

Report of the Executive Secretary

October 24, 2009

Let me begin with a positive report. At the last two fall meetings of the Georgia Conference we discussed problems associated with the creation of a new Core Curriculum for the University System of Georgia. Specifically, the Association was concerned with the lack of genuine faculty participation in the process. Under the direction of President Dorothy Leland of Georgia College and State University and Executive Vice Chancellor Susan Herbst the process, in the opinion of the majority of the faculty who had any involvement with the Core Curriculum initiative, provided little opportunity for true faculty involvement or genuine shared governance and represented a top-down process whose outcomes appeared to be predetermined.

With complaints reaching the Chancellor's Office from a number of sources, including very strong complaints from the Georgia Conference, President Leland resigned as head of the initiative and a new process was instituted with AAUP member Dr. George Rainbolt assuming the chairmanship of a new committee that promised to open up the process and work transparently. The committee developed a website that posted all minutes of meetings, provided examples of cores from across the nation, and allowed for constant input from faculty via its blog. The new committee also conducted a survey of faculty to determine the strengths and weaknesses of the existing core.

On October 14 the committee presented its recommendations to the Board of Regents. According to the Committee, the new core curriculum is designed to:

- give all students a broad liberal arts education;
- mandate more assessment of student learning than ever before in the USG's history;
- enable students to finish their majors/degrees in a more timely fashion;
- protect the already-strong within-USG transfer between institutions; and
- give USG institutions the flexibility to create unique core curricula that give students a powerful, shared, intellectual experience and allow students to choose an institution that fits their needs and interests.

The Committee also stated that the new core curriculum continues to ensure that students understand the general nature of the sciences, the social sciences, the humanities and the fine arts.

The work of the Committee is recorded at <http://core.usg.edu/>.

In other areas of work, the Georgia Conference has not been as successful. Starting in fall 2006, the Georgia Conference worked with the Chancellor's staff and the Office of the Governor to seek a

solution to the failure of the Regents' Optional Retirement Plan to provide for the retirement needs of University System faculty and staff. One of the primary recommendations of an ad hoc committee formed to address this problem (on which the Georgia Conference was represented by its Executive Secretary) was the creation of legislation to allow member of ORP to purchase time within the Teachers' Retirement System of Georgia. Another major recommendation was to increase the state contribution to ORP for those members who elected to stay in the defined contribution plan. Unfortunately, the Governor opposed the transfer of membership from ORP to TRS and based on that opposition the Board of Regents would not support legislation drafted by the Georgia Conference to permit faculty and staff to move from ORP to TRS. The Georgia Conference's bill died in committee during the spring 2008 session.

The Georgia Conference Executive Secretary met again on several occasions with the Office of the Governor, specifically Mr. Tommy Hills, the state Chief Financial Officer, during fall 2008 to address the growing problem. Mr. Hills coordinated conversations with Jeff Ezell, TRS Executive Director, to produce legislation that would allow the movement from ORP to TRS while eliminating concerns expressed earlier by Mr. Ezell regarding protecting the interests of TRS. Based on those conversations, and with the guidance of AAUP lobbyist Steve Anthony, bills were introduced in both the house and the senate that would permit members of ORP to purchase time within TRS. However, under pressure from the Governor, the House Retirement Committee, under Howard Maxwell, State Representative for District 17, refused to allow HB 740 (which enabled faculty and eligible staff in the Regents' Optional Retirement System to purchase time within the Teachers' Retirement System) to be forwarded for a cost study. In effect, this killed the bill for this session. SB 257, which was a duplicate of the house bill, died without a committee hearing as a result of the pressure from the Governor. Legislation to allow faculty to purchase time in TRS at no cost to the state or TRS, and thereby improve the ability of faculty to retire with dignity, was considered not merely unworthy of support, but unworthy of even verification of its financial impact on the state.

The Georgia Conference will return to work on this legislation, although it is clear that a change in the governor will be required to move the legislation forward.

The Conference has also been working with the Chancellor's staff to improve the notice of non-renewal for Lecturers and Senior Lectures within the University System of Georgia. In May of this year, the Board of Regents changed the policy on lecturers and senior lecturers to allow not merely the universities but all institutions to employ lecturers. The Board also changed the percentage of an institution's Full-Time Equivalent corps of primarily undergraduate instruction that could serve as lecturers or senior lecturers from 10 to 20 percent.

The reappointment process for lectures and senior lecturers is a matter of utmost concern for the Georgia Conference. Present policy requires only the following:

1. For lecturers with less than three (3) years of full-time service, institutions are encouraged to provide non-reappointment notice as early as possible, but no specific notice is required.

2. For lecturers with three (3) or more years but less than six (6) years of full-time service, institutions must provide non-reappointment notice at least thirty (30) calendar days prior to the institution's first day of classes in the semester.
3. For senior lecturers or lecturers with six (6) years or more of full-time service, institutions must provide non-reappointment notice at least one hundred and eighty (180) calendar days prior to the institution's first day of classes in the semester.

Institutions thus can nonrenew a lecturer with less than three years' service with no notice whatsoever. Lecturers who have served three to six years can be provided notice of non-renewal on 15 July, some six weeks after their previous contract has expired. And even senior lecturers who have been promoted do not have to receive notice of non-renewal until February of their contract year, well beyond the time when searches for new academic positions in most disciplines have closed.

Efforts to improve the policy on notice of nonrenewal that were being carried out with the Chancellor's staff abruptly ended this month. The Executive Secretary has scheduled a meeting with the Chancellor to address this serious problem.

On the institutional level, the Georgia Conference has attempted to work with Georgia Southern University in what the Executive Secretary believes to be a gross misuse of the provisions of the University System Post-Tenure Review Policy. Regrettably, President Bruce Grube of Georgia Southern rebuffed the efforts of the Association to assist in returning the policy implementation to its intended purposes. That issue was taken on by the staff of national AAUP.

Although the Georgia Conference continues to have a professional and positive relationship with the Chancellor of the University System of Georgia, there remain matters of great concern regarding the rights and obligation of faculty within the USG, including whether the two-year institution will remain within the USG or be given, in total or in part, to the Technical College System of Georgia. This issue raises genuine alarm regarding the rights of tenure of those faculty presently serving in our two-year institutions.

We will continue, nonetheless, to represent the faculty in all these matters and attempt to preserve higher education in the state.