



To: Our Colleagues

From: The University of Oregon Bargaining Team

Contract negotiations between the University of Oregon and United Academics have turned to economic issues. For the most part, the discussions have continued in the professional spirit in which they began last December. Representatives on both sides of the table agree upon the need to increase faculty salaries.

At the same time, there have been differences aired at the table. Most frequently, the Union's bargaining team has expressed its impatience at the pace of the discussions, in part because of the Union's self-imposed deadline of completing negotiations by June 15th.

The University's bargaining team wants to have a contract as quickly as possible, but we do not share the Union's impatience. As part of the management team advising the president, we have a responsibility to evaluate the potential impact of all proposals on the entire University. We cannot responsibly enter into any agreement until its legal and financial implications have been fully understood. In our view, we are making good progress toward an agreement, but this hard work takes time. We have committed to the Union that we will continue to work as long as we are making progress—through the summer if necessary—in order to get this first contract right.

The University finance staff has spent considerable time over the last couple of weeks costing out the Union's compensation proposals, and we are sharing that information with the Union bargaining team and with you when we are confident that it is accurate.

One of our greatest challenges is finding revenue to fund the Union's proposals. The Union has faulted us for equating its salary proposal to a percentage increase in tuition. As we explained to the Union at the table, because tuition is the primary source of funding for faculty salaries, this is a legitimate measure of the scope and potential impact of the Union's salary proposal. We have also made it clear that we agree with the Union that faculty salaries need to increase, and that those increases cannot be funded exclusively from new tuition dollars. That said, although the Union has communicated to its members that money is available to fund their compensation proposals and that all it takes is a reordering of the University's priorities, the information we have shared with the Union unmistakably shows that our University is significantly underfunded and has significantly fewer resources and staff than our AAU peer universities.

The finance staff has also spent significant time reviewing the University's financial picture—information that we are sharing with the Union. We have already detailed many of the funding and cost uncertainties that we must assess before we can make responsible decisions about compensation. Many of these variables – tuition increases, state general funding, PERS and PEBB expenses – are not under our control.

We have told the Union's bargaining team that we are open to a discussion about their views on how to reallocate current funds and about the cuts they believe should be made to fund their compensation proposals. We will see where this discussion goes when we put our economic counterproposals on the table beginning on April 24th.

As we move forward with these discussions, we want to reaffirm our commitment to reaching a final contract agreement that is good for the faculty but also good for the entire University community. Watch for more updates.