. This bill also allows students to record inside college and university classrooms without consent from faculty or their fellow classmates.

Discussion on resolution about recording bill. The FIU representative is Michelle Palacios. There are unintended consequences from recording bill. Discussion on Chinese government being very invasive and the recording legislation exposing faculty to penalties from the Chinese government. This is very dangerous for academics in Florida's public institutions. Comment about Chinese government prohibiting Chinese students going abroad to discuss anything about their country/government. This type of legislation is not exclusive to Florida, it was introduced in Kansas and Iowa.

The legislative session ends at the end of the month. FEA has a great page that follows the 2021 legislative session. There are calendars and links to contact your state representatives. On the website, you can get a synopsis of each bill and UFF positions: <https://feaweb.org/issues-action/2021-legislative-session/bills-were->

[watching/](#). The bills are on a fast track and front loading the legislation before they run out of time. The state legislation has a tracking link for the bills.

Anybody who speaks to a legislator can fill out this form:

<https://forms.office.com/pages/responsepage.aspx?id=nCleVY9ONESay0l8hVhV2bQYqQbEQhpDrdBv-7VoOn9UNIFJRIpaV0c0VjJPUTdCWkROQzNjMVRTWCQIQCN0PWcu>

IV. Treasurer's Report

We haven't gotten our rebate check. Last year we got it mid-April. We expect to get about \$52,000. Our budget is way off because of the pandemic.

We budgeted \$83,000 for expenses. Due to the pandemic, we haven't been spending as much.

Summary of budget

Income actual \$0; income budgeted \$52,000; income difference -\$52,000

Expenses: actual \$31,892; budgeted \$83,870; difference -\$31,870

Difference: actual -\$31,892; budgeted -\$31,870; difference -\$22

Question on grant that was approved not being reflected in the budget. The next budget will include the money approved for the UFF-FIU mini grants.

Discussion on continuation of Zoom and Slack payments post-pandemic.

Discussion about spending money on promotional video for the union. The video could include accomplishments. Suggestion of creating the video soon before the wins from pandemic become old.

V. Bargaining Report

We have a change in our bargaining team. Dan Saunders became chair of the Educational Policies Department, so he is out of the bargaining team. Dan was our previous bargaining chair and vice-president of the Union. Our new chief negotiator is Charles Shields.

This year is open book bargaining, meaning that anything in the CBA could be bargained. We have a CBA that expires on June 30th. We are negotiating the full

terms of the CBA. We started the process last summer. Summer and Fall negotiations focused on MOUs due to the pandemic. We got the MOU for summer 2020, Fall 2020, and Spring 2021. MOUs were incredibly successful. We provided protections to faculty that became a model across unions and universities. Dan Saunders deserves the credit for the MOUs. Also, Barbara Manzano, Kathleen Wilson, and the Provost were good working partners for the MOUs.

Back in February, the message from President Rosenberg about a premature reopening became a point of contention. Rosenberg sent that email due to political pressure. Union responded by reminding faculty that they were protected through the duration of the Spring semester.

Summer and Fall MOUs weren't possible due to the chair of the Board of Trustees emailing the board and indicating that they shouldn't support any agreements between FIU's administration and faculty. Administration was instructed not to discuss any additional MOUs with UFF-FIU, and they acknowledged this at one bargaining meeting.

The bargaining team is working on getting the book done in a reasonable and timely fashion. The administration team is under more scrutiny. They are moving slowly in their responses. They asked us to scale back the frequency of the bargaining meetings and suggested meeting only once a month. We did not agree to this as this would only leave us with 3 meetings before the contract expires. We will have biweekly meetings with some flexibility. We might not have a new CBA in place before the current one expires. This is common practice; however, we do not want to set the precedent to operate without a CBA. We expect ratification to be closer to the Fall semester.

The current bargaining discussion includes the following topics:

Increased Released Time for Union Work: Union will get more course releases for union work.

Bereavement: We are moving from 3 days of bereavement leave to 7 days. We want to remove the list of familiar relationships that qualify for bereavement as we have diversity in the definition of family and those for whom we can grieve. We eliminated the specific list of people who qualify as family, so faculty could have the opportunity to decide for which individuals they are requesting bereavement leave.

Academic freedom: Changes on academic freedom language. Right now, the CBA lists academic freedom as a principle. We want to change the language for academic freedom to be listed a right. A right can be grieved, a principle might not.

Summer supplemental assignments and compensation: Issue of faculty teaching courses in market rate or self-supporting programs being paid in the summer less than 12.5%. This violates the CBA, which indicates that every supplemental summer compensation needs to be compensated at 12.5%. In the current CBA, there is an article that covers summer supplemental assignments. The policy on appointments is contained on pages 47-50 of the CBA. We want to be able to provide faculty with the 12.5% and bring the language to align with current practices, and permit the pay rate to be set by programs. We discussed the minimum to be about the same as an overload compensation, with this being revisited every 4 years. We need to really look at the issue of self-supporting programs. Discussion about paying faculty more than the 12.5%. It is okay to pay faculty more than the 12.5% as long as the opportunity to teach those courses is equitable.

Equity in assignments: We have a long standing commitment to equity in assignments. We have a working proposal in place to bump the minimum salary that will affect a couple hundred faculty. Administration seems to be amenable to it. The proposal will have a minimum salary based on highest degree earned. UFF-FIU is proposing a minimum 9-month salary of \$55,000 with a master's degree or \$60,000 with a terminal degree. We also have been working on a proposal to pair with this to address compression and inversion.

Faculty raises: We will propose faculty raises, but the administration's bargaining team wants to discuss economic proposal after the legislative session ends. We are going to work on a proposal before now and the end of the session and will bring that to the table. We have to be prepared for Draconian cuts to the university's operating budget. We won't agree to a contract that does not include raises, but what these raises constitute is yet to be determined.

Suggestion about having another meeting to let Faculty know about numbers for raises. The overall cut for the FIU's operating budget might be \$83 million. We are going to propose an increase to the minimum base salary. Bargaining team will schedule a bargaining town hall in the summer.

Discussion about inflation protection. We need a guarantee of inflation protection for the coming years (COLA). This topic in the past has not been supported. Discussion about the housing market. It is very expensive to live in this city.

Question about MOU. There won't be any MOUs for Summer or Fall. Discussion about mandatory vaccination for the Fall to open up the campus. This is something that has not been discussed at the bargaining table. As more people have access to the vaccine, the conversation might start. The union doesn't know anything more than anybody else about the possibility of mass vaccination for faculty.

Question about COVID related accommodations being totally out the window for Fall. The return to normal for Fall has been imposed by the Board of Trustees. The board said that they will only reconsider going back to remote if there is a massive outbreak of COVID on-campus.

VI. Grievance Report

Evaluations for 9-month faculty are due June 25th.

Assignments for 9-month faculty are due July 1st. Grievances of assignments are due 30 days after assignment is released, but no later than July 25th.

Fall contracts start August 12th.

Do not work in the summer if you are not compensated.

Discussion about the idea of moving the grievance deadline for annual assignment to 30 days after the 9-month contract begins. This will allow faculty to not grieve during summer.

VII. Membership

In the past 2 months, we brought 7 new faculty and lost 2. We are at 46% membership. In their attempt to decertify unions, the state legislature is pushing a bill that will require 50% membership. We are looking for union liaisons from each department. Contact Heather if you are interested in becoming a liaison. NEA and UFF at the state level are concerned with the chapters that are not yet at 50%, so they are implementing a calling campaign to encourage faculty to join the union; over the month of April UFF is also doing training with fellows. We need liaisons and senators to do follow up phone calls with people who have not joined and reaching out to them. Please consider committing to this endeavor, we need people willing to reach out and call 5-7 non-members. Heather will provide support in the process. Please reach out to Heather if interested. We need to get to 50% and close the gap of non-members. Heather will be providing support and UFF will provide training. To contact Heather, email membership@uff-fiu.org

VII. President's Report

Thank you to Dan and Tania for their work with the Union. Dan will be leaving as he is assuming a role as a department chair. Tania is leaving to finish her dissertation.

UFF-FIU Mini Grants: UFF-FIU is accepting applications for a new mini-grant program. The award amount is \$500 up to \$1000. Funding for these mini-grants is designed to support labor-related or social justice related research/scholarship/creative activity; labor-related or social justice related professional development opportunities; and/or sponsorship of speaker events relevant to UFF-FIU objectives. If you have students, encourage them to apply to these grants. Students will need to be sponsored by a UFF-FIU faculty member. It will be a great opportunity for people to do research and build a network of people who are union interested.

Legislation Action. UFF-United Faculty of Florida (myuff.org)- our efforts lead to better laws. Make sure to get involved if you are able to.

Protections and CBA: Our MOU became a national model. Most of the protections from MOUs came out of the unusual circumstances. Thank you to Dan for his hard work on the MOUs.

Teaching and Evaluation Project: Project that the Provost has supported through the Center for the Advancement for Teaching. The project aims to have faculty evaluate their teaching using rubrics and guidelines that include peer reviews, self-reviews, and student reviews. This affects faculty evaluation and needs to be bargained. Teaching Evaluation Project is not required. It is the viewpoint of administration that faculty should consider the teaching evaluation project. If you decide not to do this, you are to be held harmless. We have a Fall and Spring MOU that protect us from receiving a negative evaluation in our teaching due to COVID.

We have some mold problems on-campus. If the buildings where your office is located or where you teach have mold, contact facilities immediately to report the problem.

VIII. Chapter Elections

The elections committee was formed early in the semester. The elections committee is comprised of Josh Papacek, Tim Downey, and Gene Rosenberg. Nominations were due March 12th. Acceptances of nominations were due March

19th. The ballot was put on the website on the 26th. Voting occurs today, April 2nd. Positions begin May 10th. Any vacancies can be filled by the President.

There aren't any contested positions, so we can do an affirmation of the ballot by voice acclamation.

Motion to approve all officers who are running for positions: Agatha

2nd: Heather

Officers approved unanimously

New Officers for the 2021-2022 academic year

President: Martha Meyer

Vice President: Eric Scarffe

Secretary: Vacant

Treasurer: Marc Weinstein

UFF Senators: Jacob Berglin, Heather Blatt, Jim Burns, Deanne Butchey, Umut Caglar, Agatha Carballo, Rebecca Christ, Eric Dwyer, Amir A. Khoddamzadeh, Alexander Kroll, Suchi Mishra, Martha Meyer, Julia Parker, Maria Reid, Rachel Ritchie, Elizabeth Scarborough, Eric Scarffe, Charles Shields, Lorna Veraldi, Marc Weinstein.

FEA Delegates: Umut Caglar, Agatha Caraballo, Martha Meyer, Elizabeth Scarbrough, Charles Shields, Marc Weinstein.

For anybody who is a senator, you need to send your contact information to UFF in Tallahassee. If you haven't been an officer, you need to set up your email.

We use Slack as a means of communication. We will send an update about continuing with Slack, as there have been some rumors about it not being safe. We might need a different channel for our private conversations.

We have a newly elected state president, Andrew Gothard, from Florida Atlantic University (FAU)

IX. UFF-FIU Listens – Member's voices

None

X. Old Business

None

XI. New Business

None

XII. Good of the Chapter

Discussion about in-person vs. remote meetings in the Fall. Majority prefer having the option of remote gathering. It might be best to combine in-person and remote. We will revisit the question of meetings modality in the Fall.

XIII. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn: Deanne

2nd: Charles Shields

Meeting adjourned.