

FACULTY DELEGATE ASSEMBLY MINUTES of Meeting 11/18/09

President Tony Doyle called the meeting to order and explained that there has been a snafu in voting for the Executive Committee (envelopes did not have an address) but that this would be corrected and new ballots mailed out. He also reported on what he had learned at the last University Faculty Senate meeting: that there are concerns about vetting and process at the new School of Public Health, and that the changes in PSC grants reported on after the last meeting might very well happen. He also noted that current response to the faculty survey is under 30%, and it was noted that this would not be a meaningful analysis if the response remained at that level.

Provost Rabinowitz joined to deliver a report on the state of the college with a much more optimistic characterization of the organization of the public health program, referenced excellent new hires at Hunter, and ground-breaking at the School of Social Work, noting how fortunate Hunter is to be embarking on such a venture in this financial situation and that the funding all is all in place thanks to a great donor, the largest in CUNY history. She also told us that the administration is conducting an “analysis” of teaching load at Hunter: she called it a “snapshot” and noted its problems (no accounting for build-up of course release, no official credit for advising, tutorials, master’s essays, etc.) but made it clear this was serious and would be used to rectify what she characterized as a system, unspecified, that cannot continue. The question was raised as to specifics of the analysis, and if faculty would be involved in it, and we were told if anyone wants to be involved need to contact her by end of this week.

We were also told that the college is assembling an enormous data base of information about faculty with all sorts of information about our work, which were not entirely spelled out. According to the Provost, this has tremendous potential to help us in our work: access to information useful in applying for a grant, demographic data useful for someone, for example, who studies gender equity, and an ongoing record collection of all our accomplishments so we can network with each other. The enthusiasm from the group did not match that of the Provost or Associate Provost who also attended and concern was expressed about the dangers of assembling data without any defined purpose. The Provost’s response to this question was framed as an issue of privacy and a reassurance that our birth dates and history of military service would not be revealed.

Our final speaker was Professor Stanley Aronowitz, Distinguished Professor of Sociology at the CUNY Graduate Center. He spoke of his research and analysis on the topic of “The Corporatization of the University.” (Professor Aronowitz, arrived in time for some of the Provost’s report, and his characterization of some of what he heard was “surveillance.”) What he talked about—and warned of—was how colleges, including ours, are dangerously close to becoming job training schools, mostly for jobs that will not exist for long, all under the guise of giving students what they want, and what we know is not what they need. He spoke very passionately of the value of what used to be called a liberal arts education which emphasized

critical thought. He also talked, as a former PSC CUNY leader, about the need for faculty resistance to corporatization (defined by actual corporate involvement in curriculum development as “consultors,” as well as the process of restructuring the university on a corporate model.) He was questioned about raising faculty awareness, and asked for suggestions about how to get faculty to consider, for example, that filling out a database or scholarship report is not necessarily in our best shared interest. A comment was made that unfortunately some of our colleagues are very eager to singularly blow their own horn and he answered that we ought to be very careful about talk of “meritocracy,” because in his experience in union negotiations that was always dangerous ground to tread, much welcomed by the administration because of what might be done in its wake with regard to interpretation. And he also used the word “solidarity.” He was very well received by the group except that several questioned his alternative model which is one of a four year curriculum with the first two years consisting entirely of history, philosophy, literature, and natural science. History was singled out as particularly “not useful,” with evidence offered of many fellow history majors working at Borders; not everyone agreed. The meeting adjourned on a note of lively, albeit concerned, discussion of the path ahead.

Respectfully submitted,

Bernadette McCauley