

Report on Negotiation Sessions 4 and 5—

Initial proposals on salaries, benefits and “Conflict of Interest” policy have been placed on the bargaining table. Highlights include the following:

Salaries: The Administration bargaining team opened with an initial proposal for salary gains totaling 2 percent per year; half the money to be provided through “performance” adjustments and only 0.5% (in the 3rd year only) for market/compression adjustments. The United Academics’ initial salary proposal is for total annual salary gains averaging 10% each year over three years; with substantial portions going to both across-board salary gains and market/compression adjustments in each year. The UA team made a strong case for “significant” catch-up salary gains. We noted high living costs in the Burlington area and the fact that the method used for computing market/compression gains needs to be improved. We want to make comparisons with leading research universities that are much more comparable with the University of Vermont. The UA team also referred to UA faculty membership surveys showing very strong interest in improving salaries as necessary to improve faculty retention and recruitment. The Administration provided no justification for their initial offer.

Benefits: Benefits proposals were exchanged and will be discussed in detail during the next bargaining session. The UA proposals include provisions for improved dental benefits, new vision and hearing aid benefits; improved vacation accrual; new child rearing and family care leave; and, improved language on parking and wellness benefits. The Administration team has proposed no benefits improvements, but has proposed increased medical premium sharing. The UA team wants to explore ways of changing the medical premium sharing so that the amount of premium paid by any faculty member will be more equitable in proportion to base salaries.

Retirement: The Administration had provided a “heads up” prior to bargaining advising that it wanted to “discuss” retirement changes. The Administration’s initial proposals include language requiring higher premium sharing for retiree medical and dental insurance, reduced Faculty Phased Retirement Plan (FPRP) benefits; and, elimination of the Faculty Retirement Incentive Plan (FRIP). Our team has proposed improved retiree benefits, including a new voluntary option that would be provided in addition to regular retirement benefits; proposals to make the FPRP and FRIP available to both tenured and non-tenured faculty; plus, new FRIP options.

Sabbatical & Professional Leave: The UA is proposing improvements in the sabbatical and professional leave salary rates. The Administration is proposing reductions in the percent of salary paid for a full-year sabbatical or professional leave from 77.3% to 65%. The Administration would also remove language allowing split and half sabbaticals.

Conflict of Interest Policy: The Administration wants to discuss a new “Conflict of Interest” policy, which would include a requirement that the University must be provided a list of all outside activities performed by faculty members. UA has informed the Administration team that we cannot accept such restrictions. The DA did not submit its own proposal but will respond to the Administration’s.