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UNH And UNH Chapter Of AAUP At Impasse; Process Continues With Mediation

Nov. 18, 2009

DURHAM, N.H. – Following the recent joint announcement of impasse by the University of New Hampshire and the UNH chapter of the American Association of University Professors (AAUP), UNH offers the following additional information about the process and the university's position.

Impasse occurs when no agreement is reached during contract negotiations and the parties seek help from a mediator. The administration and the AAUP negotiating teams have been meeting since last winter. According to state labor law, the university and the AAUP will now engage in mediation and, if necessary, fact finding. Each requires a neutral, third party who is in a position to encourage further efforts to resolve the challenging issues that led to the impasse. The primary unresolved issue is salary.

The UNH administration's most recent formal proposal was for a one-year contract that would provide a 1.5% salary increase (1.0% Across-the-Board and .5% Merit-Equity) effective January 1, 2010, contingent on two factors: agreement on the contract by June 30, 2010, and no rescission in state funding for the current year (FY10). Associated with the salary offer, the university agreed to withdraw its proposal to increase faculty contribution levels to health insurance premiums.

The negotiations are taking place in the context of a most difficult economy — the Boston region has been in a sustained period of deflation in the cost of living since last March, and the state of New Hampshire is facing significant budgetary challenges which directly affect the university.

"We have never been in negotiations in these kinds of financial circumstances," said Candace Corvey, the UNH administration's chief negotiator. "There is a very high degree of concern about the economy and its impact on UNH at all levels. While we normally try to reach agreement on multi-year contracts, it seems most prudent for both parties to focus on a shorter time horizon at the moment." She also said the administration has regularly communicated with faculty and staff about the state of the university's budget — particularly its challenges. "The university continues to be committed to an approach to total compensation that attracts and retains talented faculty and staff by keeping pace with the marketplace to every extent that its resources allow" said Corvey. Currently, although there are variations among the ranks, on average UNH faculty salaries overall are slightly above faculty salaries at comparator schools.

She noted that while seven of UNH's eight comparators have contracts in place for FY10, most of them were settled before the crash of the economy. Contracts settled most recently are the University of Massachusetts at 1.5 percent and the University of Connecticut at zero percent. Earlier this fall, Rutgers University reached an agreement with its AAUP chapter to delay two previously negotiated raises in order to avoid layoffs and deep cuts.

The current three-year faculty collective bargaining agreement would have expired on June 30 of this year, but remains in force until a new contract can be negotiated. According to Corvey, mediation could take place as early as December.

