ALL FACULTY ASSOCIATION
GENERAL MEETING MINUTES

August 24, 2007

(Approved by the Executive Council on September 12, 2007)

Executive Council members present (noted by *):

*Janet McCulloch, presiding	*John Daly	Joyce Johnson	*Mike Starkey
Alix Alixopulos	*Cheryl Dunn	*Michael Kaufmann	*Linda Weiss
*Lara Branen-Ahumada	*Peggy Goebel	*Reneé Lo Pilato	Lynda Williams
*Paula Burks	*Johanna James	* Andrea Proehl	*Vacancy - Sab Lv F07*

Also present: AFA Officers and Negotiations Team Members: Ted Crowell, Ann Herbst, Warren Ruud, Deborah Sweitzer; AFA Office Staff: Judith Bernstein, Candy Shell;
Faculty (in Santa Rosa): Phyllis Usina, Anne Donegan, Kathy McGreevy, Craig Foster, Vince Bertsch, Marco Giordano, Erlinda Peraza, Rhonda Findling; Deborah Kirklin; Stephanie Sanchez; Bev Henningsen; Jim Elrod; Marjorie Grossman; Kirby Bunas, Tad Wakefield, Douglas Fisher, Mark Nelson, Gale Bach, Renata Breth, Dan Munton, Fred Utter, Nora Wheeler, Amy Merkel, Ed Sikes, Abby Bogomolny; Barry Wood, Jack Geary, Susan Amalia, Beverly Hinkle, Shirley Hino, Tatjana Omrcen, Jim Spencer, Terry Shell, Rick Kavinoky, John Martin, Bettina Armstrong, Kyra Janssen, Deborah Albers, Mike Drayton, Kay Renz, Joel Neuberg, Mike Meese, Roberta Delgado, Greg Granderson, Cheryl Redmon, Joel Fasler, Barbara Gude, Gordon Yaswen; Cindy Avenell, Leslie McCauley.
Faculty (in Petaluma via video-conference): Bic Ha DoVan, Michael Eurgubian, Terri Frongia, Michael Henry, Breck Withers.
Student Reporter from the Oak Leaf: Alex Estrada

The meeting was called to order at 12:02 p.m.

DISCUSSION ITEM

1. Tentative Agreement (TA). All members of AFA will receive a TA ballot packet and the TA documents are also posted on the AFA Web site. A review of the highlights of the settlement was followed by questions, answers and discussion. Janet McCulloch began the discussion by saying that the AFA Team started negotiations immediately after the last settlement was reached in 2006 and that, by the time this TA is ratified, it will have taken approximately 16 months to reach agreement. She noted that AFA has been working hard for the last three years to convince the District to join a JPA (Joint Powers Authority) or Trust for medical benefits, and that the District will be joining SISC (Self-Insured Schools of California), a JPA which operates out of the West Kern County Office of Education. SRJC's claim experience will be blended with that of many younger people (SISC insures approximately 220,000 lives) and it is anticipated that, for the first time in many years, our rates will remain stable.

   - New Rank 10 Methodology. Last year it was discovered that, although the middle steps of the salary schedule were at or above Rank 10 in comparison to other community colleges in California, the bottom (starting) and the top (retiring) steps were nowhere even close. Consequently, instead of using one Rank 10 comparison point, there will now be three points in the non-doctorate column — Step 1, Step 16 and Step 28 (the highest non-doctorate). Steps 12 through 16 have been reconfigured and the differences between all of the steps equalized. The end result is that the middle steps are slightly above Rank 10, while the beginning and ending steps are at Rank 10. It will take two years to transition to the new methodology — with the 2008-09 schedule, it will be fully implemented. One other change is that the three Basic Aid districts, which receive so much money from their property taxes that they do not receive general apportionment funding from the State, were removed from the comparison group. Following are highlights of the question-and-answer discussion re: the new Rank 10 methodology:

   - There is no specific correlation between COLA and the salary schedule. First, there is an adjustment to Rank 10, and then COLA less 0.5% is added. From this year on, the Rank 10 and COLA adjustments will happen more or less automatically.
   - A snapshot is taken every year in mid-December, and the adjustment takes place the following August. Assuming that every other district applies COLA, it is the best that can be done in terms of timing.
   - AFA does not negotiate for administrators, and there is no correlation between administrative salaries and faculty salaries.
   - If the TA is ratified, the anticipated schedule for paychecks would be as follows: regular faculty would receive the 2007-08 rate of pay on Sept. 30, plus a small retroactive amount dating back to the first day of school; adjunct faculty would receive the 2007-08 rate of pay on October 10, plus a small retroactive amount dating back to the first day of school. Since the Payroll department is also working on retroactive paychecks for classified staff and the settlement occurred after the fiscal year ended, the adjustments for 2006-07 have to be performed manually, which means that the 2006-07 retroactive amount will take much longer to process, and the retroactive pay might not show up until October 31 for regular faculty, and November 10 for adjunct faculty.
   - There was a concern that, while regular faculty in the middle of the schedule won't see much of a salary increase in this TA but will get their annual step increases, those who are at Step 16 can sit for years at the same place without any step increases, unless they apply for PGI. Deborah Sweitzer noted that the AFA Executive Council has discussed and expressed interest in the recent past in eliminating more PGI steps and substituting longevity steps; however, this round of negotiations was very challenging and that item was not addressed.
   - A concern was voiced about the rapidity with which the changes to the salary schedule were being made all at once and a lack of fairness in terms of the middle steps getting a lower increase than other steps. The response from Janet McCulloch and Deborah Sweitzer was that regular step increases will still apply, and the middle steps will end up with the greatest long-term benefit, as they have been above Rank 10 for many years. Because of the way the adjustment was made, the two transition years bring everyone to the same objective of being at Rank 10, helping SRJC to attract new faculty and improve ending salaries for retirement, all of which is for the greater good.

- Initial Step Placement Credit Program for Newly Hired Regular Faculty. As part of an initiative to attract new faculty to SRJC in anticipation of the increasing number of older faculty who will be retiring, Deborah Sweitzer said that AFA was able to convince the District to add two new salary placement steps for new regular faculty hires. This year new regular faculty hires who meet the criteria may be placed on Step 7; next year new regular faculty hires may be placed on Step 8.

- Initial Step Placement Credit Program for Adjunct Faculty. Newly hired adjunct faculty who meet the new criteria for advanced step placement may be placed on Step 2 in Spring 2008, on Step 3 in Spring 2009, and on Step 4 in Spring 2011. This program is retroactive, to the extent that continuing adjunct faculty who are on Step 1 and meet the criteria can apply for step movement according to the same terms, procedures and time frames as newly hired adjunct faculty.

- New Method for Evaluating Foreign Degrees for Salary Placement. This new process will allow faculty with foreign degrees that are accepted for graduate work by the UC and CSU systems to get class placement credit on the salary schedule for those degrees. Prior to this agreement, there was no mechanism in place to give credit for foreign degrees. Even though this item will affect very few currently active faculty members, it will help in attracting new faculty. Janet McCulloch noted that, increasingly, more faculty in the sciences are coming to SRJC with foreign degrees.

- Joint Powers Authority (JPA) Health Organization. Deborah Sweitzer reported that AFA and the District are in agreement about joining Self-Insured Schools of California (SISC), a JPA, which will result in lower rate increases for medical insurance. SISC will offer two plans — Blue Shield and Kaiser. Health Net will no longer be an option after December 31, 2007. Faculty will be able to switch between carriers during a new open enrollment period in October. More detailed information will be publicized and distributed as soon as the District receives it from the broker. John Daly noted that the

Blue Shield plan provides for several improvements over the current Health Net plan, including self-referral to specialists within the Blue Shield network (including to Stanford and UCSF), lower copayments for prescription drugs, and nation-wide portability. SISC's Kaiser plan is also a better plan than the current SRJC Kaiser plan. Both new plans provide for automatic acceptance to group members (no exclusion based on health history). Although SRJC was for a while considered to be a high-risk group, as it experienced three bad years in a row in terms of claims history, the last 18-month period was good and presented no problem to SISC, which insures approximately 220,000 lives. One of the advantages of joining a JPA is that the larger group size spreads out the risk. SISC has been interested in expanding into Sonoma County, and is currently engaged with Santa Rosa City Schools, as well as with Sonoma County schools through RESIG (Redwood Empire Schools Insurance Group). Whereas SRJC's medical premiums have increased 58% over the past four years, it is anticipated that SISC's annual rate increases will be in the 5-6% range. A concern was raised about the June 30, 2008 expiration date that appears in the Contract and the possibility that the District would not pay any more medical premiums after that date if another contract was not in place by the time the previous contract expires. Deborah replied that June 30 is the end of the fiscal and contractual year, and it's standard practice to recognize that date in the language; however, AFA and the District negotiate benefits every year and the Contract will roll with existing terms until a new Contract is negotiated. The District's contract with SISC runs from January 1 to December 31. There was brief discussion about the State Adjunct Health Benefits Program, which is in jeopardy every year. A greater number of adjunct faculty subscribed to the program than was anticipated and SRJC has only been receiving a 14% reimbursement from the State, rather than 50%, as was originally intended when the program began. The current State budget includes an additional $4 million to augment that program. Deborah encouraged faculty to write letters to the Governor urging him to keep that line item in the budget. In response to the last question on this topic, Deborah clarified that AFA does not negotiate for retirees, as they are not members of the unit.

- AFA Educational Effort regarding Benefit Cost-Sharing. This item generated the greatest degree of concern from those present and the lengthiest discussion of any item in the TA. Janet McCulloch stated that AFA has no intention of sharing the cost of medical benefit premiums with the District. AFA will be exploring many other ways that are far less risky and expensive (for example, sharing the cost of vision, dental, life or disability benefits). The switch to SISC will greatly improve the situation — their rate increases have been less than PERS, which is the largest purchasing group in California. AFA believes that it is the Board of Trustees who is interested in premium cost sharing. Faculty were encouraged to communicate their concerns about this issue to the Board during the open forum segment of Board meetings.
  - It was suggested that there is evidence of an attempt to shift the obligation and liability from management to the bargaining agent or employees, that the *Agreement in Principle* made cost-sharing a done deal and that, rather than a year of education, there should be a year of debate, after which faculty should be able to make a decision. It was recommended that AFA seek expert legal advice to get an impartial and objective opinion. Janet McCulloch said that AFA's plan has always been to survey the faculty and have open debate. AFA would only negotiate other means of benefit cost sharing if faculty agree to it. She also said that she would be happy to consult with AFA's attorney, Robert Bezemek.
  - Some expressed concern that the proposed contract language sets forth a date certain after which some form of benefit cost sharing "will" (not "may") be implemented. Janet McCulloch and Deborah Sweitzer responded that, now that the District has joined SISC, the AFA team doesn't think that cost sharing will be necessary. In addition, AFA's position is that benefit cost sharing already exists in the form of copayments for office visits and prescriptions drugs, and faculty share of the cost of vision coverage for dependents.
  - Even though they expressed trust for the AFA Team, several faculty members questioned how they could vote on such an important item that has been left so nebulous. Janet McCulloch stated that Dr. Agrella has been made aware that benefit cost sharing is the biggest problem in the TA and that faculty do not want it. Regardless of that fact, concern was expressed that an arbitrator could interpret the benefit cost sharing language in favor of the District. Janet replied that, in addition to what's

written into the Contract, the notes from negotiations sessions would also play a role in an arbitration and the notes are very clear about AFA's intentions.

- It was suggested that AFA put out a concerted effort to solicit and support candidates for the Board of Trustees to run against those Board members who support benefit cost sharing. Janet and Deborah reiterated the importance of faculty voicing their concerns at Board meetings.
- Another concern was that faculty would be "promising" to do something next year. Even though that "promise" would be negotiable, contract language is being written into this year's contract that might lead to faculty having to make concessions in the future. In response to that concern, Deborah Sweitzer gave two examples of "promises" for future years that were written into the Contract, both of which led to gains for faculty: 1) last year, when both sides agreed to develop an alternative Rank 10 methodology in a future year; and 2) this year, when both sides agreed to establish the Medical Benefit Reserve Fund in the following year. She noted that, if AFA could have reached a TA without that benefit cost sharing language, they would have.
- It was pointed out that, even though it would send the AFA Team back to the drawing board, it would send a big signal to the Board if the TA is not ratified because of concern over benefit cost-sharing.

- Initiating the AFA Medical Benefits Premium Reserve Fund. Deborah Sweitzer noted that, so far, no agreement has been reached as to how to augment and use this fund. The District and AFA will discuss this issue this coming year. She said that it was a gesture of good faith on the part of the District. AFA did not want to be held hostage to radical premium increases. Unused funds will roll over into the following year's budget. There is no agreement yet regarding the Adjunct Medical Benefits Program.

- Shared Allocation of New "Enhanced Non-credit Funding." Deborah Sweitzer reported that the State of California has approved additional funding for specific non-credit courses that meet certain criteria. FTES generated from those courses will be reimbursed at a higher rate. It could mean as much as $300,000 this year if all the courses already identified qualify. The agreement is that AFA would have a say in how to allocate half of that money. AFA's intention is to focus on two items: changing the non-credit workload factor and adjusting the non-credit hourly salary schedule. It was agreed to undertake a survey to determine workload factors and then propose an adjustment to those workload factors. It was also agreed that funds would be allocated to faculty teaching those non-credit courses on a stipend basis. The non-credit ESL program started several years ago to position themselves to receive these funds by rewriting curriculum. They will be receiving money this year. Other departments, which did not rewrite their non-credit curriculum, such as College Skills, will not receive any funds this year, but would be eligible next year assuming the curriculum is revised.

- Article 25: Sabbatical Leave. Changes were made to the existing article that clarified the role of the Sabbatical Leave Committee and provided for more oversight from the Vice President of Academic Affairs. Pattern D (a percentage of an assignment over a 3-year period) was eliminated as an option because it has been problematic. A question was raised about the provision for a certain number of leaves over the period of 2005-06 to 2021-22 and whether or not that timeframe was binding. Deborah Sweitzer responded that this particular provision, which specifies the number of sabbatical leaves as 4.5% of regular faculty load plus <u>3</u> for 16 years, rather than 4.5% plus <u>2</u>, pays back the 16 leaves owed to faculty from the year when sabbaticals were frozen.

- Other questions: The team was asked if any progress was made on the transfer policy between campuses and sites. Janet McCulloch reported that Steve Olson, interim Vice President of the Petaluma Campus, had developed some ideas, as did the AFA Negotiations Team. Now that Steve Olson is retiring, the task will fall to Jane Saldaña-Talley, the new Petaluma VP. Janet encouraged faculty to talk to Ms. Saldaña-Talley about the importance of this issue, noting that the District's and AFA's positions have been far apart. (While AFA has been focused on a voluntary process, the District has been focused on an involuntary process.) The AFA Negotiations Team has developed some language that they will bring back to the table and also to the Petaluma Faculty Forum.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:40 p.m. Minutes submitted by Judith Bernstein.