



The University Believes the Solution is at the Bargaining Table

In a recent letter to On Campus News, Glenn Ross (President of CUPE local 1975) said "We need to work together to resolve our differences." The University could not agree more.

Nineteen months ago, CUPE 1975 began bargaining with the University by presenting 89 pages of demands. We have been able to address the majority of items through negotiations. However, complex issues of **compensation, benefits and hiring**

practices have yet to be fully addressed. The critical issue of compensation was deferred, at the request of CUPE, pending an outcome of the Job Evaluation (JE) Arbitration.

The challenge at the bargaining table is negotiating a collective agreement that balances the needs of the University with employee interests. The University has a proposal on the table that it believes has the potential to achieve this end.

The most recent University proposal has been debated in the media, discussed at union meetings, and talked about

widely. The University has been unsuccessful in persuading CUPE to discuss the proposal at the bargaining table because of the union's desire to return to the job evaluation process that ended in an impasse.

The best deal is the one we work out together. We need to learn from the mistakes we have made in the past and focus on discussions about the future.

The JE Arbitration decision was received in August 2005. The arbitrator concluded that the JE process reached an impasse and advised the parties to find a resolution. He then directed the University to return to the JE discus-

sions. Because discussions around the JE process went on for over six years without an agreeable outcome, the University has challenged the logic of the arbitrator's decision by asking for a judicial review.

Meanwhile, we believe the best place to find a solution to the challenging and complex issues of pay equity, market pressures and general pay increases is at the bargaining table. The JE dispute is focusing energy away from a healthy debate of the issues. This debate must happen at the bargaining table to find solutions that meet the needs of the University and our employees.

Overview of Outstanding Issues

Compensation

In 1998, the University and CUPE committed to the principle of equal pay for work of equal value - this is pay equity. **The University remains fully committed to the principle of pay equity and to resolving the issue at the bargaining table.** We need an outcome now, where women will see pay equity and appropriate recognition for the work they do.

Initially, both CUPE and the University agreed to use a job evaluation system (JE) to address equity. The system assigned points to jobs based on a number of criteria. The interest in this process was to remove gender bias from the existing system. A gender-neutral system would have then enabled the negotiation of a revised pay system. This work was to be completed by May of 2002.

Unfortunately, by September of 2002, it was clear that the JE process was not going to satisfy the goals. The University worked with CUPE for almost a year to address the shortcomings of the system:

The University's most recent proposal offers pay equity for the majority of women in CUPE almost immediately, or at the latest, by the end of the contract.

- The process was extremely slow and inefficient.
- The proposed system was not practical to administer.
- The process resulted in different outcomes at the two universities and the union wanted to merge or "cobble" the results to finish the process.
- Most importantly, those results would not achieve the goal of pay equity.

By June 2003 the University determined that the problems could not be fixed. The arbitrator agreed that merged results could neither be explained nor defended, particularly at appeal processes.



CUPE 1975 Collective Bargaining Update

Overview of Outstanding Issues (continued from page one)

By stepping away from the point factor system the University did not break a promise, but does admit a failure of the joint process. We want to learn from this and move forward.

We are being challenged by CUPE to complete and implement a joint job evaluation method that is fundamentally flawed. There are faster, more effective and reliable ways to address pay equity and other salary concerns that should be pursued. We have proposed a solution at the bargaining table, through a new compensation model (described below and on the HRD website). We are willing to listen to the issues the union raises in response to this proposal and work to resolve their concerns so an agreement can be reached.

Benefits

The University believes the benefit plans must be reviewed in order to ensure we are providing appropriate overall coverage rather than continue on a path that will eventually result in employee user fees.

We are willing to make an investment into the benefit plans based on the following:

- We want to increase coverage for some benefits, and review others, to create the best overall package that supports employee health and wellness.
- We want to ensure the benefit plans are affordable and sustainable over the long term.

Hiring Practices

The University needs to negotiate changes to the hiring system to give preference to candidates based on performance and qualifications.

- We want to invest in and support skill development of CUPE staff, reward their efforts, and ensure they are successful in applying for jobs.
- We want to respect the concept of seniority in cases where two CUPE candidates are seen as equal in job competitions.
- We are committed to the concept of diversity, which means equal competition for jobs based on qualifications.
- We need to open opportunities to the public to support our commitment to the *Aboriginal Partnership Agreement* with the province and end discriminatory practices.

The University's Compensation Proposal

The University put forward an overall proposal in August 2005 to address compensation, benefits and hiring. In developing the compensation proposal, the University focused on finding a solution to address a variety of concerns, resolving pay equity issues, ensuring salaries are competitive with those in the local and provincial market, and considering general increases, within the constraints of limited resources.

Maintaining the pattern of only providing general increases across all jobs does not meet these goals, because it comes at the expense of addressing pay equity and market issues.

We believe there is a compromise which includes pay equity, market adjustments and some general increases. We are willing to negotiate a solution. That requires moving forward from the failed job evaluation exercise.

We understand that CUPE believes, and has told its members, that the provincial government will inject

millions of dollars in new funding for pay equity if we return to the old job evaluation process. CUPE has suggested to women that there will be significant retroactive pay equity adjustments and believes this money is at risk if an alternative to job evaluation is considered.

There is no government money targeted for pay equity programs at Saskatchewan Universities. Pay equity adjustments will come from the operating budget.

This is a problem. There is *no government money* targeted for pay equity programs at the universities in Saskatchewan.

When the pay equity project started, the U of S set aside 1% a year, for four years, from the operating budget. The majority of this money was directed toward pay equity adjustments in May 2004 for clerical and library staff. We want to negotiate a new model that allows us to finish making pay equity adjustments now and will fund those adjustments from the current operating budget. These are the fiscal realities that we must all acknowledge and work within.

The University's most recent proposal to CUPE can be found at www.usask.ca/hrd/employees/employer_offer_cupe_1975.php