

The University has been advised by UPI that it intends to hold a strike authorization vote on Wednesday, April 18, 2018 for employees covered by the Agreement between the University and UPI Local 4100. In addition, the University recently tendered its Best on the Record Package Proposal to resolve the contract dispute. The University understands that a number of questions may exist around the strike authorization vote and the University's most recent proposal. We have attempted to anticipate those questions and our answers are outlined below. The University will regularly update the questions and answers as they are posed.

**Why should a UPI member participate in an authorization to strike vote?**

The University encourages all dues paying UPI members to exercise their right to vote. As we understand it, a strike authorization vote only requires a simple majority (50% plus 1 of those voting). Therefore, everyone's vote counts. A vote against the authorization to strike is a vote in support of fiscal responsibility and a financially viable future for Western Illinois University.

**What are the potential consequences of an authorization to strike?**

It creates uncertainty and negative media coverage that will adversely impact both retention and recruitment at the University. Additionally, once an authorization to strike is approved, the individual UPI member turns over his/her control to the UPI Executive Committee, which in turn gives the UPI Executive Committee the authority to determine if a strike is called.

**Does an authorization for a strike mean there will be a strike?**

No. The decision of whether or not to call for a strike will be at the discretion of the UPI Executive Board. Even if UPI calls for a strike, we hope that employees will make individual decisions not to strike.

**If there is a strike, when will it occur?**

If an authorization to strike passes, the UPI Executive Board has the authority to initiate a strike at any point after 10 calendar days and prior to the ratification of a new contract.

**What happens to the pay and benefits of UPI members who strike?**

All strike days for striking employees are unpaid. Employees who are not already off on approved leave cannot use accrued sick, vacation or personal days. The University is also not required to provide insurance benefits during a strike. A strike may adversely impact benefits, depending on the duration and timing of the strike. Employees who continue their employment obligations by not participating in the strike will ensure their benefits and pay remain uninterrupted.

**Will a strike authorization force the University to agree to UPI demands?**

No. The University has bargained in good faith, but there are limits on the University's flexibility. The University cannot agree to a contract that is not financially sustainable and does not position it for long-term success.

**Should a strike occur, will students be able to sit for their final exams and will their grades be available?**

Our goal is to ensure that students receive the grades and credits earned for those classes in which they are enrolled. Our students have entrusted their education to WIU. The University plans to continue to operate. We urge our faculty to vote against an authorization to strike, remain in the classroom, and remain committed to our students. We are hopeful that many faculty will see the adverse consequences of a strike and will come to work regardless.

### **Why does the University want a five-year contract?**

Because negotiations have continued for nine months since the expiration of the contract, the first year of the new contract will have passed in July 2018. If we agree to the three-year contract that UPI is proposing, we would be back at the bargaining table within a year, which is ineffectual. Additionally, each department will need to revise and update both their Department Criteria and Department Workload Equivalents (DWEs) next year, which means that major aspects of the contract will not actually go into effect until year three (the same year we would go back to the bargaining table). In addition, a five-year agreement with wage reopeners allows negotiations over wages, while at the same time creating stability for the University, its employees and students which will allow for more effective retention and recruitment.

### **Why is the University insisting on pay cuts and restructuring?**

Absent any changes to the current contract, the cost of the faculty agreement grows at a rate of approximately \$900,000 a year. At the same time, the University's expenses are outpacing revenues by millions of dollars. The deficit is projected to grow exponentially over the next five years. Quite simply, the University cannot afford the current agreement as it stands. The proposed changes by the University will not erase the deficit, but will help to slow its growth and provide an opportunity for the University to restructure, refocus and revitalize.

### **Why do Professional Achievement Awards (PAAs) need permanently applied to base salaries?**

Both parties have proposed that the PAA system be eliminated following the Fall 2018 distribution. Currently, PAAs are removed from the prior year's base salary figure when calculating minima adjustments. Moving forward, the University is proposing that PAAs be included in the base salary figure when calculating minima and merit adjustments. This will not only provide some savings for the University and make the onerous processing of salary adjustments more manageable but provides a benefit to those on merit in that the merit increases will be on a higher base.

### **Why is the University proposing to restructure minima?**

The University wants to reward high achieving faculty by introducing a merit system for post-tenured faculty, based on teaching, research and service. This system will also provide additional savings for the University as we try to close the gap between revenue and expenses.

### **Why does the University's proposal have some employees on merit and some on minima?**

The University proposed to move all employees from minima to a merit system. After the Union objected, in an effort to reach a compromise, the University modified and agreed to instead "pilot" a merit system with a smaller number of positions.

### **Why is the University proposing a new system for Unit B employees hired after the effective date of the agreement?**

As outlined above, the University wanted to restructure all positions to merit and move the Unit B employees to a five year cycle similar to the Unit A faculty. In an effort to compromise, the University has agreed to leave the current Unit B employees on the current minima cycle, but is proposing to modify it for new employees.

### **Why is University administration not agreeable to taking the same pay cuts it is asking UPI to take?**

Most of the 200 administrative employees are not eligible for PAA, promotion or minima increases. The administration has already been adversely affected to a greater extent than UPI members. The administration has taken furloughs (in which the first year was in excess of 3%) a year longer than UPI members have deferred their salaries. In addition, the administration did not receive the 2% pay increase in 2016 that UPI

members received. This does not mean that the administration will not take furloughs or cuts in the future. It only means that the University is not going to bargain with the UPI over pay for administrators who are not in the bargaining unit.

**Will wages be frozen for the duration of the contract?**

There are two opportunities in the University's offer for wage reopeners. The first re-opener, in the third year of the agreement, is triggered by the achievement of certain economic triggers that create the potential to grant increases. The second reopener, in year four, occurs without triggers upon the request of either the Union or the University.

**Are there other benefits for members in the contract offer?**

Yes. The proposal offers mini-sabbaticals, expanded parental leave, waiver of tutored study for faculty at full-load, increased promotional dollars for faculty and a second promotional step for Unit B faculty.

**Whom should a UPI member contact with questions?**

For insurance related questions, contact the Benefits office at 298-1853.

For questions relating to pay, contact Academic Personnel at 298-2216.