

Renewal in the United Faculty of Florida: Class War in Paradise?

by
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Abstract

This paper reviews faculty unionization and labor relations in Florida public higher education during 2000-2004. This tumultuous period includes abolition of a statewide Board of Regents, with devolution of university governance to university-level Boards of Trustees stacked with wealthy political donors. The Jeb Bush Administration used devolution as a pretext to eliminate statewide bargaining for thousands of faculty at 11 state universities.

The statewide faculty union local, the United Faculty of Florida, with support from affiliates, undertook a massive re-organizing effort to protect bargaining rights. More than a thousand new members were added, and signed authorization cards were collected from over 65% of faculty at each of 11 campuses. Although most schools granted voluntary recognition, two insisted on representation elections. The union won both elections resoundingly with over 90% of the vote. Contract negotiations have been completed at two schools, but are still underway at others. Union representation is still unresolved at one school.

This paper will emphasize the perspective of key constituents from Florida State University using a case study format from a participant-observer perspective. FSU is one of the largest schools in the State University System, in several ways “on the frontline” of the battle between politicians’ efforts to de-unionize the system and faculty efforts to retain bargaining rights.

Introduction

After summarizing major developments over 2000-2004, this paper takes an analytical perspective informed by scholarly literature and direct experience. Theoretical perspectives on union revitalization, administration, and governance are considered. The organizing schema is a “Semi-Contingency Model of Union Renewal” (Fiorito, 2004), stressing that while some matters apply to most unions, others are unique or apply to a small number of unions subject to similar influences. The approach is to trace the major components of that model with particular reference to the United Faculty of Florida’s Florida State University Chapter (UFF-FSU).

The state’s political environment, Governor Jeb Bush’s goal of “running government like a business,” and university governance devolution were key external forces for change. After a review of the environment, we discuss leadership and organizational issues. This public sector union, previously insulated from forces such as globalization and cost-cutting, found itself moving from a classic “Servicing Model” (SM) orientation to what might be construed as a centralized “Organizing Model” (OM) orientation. This paper discusses the impact of this external crisis, and the transformational challenges faced when union leadership is forced to alter its focus.

This paper also discusses membership demographics, union activism, and relevant theories in relation to the unique population (i.e., academic professionals). Faculty cherish autonomy, and increasingly as a result of telecommuting possibilities, have become more like quasi-free agents over time, creating new problems for traditional conceptions of unions as collective workplace institutions. Scholars agree that membership participation is key in building strong local unions (Lévesque and Murray 2002: 52). One issue this paper considers is *optimal* membership participation, contending that more is not always better.

Unique challenges in motivating and activating professional membership - the balancing act of training activists and deepening commitment versus “doing it yourself” (and risking burnout) are addressed. A myriad of topics – decentralization, administrative versus representational imperatives, and changes in dues distribution – are discussed within the context of union democracy, citizenship, and participation.

Also discussed is the union’s commitment to organizing, highlighting how this union compares and contrasts with activism norms. At the statewide level, the emphasis was predominantly on internal organizing; at the chapter level, only internal organizing had practical meaning. Later, the union’s focus shifts toward bargaining as an issue to “organize around,” partially evolving from a SM to an OM orientation amidst continuing conflict between organizing commitment and servicing commitment (see Fletcher and Hurd 2001 for recognition of this dilemma generally). Membership increases and decreases are discussed in relation to renewal efforts and external influences. Finally, outcomes relating to worker and union influence are considered.

Background: Devolution in the Statewide System and Developments at FSU

In the late 1990s, the Board of Regents (BOR) that governed the State University System (SUS) angered powerful legislators by resisting legislator “edifice complex” initiatives. The BOR

concluded that Florida would be ill served by various expensive proposals to establish new law and medical colleges. Two powerful Republican legislators wanted a medical school established at Florida State University (FSU), their alma mater. African American legislators wanted the historically black university, Florida A&M (FAMU), to regain the law school closed years earlier. Miami- and Orlando-area constituents wanted better access to a public law school than Gainesville or even more remote Tallahassee.

In an unholy alliance, legislators from central Florida, southeast Florida (a Democrat stronghold), Democrat African American legislators, and conservative Miami Republican Hispanic legislators teamed up with other conservative Republican legislators to abolish the BOR and replace it with separate Boards of Trustees (BOTs) for the 11 SUS institutions. At the same time, they mandated the creation of a new medical school at FSU, a law school for Florida International University in Miami, and a law school for FAMU, located in Orlando rather than FAMU's home, Tallahassee.

This decentralization to local BOTs jibed with the dominant Republican Party's calls for privatization and running government "like a business." It also held potential, analogous to Thatcher's attacks on the British miner's union, to undermine a stronghold of Democratic Party support, Florida educator unions. Although creating local BOTs does not constitute privatization *per se*, it was a significant step. Governor Jeb Bush backed these efforts and packed the 11 new BOTs with pro-business Republican donors.

These changes in governance structure were used as a pretext to end statewide bargaining. For roughly 25 years, faculty and other employee groups in occupationally-grouped units had bargained statewide agreements. Despite arguments for SUS devolution in terms of decentralization and independence, the SUS universities *uniformly* argued that they were no longer bound by previous recognition obligations or statewide bargaining agreements.

While challenging these moves' legality, the statewide UFF undertook more immediate action by soliciting national and state affiliates' support for a massive organizing campaign within the SUS. Led by newly elected United Faculty of Florida (UFF) President Tom Auxter, the UFF, American Federation of Teachers (AFT), National Education Association (NEA), and Florida Education Association (FEA) co-funded the Florida "Organizing Project," consisting of a proven lead organizer and a handful of newly-hired and -trained organizers assigned to specific universities. Legal challenges could take years. As Auxter put it, the best hope for the UFF was to "organize its way out" of demise and back to vitality.

Authorization cards were secured from thousands of faculty, 65% or more at each of the 11 SUS schools. Membership increased substantially. Confronted with this overwhelming expression of UFF support, BOTs broke ranks. Eight BOTs granted voluntary recognition to UFF after the authorization cards were filed with the state's Public Employees Relations Commission (PERC). Two BOTs insisted on elections, and in each the UFF prevailed with over 90% of the ballots. Matters are still unsettled at the University of Florida (UF), where the BOT opted for a protracted battle over the appropriate bargaining unit (who would be represented and who will vote). Meanwhile, negotiation has resulted in school-level agreements at two of the SUS schools, and is ongoing at the others.

Table 1 provides a brief chronology of major developments in the statewide SUS devolution and selected labor relations developments at FSU.

Table 1 About Here

Devolution and Renewal: Inferences from the UFF's Experience

The remainder of this paper focuses on inferences for union renewal that can be drawn from the participant-observer's experiences and interpretations. The organizing schema (Figure 1) is a "Semi-Contingency Model of Union Renewal," first proposed as a framework for understanding union renewal in Britain (Fiorito, 2004). The term "semi-contingency" is used to stress that while some matters are relatively applicable to most unions, others are unique to the union under consideration or to a small number of unions subject to similar influences. This paper will trace the major components of that model within the UFF and UFF-FSU context.

Figure 1 About Here

Environment

Like most public sector US unions, the UFF and its FSU Chapter were insulated from globalization and other forces that increase competition and cost-cutting pressures. Countering this partial "immunity," however, is a hostile political and ideological climate within the Florida Republican Party. That party has controlled both houses of the state legislature and the Governor's office for several years, and frequently espouses goals such as "running government like a business." Governor Jeb Bush spoke longingly of his utopian vision of emptying state office buildings of workers and has referred to state workers as "parasites." Privatization of government services, vouchers to support students in private schools, efforts to transform civil service employment into at-will employment (Bowman 2002), and attacks on dues check-off among public school teachers represent a sampling of policies that reveal the limits of public sector immunity from market forces.

The most profound environmental change for SUS was the abolition of the statewide BOR and the establishment of BOTs staffed with wealthy political donors. Faculty unions were never mentioned in the legislative debates, but with an administration known for privately describing its own schemes as "devious plans," it does not require paranoia to suppose that de-unionization was premeditated. Juravich and Bronfenbrenner noted that public sector "insulation" from anti-union initiatives is no longer assured: [A] kind of open season has been declared on public sector employees and their unions" (1997: 263).

Thus while the driving forces may be different from the private sector, not being directly market-based, the environments for the UFF and UFF-FSU were clearly hostile. Apart from the devolution, long term factors including a right to free-ride ("right to work") enshrined in the state constitution and chronic under-funding of public higher education support this contention.

Leadership and Organization

Pre-devolution, one could characterize the UFF as a “service model” (SM) union. Across the 20-some university- and community college-based chapters, the norm was low membership (roughly 15-20% of bargaining unit potential) and low activism. Statewide bargaining and grievance-handling for the SUS encouraged concentration of authority at the state office. Roughly 65% of dues were paid to national and state affiliates, suggesting a centralized SM model. Only eight percent of the member’s dues were rebated to chapters.

Training offered by the UFF state office focused on state-level bargaining (pre-devolution) and grievance handling, with a brief orientation for new chapter presidents. During devolution, emphasis in the bargaining training shifted to preparing campus-level teams for campus-level bargaining. There was little or no organizing-focused training until the advent of the Organizing Project. Interestingly, apart from the Executive Director, the only high level professional in the state office was an Organizing Director. Unfortunately, this well-paid full-time staffer was conspicuously not committed to organizing.

Pre-devolution, allocation of “release time” secured under the statewide contract reflected the SM view, providing roughly 30 “units” of release time (one-course teaching release for conducting union business), allocated among chapters in proportion to faculty numbers. The priorities for release time were grievance handling and chapter president.

The statewide collective bargaining agreement provided for campus level consultations between chapter leaders and campus administrators, but stipulated that consultations were *not* “bargaining.” Power and authority relations between the state office and local chapters reflected conventional wisdom -- that bargaining structure dictates governance structure within unions (e.g., Fiorito, Gramm, and Hendricks 1991). The concentration of employer authority at the statewide BOR dictated concentration of authority in the statewide UFF, and encouraged a perception that UFF hindered chapters’ independent efforts.

But why not a centralized “Organizing Model” (OM) union? As Voss and Sherman (2000) have noted, transformational initiatives can come from more centralized authorities within unions. On the national scene, it often seems the national union is pushing for greater commitment to organizing in the face of local resistance. This situation may have persisted at UFF partly out of complacency due to benefits and other favorable employment terms enjoyed by UFF office staff (health care for life, generous holidays, and four-day work weeks during summer).

But this is only part of the answer. A more fundamental part may be that members and representatives did not push for organizing leadership, and failed to recruit and activate newly hired faculty. In contrast to the national scene, the UFF’s problem was less one of organizing new employing units than recruiting in already-represented units.

Yet effects on the UFF’s bargaining power were difficult to discern, as it continued to negotiate modest statewide improvements year after year. The UFF Executive Director had learned to “work the system” in dealing with the BOR reasonably well. Most failings at the bargaining table could be blamed on uncontrollable forces (the legislature, revenue fluctuations, etc.).

External crisis often spurs transformation (e.g., Voss and Sherman 2000). Republicans gained control of state government in the 1990s and initiated devolution in early 2000. Consistent with Voss and Sherman's analysis, new UFF leadership was critical. Although the Executive Director remained in place, a newly elected statewide President, Tom Auxter, a young and energetic UF philosophy professor, helped to interpret threats and develop plans including the Organizing Project. National (and state) affiliates were a critical factor in developing and implementing plans for transformation, consistent with prior analyses (Fiorito, Jarley, and Delaney 1995; Voss and Sherman 2000).

The Chapter Level

Structurally, the university-based chapters are primarily volunteer-run administrative divisions of UFF. Each chapter has its own constitution and bylaws but is subject to the statewide constitution, receives its funding through dues rebates, and has no bargaining rights. That they have continued to function at all is some tribute to volunteer efforts.

A UFF-sponsored study (MGT of America, Inc. 2001) found a widespread perception among faculty that the UFF "doesn't do anything." The basis for this perception is understandable. Even in a large unit such as FSU, with over 1700 faculty in-unit, only about 20 part-time activists participate regularly in the chapter. To overcome this, the formidable task for chapter leaders was to recruit and activate members. The long-term trend was membership decline, but the chapter survived, able to exert influence through the grievance process, litigation, and participation in statewide bargaining.

In "early devolution", prior to January 2003 (See Table 1), the UFF-FSU Chapter had partially transformed. The new president was 15 years younger, a number of younger faculty had become active, and leadership had expanded to new areas of campus. Membership had increased roughly 25% to its peak of about 250. To a significant extent, this growth stemmed from volunteer efforts spurred and coordinated by the external organizer assigned to FSU (and two other schools). Efforts by chapter leaders were also a significant part of the story, however.

There were assorted initiatives by the Executive Council members during devolution changing the chapter's organizational characteristics, including:

1. Persistent efforts to interpret the environment to bargaining unit members to motivate them to join UFF (citing member benefits, union influence, and administration injustices), including campus mail flyers/newsletters, occasional home mailings, and increasingly e-mails and web postings;
2. Efforts to portray a positive image of UFF members by noting accomplishments (e.g., appointments to named professorships);
3. Building a cooperative relationship with Senate leaders through informal discussions and regularly updating them on UFF-related developments;
4. Building membership identity and pride (chapter-logo shirts, tote-bags, and post-its);
5. Activating membership through committee appointments and efforts to get chairs to activate their committees;
6. Experimentation with alternative venues for membership meetings;

7. Systematic use of information technology (IT) for efficient, up-to-date communications;
8. Periodic efforts to widen support for the UFF in the broader community through media relations and developing relations with other community groups;
9. Efforts to implement an organizing-focused perspective (allocating resources); and,
10. Establishing a servicing demand “firewall,” insulating the president from grievance matters.

Membership

At this writing, UFF-FSU Chapter membership stands at approximately 235 dues-paying members, roughly 12% of two combined bargaining units. Forty-some members are at FSUS (FSU’s K-12 Developmental Research School) within that unit’s roughly 100 faculty, meaning the 190-some FSU members represent a membership density of about 11% among main campus faculty. These figures imply that membership have returned nearly to the 250-some range prior to dues deduction cessation.

Beyond the aggregate numbers, the 11% figure for the main campus conceals notable variation, with a few departments approaching 50% density and others at 0%. The variance across disciplines conforms to popular stereotypes somewhat, with low membership in engineering and high membership in English and history. Beyond these stereotypes, there are pockets of membership strength seemingly attributable to the influence of individual activists.

Membership density within the tenure track ranks is approximately double the rate among non-tenure track faculty. This division seems to reflect general divisions between temporary and part-time workers and permanent full-time workers (e.g., Fiorito, Gallagher, and Greer 1986). As with “contingent workers,” the perceived value of working through a union may be discounted due to uncertainty of continued employment.

Despite some perceptions of unions as protecting lazy and incompetent workers (Lipset 1986), UFF-FSU faculty members appear to hold a disproportionately high share of named professorships. This may relate to observations regarding high status workers and union participation (e.g., Strauss 1977) in that high status workers are more secure and less threatened by association with unions. A complementary explanation involves “dual commitment,” suggesting that perhaps those most committed to their employer are also those most inclined to seek change through the union to improve conditions (rather than exit).

UFF-FSU demographics appear to mirror bargaining unit demographics, with slight over-representation among women faculty, slight under-representation of African-Americans and slight over-representation of Hispanics. Analogous to the national decline in unions stemming in part from closing of older unionized facilities and failure to organize new facilities, UFF membership at FSU has declined in part due to failure to organize newly hired younger faculty (coupled with retirements of the older faculty). Membership density tends to follow an inverted U-shape with respect to salary, i.e., highest among those at mid-range salaries. Since salary correlates with other factors, notably tenure, this pattern may be a statistical artifact. There are, however, at last two lines of thought that suggest this may be a distinct phenomenon.

First, since dues are 1% of salary, dues are low for low-salary faculty and high for high-salary faculty. Economic theory suggests that low-salary faculty have lower discretionary income, and thus feel they cannot afford union membership. One's high salary implies a high dues amount, or a "price effect," wherein dues are seen as too high relative to value received. Second, the pattern is consistent with the median voter model (e.g., Freeman & Medoff 1984), suggesting that a democratic organization will tend toward policies that generate majority support, those favored by the 51st percentile of voters.

Renewal Efforts and Meanings

Activism and the "organizing model." A notable aspect of UFF-FSU membership is its "character." Faculty cherish autonomy, and perhaps increasingly via IT-related developments, many have become more like quasi-free agents, telecommuting. This trend bodes ill for collective orientations.

On the other hand, membership activism at UFF-FSU does not differ markedly from the conventional wisdom's description where a small proportion of the members (say, 5-10%) are typically reliable activists, a slightly larger proportion are "committed apathists" (say 10-20%), and the vast majority of members are "pickers and choosers," selective in their participation. The fact that even times of extreme crisis (the authorization card drive and election campaign) served to motivate only a minority of UFF members is telling. The committed apathist group may be larger than conventional wisdom suggests.

It appears that many prefer the "service model," paying their dues, expecting "the union" to protect and advance their interests. "Organizing Model" advocates might charge that chapter leaders failed to motivate members, failing to break down union tasks into accomplishable elements. Such efforts provide considerable long-term payoffs in terms of training additional activists and deepening the commitment to union activism among the membership (Fletcher and Hurd 1998). Conceptually, marginal costs and benefits of training guiding activists determine an equilibrium activism level. Calculations have to include the long-term value of developing activists and the costs of burnout that are likely to accrue to a small, overworked core of leading activists (Fletcher and Hurd 1998).

In the case of UFF-FSU members, that equilibrium seemingly entails a fairly low level of activism. Nissen (1998) reviewed case studies involving Midwestern Teamster truck drivers and Steelworker mill workers that present striking similarities to the case of UFF-FSU activism, however. He notes that a "strong ideological commitment to unions, unionism, solidarity, and the like" (1998: 139) underlay many volunteer organizers' activism. A similar finding is reported for a quantitative study of Swedish professional union members (Kuruvilla and Fiorito 1994; see also Barling, Fullagar, and Kelloway 1992). Among mature adults, the likelihood of fostering ideological change is probably low, and this would be a key consideration among faculty who start their careers relatively late. Nissen notes that among his blue collar subjects, motivational effort was probably best directed to a relatively small core of activists: "This portrait makes it clear that locals are not getting the average or even mildly motivated members to volunteer. Instead, the volunteers are the most devoted members" (1998: 140).

Efforts to activate UFF-FSU members have been consistently resisted by most members in terms of time pressures. Faculty typically love their work; they take it home with them, they take it on “vacation” with them, and there is always more to do. They work independently and cherish that independence.

In view of all this, member activism at UFF-FSU is mildly encouraging. A core of activists, 10-15% of the membership, can generally be counted on to take on union work. In times of crisis such as the card drive and the election campaign, this core was temporarily expanded to perhaps 25% or more of the membership. Union renewal has been accomplished to at least a degree with this minority activism.

Member activism is virtually essential to accomplish union tasks. In the typical case where member salaries and dues cannot support more than minimal professional staff, reliance on staff is clearly not a viable option. But what degree of activism? The Organizing Model has often been (mis)interpreted to imply that success requires mass mobilization. This is clearly an exaggeration. The UFF case illustrates that the union was able to undertake successful campaigns. The rank and file intensive organizing campaign notion (Bronfenbrenner 1997) suggests that an organizing committee should be large, e.g., 10% of the unit. This sort of activism level is not terribly different from the conventional wisdom’s typology (on activists, pickers-and-choosers, and apathists). In effect, the level of activism suggested in Bronfenbrenner’s schema is realistically attainable for nearly all unions.

Perhaps it is feasible in some lower-status occupations to mobilize a majority of members. In instances where the work is low-paid, physically demanding, or low-status, union work may seem a pleasant alternative to “the shop floor.” This is clearly not the case for the vast majority of faculty, and others in our increasingly professional and technical-oriented economy.

Cost-benefit analysis is a useful way to view the phenomenon of activating membership. The Organizing Model, if (mis)construed as suggesting that majority activism is required in nearly all settings, is clearly misguided. Assuming that the typical union has been at a sub-optimal level of member activism, as suggested by the receptivity to many of “Organizing Model” rhetoric relative to the “Service Model,” to the extent that a union moves in the direction of that optimal level of activism, it can be said to have moved toward renewal.

Union democracy. Union democracy is conceptually distinct from activism, but clearly some overlap exists. It is possible that members are activated by autocratic or charismatic leaders to coerce or inspire members, but in practice, most unions lack coercive power over members. Rather, the literature suggests that having “felt” influence within the organization, arguably a key indicator of democracy, is a key antecedent of “citizenship” behaviors, of willingness to perform extra-role behaviors (Cappelli and Rogovsky, 1998).

The proponents of democracy-as-renewal tend to speak in terms of “giving the union back to the membership.” Devolution forced decentralization, and UFF Senators and statewide officers acknowledged this, recognizing that various functions would devolve toward individual chapters (i.e., bargaining and grievance processing). In addition, the UFF statewide Steering Committee was expanded to include chapter presidents, becoming the primary “executive” body for

consultation in major UFF decisions. Finally, a vote by UFF Senators increased the portion of member dues directly rebated to chapters from 8% to 10% (in 2002). While a later motion to increase the chapter rebate more dramatically to 15% was defeated by the UFF Senate, this movement may reflect the direction of things to come, with decentralization intertwined with democracy.

Other signs of democratization in the chapter included an upturn in voter turnout for chapter elections and more candidates for UFF Senate offices. The frequency of communications between chapter leaders and members increased, thanks in part to the establishment of listservs, with greater IT use a notable enabling factor for renewal through democratization. Literature has suggested (e.g., Greer 2002) that e-mail and dynamic web sites effectively lower the cost of participation. Within the chapter leadership, the ability to communicate via e-mail permits ongoing discussions of policy issues (rather than discrete monthly meetings).

Bottom-up chapter communications include a regular faculty survey, with the survey giving substantial attention to university-level bargaining priorities for the first time in 2004. Interestingly, there was no noticeable upsurge in response rate, which might have indicated further evidence of democratization.

Does the evidence as a whole suggest that democratization has been a notable form of renewal in the UFF and UFF-FSU chapter? At the state (local union) level, there clearly has been decentralization and it is likely this trend will continue. But the impetus behind this trend has come from outside, from devolution and decentralization of bargaining. The UFF Senate has long been a functioning democratic body with contested elections.

Circumstances surrounding conflicts with staff suggest that the state office was generally acting in a prudent manner for the good of the UFF overall to counter myopic or imprudent behaviors by chapter activists (see Fiorito, Gramm, and Hendricks 1991 re myopic local behaviors within national unions), although opinions differ on this. In sum, democratization has been a minor element of the renewal within the statewide UFF, largely because autocracy was not a significant problem. With regard to state office staff specifically, there has been some tension between staff versus members and elected leaders, i.e., the administrative versus the representational imperative (see Jarley, Fiorito, and Delaney 1997). While elected officers came and went, the Executive Director served for 14 years. An incumbency of such duration almost inevitably fosters perceptions that staff have their own agenda. There have been more serious questions of goal displacement concerning other staff, particularly with regard to organizing efforts. These issues are as yet not fully resolved.

At the UFF-FSU chapter level, “partial dormancy” comes to mind as an apt description of democracy prior to devolution. The “soviet style” (single candidate) elections were primarily due to apathy, apathy perhaps fostered by the “UFF doesn’t do anything” perspective.

What does the UFF and UFF-FSU experience regarding democratization imply for the view of democratization as renewal where a reasonably well-functioning democracy exists? Classic literature on union democracy and governance tends to emphasize member apathy as a consequence of leader autocracy (Jarley et al. 2000, Strauss 1991). The argument is that

members' influence efforts are stymied and members learn not to waste their time. However, the UFF-FSU experience suggests that causality can flow in the opposite direction. Leaders learn that calls for input and activism are persistently ignored. Perhaps a reinforcing cycle is implied. In any case, leadership turnover helps to forestall this perception. All told, the circumstances are consistent with the view that democratization can be a significant form of renewal, and probably far more significant in cases where an initial goal displacement problem is more pronounced.

Commitment to organizing (internal and external). Fletcher and Hurd (1998) have forcefully argued that the Organizing Model and external organizing are distinct. The evidence from the UFF experience squares with this view. UFF's transition to an "organizing model union" is arguable. Conversely, the creation of the Organizing Project by the UFF and its affiliates was a substantial and unmistakable commitment to organizing.

Regarding internal versus external organizing, the emphasis was internal. Representation rights were obtained but under challenge at SUS institutions. There was no immediate threat to UFF's community college chapters, but the threat at SUS schools suggested broader danger. With these external threats, and densities below majorities - averaging only 20% in the SUS units - internal organizing was top priority although external organizing was not ignored. The Organizing Project and UFF staff waged a successful representation campaign at the previously nonunion Florida Community College of Jacksonville, but again, the bulk of organizers' attention was focused on the already-certified SUS.

This new organizing commitment statewide emanated from Auxter and statewide leaders, and could be described as a "challenge from above" in Heery's (2003) renewal schema. Deliberate analyses of the environment led Auxter to champion organizing. While not neglecting other options entirely (e.g., devoting substantial resources to legal remedies), a new emphasis on organizing internally was forged. In persuading the UFF Senate to support this, Auxter referred to the devolution "crisis," and the Organizing Project as providing the means to "organize our way out of it." In summary, at the statewide level, the emphasis on organizing was predominantly, but not entirely on internal organizing.

Also at the statewide level, the UFF's commitment included financial resources to support Organizing Project staff — small chapter grants (e.g., \$500) and a new-member rebate of \$50 per new member. However, both were suspended indefinitely in 2003, as factors combined to drain UFF resources. A \$30 per new member rebate was implemented in late 2004.

At the chapter level, only internal organizing had clear meaning. There, a *newly-found* commitment to organizing included the development of a network of activists, adapting to meet the changing threats. Initially, the focus was on recruiting new members, and later on the authorization card drive. At the institutions where voluntary recognition was refused (FSU, UWF, and UF), attention later shifted to the representation election. Upon the conclusion of successful UFF election campaigns at FSU and UWF, and with matters stalled at UF, the focus of Organizing Project staff shifted once again to internal organizing.

For chapter activists, election wins led to focus on institution-level bargaining. For Organizing Project staff, bargaining was a means to organize and increase membership (their performance

criteria). For chapter leaders, organizing was seen mainly as a means to more effective bargaining (and giving membership their money's worth from dues). This description of diverging emphases oversimplifies, with an important element of truth nonetheless.

Chapter leaders are not oblivious to the centrality of organizing. Allocation of release time to the chapter's membership committee chair at UFF-FSU was an innovation and a symbol. When an interim agreement providing five course releases was reached in July, 2004 at FSU, three were assigned to FSU-based bargaining members, one to the chapter president, and one to the chapter membership chair. This prompted the chapter grievance chair to resign, a tangible manifestation of the servicing-versus-organizing conflict. To recall Heery's renewal typology, this incident too reflects a challenge from above rather than one arising from membership.

Partnership. Partnership with employers represents a final form of renewal (Heery, 2003). Heery suggests that unions might use cooperative relations with employers to extend recognition, a seemingly irrelevant tactic given the UFF's circumstances. There were no serious calls for greater cooperation from the Governor. Rather, Bush and his allies assumed they could simply eliminate long-established bargaining relations.

UFF leaders sought to maintain state-level bargaining or a smooth transition to devolved bargaining. Virtually all high-level university administrators fell into line behind the "devolution as de-recognition" strategy, with each of the SUS universities ultimately insisting that representation rights would cease upon transfer of control to BOTs.

As growing UFF support among faculty became clear during the authorization card drive during fall 2002, divisions within the universities' ranks began to appear, first with UCF and eventually other SUS schools agreeing to voluntary recognition early in 2003, leaving the representation issue unsettled at only the University of West Florida, the University of Florida, and FSU. One could argue that in voluntary recognition partnership received new hope, but even a commitment to partnership between a given university administration and BOT and its UFF chapter provides limited prospects for renewal in the sense of expanded recognition rights. Further, bargaining at even the institutions first to recognize the UFF was often contentious.

Partnership-as-renewal concepts are of limited relevance here because the SUS universities do not operate separate parallel non-represented facilities. Yet, there are at least 2000 unrepresented professional and administrative employees at FSU alone (e.g., staff professionals and semi-professionals other than faculty). Thus while partnership-as-renewal seems irrelevant for the moment, it is not without potential future relevance.

Membership Growth

UFF membership trends for 2001-2004 are shown in Figure 2. SUS membership dominates the overall trend, attesting to the contention that attacks on the UFF's SUS representation rights were roughly equivalent to attacks on the existence of UFF. Community College (CC) UFF membership was relatively stable. However, the data also show that Graduate Assistant Union (GAU) membership has been highly volatile, and that the FSU chapter membership (also shown in Figure 3) has been far more volatile than overall SUS membership.

Figure 2 and Table 2 About Here

Figure 3 About Here

The figures suggest that the Organizing Project was successful. Its staff were trained and placed during the spring of 2002. This marks the start of a membership upturn continuing through the authorization card campaign in fall of 2002. Notably, this UFF growth occurred during steady declines in overall U.S. unionization (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics 2004).

The downturn shown in SUS membership for the first part of 2003 is attributable to a number of factors. First, in January 2003 the universities' BOTs assumed control of the employment function. At least two universities, FSU and UWF, ceased payroll dues deductions. At FSU, this meant dues-paying membership plummeted from approximately 250 to a handful of long-time direct dues-payers. By then, some of the Organizing Project's professional organizers, and activist volunteers, probably felt a sense of exhaustion. It was increasingly difficult to mount the one-on-one effort to rebuild membership. Despite these setbacks, the upward trajectory appears to have returned by the end of 2003.

Because discrete membership counts are "snapshots" of potentially volatile phenomena, they can mislead, with FSU data showing a membership plunge in January 2003, yet still understating its depth. The plunge was to nearly zero, and recovery was slow and unstable. Membership via direct dues payment stood at less than 150 at the end of spring semester, and plunged to no more than 40 for summer 2003. A "\$100 Special" (\$100 dues for the entire fall semester rather than 1% of salary) during the fall, 2003 election campaign, and reinstatement of payroll dues deduction following the October election victory led to a more stable recovery.

Bookkeeping aside, the overall upward trend in SUS UFF membership is unmistakable. The commitment to organizing and activation of a network of volunteers at each school was a key part of that trend. As Bronfenbrenner (1997) and others (e.g., Fiorito, Jarley, and Delaney 1995) have concluded, union strategies and actions matter greatly for organizing, perhaps more than any other single factor (Bronfenbrenner 1997).

Other forces were at work as well. An upward trend in UFF membership predated the Organizing Project, probably attributable to growing awareness of the threats to tenure, academic freedom, and faculty rights. There was also growing awareness of the hostility toward faculty and public employees on the part of the Jeb Bush administration and the legislature. Hence, environmental influences were critical. Meanwhile, the UFF was able to enhance faculty perceptions of UFF's instrumentality, by pointing to the faculty-friendly provisions in its contract and gains it had accrued in bargaining over 25 years.

The impact of employer opposition is also evident both in its presence and absence. The astounding 90%-plus victory margins at UWF and FSU are attributable in part to a lack of active employer opposition. On the other hand, the cessation of payroll dues deductions had a devastating impact on UFF membership and sent a clear signal to faculty that the FSU administration opposed UFF representation.

In sum, while other factors mattered for membership growth, the union's own renewal efforts and its renewed commitment to organizing mattered most. Although the UFF's crisis is not fully resolved, Auxter's call to "organize our way out of the crisis" has been partly met. Discussions among state UFF leaders continue on how to internalize the organizing commitment that was temporarily represented in and supplied by the Organizing Project.

Influence

The final component of the Semi-Contingency Model in Figure 1 depicts influence (in bargaining, legislation, and society) as an ultimate outcome. Consistent with conventional wisdom and industrial relations literature, membership growth is shown as a critical causal influence, directly affecting union density: "Although density is not a perfect predictor of power and influence, it is perhaps the strongest correlate of the ability of unions to perform positive political and economic functions for their members and their societies" (Verma, Kochan, & Wood 2002: 381). The model also shows direct effects from renewal efforts to influence (as well as renewal effects on membership).

To illustrate the basis for the direct effects, consider the case of member activism. Suppose there are two comparable size unions with 20% union density, one in which 50% of the members are active and the other in which just five percent of the members are active. Which will generate the most "person power" to assess bargaining unit preferences, to translate those preferences into contract language proposals, to provide a pool of volunteers, negotiators, lobbyists, contributors, communicators, etc? The answer is obvious. The point is not that the union should maximize member activism (implied by a simplistic conception of the OM); there is some optimal level of activism that balances the leadership and financial costs of generating activism.

Direct effects on influence from other efforts are less substantial, but not unimportant. Partnership can be a means to greater influence. Legislators confronted with a united group of workers and employers favoring a particular piece of legislation are more amenable to influence than legislators facing a situation of lobbying groups take opposite positions. At the workplace, partnership can mean less potential "fear conflict" (fear of union-management conflict; Cohen & Hurd 1998) for faculty supporting union-backed positions, also thereby reducing individual resistance to union membership.

With bargaining over initial institution-level contracts concluded at only two SUS schools, it would be premature to discuss at length how UFF or UFF-FSU renewal efforts and membership growth have affected UFF's influence on outcomes. Where new contracts have already been settled, at Florida Atlantic University and the University of South Florida, there are specific bargaining gains that could be cited as evidence of the UFF revitalization's impact. Overall, however, that sort of discussion is best deferred until a later date.

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Table 1
Chronology of Major Events in Florida State University and System Devolution, 2000-2004

June 2000	Governor signs legislation abolishing the statewide BOR, effective July 1, 2001. The law created separate BOTs for each institution, appointed by the Governor.
Feb. 2001	AFT, FEA, and NEA agreed to partner with UFF to fund the Organizing Project to enhance UFF membership, with each contributing equally.
Spring 2002	Statewide Organizing Project staff hired and assigned to institutions.
Fall 2002	Authorization card campaigns at 11 SUS institutions secure 65%+ signatures.
Oct. 2002	“Gag Order” letter from FSU Provost attempts to limit UFF and faculty use of e-mail and other facilities for communication during the card campaign.
Nov. 2002	Jeb Bush re-elected to second term. Voters approve Graham Amendment calling for statewide Board of Governors (BOG) appointed by Governor, to oversee SUS.
Jan. 2003	BOG meets and immediately delegates nearly all its authority to BOTs. BOTs assume control of respective universities on January 6 th .
Jan. 2003	Last statewide agreement expires. FSU administration cancels release time, grievance procedure, and payroll dues deduction, asserting no successor obligation, etc. UFF files unfair labor practice charges (“Status Quo Case”).
Jan. 2003	University of Central Florida (UCF) administration grants voluntary recognition to UFF. Within the next few months, most SUS institutions follow suit.
Feb. 2003	PERC Hearing Officer (mostly) rules for UFF in FSU “Gag Order” case.
May 2003	University of West Florida faculty vote for UFF by 199-18 margin in mail ballot.
Summer 2003	“Status Quo” ruling by PERC goes against UFF. UFF files appeals.
Oct. 2003	FSU faculty vote for UFF by 736-33 margin.
Fall 2003	\$100 membership offer (for fall semester versus normal dues of 1%) helps rebuild UFF-FSU membership. Vast majority of members sign up for payroll deduction.
Mar. 2004	UFF-FSU Chapter elections. Only four of 10 elected officers and senators were among those elected in March 2001.
Jun. 2004	Florida Atlantic U. and its UFF chapter reach first post-devolution agreement.
Fall 2004	Bargaining for first FSU-level contract continues at FSU.

Table 2
UFF Membership Trends for Selected Constituencies (Detail)

<u>UFF Division</u>	<u>Mar. 2001</u>	<u>Sept. 2001</u>	<u>Jan. 2002</u>	<u>Sept. 2002</u>	<u>Jan. 2003</u>	<u>Sept. 2003</u>	<u>Jan. 2004</u>	<u>Sept. 2004</u>
SUS	1668	1690	1723	1943	2333	2125	2265	2225
GAU	627	653	526	573	723	736	867	618
CC	682	822	820	904	915	857	880	855
Other	110	115	117	118	115	123	147	158
Total	3087	3280	3186	3538	4086	4037	4159	3856
FSU Chapter	177	180	187	223	251	142	226	237

Figure 1
A Semi-Contingency Model of Union Renewal
Adapted from Fiorito (2004)

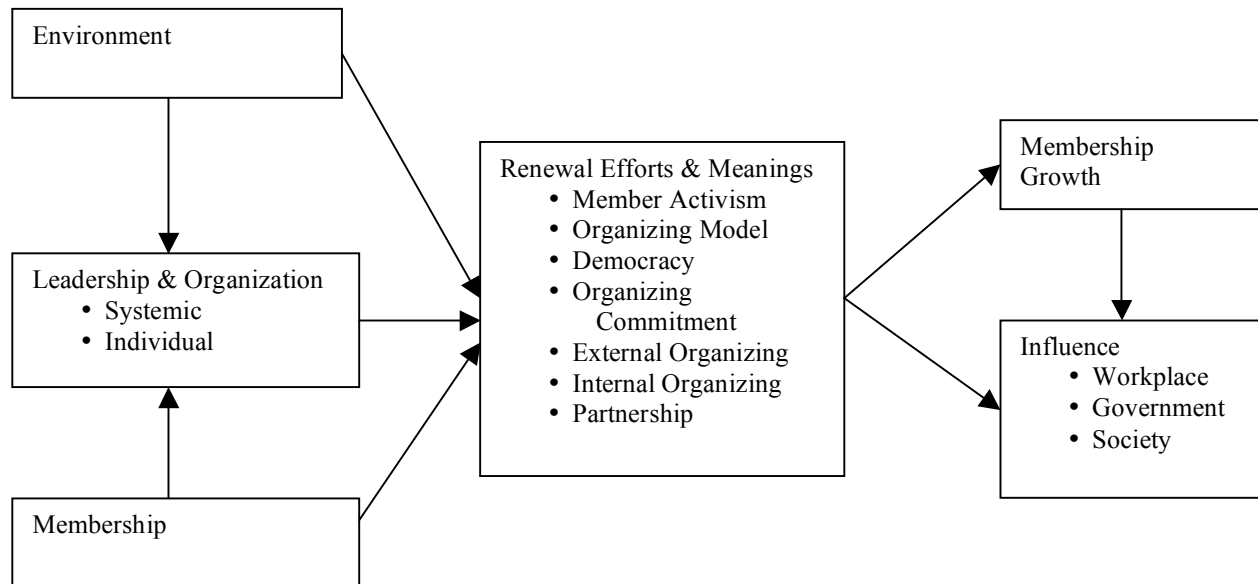


Figure 2
UFF Membership Trends for Selected Constituencies, 2001-2004

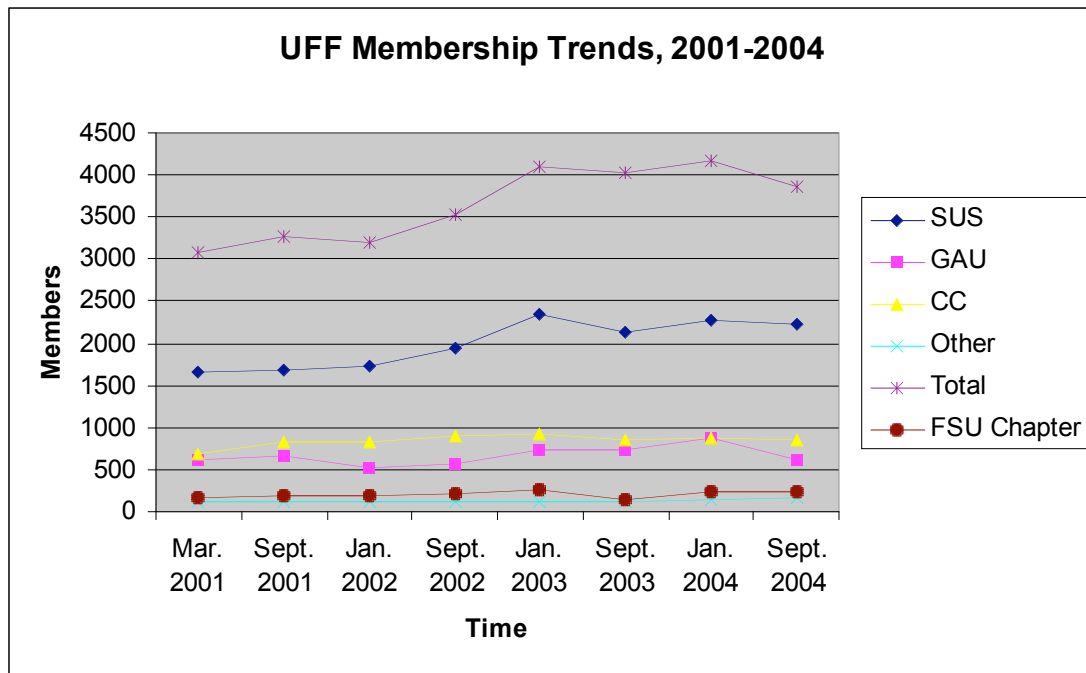


Figure 3
FSU Chapter Membership Trend, 2001-2004

