

What's keeping us from a contract settlement?

Some of our members apparently have gotten the impression that the Fair Share (agency fee) issue is holding up contract negotiations. Get rid of the fair share proposal and we would have a settlement quickly, they maintain.

That notion is incorrect. There are many issues holding up a settlement, fair share being only one of them. TAUP has been honest and upfront about what's separating us and Temple management. Key obstacles to an agreement at this point include:

- Across-the-board raises;
- Merit pay vs. "pay for performance";
- Increased compensation procedures and guidelines;
- Promotion raises;
- Fair treatment for NTTs, especially salary minimums for the lowest ranks, evaluation procedures and pension parity;
- Independent peer review of tenure and promotion and of sabbatical proposals;
- Fair raises for librarians and academic professionals; and
- Fair share.

Pay issues are not just about the amount of the pay increase, but also about how pay increases are granted. Those who wanted TAUP to agree to management's proposals in fall 2008 may have been thinking about the sum totals and not about how the components were structured.

Our economic proposals are reasonable. Basically, TAUP wants a decent cost-of-living raise for everyone and transparent, agreed-upon merit and increased compensation procedures that emphasize excellence. Management wants much greater discretion to determine individual pay increases and would provide only minimal raises for all.

Management wants to use a new "pay for performance" system that substitutes for merit pay. TAUP proposes to keep and improve the current merit system. Pay for performance would use a yet-to-be-defined criterion of "satisfactory" performance and a less developed procedure in place of the current procedure and standards of "exceptional" and "outstanding" performance for merit pay. TAUP is not against pay for performance, but we can't agree on criteria that we haven't seen and don't understand.

Management wants total discretion to give raises to individuals under the increased compensation language of the contract. TAUP accepts that management should be able to increase individual salaries beyond what is mandated. However, TAUP wants a regular, defined set of procedures and guidelines for individuals to apply for increased compensation. Raises from increased compensation would address a variety of situations, including salary compression and pay equity. TAUP also wants a significant raise for promotion; management wants to keep it as it is.

So-called noneconomic issues are quite important too, including fair share. Again, our proposals are reasonable. Peer review of decisions through independent faculty committees is an important academic principle. TAUP believes that peer review should operate not only in departmental and collegial tenure and promotion procedures but also in the University Tenure and Promotion Advisory Committee and in the University Study Leave (or Sabbatical) Committee.

All of the economic and noneconomic issues outlined here are very important. That is why fair share is not the only issue keeping TAUP and Temple management from agreeing on a contract. TAUP is working very hard to assure that we negotiate an agreement that addresses all these key issues. Compromise and concession are necessary parts of the collective bargaining process, but unilateral concessions are not a good recipe for achieving a fair contract. Negotiation requires mutual sacrifices in order to achieve mutual gains. Both sides are still talking and seeking agreement. We have confidence that we will get a good contract if we practice patience and persistence.

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