

Workers!

At 2 am this morning, your bargaining team wrapped up a 17-hour mediation session with the university that has resulted in a great deal given the budget climate in the state of Oregon. More details about the session below, but first the highlights of the deal.

Elimination of departmental resource fees (established as the number one bargaining goal by the Executive Council)

The elimination of approximately 500 course fees for graduate students

Raises to the minimum wage of 1% in 2010-2011 and 3% in 2011-12

A \$10 per term reduction in fees

Minimal increases in the cost of health insurance for dependents and in summer for the next two years, with hard caps on the amount of increases GTFs will have to face. This was actually our toughest fight and perhaps biggest victory. The university seemed intent on pushing a lot of the risk of cost increases next year on to the GTFF - with the changes to our plan that will occur because of the Congressional health care reform, we face massive increases next year - but we fought them back. If the renewal for health care next year is 20% - at the high end of guesstimations, but not inconceivable - the UO would face a cost increase of \$1.2 million dollars, while GTFs would only share \$60K of that.

We very much wanted to get more dollars in the pockets of GTFs today, but we felt strongly that it was worth sacrificing a few dollars now for security next year.

We did have to give up on protecting the right of GTFs who graduate in the Spring term to have the discounted summer health insurance. It was a hard thing to give up on, as we know that the end of graduate school is when our brothers and sisters need the help the most, but it was the only way that the UO would take their demand to reopen health care bargaining next summer and make the GTFF take a bigger chunk of next year's renewal off the table.

On the non-economic front, we managed some gains without getting exactly what we want.

You all know that we have been fighting to make it so the UO cannot fire or refuse to hire based on the subjective judgment of faculty when it comes to satisfactory academic progress. What we got is a process whereby if a GTF is fired or not hired for lack of satisfactory academic progress, they have to be notified in writing, the specifics of the deficiency explained, and an appeals process laid out. We think that this arrangement, while not perfect, protects grads against arbitrary and capricious actions by the faculty.

We will have access to the rankings lists departments make when hiring GTFs for the purposes of grievances. This will help us make sure that departments are complying with the contract and their own policies when it comes to hiring GTFs.

We did not get the maximum class-size language we wanted, but the UO will be doing a long-range study of the number of students assigned to teaching GTFs and the GTFF will be getting the raw data.

We will post all the tentative agreements to the bargaining blog or webpage soon so you can take a look.

As I mentioned, we bargained for 17 hours yesterday, the first time in memory that the GTFE and the UO have engaged in a marathon session of this type. The team held up well over the hours, playing hold 'em, griping about the University, wishing we were celebrating a very special birthday, and arguing about grammar rules. We were in Oregon Hall for most of the night, with the air conditioning turning off at 7 pm and the lights shutting off automatically every hour or so. As you may imagine, being in a room with the same 5 people for that long with only a deck of cards to entertain sparked some tensions, but it was a great time. Every single person in the room had some place else that they needed/wanted to be, but never for one second did anyone consider the possibility of not fighting on in an attempt to get the best deal possible for the members.

That's all for now. If you want more details about the session itself or what the deal means, feel free to seek out Jacob Dittmer, Dan Andersen, Anna Pucilowski, or Scott Nieradka who all did a fantastic job fighting for you.

Dave

P.S. A hat tip to Lia Frederiksen who bargained along side us for 9 months, but had to jet off to Toronto before we could wrap bargaining up.