

3/10/2017

Dear United Academics Colleague,

Members of your UNAC negotiation team (Pat Fort, UAA; Tony Rickard, UAF; Cyndee West, UNAC;) met with members of the University of Alaska negotiation team (Geoff Bacon, UA Statewide; Keli Hite McGee, UA Statewide; Paul Layer, UAF; John Petraitis, UAA) March 6-7, 2017, at the Bragaw Building in Anchorage. UNAC negotiation team members Candi Direnfield (UAF) and Mike Stekoll (UAS), and UA negotiation team member Deborah Lo (UAS), were unable to attend. Special thanks to the UNAC members who attended UA/UNAC negotiations and supported your union!

We have continued discussion with UA of proposed changes to Articles 1/22 (these will likely be combined), 3, 9, 13, 15, and 16 of our UNAC collective bargaining agreement. Most of our negotiation sessions consisted of your UNAC team asking questions of the UA team about their article proposals, and your UNAC team presenting counter proposals. As a reminder, we have reached tentative agreement with UA on 16 of the 23 articles of our CBA. While we believe we are close to reaching tentative agreement with UA on most of the above seven outstanding articles, substantial differences remain, especially on Article 15: Compensation and Article 16: Personnel Benefits. Your UNAC team has negotiated in good faith with UA for the past six months and we will continue to do so to reach a fair and competitive CBA for our members. To help illustrate where UA/UNAC negotiations are currently at, below is some background and summaries of key aspects of Article 15: Compensation.

UNAC Value. Throughout negotiations, we have stressed that UNAC faculty are an outstanding value to UA. For example, our membership brings in external funding that UA reports averages at least \$46 million per year for the past three years; UNAC estimates that courses our members teach generate at least \$60 million per year in tuition paid by our students. This means that, even in the current budget crisis, our membership generates at least \$106 million per year for UA (the actual figure is likely significantly higher than this estimate), yet our total current annual payroll is about \$75 million. In addition, we have lost about 100 UNAC members over the past three years through attrition (i.e., members who have retired, resigned, or have not been renewed that were not replaced with new hires) and our membership, on average, is underpaid relative to Lower 48 peer institutions by about 20% when the cost of living in Alaska is considered. Finally, due to the aforementioned attrition of UNAC membership from about 950 members in 2013 to about 850 members now, our total current annual payroll is actually slightly less than three years ago. In other words, over the past three years, UA has paid for our raises, promotions, and retention offers through attrition of our membership. Critically, it is not your union that can decide whether or not to replace UNAC faculty, but only the UA administration. In a nutshell, our membership pays our own way, many of us are doing more because former colleagues have not been replaced, and we work at a substantial discount while doing an excellent job teaching our students, conducting

research, artistic, and performance work, and engaging in institutional, professional, and community service that serves UA and Alaska.

UNAC Proposal for Article 15: Compensation. Your UNAC negotiation team has worked hard to balance the value of our membership with the fiscal realities of Alaska and UA. As a result, we have proposed to UA for Article 15: Compensation, annual raises that are similar to the annual raises in our expired contract (i.e., 2% + \$750 to base). Note that these annual raises were “revenue neutral” in the past contract (i.e., they did not add to the UNAC payroll due to member attrition) and we have no assurance from UA that attrition of our members will not continue. Moreover, the annual raises we have proposed are actually less than the typical raises negotiated by other Alaska public employee unions last year for state employees and K-12 teachers and administrators (all of whom have salary “steps” or “grids” with cost of living adjustments built in, which UNAC faculty do not have). Given the need for UA to retain and attract high quality faculty, we have also proposed modest market salary adjustments that would bring the roughly one-third of our members who are below their peers up to the peer national salary averages for their disciplines (NOTE: these peer national salary averages are not adjusted for the cost of living in Alaska and, therefore, would not contribute to closing the existing 20% salary gap for our overall UNAC membership). We have also retained in our proposal opportunities for our members to receive base salary adjustments and merit pay/bonuses (at the discretion of UA) as well as earn 10% salary adjustments for promotions. Your UNAC team has also proposed that all summer compensation, including for summer teaching, be proportional to academic year salaries. Given that our membership generates revenue for UA that more than covers our own salaries and the above proposed raises, that similar raises negotiated by other public employee unions in the past year were similar or even slightly higher, and the need to retain and attract high quality faculty, your UNAC team regards our proposals as reasonable, especially given the value of our membership to UA.

UA Response. The current counter proposal from the UA negotiation team for Article 15: Compensation, is to offer no raises at all for the entire duration of the three-year contract, with the exception of promotion raises of 10% that are currently in the CBA. UA also offers market salary adjustments, but they are undefined and at the sole discretion of UA, as are bonuses and merit adjustments to base salary. In fact, the only funding that UA has firmly offered for our UNAC membership is \$300,000 per year in competitive funds for professional development. While such funding is welcome, as one UNAC member who attended negotiations observed, the entire \$300K per year for 850 UNAC members is less than the annual salary of the UA president. UA is also proposing to substantially decrease summer teaching compensation for low enrollment courses with the administration reserving the right to determine what a low enrolled course is. In summary, for Article 15: Compensation, UA is currently offering our 850 UNAC members \$300K per year for professional development and, with the exception of earned promotion raises, nothing else that is not at the sole discretion of UA.

Where do we go from here? The UA/UNAC CBA is, of course, about more than salaries, raises, or even \$300K per year for professional development for 850 people. Our CBA provides important parameters for our workloads, working conditions, rights to academic freedom, a fair and defined dispute resolution process with union representation, knowing how we will be evaluated and by whom, how we can be appointed, promoted, tenured, reappointed, and let go, our rights regarding intellectual property, and the rights and responsibilities of UA administration in managing UA. We are in agreement with UA on many of these aspects of our CBA and we continue to work productively with UA to improve the CBA in ways that, we believe, are beneficial to both UA and our UNAC members (e.g., we are continuing to work with UA to integrate an inclusive promotion process for our non tenure-track members into Article 9). We are also trying to work with UA to finalize our CBA, including overcoming our differences on raises. For example, we have suggested that UA guarantee all UNAC members \$1000 in professional development funds for the first year of our three-year contract, i.e., “front loading” what they have proposed for professional development. Annual raises would then be “back loaded” into years two and three – i.e., instead of 2% + \$750 (to base) each year, no raise the first year and then raises of 3% + \$1150 (to base) in years two and three. UNAC proposed market adjustments would also be back loaded into years two and three of the contract, giving UA time to make budget adjustments and work with the Alaska Legislature. To date, our work with UA on such compromises has not been encouraging, but we will continue to negotiate with UA in good faith, as we believe our UNAC membership deserves a fair and competitive CBA.

Our next negotiation sessions with UA are scheduled to take place March 24-25, 2017 in Anchorage. These Friday – Saturday dates were deliberately chosen to enable more members of both the UNAC and UA teams to attend the sessions and allow more UNAC members to attend. The negotiation sessions are scheduled to begin at 10 am on both days at locations that will be announced soon and will be sent out to the UNAC membership. If you are in Anchorage please stop by!

Thank you for your support of your union and UA/UNAC negotiations,

In solidarity,

Tony Rickard, UAF.