

YU Faculty Council  
April 15, 2016  
Minutes

Present: Charles Swencionis (Ferkauf), Will Lee (YC), Ruth Bevan (YC), Marina Holz (SCW), Moshe Krakowski (Azrieli), Daniel Rynhold (Revel), Neer Asherie (YC), Gabriel Cwilich (YC), Jeffrey Freedman (SCW), Gary Stein (Wurzweiler), Leslie Salzman (CSL), Yehuda Willig (YC)

Neer Asherie reported on the activities of the FC Benefits Committee. FC involvement mitigated some of the cuts proposed initially to the health insurance plan. Also, the university-wide YU benefits committee will meet on May 24 for the first time since the separation from Einstein. The members of the committee are the chief HR officer (Julie Auster), director of benefits (Jane Gonzalez), general counsel (Avi Lauer), a staff representative (Marc Goldman) and a faculty representative (Neer Asherie).

Julie Auster and Jane Gonzalez attended the FC meeting. They invited input on ways to increase transparency and make the Benefits Office more responsive to faculty and staff. Neer Asherie noted that the benefits office has become more transparent, and that the FC benefits committee would be working with the Benefits Office to make further improvements. FC members recommended improvements to the Office's operations, including that it: 1) consider increasing membership and diversity of members in the face of the loss of Einstein members; 2) provide benefits office staff with FAQs and answers so that they can better respond to member inquiries; 3) have presentations regarding benefits for faculty and staff, so that members can understand options, particularly at times of open enrollment, and 4) provide meaningful information about changes in benefits to faculty and staff before the changes are adopted.

Several FC members reiterated the need to restore Yeshiva's retirement benefit contributions.

The Provost reported that YU Board members Kornwasser and Rosen were in the process of meeting with the graduate Deans to discuss ideas for generating new income streams, including the addition of new programs or expansion of existing ones.

The FC thanked the Provost for issuing the Emeritus Appointment Policy.

The Provost announced that she will be reviewing the Faculty Handbook to clarify and improve existing language and add new policies, focusing on the first 40 pages of the Handbook. The Provost stated that the FC would be involved in the revision process, with final approval by the Provost and President. Concerns were raised about the contemplated FC role in revisions to the Handbook.

The Provost also announced that her office was about to release a new voluntary separation program for longer term faculty members. There was a brief discussion about whether the anticipated separation program would compensate for the fact that no contribution has been made to retirement funds. The Provost stated that it would not.

The announcement of the voluntary separation program prompted a discussion about trying to develop a uniform policy for adjunct teaching by retired and emeritus faculty. The Provost stated that the University needed to have a flexible policy since these hiring decisions needed to be made at the decanal and department chair levels based on departmental needs at each school. At the same time, the Provost stated that YU is discussing with Deans the goal of having greater uniformity in hiring retired and emeritus faculty within each University unit.

A discussion ensued about the University's plans to replace retiring faculty members to ensure sufficient capacity in departments. A question was raised as to whether faculty could know in advance of retirements whether the faculty member will be replaced by a tenure track faculty member. The Provost stated that the University could not make any commitments and would need to consider the totality of retirements and University needs.

The Provost reported that the University has contracted for the migration of 5000 courses from Angel to Canvas. Departments will need to review course lists so that the current course offerings are successfully migrated to Canvas.

The Provost provided the FC with data regarding labor and non-labor expenditures for FYs 2014-2016, which had been requested by the Executive Committee. When asked, the Provost reported that there were no current plans to further reduce full-time faculty.

Report from the Finance Committee. The Committee asked the Board when the University would restore raises and matching retirement contributions and were told that this would happen when the budget was balanced, which is projected in the 2018-19 academic year. Some concerns were raised about the allocation of significant overhead costs. The FC will request income information comparable to that provided regarding expenses. The discussion ended with several council members emphasizing that the phased retirement/buyout offers from the university will have staffing repercussions and the administration should be asked to delineate a plan to replace positions lost.

Report from the Presidential Search Committee (Charles, Gabriel, Moshe). Some members of the PCS (not those from the FC) were unsure of their mandate and felt disenchanting, expressing concern that they do not have an actual say in the selection process. Charles believes that the PSC will see 5 or 6 short-listed candidates before the 2 or 3 public finalists are selected and so have some say in the process. He will ask the Chairman of the Board, Moshel Straus, to clarify this point for the PSC. Charles will also circulate to FC members the Commentator letter that expressed dismay at lack of faculty participation during the search for the previous president. The PSC agreed that the next president should be an academic.

Speaker's Report: Charles's report will review the priorities set last year (raises and restoration of benefits; faculty representatives in Academic Affairs and Finance Committees; policy changes such as status of emeritus faculty and family leave; strategic planning; review of A&M restructuring plan; review of endowment and investing) and explain the progress (or lack thereof) made this year.

FC voted to issue a statement recognizing the contributions of Thomas H. Otway, Professor of Mathematics, who passed away earlier this month.