

February 7 bargaining session report

Your Negotiating Team will be sending you regular updates about contract negotiations. The first bargaining session for the new full-time faculty contract was held on Thursday, February 7. Representing the Administration are Nick DiGiovanni, their Chief Negotiator, Ellie Miller (CAS), Mike Vayda (CALS), Lori Bello (CESS), Gina Bailey (UVM Contract Administrator), Doug Lantagne (Extension), and Peter Blackmer (Library). Our team includes Ross Thomson (Economics, Chief Negotiator), Thom McEvoy (Natural Resources), Mary Peabody (Extension), Beth Mintz (Sociology), David Shiman (Education), and John Howard (staff).

Both sides presented some opening remarks. Ross noted that we enter negotiations with a clear mandate from our members, based on 400 responses to three surveys, including 120 pages of comments, and innumerable meetings. Faculty broadly agree with the vision of becoming a “premier small research university,” and we know what that requires: an outstanding faculty who advance knowledge through their own research and who provide every UVM student an outstanding, interactive education. To accomplish this four principles are required, principles that govern our contract proposals.

- UVM needs to attract superb faculty members.
- It needs to provide conditions to keep them.
- It needs to use their capabilities to develop knowledge and communicate knowledge to students.
- It requires an environment of fairness, transparency, trust and mutual respect.

Our schedule calls for both sides to finish submitting all proposals except salary and benefits by the next joint meeting scheduled for Feb 15. Our timeline also calls for both sides to submit proposals for salary and benefits articles on/before March 1. We hope to finish this semester, though, given the history of the past two rounds, this might be overly optimistic.

As typically is the case, the proposals presented at the first session are the simplest; more complex articles, such as Evaluation, Workload, Salary, and Benefits, are dealt with later. Issues brought forward at this week’s meeting include these proposals:

1. We are proposing to change the definition of the membership in the full-time faculty bargaining unit to include faculty members with 2 consecutive semester appointments at 0.75 FTE and above and to include CE courses in determining this FTE.
2. We propose that the Administration not be allowed to change university policies effecting terms and conditions of employment without Union agreement.
3. Regarding professional resources and support, we are proposing that faculty members be provided the administrative and technical support necessary to do their jobs, including offices, equipment and personnel.

4. We propose increased release time for unions activities as needed to properly represent members of the bargaining unit including added release time if negotiations extend beyond one semester.
5. We propose that Program Review Process for retrenchment be extended to include Extension and Library
6. We proposed (consistent with a favorable ruling by a VLRB) that the Union should have access to any faculty member's personnel file for the purpose of necessary union business. There was a preliminary rejection of this proposal by the Administration.