

Frequently Asked Questions About the United Academics Contract Negotiations United Academics, Fall 2005

NOTE: For more detailed information and analysis, please visit our "UA Reports," "Media Coverage of UA," and "Contracts" pages on our web site: www.unitedacademics.org.

United Academics is the Faculty Union at UVM. Within United Academics are two separate bargaining units: the full-time faculty unit and the part-time faculty unit.

- The **full-time unit** of United Academics was formed in April 2001 and its first contract with UVM administration was ratified in February of 2003. The full-time unit and UVM administration began negotiation on a second contract in January 2005. These negotiations reached impasse in August 2005. Mediation began on Wednesday, September 21st. Additional mediation sessions are scheduled for mid-October.
- The **part-time unit** of United Academics was formed in December 2003 and began to negotiate its first contract with the UVM administration in January 2005. These negotiations reached impasse early in September. Mediation dates have not yet been set for these negotiations.

What does the union want from the administration?

We want contracts that protect academic quality. We want contracts that put people — not just new buildings — in the vision at UVM.

That means salaries that allow us to compete with other institutions to attract high-quality faculty members. And it means limits on class size to ensure that as the university grows, students continue to receive a high-quality education.

In short, we want the administration to do more than talk about making UVM the nation's premier small public research university. We want them to accept our reasoned and fair proposals and commit the resources to make that vision possible.

Why have the union and the administration gone to impasse?

What were the sticking points?

There are a number of sticking points, but the main issues for full-time faculty are salary, benefits, and workload. Part-time faculty are primarily seeking job security and professional resources so they can concentrate on their teaching and students.

The administration proposed salary increases for both units that don't even keep up with inflation. And they haven't budged from those positions in nine months of negotiations. Plus they seek to

rollback benefits. Finally, they offered no response to our proposals to protect educational quality by limiting class size growth and increasing the percentage of instructional faculty on the tenure track.

Aren't UVM faculty already well paid? Why do you need more money?

We certainly support livable wages for all Vermonters. While it's true that UVM faculty receive relatively good wages compared to the average Vermonter, our salaries lag far behind peer institutions (as defined by President Fogel) by all measures. This makes it hard for us to hire new tenure track faculty at a time when enrollment growth has reached record highs. We've had excellent candidates for positions turn down our job offers when they compare the cost of living in Burlington with our salaries. The compensation proposed by the administration may result in UVM faculty placing in the lowest tier nationwide.

We share the administration's aspiration to become the nation's premier small public research university. But their proposals make that vision unattainable.

Can the administration afford to give raises to faculty?

Actually, UVM is quite healthy financially. United Academics commissioned Dr. Rudy Fichtenbaum, an economist from Wright State University in Ohio, to analyze UVM's financial statements. He found UVM's financial health to be strong. And he concluded that barring any major declines in enrollment or dramatic reductions in government appropriations, UVM is in a position to not only improve its plant and equipment but to invest in human resources, as well.

Why do you think the administration has offered the proposals it has?

We really don't know. The administration's proposals don't make sense. They are in direct conflict with President Fogel's stated goal of making University of Vermont the nation's premier small public research university. Even the newly hired dean of the College of Arts and Sciences recognized that starting salaries are too low to attract the highest quality faculty.

What will you do if the mediator can't help you work out the differences?

We don't expect that to happen. We really hope the administration will make the right choice and accept our reasoned and fair proposals. But if we cannot reach agreement in mediation, the next step is a hearing before a neutral fact finder. Eventually the dispute could go to the Vermont Labor Relations Board for a decision.