

FROM THE PRESIDENT



Rudy Bell
Professor of History

In this issue we are focusing on the poorest members in our bargaining unit: Teaching Assistants, Graduate Assistants, and Part-Time Lecturers, many of whom are graduate students who have exhausted other means of funding.

The TA/GA's made a very positive impression upon the faculty and distinguished guests assembled on October 25 for a gala celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the New Brunswick Graduate School. We provided informational leaflets showing convincingly that current TA/GA stipends leave students at least \$2500 short of the minimal expenses specified in the Rutgers Graduate School Catalogue as necessary to live in New Jersey. Others writing in this issue will address the harm done to graduate programs when we fail to make offers sufficient to attract the best students. My immediate concern is with the economic burden we place on the young scholars who do choose Rutgers.

At the gala dinner there was much nostalgic talk among faculty colleagues about how we all in our turn had lived close to the bone, making do with rice, peanut butter, and canned vegetables. But the current realities are radically different than they were two and three decades ago, and toughing it out is no longer the option it once was.

TA/GA come in large numbers from outside the United States. They receive offer letters that fail to tell them they will be socked with over \$1000 in fees, deducted directly from their stipend checks. Their offers do not tell them that if they opt for university housing, a reasonable choice for someone coming from thousands of miles away, they will be hit with a 9% increase in rent, from day one, blamed in part on rising labor costs, although our fellow workers in AFSCME also are laboring without a contract and with the same "zero now, see you later if we choose" non-offer from the administration. Students also were hit last July with a 5% increase in meal plan charges. TA/GA's soon learn that they cannot seek supplementary employment outside the university and would risk instant deportation for accepting even a casual payment for babysitting or the like. They are not eligible for student loans. They cannot realistically turn to their parents for support.

I hope we are all listening to the message presented by the TA/GA's who protested their plight on October 25. They are mired well below the minimal amount necessary to survive in New Jersey, and effectively forced to "shop" at the Rutgers company store for food and shelter since they have no money for a security deposit on slum housing in New Brunswick and cannot possibly buy a car to commute from some lower-cost area.

The situation is intolerable. Certainly, TA/GA's will actively discourage applicants from considering Rutgers when the recruiting season begins in earnest after the winter break. Many already are writing back to their schoolmates overseas, warning them about the real cost of living here. I urge my faculty colleagues to be most cautious about encouraging prospective graduate students into poverty; they do not have the resources we once did to alleviate the shortfalls. Let us at least be honest in our recruiting efforts and tell potential students about those \$1000+ fees, the rent and food increases likely to hit them again, and the necessity of borrowing heavily or working many additional hours (if these options are even available to them) just to get by.

We can do better. Let the administration begin with a serious offer, one consistent with what colleagues at every other institution of higher education in New Jersey agreed upon last August, one that provides a minimal living wage to TA/GA's. We promise to respond with equal determination to reach an equitable settlement that furthers the goals we all share



Samuel Rabinowitz
Associate Professor
Management,
Camden
Vice-Chair, Rutgers
University Senate

"The vision espoused by the AAUP is one which is at the very core of university life. I join with others at Rutgers in strongly endorsing the collective strength that exists from providing innovative, relevant teaching, research and service to our community at large. We owe it to all our stakeholders within and outside of Rutgers University to all work together to grow the culture of learning that can come from our outstanding faculty, students, administrators, and staff members all striving to achieve a common purpose — one of excellence."

New Brunswick Faculty Council Endorsement

Approved on September 12, 2003

Be it resolved that the New Brunswick Faculty Council endorses the AAUP vision statement for Rutgers, and agrees that the actions outlined in that statement need to be taken in order for Rutgers to advance to the top echelon of public research universities. The Council also urges the representatives of the faculty and of the Rutgers administration to negotiate constructively, in a spirit of collegiality and mutual respect, to reach an agreement based on a shared commitment to the goals and principles expressed in the vision statement.



James R. Miller
Professor of Marine
and Coastal Studies,
Cook College,
New Brunswick
Vice-Chair and Chair
Elect, New Brunswick
Faculty Council

"As noted in the AAUP vision statement, it's incumbent on all of us within the University community to work together to bring Rutgers to the very highest level of public research universities. The statement provides a clear and articulate vision of what must be done to get there. Although bringing the ideas reflected in the statement from vision to reality will be challenging, it will also be exciting. Each of us must work cooperatively with our colleagues and must identify what we can do to help attain the vision."



Ziva Galili
Professor and Chair, Department of
History, New Brunswick

"Over the years I have not been active in the AAUP and I have not always supported all its positions. But I was deeply impressed with the results achieved for TA/GAs in the last contract negotiations and, likewise, find the new vision statement worthy of support. As former Vice Dean of the Graduate School, my

concern is above all with Rutgers' ability to attract excellent graduate students. In the last contract negotiations, the faculty and administration worked together cooperatively to agree on a contract which contained significant increases in the stipends of all TA/GAs. Additional funds were set aside for TA/GAs in the most competitive fields. With competition for the best graduate students increasing across the board, the next contract should again bring a raise in TA/GAs stipends in all disciplines. No less important, the University should develop a plan for gradual increase in the number of TAs - arguably the resource most sorely lacking at Rutgers."

THE AAUP VISION FOR RUTGERS

The Rutgers AAUP is strongly committed to the vision of advancing Rutgers to the top echelon of public research universities. We believe that to achieve this goal, or even to preserve the present quality and accessibility of its programs, Rutgers must

- recruit and retain an outstanding and diverse faculty
- recruit an outstanding and diverse graduate and professional student body
- recruit an outstanding and diverse undergraduate student body
- provide students outstanding classroom instruction and mentoring, to the fullest possible extent by full-time faculty members
- provide first-class facilities, infrastructure, and staff support for teaching, research, and service to the citizens of New Jersey
- build on our strengths in the liberal arts and sciences, the applied sciences, and the professions
- uphold, in all its actions, the core academic values of academic freedom and due process, intellectual honesty, shared governance, and respect for the rights and opinions of others
- foster an atmosphere of openness, collegiality, and trust in which all members of the university community work together to obtain the resources required to move Rutgers to the next level of excellence.



Nancy McWilliams
PTL, Graduate School of Applied and
Professional Psychology, New Brunswick

"I've been a "visiting" professor for over 20 years—rather a long visit!

I would be glad to add my voice to those supporting the vision statement. I have a lot of hope that even in these difficult times, the AAUP vision statement can be trans-

lated into collective bargaining agreements that will move us all toward reaching the goals stated there."

for Rutgers. Everyone knows that there is currently money for \$3,000,000 in new projects, about to be carved up, and millions more in new hires of administrators and even a few faculty. Let there also be money to provide decent salaries for the teachers and researchers already here on the job: faculty, TA/GA's, and PTL's. And let us not forget the sadly underpaid clerical and blue-collar members of AFSCME, the police officers represented by FOP, and the dedicated physicians of SEIU who serve students at the health centers. We call on President Richard McCormick to make hard choices and reach the settlements we are ready to work out with him and his bargaining team. ■

"In effect, graduate students have seen their pay drop, since on-campus housing costs have increased more rapidly than their paychecks have."

Home News Tribune editorial, November 5, 2003



Matthew R. Francis
Graduate Assistant, Dept. of Physics
and Astronomy, New Brunswick

"I applied to Rutgers on the recommendation of a friend, who told me that this was a very good place to be. After seeing what Rutgers had to offer, I believed him, and I still believe him now. The university is at a watershed point, however, and could cease to be what it was. Without a real commitment to improving the

financial situation for graduate students-TAs, GAs, and PTLs especially-there is little hope Rutgers can maintain its excellence. The AAUP Vision Statement embodies the essential message I hope the Administration will take to heart: that we are all committed to advancing the university. Nevertheless, without sufficient support in the form of adequate salaries, concrete limits on teaching loads, and simple honesty in dealing with graduate student issues, many current and prospective students may find that the trials of day-to-day existence outweigh the advantages of being at Rutgers."



Paul Panayotatos
Professor of Electrical &
Computer Engineering,
New Brunswick
Chair, Rutgers University Senate

"As a faculty member, I am happy to endorse the AAUP Vision for Rutgers, which I understand to be the AAUP's proposed basis for the ongoing collective bargaining.

Although the University Senate does not, and should not, engage in issues pertaining to contract negotiations, I personally find that the vision statement articulates goals and principles that we can all agree on. Furthermore, it is my personal belief that the current contract negotiations need to be resolved sooner rather than later so that a unified Rutgers community can address such challenges as the restructuring of New Jersey's public research universities. I am optimistic that, with such a vision statement as a basis, and with frequent, sincere negotiation meetings, the representatives of the faculty and of the university administration will be able to achieve a contract that expresses our common goals for Rutgers."