

Dear University Community,

It is always my goal to be forthright and transparent in my communications with the University community. I have held 13 town hall meetings and two brown bag lunch discussions this semester alone, where individuals had the opportunity to voice their concerns and where I have answered questions regarding a variety of topics, including the University's proposals during the negotiations process.

Despite these efforts, it has been brought to my attention that there continues to be a great deal of disinformation regarding items proposed by the administration in negotiations. Allow me to set the record straight.

The Mediation Process

A current rumor circulating is that the administration has no intention of reaching a contract agreement and will declare an impasse in December and then implement the University's last best offer. Let me be clear, we are not running out the clock. There is no deadline. The University is dedicated to moving forward. We are concentrating on mediation and a positive outcome for both sides.

Timetable for Negotiation

The University does not have a timetable for declaring an impasse. We intend to continue focusing on the mediation/negotiations process and working toward a contract resolution. To state otherwise is deceitful and misleading.

Faculty Teaching Workload

It has also been stated that the administration intends to impose mandatory increased faculty teaching workloads across the board. Concerns and misinformation about workload have persisted despite Dr. Russ Morgan and I stating on numerous occasions since June 2017 that the University has proposed keeping the status quo on this item. The University's intention is for the faculty teaching workloads to remain as dictated by the last collective bargaining agreement. The administration is not insisting upon across the board mandatory increased faculty teaching workloads. Anyone who states otherwise is misstating the facts. UPI is the only party that has an on-the-record, formal proposal related to workload, in which they are requesting a reduction from the status quo.

Salary Minima Lanes/Professional Achievement Awards (PAAs)

Salary minima lanes have been characterized as being eliminated. However, this does not reflect the entirety of the conversation. The University's on-the-record salary proposal included a revamped system that was comprised of enhancing salary increases at promotion and restructuring PAAs. The reality is that salary minima lane discussions continue between the parties.

Merit/Promotion/Salary

The University continues to provide merit and promotional increases for faculty. Despite the fact that the current faculty contract has expired, this year the University will provide approximately \$1 million for promotions, minima lane salary increases, and PAAs. The University's current on-the-record proposal is for faculty base salaries to remain at FY18 levels over the course of the contract.

Administrative Salaries

Another inaccuracy that has been shared is that administrators have received salary increases. This is based on misinterpreting the Fiscal Year 2017 WIU Budget Book. The Fiscal Year 2017 budget column does not reflect furloughs and voluntary pay decreases. Administrators have not received raises since FY15 (Fall 2014) and continue to participate in furloughs.

Moving Forward

I will reiterate that the University's focus at this time is on mediation and hopes of attaining a positive outcome. This is where members of the University's mediation team are concentrating their efforts.

In an effort to continue to be transparent, I will hold additional discussions during the Spring 2018 semester and Contract Administrator Russ Morgan will continue to provide updates to the University community. As we continue to work together, I am hopeful the administration and the UPI will arrive at an equitable and mutually beneficial resolution.

Sincerely,

Jack Thomas
President