

COVID-19 Statewide Bargaining Update

Over the course of bargaining the summer agreement in April, your MCCC team – Claudine Barnes, John McColgan, Margaret Wong, Rosemarie Freeland, Colleen Fitzpatrick, Bret Seferian – repeatedly stated that MCCC intended to bargain over how fall classes would work and over professional staff issues. Right at the start of May we submitted potential bargaining dates to the BHE, but they did not respond immediately and so we did not meet until May 21 to start the third round of bargaining.

We have been bargaining over professional staff working conditions as campuses plan to reopen. Initially the BHE was not willing to discuss staff issues at all – instead saying that each college would each create their own unique plan. However, the MCCC bargaining team asserted our rights and the BHE eventually relented. We are still bargaining over issues surrounding safety such as PPE for staff when they get back to campus, notice before staff are required to return to campus, adequate supplies for staff to do their jobs, and flexible childcare arrangements.

We want staff members to be aware that we have tentatively agreed to language extending the deadline professional staff members have to utilize the three (3) days of “off campus activities” under Article 12.04 C 6 of the Day Unit Collective Bargaining Agreement to **September 1, 2020**. The bargaining team is aware that there are not many off campus activities in the current environment, but the BHE stated those activities can be as simple as reading a book. This represents a hard-fought compromise position as we initially proposed the days be converted to comp time and then that the deadline be the end of the Fall semester.

In the May 21 meeting the BHE proposed a whole series of sweeping changes which would have undermined the Distance Education Agreement – many changes which were not related to the current Covid pandemic. Those included creating course shells that the college would own for THREE years and a system where faculty hired after June 2020 would not be compensated to develop classes under the Distance Education Agreement. They also proposed that any new agreement be open ended until some unclearly defined time when the pandemic is over.

The MCCC team immediately countered that any deal we would agree to would be non-precedential and only cover the Fall semester and were able to beat back the worst of their initial proposals. Subsequently, we agreed that any money paid for developing temporary remote courses will not count against the normal \$500 per credit hour compensation if a faculty member teaches that class under the Distance Education Agreement in the future.

For faculty, most of the discussion has surrounded the compensation for temporary remote classes. The very first session the BHE told us they were “terrified” of having to pay the normal compensation under the Distance Education Agreement. They also brought in the chair of the Council of Presidents Lane Glenn (Northern Essex Community College) to talk to us about fall classes and vaguely threaten that the colleges might cancel classes if they have to pay the normal compensation under the Distance Education Agreement.

Thus far the BHE has offered compensation only in the range of \$550 to Day faculty – total for the semester, not per course or per credit – and \$120 to DCE faculty for transitioning face to face classes to temporary remote.

We have stated that this amount is simply not sufficient. We have reminded the BHE that there was no extra compensation for all the classes that faculty moved to remote in an emergency situation in the Spring, and only \$100 for training for Summer courses. We have said we could agree to change the student evaluation form so that colleges will no longer have to pay the University of Washington to process the forms. And to be clear we have stated we are willing to work with the administration and have backed that up with action in the form of a proposal for a lower per credit compensation for the transition of face to face courses to remote formats.

Additionally, while we are hearing about how much less the colleges need to pay faculty, we are reading statements [in the press](#) from college presidents that they are expecting increased Fall enrollments. We do not assume that the presidents are lying to the public.

We are concerned that only faculty and staff are being asked to make sacrifices. Amongst all the colleges we are aware of only one president who suggested having administrators at that college take five voluntary furlough days. Otherwise we do not know of any cuts to administration while they are demanding the budget be balanced on the backs of faculty. We submitted an information request in May to see if any other colleges have made administrative cuts. The BHE initially tried to decline to answer until we asserted our right to information and they have recently conceded they will supply the information. We have yet to receive it.

We do believe we are getting close to an agreement and want to thank all the MCCC members who have supported the bargaining team through a long process. The volunteers on the team have put in an inordinate amount of time already – we had ten hours of bargaining this past week alone.

Thank you and we hope that you will continue to be able to stay safe.

The COVID-19 Statewide Impact Bargaining Team