

To the University Community,

Since my initial letter of Sept. 19 notifying the University community of our intent to request mediation, there has been much information shared on campus, in the community, and via traditional and social media.

Some of the information that has been referenced includes the University's initial proposals that were set forth at the start of the negotiation process in October 2016. When negotiations began, the University did not have a state appropriated budget (and had not had a state appropriated budget for nearly two years). The proposals that were initially put forward by the University reflected the lack of a state budget.

When a budget was passed in July 2017, the University modified the initial proposals for consideration to reflect the change in the budget status. While we understand that employees would very much like salary increases and many other perks, much like was considered the norm in the days of guaranteed and predictable state funding, the University has had to bring forward proposals that are fiscally conservative and ensure the viability of this institution as state appropriations are no longer guaranteed, and they most certainly are not predictable. The current proposals and other information can be found at <http://www.wiu.edu/provost/negotiationsupdate.php>.

The impasse was resolved in July 2017 and higher education was funded, but at 90 percent of FY15 levels. State appropriations are currently being distributed in limited amounts; however, much like our personal paychecks, while the cash appears in our bank accounts on payday, a sizeable portion has already been designated for monthly obligations. At WIU, these monthly obligations include payroll, utilities, vendor payments, and other required expenses. In addition to reduced state appropriations, the University has experienced an enrollment decline due to the budget impasse, which translates to a decrease in revenue.

We must come together and move forward for the continued success and viability of Western Illinois University. Five mediation sessions have been scheduled for Fall 2017, with the first session scheduled for Monday, Oct. 30. Subsequent mediation sessions are tentatively scheduled for Nov. 8, 27, and Dec. 4 and 18. I am confident that mediation will bring both sides closer together to ensure a solid future for Western.

Sincerely,

Russ Morgan
University Contract Administrator
Associate Provost for Budget, Planning, and Personnel