

March 5, 2007

Note: The following report is based on information presented as a handout at the Special Membership meeting on March 3, 2007.

Introduction

Bargaining has been intensive this past week, to put it mildly. On Monday, February 26, the employer presented a revised settlement offer in response to our February 21 comprehensive offer. The receipt of this offer from the employer was a good sign, especially as this was the first one written in the customary form of contract language. The USFA negotiating team continued to make progress on priority issues. Bargaining concluded just before 9 p.m. last night with an agreement to meet next week to continue with negotiations. Below is a summary of progress on key issues since our February 21 report to you.

1. Salaries & Grid Reform

Salary grid reform to increase faculty life-time earnings was a high priority for the Association this round of bargaining. To their credit, the proposal from the employer this week will represent a substantial improvement in our grids. They also presented clear contract language on their proposal for the first time this week, and we could actually begin to discuss these with some clarity. Grid reform, by its very nature, will benefit newer faculty more than longer-serving faculty. The trick to a grid reform is to ensure that existing faculty also receive a fair compensation package. This was the subject of intense negotiations yesterday and last night. A verbal update will be provided.

2. Salary Grid Transition Issues

The employer's proposal for transition to the new grid proposal is awkward but workable. Agreed upon items to support grid reform are:

- (a) Separate Tracking of Special Increases**
- (b) Modifications to Article 16**
- (c) Modifications to Article 15.10, 15.11 & 16.5**

3. Benefits

The employer has refused to pay professional fees and insurance required as a condition of faculty employment or to alter eligibility requirements for Academic Long Term Disability Benefits. Agreement has been reached on some of the other benefits:

- (a) Increase employer-paid pension entitlement by 0.5%**
- (b) Some improvements to the Dental Plan and Extended Health and Vision Care Plan**
- (c) Access to Recreation Facilities - \$150 per year wellness allowance**
- (d) Sabbatical Travel Grant increased to \$4000.**

4. Workload

There is agreement on the development of workload guidelines at the unit level. However, the employer continues to insist that workload issues are a result of personal choice by faculty. Within the WVCM, the employer has agreed to add clinical earnings to base salary but strongly resisted all other attempts to improve the specific situation for clinicians.

5. Leaves

The employer will not budge on sabbatical leaves. Agreement has been reached on other leaves:

- (a) Maternity/Parental/Adoption Leave or Primary Caregiver Leave**
- (b) Compassionate Leave With Pay**

6. Other Agreed Items

- Deletion of Article 18 - Librarians will be incorporated into other articles
- A new Article 23.20 regarding the Employee Assistance Plan (EAP).
- Modifications to ensure that Special Lecturers are in scope of the Association.
- Modification of Article 9.3 to clarify that loss of pay is not discipline.
- Association will be provided with more membership information.
- Process to develop new reporting mechanism and methodology for reporting teaching by non-members of the Association.

7. University Governance

The Board of Governors will provide the Association with a letter assuring that the elected faculty representative can discuss and provide information about matters that are before the Board.

8. Equity and Diversity

This has been a most contentious issue. The Employer withdrew their proposal on pay equity payment earlier in the week. Last night, Barb Daigle threatened to pull all employer proposals from the table if we did not agreed to delete existing language dealing with pay and employment equity. The Association has indicated its desire to leave this language in place. However, we have linked this to a discussion of adding some additional money to the special increase pool **but only** with modifications to make the process of awarding special increases more fair and transparent. Discussion on this will continue the week of March 5. Whether the employer will continue with its unreasonable stance on equity issues remains to be seen.