

NEWS

Negotiations turn sour after five sessions

After five bargaining sessions, the Faculty and Administration teams are far apart on some significant topics, and none of the discussion has involved workload, compensation, or benefits.

Faculty team members said the tone of negotiation sessions has been cordial for the most part, but team members also noted that at recent sessions, the administration's proposals have taken increasingly extreme positions.

Faculty team member Joyce Rimlinger said, "Things seemed to be going well for the most part—and then in just a couple of hours at the last session, the tone went from cordial to crazy."

The teams met on May 16 for introductions and to develop a schedule and groundrules for future sessions. Bargaining sessions took place on June 1, June 6, June 8, June 10, and June 13.

Because of scheduling concerns that affected both teams, no additional bargaining sessions are planned until June 28.

The Faculty Chief Negotiator is Geoff Woolf. Other Faculty team members are Pam Ecker,

Bob Eveslage, Joyce Rimlinger, and Linda Schaffeld.

For the administration, the Chief Negotiator role is shared by Human Resources Director Gene Breyer and attorney James Lawrence.

The other members of the administration team are Executive Vice President Carolyn Anderson, Academic Vice President Monica Posey, and Dean Marianne Krismer.

Chief Financial Officer Mike Geoghegan attended the groundrules meeting only.

Geoff said the Faculty team was prepared from the beginning for comprehensive discussion of all contract articles, but the administration team did not agree with this approach.

"The administration team told us at the first session that they did not want to discuss economic issues until all other topics were resolved or close to resolved," Geoff said. "So we have been talking about a limited set of topics at our sessions."

"We have been able to reach some tentative agreements on a few changes to small portions of the contract,"

Geoff said. "But to make real progress, the administration needs to be willing to engage in comprehensive discussion of all of the issues."

Administration proposes rollbacks in governance and hiring procedures

Faculty team members said they were surprised at the administration's most recent proposals, regarding faculty participation in governance and the faculty role in selection and hiring.

Linda Schaffeld said, "At the June 13 session, the administration team brought a proposal that strips away most of the current contract provisions giving faculty a fair and meaningful role in hiring."

Bob Eveslage added, "The administration team kept saying they need to make hiring processes more efficient—but their proposal implies that it's the faculty's fault that some hiring processes take time to complete."

"Their proposed solution is to give Deans and other administrators total authority for every faculty hire."

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“Even the hiring processes we used 25 years ago, before there was any contract, were more fair than the administration’s most recent proposals,” Bob said.

AAUP President Paul Davis said, “It’s alarming to hear that the administration’s bargaining team is bringing in proposals that take away foundation elements of faculty participation in decision-making.”

“What I’m hearing from the table is the complete opposite of the things Dr. Owens said a few months ago,” Paul continued.

“I was told that the administration shared our desire to get these negotiations done efficiently, so we could all concentrate on serving our students and getting through all the work of semester transition,” Paul said.

“I was also told that this administration has a lot of respect and appreciation for the many contributions that faculty members make as we help

carry out important roles like serving on screening committees and participating on all the other committees, task forces, and teams that make shared governance work,” Paul added.

“But the things I was told don’t seem to fit with what the administration’s bargaining team is saying at the table,” Paul said.

Faculty team members said it’s unclear whether the pace or tone of bargaining will change in the near future.

“The AAUP has been preparing for bargaining since the beginning of this academic year,” Geoff said.

“Because of the change to semesters, all of our proposals are integrated.”

“We believe it won’t be productive to discuss issues like compensation and benefits without a sense of the total vision for how the College will operate on semesters,” Geoff said.

“We don’t know why the administration is reluctant to share all of their remaining proposals,” Joyce said.

“It might be that they want to try to stretch out bargaining because of the upcoming referendum on Senate Bill 5,” Joyce continued.

“Maybe they think that as the referendum gets closer, they can scare our faculty into settling for a new contract that would be worse than anything we’ve had in the past.”

“Our team hopes we will be able to move forward with discussion of all contract articles when we get together with the administration for the next bargaining session,” Joyce added.

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