

Response to Human Resources

The package circulated to all faculty by Human Resources on February 7th outlining their negotiation position represents an unprecedented change in bargaining protocol at the University of Saskatchewan. It is highly unusual for an employer to circulate what appears to be a detailed settlement proposal directly to employees who are represented by a union. And please make no mistake about this document: it is a one-sided piece of propaganda designed to deceive faculty into thinking that the bargaining position of Human Resources is reasonable and generous. In fact, it is neither.

We do not wish to negotiate a new collective agreement through our members. Negotiating a new collective agreement is a complex, multidimensional process involving many issues that are not always consistent with one other. It is the role of your negotiating team to determine the relevant issues and establish an appropriate strategy to achieve the best settlement. Within this context, it is important to provide some clarification regarding the more controversial information in the Human Resources package.

Compensation Issues

The compensation package outlined by Human Resources is complicated and open to misinterpretation.

The lead-payer strategy which determines compensation for faculty based on the 75th percentile of salaries compared to other target institutions is arbitrary. There is no justification provided for the seven comparison institutions, nor is there a reason for choosing the 75th percentile as a target point. One might reasonably ask why not

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90% or 110%, given the effort and commitment that faculty invest in our institution. Worse still is the proposal to accept a formulaic approach to compensation for the future. Compensation comparisons with similar institutions should always enter into negotiations but we must never forfeit our independent right to negotiate compensation.

Two themes characterize the proposed salary changes: grid reform and salary compression. The Association bargaining team agrees that a reduction in the number of steps in each rank is desirable. In addition, the comparative information supplied by Human Resources indicates that our assistant and associate professor

salaries may be too low compared to our full professor salaries.

The salary tables with their impressive increases particularly for assistant and associate professors turn out to be somewhat modest when one analyzes the proposed new salaries within the more traditional formula of annual scale increases. For example, without careful scrutiny of the tables, it is easy to misunderstand that annual Career Development Increments (CDIs) are included as increases in the proposed agreement. In other words, existing CDIs have been indicated as being new money. Outlined below are the salaries proposed by Human Resources for various ranks once they have been converted into annual scale increases.

Consider an assistant professor appointed July 1, 2004 at 5 increments above the floor. According to Human Resources, the salary for this person would increase from \$63,129 to \$83,367 over a 4 year period ending June 30, 2009 with a one-time payment of \$2,000. This reflects a 32.06% increase in base salary. Within the traditional annual scale increase conceptualization, the Human Resources proposal for assistant professors does not even translate into an annual 4% increase in scale after CDI entitlements are awarded. Using a 4% annual scale increase, salary would change from \$63,129 to \$83,805 with back pay equal to \$8,109. Thus, the apparently large and generous offer to assistant professors is worse than an annual 4% increase in salary, a value that most individuals might expect to receive given the nature of settlements with other faculty associations across the country and other public organizations in Saskatchewan. In other words, the best

salary increases in the proposal are reflective of an expected absolute minimum, let alone increases that would permit catch up.

For associate and full professors the salary changes suggested by Human Resources are worse.

An associate professor at 5 increments above the floor in 2004/05 would see a four year increase from \$75,596 to \$94,862 with a one-time payment of \$2,000. This reflects a 25.49% increase in base salary. Yet, the salary changes do not even exceed an annual 3% increase in scale, as the same salary would increase to \$94,660 with back pay equal to \$7,195. For an associate professor at the top of the rank, a modest 2.5% increase in scale each year would result in a salary of \$101,053 with back pay equal to \$6,923. Human Resources is offering \$100,790 with a one-time payment of \$2,000.

A full professor at 5 increments above the floor would see a four year increase from \$93,190 to \$111,641 with a one-time payment of \$4,000 within the Human Resources proposal. However, an annual 2.5% increase in scale would result in a higher salary of \$112,695 with back pay equal to \$7,354. Likewise, for a full professor at the top of the rank, a 2% increase in scale each year would result in a salary of \$114,017 with back pay equal to \$6,362. Again, Human Resources believes that this is too much: they are offering \$113,500 with a one-time payment of \$4,000.

Finally, full professors who have received all increments for the rank, and their salary today is equal to or greater than \$106,213 receive the worst increases. Over four years, there would be a base salary increase of

\$2,429 in 2007/2008, a \$4,858 increase in 2008/2009, and a one-time payment of \$4,000. Someone earning \$110,000 on June 30, 2005 receives the equivalent of an annual scale increase equal to 1.5% per year. Of course the suggested salary increases reflect lower scale increases for salaries above \$110,000. Perhaps not surprisingly, the majority of full professors earn salaries above this value.

The pattern of salary changes between ranks within the Human Resources proposal does achieve compression of salary between ranks, but only to the detriment of associate and full professors. The average scale increase across all faculty is too low, and under the current proposal faculty would not receive their deserved back pay. In essence, while the percentages cited in the document distributed by Human Resources may seem impressive, the average salary increases over the stipulated four year period are far too low when compared to other institutions and the current economic times.

There are many other items outlined in the compensation package, but only two others will be addressed here. First, the package attempts to solve pay equity issues between male and female faculty by arbitrarily increasing the base salary to each female faculty member by \$2,500. Second, Human Resources is proposing to increase the amount of merit money available to the President's Review Committee from 20 to 100 career development increments.

Addressing the issue of pay equity between male and female faculty members has been a continuing issue for the current and past bargaining teams of the Association. To date, we have only been successful in

agreeing to study the problem, and even efforts towards studying the problem have been slow and inconsistent. Thus, it is promising that some actual money has been placed on the table, and it is an important first step towards negotiating a reasonable and equitable solution to this longstanding issue. However, it must be viewed as only a first step because more analysis is needed to see whether pay inequity, as the offer suggests, is independent of rank, length of employment and current salary.

We see attempts to increase the number of discretionary salary awards through base budget merit increases to be counterproductive to our long range compensation strategy. In principle, base budget merit increases seem reasonable, but the evidence shows that even our collegial committees are susceptible to serious and harmful biases in the awarding of merit. And it does not take long for large salary discrepancies to appear between individuals who at face value perform the same job and demonstrate the same productivity. In fact, several faculty associations have opted to remove the award of base salary merit increases from their compensation packages in favour of either increasing salary ranges and/or switching to the award of one-time merit. The Association is inclined to follow these solutions to prevent future salary inequities.

Unionizing the academic agenda

By far, the most disturbing component of the circulated document is the position taken by Human Resources on unionizing the academic agenda. This is a very old and complex issue and it cannot be simplified in the naive manner presented in the

document.

University governance is an interesting contradiction. On the one hand, the University is a large business organization involving many employees including faculty who are typically represented by labour unions. On the other hand, the academic agenda of the University is based on a model of self-governance where the faculty through Council decide collectively on the priorities and directions of the institution. These distinct governance roles are inextricably related and separation between the roles of the University as a business versus a self-governing academic institution are blurry at best. To make the argument that certain issues such as faculty workload, faculty complement and representation on the Board of Governors are solely within the domain of self-governance and are thus outside the scope of employment negotiations borders on the absurd. In fact, the failure of faculty to seriously assume their self-governance roles in Universities throughout Canada and relinquishing these decisions to University administrations has led the Canadian Association of University Teachers to suggest that faculty unions should negotiate self-governance procedures into their respective collective agreements. Clearly, the interplay between these governance roles is complex.

The Association believes that issues surrounding faculty workload, or more accurately the downloading and offloading of additional work to faculty, must be addressed. There are many solutions to the problem that can be considered instead of avoiding the issue by relegating it to a problem of self-governance. There can be no doubt that the day-to-day business of

the University has become more administrative. Faculty spend far more time on activities related to teaching larger classes, using new teaching technologies, conducting more research, applying for more research grants, learning and using new programs for student information and financial control, and performing tasks that were previously handled by administrators. The list of tasks offloaded to faculty continues to grow. However, concerns raised by faculty regarding their increasing workload are labelled by Human Resources as either poor personal choices and/or the inability of Department Heads to assign duties appropriately. We disagree.

Faculty are very committed to their jobs and in most instances it would be unreasonable to try and solve these issues through hours of work or more traditional union-management solutions. However, we cannot ignore the fact that while the offices of Deans and senior administrators seem to have an ever increasing capacity to recruit additional personnel to offload their administrative duties, the same cannot be said of departments and the workload of faculty. All we are asking for is equal treatment by making sure that some support for these tasks actually results in changes at the faculty workload level.

The Association Executive is asking the membership to view the document circulated by Human Resources as the piece of propaganda that it is, and to consider it only in relation to the bargaining position of our Team. There are some favourable components to the outlined bargaining position, but it is our view that our bargaining position serves our members much better both now and in the future.

