



Bargaining 2003

UPDATE

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Bargaining gets ugly

Golden Handshake gets a bit tarnished

The CSU bargaining team completed their presentation of their initial proposals on benefits during a bargaining session held August 19 and 20, 2003. The intended cornerstone of the CSU proposal was to offer CSEA-represented employees an early retirement incentive, better known as a “golden handshake.” Unfortunately, the CSU’s offer was more tarnished than golden. After months of bargaining, the CSU finally offered the union a written proposal for an early retirement incentive of a 2-year service credit, provided we accept the following conditions:

- Abandon support for pending legislation which would provide 2 years service credit plus 2 years age credit (AB 457) and legislation which would provide 2 years service credit (AB 1253).
- No guarantee that the golden handshake would mitigate any layoffs. Management asserted that there was “no nexus” between layoffs and a golden handshake (despite the CSU’s professed preference for early retirement incentives over layoffs.) The CSU had no information for us regarding potential layoffs. They also said that they typically draft the language that goes into a potential Executive Order, but they couldn’t tell us if they had drafted one for 2003, nor if they had provided it to the Governor’s Office or the Department of Finance, two requirements of such an offer. CSU’s proposal promised only to request an Executive Order, but there is no guarantee that the Governor would even issue one.
- Give up the right to bargain over parking fee increases, with the clear intention to raise fees on many campuses. We have heard of plans to double and triple parking fees on some campuses. And, the CSU is not proposing to raise parking fees for faculty.
- Give up the right to bargain over merit salary increases, which would essentially bring back discretionary, subjective performance pay, no longer tied to annual performance evaluations.
- No general salary increase. We recognize that the CSU is faced with budget cuts of more than \$300 million, but they do have a \$2.5 billion budget and there is still plenty of money available for projects like CMS.
- No rural health care subsidy for employees at campuses like Humboldt and Monterey Bay which do not have HMOs. The CSU opined that the cost of living is lower at these campuses and employees who work there don’t need rural health care subsidies.
- CSU campuses would no longer have to provide Employee Assistance Programs, which provide valuable services such as psychological counseling, substance abuse treatment, smoking cessation programs, debt management, stress reduction, child care/elder care referral services, and programs on how to deal with difficult co-workers.

The CSU may well portray the union as the “bad guy” in withholding the golden handshake. However, management needs to polish up their handshake proposal and “show us the gold” before we can take them seriously.

CSU's "love-it-or-leave-it" compensation philosophy

"If you are so unhappy at the CSU, maybe you should get a job somewhere else," said a member of the CSU's bargaining team at the close of the August 21 bargaining session. Notwithstanding such a counterproductive remark, CSEA negotiators continued to try to engage the CSU in a dialogue about their compensation philosophy. They got very agitated and contentious as we questioned them about the lack of equity in the system. In a condescending manner, they said such a conversation "would be too long and complicated," especially since the window of opportunity for a golden handshake was drawing near.

CSEA told CSU negotiators that employees around the state have reached a peak of frustration over our inability to progress through the open salary ranges and the lack of adequate pay raises over the years. CSEA stated that the overwhelming majority of In-Range Progressions (IRPs) have been awarded to employees in BU 7 and 9, while hardly any have gone to employees in BU 2 and 5. The university replied with an appalling and insulting comment "custodians are, oh well, they are just custodians. And nurses are just nurses. In-range progression is really not intended for them. IRP is discretionary pay that is for jobs more affected by technology, jobs that have had more changes to them. IRP was intended to provide flexibility to the campuses." The further away employees are from the center of authority (vice presidents, deans, etc.), the less likely they are to receive these "proximity awards" (IRPs).

Employees in all four bargaining units represented by CSEA deserve to be recognized for enhanced skills, additional training and more education. An IRP is for the increased value of the individual to the university. IRP was also intended to be used for external and internal equity considerations, as well as for retention purposes. BU 2 employees in health care professions have seen their jobs become more complex and hazardous, and they must comply with more state and federal regulations, as well as shouldering the responsibility of ensuring that strict new medical records confidentiality rules are followed. BU 5 custodians and groundworkers have seen their workload more than double over the last ten years as more and more buildings are constructed and campuses dramatically increase their acreage. Yet, the number of employees who maintain the beauty of campus grounds and who clean campus buildings has remained the same.

Next Bargaining Dates - September 3-4, 2003

CSEA will continue this important dialogue with the CSU when we return to the table in September. While a golden handshake might sound great for those who are ready to take advantage of one, we remain committed to ensuring that those of us who remain are properly compensated and not subjected to impossible workloads. Bargaining continues September 3-4, 2003, at the Office of the Chancellor. CSEA will continue to keep you informed.

