

# NEWS

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## Initial bargaining sessions have focused on understanding interests; Faculty hope for efficient contract resolution

Members of the Faculty Bargaining Team for a new Unit 1 Agreement said they hope the negotiation sessions held between June 13 and July 14 have established a tone and process that will facilitate efficient completion of the bargaining process.

Faculty Chief Negotiator Geoff Woolf said, "So far, the tone of these negotiations has been significantly different from the contentious

bargaining of three years ago."

"Both sides have been trying to fully understand the interests and concerns expressed by the other team," Geoff added.

"We've invested a lot of time in understanding each other's views, and talking about broad concepts rather than exchanging a lot of detailed proposals," Geoff said.

"We hope these efforts have prepared both sides to accelerate our pace, and develop mutually-acceptable solutions for the problems we've identified."

The other members of the Faculty Bargaining Team are Yvonne Baker, Tom Burns, and Pam Ecker.

The members of the Administration Bargaining

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## The View from the Table

-- Tom Burns

This summer I'm finishing my 27th year as a faculty member at Cincinnati State. Along the way I have served in many different roles and on many different committees. I've witnessed faculty doing great things in their programs, departments and divisions.

Although no college or business functions perfectly, the mix of aspiration,

motivation and collegiality I've seen over the years brought Cincinnati State to the top tier among two-year colleges.

We had plenty of factual claims to fame, but we also had hard-to-describe intangibles—we had "something."

Like virtually all of my faculty colleagues, I was disappointed with what occurred during our contract

negotiations three years ago. I felt that the faculty, and the College, had lost a portion of that "something" that made us special.

When I was approached this year about serving on this year's AAUP bargaining team, I thought it might be a chance to play a role in improving the tone, tenor, and substance of the work that faculty do at this College.

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## Bargaining sessions focus on shared interests / continued from 1

Team are Co-Chief Negotiators Dr. Monica Posey and College Labor Relations Manager Steve Brooks, Chief Financial Officer Mike Geoghegan, and Dean Robbin Hoopes.

Bargaining sessions have been held June 13, 23, and 30 and July 7, 11, and 14. Because of scheduling issues that affected both sides, the next session is planned for July 23.

“During this short break in the meeting schedule, both teams have agreed to try to prepare all of their remaining proposals,” Geoff said.

Geoff said a few proposals were exchanged during the previous bargaining sessions. None of those proposals

related to contract articles on workload or compensation.

### Mediator introduced & fact-finder names requested

At the July 14 session, the Faculty Team members said they would like to complete negotiations efficiently, and not drag out the bargaining processes far into Fall Semester, as occurred during the last negotiations.

According to the Faculty Team, the Administration Team said they shared the goal of not dragging out negotiations.

Also at the July 14 session, Mediator Earl Leonhardt met briefly with the teams for introductions and an explanation of a mediator’s role in helping teams reach

an agreement. Mr. Leonhardt is expected to attend some of the bargaining sessions in the future.

**(See below: “What is a mediator? What is a fact-finder?”)**

On July 17, the AAUP asked the State Employment Relations Board (SERB) to provide names of possible fact-finders. The SERB has 15 days to respond, and then the teams will select a mutually-agreed-on fact-finder from the SERB-provided list.

“Asking SERB to provide names of possible fact-finders now does not mean that we’ll definitely have a fact-finding hearing,” Geoff said. “However, scheduling

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## What is a Mediator? What is a Fact-Finder?

Contract negotiations between Cincinnati State AAUP and the College administration take place under procedures defined in Ohio’s Collective Bargaining Law, Ohio Revised Code 4117.

The law includes timelines and processes that are intended to help keep negotiations moving toward a settlement.

If a new contract agreement has not been reached 45 days prior to the expiration of the current contract, the State Employment Relations Board (SERB) designates a **mediator**, an expert in labor relations who tries to help both sides reach an agreement.

The mediator observes and communicates with both teams. Mediators can help the sides resolve misunderstandings or consider compromises.

The AAUP and the

Administration agreed to use independent mediator Earl Leonhardt for these negotiations. Mr. Leonhardt has been the mediator for AAUP contracts in the past, including the negotiations three years ago.

Any time after a mediator has been appointed by the SERB, either side can ask SERB to begin the process of designating a **fact-finder**, a neutral third-party with knowledge and experience in labor law.

If a fact-finder is requested, the SERB provides a list of five qualified people. By law, the sides use “alternate striking of names” to reach a decision about who will serve as fact-finder, if needed.

If the sides reach a point of impasse, then a fact-finding hearing takes place. Both sides present to the fact-finder their

proposals for the unresolved issues, along with evidence that supports why this proposal should become contract language.

Following the hearing, the fact-finder writes a report with a recommended solution for each of the unresolved issues. The fact-finder can recommend that a proposal submitted by one of the sides become part of the contract, or the fact-finder can recommend their own compromise solution.

Both sides vote on the fact-finder’s recommendations. If the recommendations are accepted by both sides, negotiations are finished.

If either side rejects the recommendations (60% of total membership votes “no”), then negotiations continue, and a strike could take place.

## View from the Table / continued from 1

The bargaining sessions started last month and, as you have read in the Newsletter and the bargaining updates, the tone at the table has been cordial.

The efforts of the AAUP and the administration teams have focused on identifying common interests, in the hope of finding shared solutions, and not repeating the problems of bargaining from three years ago.

The tone of bargaining is undoubtedly a carryover from the FACT committee discussions that occurred over the past year and a half.

Members of the Board of Trustees requested and participated in those sessions, which I applaud.

On July 14 we had our sixth bargaining session. While some things are progressing, it has been slow going overall.

It makes me think about driving past a construction site day after day (as we are so happy to do coming and going from the College). Initially, you might say to yourself that it seems to take a long time for a building or bridge to “get out of the ground.”

However, you might also notice that once the foundation for the structure is built, progress seems to occur much more rapidly.

That is my hope for these negotiations. I hope our first six sessions have been laying

the groundwork for timely completion of our contract, so faculty members and administrators can move on to addressing the important work that lies ahead.

I am hopeful—but I am also a realist. I would be kidding myself if I said I was not concerned about how and when this bargaining will end.

**“Big construction projects need to wrap up before the weather starts to turn.**

**It’s time to get these contract negotiations done.”**

I am hopeful that the next few bargaining sessions will start getting this new contract “out of the ground.” As July drags into August, time works against all of us.

Every day without a settlement injects more uncertainty into the day-to-day business of the College. We already know that all businesses hate uncertainty.

Is it really beneficial to spend the next month with both sides focusing on all the potential “bad news” scenarios that could unfold?

Any faculty member who has been at the College three years or more knows that path, so we can do it again if

we must.

But wouldn’t it better to choose another road? Wouldn’t it be better if the Convocation on August 22 was a time for talking about teaching, learning, retention, and all the “somethings” that make Cincinnati State great—not a time for wondering when bargaining will be over, and how hard the road to settlement will be?

Progress needs to be made, quickly.

People have asked me why (after all these years) I chose to spend this summer working on our AAUP bargaining team.

After all, summer is the season when many of us “refresh” and think about the improvements we’ll make during the next school year.

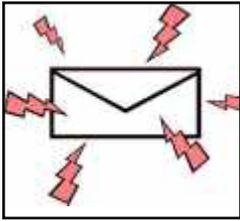
It’s also a time for some extra activities with family and friends, like vacations, concerts, Reds games, or golf.

In the construction industry, summer is also the season to get things done, and to wrap up big projects before the weather starts to turn.

The same is true for these negotiations. I chose to be part of the team this year to help with the big project of settling an AAUP contract.

Summer is going by quickly. I hope we have built a solid foundation over the first six sessions.

Now it’s time to get things done.



## Letters

To the Editor:

As a faculty member with many years of service at Cincinnati State, I consider myself vested in the process of education.

I have always prided myself on my strong work ethic and I have worked as a Registered Nurse for more than 30 years, but I have received the most satisfaction from my employment at the College.

Educating future generations of nurses is not just a job. Cincinnati State stands for what I believe in: helping other people through education, and empowering them to go forward and help others.

The contract negotiations three years ago were disheartening to me. I felt confused by the outcome and how it came about.

How was the end result of increased workload possible, given the challenges we

face as educators to produce results when so many of our students are underprepared and need extra support and mentoring to be successful?

Was the end product simply an effort to show the community that Cincinnati State is getting the most for every state-supported tax dollar?

Even now, I feel silly when I discuss my workload with my colleagues at national meetings. Who would believe that faculty could actually teach as many hours as we do, and be effective at the community college level?

I like to be proud of my workplace, so I have been close-lipped. It feels like our workload is “dirty laundry” that shouldn’t be discussed in public.

No matter how current negotiations end, I plan to continue to work hard and to support my students as much as I possibly can. I know my colleagues will do the same.

I cannot, however, work harder than I am already working.

I feel like I speak for all of my colleagues when I say

that I work way more than 40 hours a week. No matter how official workload is measured, there is no way to add more hours to my life. Over the past three years, I simply have changed the way I “spread” my work around.

Honestly, though, I do not feel satisfied, and I don’t think my students feel satisfied, with the “new me” of the past three years.

I’ve had less time for mentoring and getting to know my students. These relationships were very important to me and beneficial to them.

I would really like to have the opportunity for those relationships to return. I would like to feel a renewed spirit and pride in the quality of my work.

When this year’s negotiations are finished, I want to feel like what the College is asking me to do as an educator not only can be done, but can be done well.

Sherri Lipscomb,  
RN, MS, CNE  
Nursing Faculty



## CinStateAAUP

*and*

## Students Supporting the Cincinnati State Faculty

## Bargaining sessions focus on shared interests / continued from 2

a hearing date sometimes can take several weeks. By requesting the names now, we're just adding to the efficiency of getting this contract settled."

"We hope that we'll be able to work out an agreement at the table, and won't need to take unresolved issues to a fact-finder," Geoff added.

"It's simply easier and more efficient to cancel a hearing that we don't need, rather than find ourselves waiting for a fact-finder to become available," Geoff said.

### **Pace of negotiations affected by FACT meetings with BOT**

"The Faculty wanted to begin negotiations earlier than June 13," said AAUP Chapter President David Simmermon.

"Since Fall Semester starts in August, we had hoped the Administration would be ready to come to the table in April or May," Dave continued. "We wanted to have plenty of time to settle a contract before a new school year started."

"However, the members of the Board of Trustees who were participating in

the Faculty / Administration Communication Team (FACT) asked if AAUP would delay the start of formal bargaining, so some additional FACT meetings could take place in April," Dave said.

"We were assured that if AAUP agreed to the additional FACT meetings, the Board would instruct the Administration to expedite their bargaining preparations," Dave said. "We believed the FACT meetings were valuable, but we didn't want them to cause a delay in getting the contract resolved,"

The FACT meetings, which took place periodically from March 2013 to April 2014, served as "bargaining debriefing sessions."

Faculty participants in FACT said the series of meetings included candid discussion of topics such as reasons for the faculty strike, problems with faculty workload, College finances and ways to improve the College's fiscal sustainability, and other issues of mutual concern.

Members of both bargaining teams were part of the

FACT discussions: Geoff, Yvonne, and Pam from the Faculty Team and Dr. Posey and Dean Hoopes from the Administration Team.

The Board members participating in FACT were Mr. Michael Oestreicher, who was Board Chair when negotiations began three years ago, and Mr. Mark Walton, the current Vice Chair of the Board.

"The FACT meetings seem to have had a positive impact on the tone at the bargaining table," said Faculty Team member Pam Ecker.

"However, the bargaining teams have real differences in our perspectives on some of the issues we've discussed. It will take shared commitment, and maybe some creative collaboration, to finish this work and reach a settlement," Pam added.

Dave said, "Faculty are looking forward to the reports on the upcoming bargaining sessions."

"We're confident that Faculty are willing to put in as much time and effort as needed to settle this contract successfully," Dave continued.

"All faculty members hope the Administration also is committed to making the bargaining sessions productive and effective," Dave said.

"All of us would like to start a new school year with our primary focus on helping our students reach their goals."

**Read updates  
after every bargaining session  
at  
[www.cinstateaaup.org](http://www.cinstateaaup.org)**

# AAUP gives students an “end-of-semester boost” (and a free pen)

Members of Cincinnati State AAUP handed out free pens to students on the Main Campus, as an end-of-semester morale boosting activity.

The combination pens/markers were distributed outside the cafeteria at lunch and dinner times on Wednesday, July 16, and Thursday, July 17. The project slogan was “AAUP Cincinnati State: Faculty Supporting Student Success.”

The pen project was organized by the AAUP Communication Committee, led by Bargaining Council Co-Chair Peggy Rolfsen.

“We discovered, while doing some housecleaning in the AAUP Office, that we had a large supply of extras of our popular pens/markers,” Peggy said.

“We thought students might enjoy receiving this ‘school supply’ as we enter the

final month of the Summer semester,” Peggy added.

Along with the pen, each student received a business card with the AAUP Chapter website address, and information about the Facebook group “Students Supporting the Cincinnati State Faculty.”

The committee estimates that about 600 pens were distributed during the two-day event.

## AAUP Scholarship recipients are *Daily News* headlines

The Cincinnati State *Daily News* for July 3, 2014, featured a photo and story about the 2014 Cincinnati State AAUP Scholarship recipients, Jessi A. Rebholz and Sean F. Von Hoene.

Jessi and Sean were pictured with Chapter President David Simmermon

and Ken Stoll. The Chapter named the scholarship for Ken when he retired, in recognition of his many contributions to the College.

Jessi is majoring in Diagnostic Medical Sonography - General Imaging and has a 3.93 GPA.

Sean is majoring in Mechanical Engineering Technology - Design and has a 3.67 GPA.

The AAUP Scholarship provides each student with \$1,000 to be used for tuition, fees, books, or other academic expenses.

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