

香港浸會大學教職員工會

Hong Kong Baptist University Faculty and Staff Union

團結 · Solidarity 自主 · Autonomy 公義 · Justice

Newsletter (36)

17th February, 2005

Dear colleagues,

Defensive Action against the Re-titling Exercise

You are strongly advised to take defensive action as suggested below in responding to the re-titling exercise, which the university administration offers as part of the conversion arrangements for the new pay and reward structure.

In the Union's Newsletter 33, we advised you not to join the re-titling exercise due to uncertainty in various issues and wait for our President to summon enough courage to come out and answer our legitimate concern. Since then, Mr President has chosen to remain silent, while Faculty / School deans moved ahead and set deadlines for faculty members to reply whether to join the re-titling exercise. We find it bizarre that one dean would assume faculty members who do not reply before the deadline not to join the exercise, while another may interpret lack of response as a sign of agreeing to join the exercise. More bizarre is the fact that some deans simply take for granted, without asking for consent, that you agree to join the new pay and reward structure even if you choose to reject the re-titling exercise.

We condemn such personnel practice as irresponsible, if not dishonest, to say the least. Faculty members badly need an informed understanding of what re-titling means to them before they can decide whether to choose re-titling. **What we need is a guarantee that the Council would never terminate their appointment because of financial stringency, which is listed as one possible cause for terminating academic staff members on substantive appointment in the Chinese version of the New Pay and Reward Structure document but not the English one. We want the University to explain why there is such an important discrepancy between the two versions of the same document. For the re-titling exercise, we also need to build a fair and transparent system for the appraisal of teaching, research and service.** To all these legitimate concern, the University administration has failed to respond, not to say giving an acceptable reply.

Added to this list of uncertainties is lack of details of the new pay and reward structure that the administration is forcing us to join. The new structure will reportedly be based on a flexible adjustment mechanism that would substitute the system of automatic annual increment. Details for the operation of this flexible adjustment mechanism, however, are all lacking. **We have the right to know the following details: if annual increment is performance-based, how will performance be appraised in a transparent, fair and just way? How are performance results related to whether annual increments are given to the faculty members concerned, and if yes, how much? Will performance appraisal be conducted not only for frontline teaching staff but also for the**

management including our President and Vice-Presidents? Without providing answers for the above questions, the University administration, and in particular the Personnel Office, has failed in their duties in serving the interests of faculty members.

Also unclear are the criteria by which the Council determines whether the University would reduce its superannuation contribution and, if the contribution be reduced, the amount of reduction. The new structure document proposes that under circumstances that funding is cut, the university with the approval of the Council could reduce its superannuation contribution from 15% to 10%. But we think the Council should also consider the overall financial situation of the University before making such a decision. In 2003/04, for instance, we ended the financial year with a surplus of 400 million. Given such a surplus, we doubt that it is decent to reduce the University's contribution simply due to funding cut by the government. We understand that faculty members as well as administrative staff have been working harder and taking up more courses for both government-funded and self-financed programs. They have contributed to the financial health of the university. But whether the Council would take this into consideration is an unsettled question that may require deeper thought.

In the absence of such basic information as mentioned above, and despite repeated requests for clarification, the University administration remains tight-lipped but continues to force us to join the new structure by taking the re-titling exercise. That is highly unethical and irresponsible. We are left in the dark, not knowing how the new system will work, while we are forced to accept something with unknown implications. From job security to annual increment, from superannuation contribution to an important discrepancy in the Chinese and English versions of the new structure document, the University administration refuses to give any explanation even in the midst of strong calls for clarification since December last year. We wonder how this irresponsible attitude of the senior management could persist without undermining its authority and betraying taxpayers' trust.

In response, we must protect our interests by expressly stating the principle that **we are not prepared to declare whether to switch to the new pay and reward structure; our service will continue to be governed by the existing terms, unless and until the University authorities provide information and assurances sufficient to allay our anxieties mentioned above.** Given such an express reservation, re-titling exercise is divorced from the commitment of joining the new pay structure. Accordingly, you may opt for re-titling or not. Enclosed please find the wordings you may use to safeguard your interest in accordance with the above principle when you render your reply to the authorities concerned.

Yours sincerely,

Executive Committee
Hong Kong Baptist University Faculty and Staff Union

Appendix: Wordings you may add in your reply regarding re-titling

1. I am not prepared to declare whether to switch to the new pay and reward structure; our service will continue to be governed by the existing terms, unless and until the University authorities provide information and assurances sufficient to allay our anxieties. Our opting for re-titling or not re-titling in no way expresses our commitment in joining the new pay structure. OR
2. I opt for re-titling but I am not prepared to declare whether to switch to the new pay and reward structure; our service will continue to be governed by the existing terms, unless and until the University authorities provide information and assurances sufficient to allay our anxieties. OR
3. I opt for re-titling on the following understanding: (1) the University would never apply the new terms such as termination of service as a result of financial stringency of the University; (2) the University should seek my consent on the criteria by which it may reduce its superannuation contribution; (3) the future flexible adjustment mechanism for annual increment should be fair, just and transparent; and (4) the University must clarify the important discrepancy between the Chinese and English versions of the *New Pay and Reward Structure* document.