

Paddington Spokesperson

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In August of 2017 I will begin my 30th year as a member of the IUP faculty. Over that period I have experienced eight full contract negotiations. For six of those negotiations I chaired, co-chaired, or was a member of the local and statewide Strike Committees. I thus had the opportunity to develop what I thought was a very thorough and complete picture of negotiations “from the trenches.” During the latest round of negotiations, my role changed and so too did my picture of the process.

This experience exposed me to the issues surrounding collective bargaining as they played out within the union, both local and statewide, within the campus and state system, and as they impacted students and their parents. During non-negotiation years, my circle of exposure expanded to include the politics of adequate funding for public education generally and public higher education particularly, persistent legislative attacks on union rights, and, because in the late 1990s IUP-APSCUF institutionalized its Strike Committee and expanded its function (renaming it the Faculty Education for Action Committee), into the realms of internal campus politics.

It was not until I became the official IUP-APSCUF Strike Spokesperson that I began to understand how all these pieces

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fit into a broader context. As the pieces started to fall into place during those remarkable three days in October 2016, I also began to see things my previous experience hid from me. At a superficial level I became aware that I have a face and body best suited for radio and that in a rain soaked wide-brimmed hat and slicker I bear a striking resemblance to



Paddington Bear (an insight for which I have my colleague Gwen Torges, my daughter, and my grandson to thank). The Paddington Bear comparison was apt. Anyone with children is certainly familiar with Paddington, the friendly bear from the jungles of Peru who finds himself with an old hat, a duffle coat, a suitcase, and a marmalade “habit,” stuck in the unf-

miliar and frightening world of Paddington train station in London. This friendly, unfailingly polite and trouble-prone bear leads readers through a delightful series (according to Google, he features in 70 books) of zany adventures as he “tries so hard to get things right” in his strange new world.

That was me as spokesperson, a man in an unfamiliar and frequently uncomfortable environment; a man of passion in a venue that demanded even temper and unfailing politeness. It was an unsettling environment that produced a fair number of misadventures as I tried very hard to “get things right” in front of a television camera. (To this day, I still have not seen nor do I wish to see myself “on camera”.) Looking back, I now see how this unfamiliar and frightening task placed me in a state of intellectual uncertainty that allowed me to perceive things that had previously lingered only indistinctly on the peripheries of my public education-union member-college professor consciousness.

In the succeeding months as I pondered what I learned, it became clear that in many, perhaps most ways the struggle in which the union was involved was only the most recent enactment of a conflict that has its beginnings in the earliest history of the Republic. Seeing it in those terms suggested to me that the union’s approach to future negotiations may profitably benefit from a history lesson, but also by the application to that lesson of a couple of more recent understandings about the nature of human behavior (see Kahneman, 2011).

Framing

Consider framing first. In the Social Sciences, a frame is understood as a means of rhetorically “packaging” information so as to encourage some interpretations and/or discourage others (van der Pas, 2014). As such a frame is a crucial social construct used by members of political communities to give shape and meaning to complex social phenomena. They simplify that task of identifying those elements of a phenomenon that are most salient. The frame

is, thus, also a mechanism used by the media, politicians, and opinion leaders to convey messages about issue in relatively simple and straightforward terms.

Both sides in the negotiations that led to October's faculty strike sought to frame relevant issues in ways that would both speak to relevant publics and ultimately be "picked up" by media sources as a preferred means for constructing their narratives. We APSCUF spokespeople were certainly given considerable training on both the frames that APSCUF was particularly interested in using and the skills to use in reinforcing those frames for the media. In the event, I found this to be an extremely challenging task. It often appeared to me that State System (the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education) frames dominated, and my task was to respond to the inadequacies of those frames. This in turn made it extremely difficult to provide, reinforce, and to some extent substitute an APSCUF frame. I often wondered why that seemed to be the case. APSCUF did a fine job of providing solid information in clear and reasonable terms. This information was well articulated and effectively deployed in all state-level communications over the long term of the negotiation process. And, on the individual campuses, faculty were reflecting and building on those state-level themes in ways that would best "speak to" fourteen similar but different local communities. Yet, public debate was still largely dominated by those pesky State System frames. Why?

The answer, I believe, begins to emerge only when we break the frames into proximate and distal "pieces". The proximate, or most immediate, tightly focused, frames are easy to recognize. In some form or another they have been part of the System's negotiation strategy during all eight negotiations I have experienced. There is no better way to clearly see those frames than to watch Chancellor Brogan's appearance before the Senate Appropriations Committee during hearings on the budget on March 2, 2016. Without going into excruciating detail, the exchanges between committee members and the chancellor yield the following

observations:

- the Collective Bargaining Agreement is an obstacle to both creative and cost effective management of System universities;
- in spite of tight budgets and difficult economic times, the System was offering its faculty a very generous compensation and benefits package;
- the “old dinosaur” faculty on the individual campuses are out of touch with and resistant to the best practices of modern higher education;
- faculty have conspired to create what can only be called a communist/socialist governing structure at the State System and in the local universities;
- contractually, faculty are only obligated to work 17 hours per week and they have their summers off; and,
- for this 17 hours of work faculty are handsomely compensated - the average faculty salary is \$97,000 per year – in fact a swimming coach at one university earns \$420,000.

The persistent proximal frames associated with these observations are easy to spot:

- 1 Teachers have cushy, comfortable lives. They are underworked and overpaid, at the expense of hard-working taxpayers.
- 2 Teachers bear the primary responsibility for the high cost of public education.
- 3 Teachers are resistant to any change, no matter how reasonable or necessary.
- 4 Contracts (tenure) both produce and protect incompetence and complacency.
- 5 Teachers are primarily to blame for the decline in the quality of public education.

Each frame appears to great effect in each of the System/APSCUF contract negotiation cycles over the last

thirty years. To my mind the critical issue is not so much their use or even their thirty year persistence. Their importance emerges out of answers to two questions: What is the source of the frames? Why do they persist and exert power? Significant pieces of an answer to each question emerge from the examination of a distal or fundamental frame.

In his 1963 Pulitzer Prize winning book, *Anti-intellectualism in American Life*, Richard Hofstadter nicely examines what I am referring to as the distal frame. Hofstadter defines anti-intellectualism as “resentment and suspicion of the life of the mind and of those who are considered to represent it” (Hofstadter p. 7). Although subject to cyclical fluctuations, “it is older than our national identity, and has a long historical background” (p. 6). This resentment is, according to Hofstadter, a function of the country’s colonial and Protestant heritage re-expressed in the fundamental tension between the inclusiveness and egalitarianism of democracy and the elitism and exclusiveness of intellectualism. This tension, which rose to prominence in the Jacksonian “era of the common man,” can be observed as a common thread throughout the history of the republic.

Andrew Jackson, the first American presidential candidate to take full advantage of the expansion of suffrage to the American yeomanry, entered the presidency in 1829 with a very different understanding of democracy and popular sovereignty than his “founding father” predecessor. Where they feared the excesses of democracy and found it imperative to filter popular sovereignty through mechanisms like representation and the Electoral College, Jackson maintained the “our government is founded upon the intelligence of the people . . . I have great confidence in the virtue of the great majority of the people, and I cannot fear the result” (Remini, p. 38). From the Jacksonian perspective, government positions did not require specialized knowledge. Knowledge resting on the firm foundation of life experience, practical knowledge was in all respects preferable to

speculative academic knowledge. In fact, to many Jacksonians “book learning” was a danger to the health of the democracy.

By 1880, it became abundantly clear that the Jacksonian approach to staffing government produced, at best, incompetent administration and at worst graft and corruption. Coupled with the rapid industrialization and urbanization of the society, the need for formalized training and specialization became abundantly clear. Thus the wheel turned and education, specialized training emerged as both desirable and necessary. The period saw the creation of the Civil Service system, the great Land Grant Universities, professional associations and credentialing, and a host of supporting structures and processes.

And so it is that over the course of next 100 years of national history as social, economic, and political circumstances changed so too did the relative positions of need for and mistrust of intellectuals and the institutions that created and housed them. According to Hofstadter’s analysis, the need for the intellectual stands at all times in tension with resentment of their perceived power and privilege. The country could not cease to need or to be at the mercy of professionally trained intellectuals, but those who were unnerved by this new group’s influence “achieve[d] a measure of revenge by ridiculing the wild-eyed professor and by applauding politicians as they pursue[d] the subversive teacher” (p. 37). After 1900, it became easier to target this revenge. With the advent of “institutions that could forge [intellectuals] into a numerous social order with some capacity for cohesion and mutual communication on a national scale” (public universities, learned associations, academic journals) they became a more easily identifiable “class” (sometimes referred to as the “professional managerial class, or PMC), and thus an easier and more attractive scape-goat (p. 408).

It seems clear to me that, at present, mistrust of and hostility toward educational institutions and the purposes they serve are again ascendant. What factors will combine to tip

the wheel, I cannot say. The existence, demonstrated power, and persistence through history of the distal frame described here means that the kinds of proximal frames employed by the System and on display in the 2016 Appropriations Committee hearings will always find “fertile ground” in which to take root and thrive.

Although APSCUF must try, it seems to me that the creation and advancement of competing frames is destined to be a highly fraught enterprise. It has not always been so. During the first half of my tenure at IUP (1988 – 2001), the union had a bit easier time in advancing its preferred frames. I do not mean to suggest that these were halcyon times. Contract negotiations were every bit as difficult and rancorous as any experienced more recently. In 1999, for instance, the union came within twenty-four hours of calling a strike. During those negotiations, the state system deployed many of the frames described here. But, two circumstances existed that permitted APSCUF frames a bit more “play” in the process.

First and perhaps most important, during the entire period, whether negotiating or not, both APSCUF and the System shared a powerful commitment to a common frame – a passionate allegiance to the support, protection, and advancement of the PA State System of Higher Education. The existence and power of the frame had much to do with the leadership of the Chancellor, James McCormick and from the Chair of the Board of Governors (BOG), Fitz Dixon. Both were present at the birth of the System in 1983. McCormick became the first Chancellor and Dixon the first Chair of the BOG. McCormick received his undergraduate degree from a System school (IUP) and served on the faculty of another System school (Shippensburg) and became president of a third System school (Bloomsburg) before being named Chancellor. Dixon came from a distinguished Pennsylvania family (Widener) noted for philanthropy. Dixon was himself a teacher early in his varied and distinguished career and was noted for his own public-spirited philanthropy. Both men were devoted to the cause of the System. Thus, however

much APSCUF and the System disagreed, at base the two shared this mutual commitment. It was this shared commitment that allowed the two sides to step away from the brink of a strike in 1999.

Second, there was a marked difference in the tenor of the relationship between APSCUF and the System in periods between contract negotiations. While there continued to be disagreements, they tended not to be framed in the stark terms very often used during negotiation periods. During these periods of relative calm, there were again opportunities for APSCUF to advance its frames. Given shared commitment to the health of the system, there were times when APSCUF and System frames achieved a kind of cautious harmony.

Circumstances changed in 2001. In that year, both Chancellor McCormick and Chairman Dixon left positions they had occupied for the preceding 17 years. They were replaced by individuals that did not possess the same relationship to nor commitment to the State System. The allegiances of their successors were to a broader “business model” of higher education than a personal and direct engagement with the State System particularly. Further, the comparatively rapid turnover in both position (three chancellors and four BOG chairs in 16 years) have further exacerbated the commitment problem. As a consequence the relationship between APSCUF and the System became ever more strained and contentious. Add to that change in the internal environment changes to the external political environment in which the System existed. That environment became much less receptive to the needs of higher education even antagonistic to those needs. This in turn produced punitive budgets and worsening financial conditions for each of the Systems fourteen universities. Many of these universities in an effort to “find” additional revenues resorted to the retrenchment (the laying off) of faculty. Originally intended as an emergency mechanism, this contractual procedure was quickly perceived as and used by System and university officials as just another “tool” for balancing budgets. As a result of these changes

amity between APSCUF and the System is largely gone. The tensions endemic to a negotiation period have increased and the rapprochement between the sides during the period between negotiations has all but disappeared. As a consequence the proximal frames described above are invoked and reinforced on a continual basis. They are obviously in evidence during negotiation period, but they can now be readily observed in the annual retrenchment debates and during the annual state appropriations process. Thus APSCUF's preferred frames find very little purchase and even less visibility.

In the light of these new circumstances, APSCUF cannot prevail in a fight with the frame. It is too firmly ingrained in our national and state psyches and too easily and powerfully invoked. If the union is to "get things right" Instead of engaging in a battle of frames every three years, more productive strategy is required. One strategy that can only be applied during negotiation periods would be to take the process out of the public eye. That is, both sides should agree to an information blackout for the duration of the process. Such an agreement could reduce (without eliminating) motivation to invoke frames to either secure public support or demonize the other side. A blackout could further contribute to more effective and shorter negotiations which could, in turn, reduce some of the between negotiations tensions and provide APSCUF with a better opportunity to advance and reinforce alternative frames. In my experience, the value of a blackout would also remove another significant obstacle to productive negotiations, the anchor.

Anchoring and Adjustment

In virtually every press interview I did during both the lead up to the strike and during the strike itself, I was confronted with some form of a single number – 159. I was struck by the ubiquity and focal power of that single number. The really distressing part of its omnipresence was that I knew it to be a demonstrably false number. I am, of course,

referring to the State System's repeated claim that it was "offering about \$159 million in pay raises" to faculty over the three year life of the contract. This single inaccurate number was the anchor around which most of my press interactions revolved. I consciously use the word "anchor" to describe this number because it allows me to tap into a two very powerful cognitive phenomena, Anchoring and Adjustment. An examination of this decision heuristic will help to understand the power of the number and the significant value we derive by attempting to banish it from the process.

Anchoring is a cognitive propensity to rely heavily on an initial piece of information (the anchor) when making a decision. According to Daniel Kahneman the tendency is "one of the most reliable and robust results of experimental psychology" (2011, p. 119). In the present context it is useful to bear in mind that the initial piece of information need not be particularly informative for it to exercise this influence. Although anchors are particularly strong on things about which people know little, studies have shown that even where people are aware of the uninformative nature of the anchor and may even be consciously determined to resist it, it will continue to exert influence on their decision. An anchor exerts its greatest initial influence on a specific decision, however, studies have also shown that the influence can persist and influence future circumstances requiring decisions of a similar sort. Kahneman has observed "[people] are always aware of the anchor and even pay attention to it, but [they] do not know how it guides and constrains [their] thinking, because [they] cannot imagine how [they] would have thought if the anchor had been different or absent" (p. 128).

By repeated reference to the very generous \$159 million package on offer, an anchor was created. The more that number was cited – in press releases, briefings, newspaper articles, television reports, on the PASSHE website – the greater the influence it exerted. Even where there may have been suspicions that the number was inaccurate, the

companion human tendency to Adjust from the anchor continued to give it excessive attention-grabbing power. Kahneman describes the tendency to adjust as follows: “start from an anchoring number, assess whether it is too high or too low, and gradually adjust the estimate by mentally ‘moving’ from the anchor. The adjustment typically ends prematurely, because people stop when they are no longer certain that they should move farther” (p. 120).

In addition, the \$159 million anchor nicely flowed from and reinforced the proximal frame on evidence in those Senate Appropriation Committee exchanges – System faculty are handsomely compensated (even over-compensated) for the extraordinarily little amount of work they do. The State System was also able to reinforce its generosity and the unreasonableness of Union demands, by publishing on its website, every written proposal put forward by APSCUF negotiators (and putting forward no written proposals of its own).

It is also useful to observe that \$159 million was only the numeric part of the anchor. There was also a narrative part. On September 27, 2016, the State System placed a document on its website, under the Fact Center tab, entitled Student Fact Sheet. That fact sheet included, in a question-and-answer format, and examination of “the State System’s proposal for faculty raises.” The fact sheet made multiple references to the \$159 million figure, describing it variously as: “an increase in faculty compensation;” “a wage increase;” and, “a pay raise.” I mention this narrative for two reasons. First, it neatly separates \$159 million from another number that a person might be tempted to perceive as acting to reduce that compensation package. The fact sheet indicated that the \$159 million “wage increase is contingent upon faculty accepting changes to their healthcare that already apply to other State System and state employees across the Commonwealth and other important operational changes that would allow our universities to be more efficient and flexible.” The cost of these “operational changes” was set at \$70 million. The desired interpretation is clear: that \$70 million total should not

be used to adjust the \$159 million compensation anchor downward. Except that one is contingent upon the other, the two numbers are unrelated.

The second reason I mention the narrative anchor is because it provides a point of departure for a clarification of the \$159 million anchor, explicitly in terms of the System's proximal frame. Again, from the student fact sheet: "Pay for full-time faculty would increase between 7.25 percent and 17.25 percent over the three-year life of the contract." Recall one of the proximal frame statements from the Senate Appropriation Committee hearings. There we learn that the average salary for full-time faculty is \$97,000 per year. Pay increases of the sort proposed by the State System would significantly enhance salaries that are already well above the average salaries of most working Pennsylvanians (average per capita income in 2015 was \$30,000).¹ Furthermore, most working class salaries have been largely stagnant over the last ten years.

All in all, the anchor created was extraordinarily powerful. Again, the accuracy of the number is largely unimportant. It likely exerted some influence even on those who suspected it was wrong. And wrong it certainly was. The APSCUF negotiation team wasted hours trying to get an explanation of the number from System negotiators to no avail. Barring information from the System, APSCUF analysts attempted to recreate the number. The exercise was fruitless. Regardless of the assumptions used or the information included, it was simply not possible for the union to discover how the State System derived the \$159 million sum. But, in the final analysis it didn't matter. The System could have manufactured the number out of thin air. So long as it was continually and authoritatively cited, it anchored the perception of virtually everyone who considered it, even rank-and-file members of the union were influenced by it. During my interviews with the press I quickly discovered that any attempt on my part to respond effectively to the number was doomed from the start. The responses I fashioned were

too long, too complicated, too annoying, or all of those things combined. As dearly as I wanted to lay waste to that useless number I was powerless to do anything. What was worse, it seemed like every time I gave an interview, the number returned in one form or another. The harder I tried to get things right, the more wrong things seemed to get, until finally I just ignored the anchor all together. It was a powerful real-world opportunity for me to observe and understand a phenomenon that, up to that point, I had largely considered in purely intellectual terms. Perceived in that way, it became less a frustration than a fascinating set of observations that I have since refined for use in my classroom. So, in the end, perhaps I did get it right.

Once they are “out there,” it is extremely hard to either debunk, adjust, or replace an anchor that is so powerfully tied to an underlying frame. Again, it seems to me, the only answer is, at the very start of the negotiation process, to structure an environment that reduces the value to both sides of engaging in anchor-dependent public exchanges. So, I come back again to the potential value of a mutually agreed information black-out. As was the case with framing, I don’t expect an information blackout to end the practice of using anchors to manipulate public opinion, but it may at very least minimize their significance and contribute to more useful dialog at the negotiations table.

Conclusion

So what did Paddington Spokesperson learn? First I learned that I would much rather deal with a marmalade habit in the forests of Peru than face a television camera. It is physically, mentally, and psychically exhausting (not to mention frequently embarrassing). Second, in my experience college professors are not terribly good spokespeople. We tend to be pedantic when clear, pointed, and uncluttered responses to questions are required. I was far too likely to climb onto a “soap box” and preach rather than to provide a

direct response to the question I was asked. Or, perhaps worse, I would answer the question multiple times, groping for exactly the right thing to say. The saving graces here were training sessions conducted by knowledgeable and experienced people and the support of a well-versed, extraordinarily competent State-APSCUF professional staff. If I am ever called upon to perform this task again, I will spend much more time learning from the experience and example of these people.

Finally, and I think most importantly, “getting it right” has much to do with how the intellectual community handles the dichotomy advanced by Richard Hofstadter and referenced early in this essay: the tension between the inclusiveness and egalitarianism of democracy and the elitism and exclusiveness of intellectualism. Let me here reframe that tension in terms familiar to me as a Political Scientist and as a bred-in-the bone defender of public education. As a student and teacher of American politics I have believed in the essential competence of “the process.” That should not be read as a statement of blind or unwavering support. The process is replete with flaws, some circumstantial and some basic. But so long as it can be productively influenced by the open, honest, well-informed, and inclusive strivings of well-motivated people, it is worthy of my support. That said, there have been, are now, and, I am certain will be many times when the process fails to produce the kinds of outcomes I believe are most necessary and most worthy.

To my mind, we are in such a time now, particularly with regard to support for public education. My public education roots run deep. Not only am I product of public schools, from elementary through graduate, but I am the grandson, son, husband, father, brother, nephew, uncle, and cousin to more than four dozen current and former public school teachers and administrators. Everything I know, by experience and training tells me that the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and the country is on the wrong course where public education is

concerned. How then do I reconcile that ardent belief with support for the process? Hofstadter nicely framed the choice: “What is at stake for individuals is a personal choice: but what is important for society as a whole is that the intellectual community should not become hopelessly polarized in two parts, one part of technicians concerned only with power and accepting implicitly the terms power puts to them, and the other of willfully alienated intellectuals more concerned with maintaining their sense of their own purity than with making their ideas effective” (p. 429). He is equally clear about the consequences of making the choice to act primarily or exclusively in the protection of intellectual purity. “Dogmatic, apocalyptic predictions about the collapse of [the] culture. . . may be right or wrong; but one thing about them seems certain: they are more likely to instill self-pity and despair than the will to resist or the confidence to make the most of one’s creative energies” (p. 432).

Fighting to strike the balance then has become for me the single greatest “take-away” not just from this experience as spokesperson, although the experience sharpened and clarified the issue, but from my entire thirty-year experience as a public school teacher and active member of APSCUF. “Getting it right” is all about resisting the temptation to self-pity while preserving my will to resist and to actively and creatively engage and my confidence in the ability of that engagement to change “the system.”

Notes

¹ I use the per capita income here only to maintain consistency with the way the average income of a faculty member was reported by the State System. During the same period, average household income in Pennsylvania was \$73,000 and median household income was \$54,000. These data are the most current income statistics for Pennsylvania taken from the U.S. Census Bureau’s American Community Survey 2015, 5-year Estimates.

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With Negotiations Stagnant, APSCUF Sets Date for Emergency Legislative Assembly

June 24, 2016

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

For more information, contact:

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After today's negotiations made no progress toward a faculty contract, the union representing Pennsylvania's state-owned universities' faculties and coaches has set a date for an emergency legislative assembly.

Delegates from all 14 campuses in the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education will convene via conference call Aug. 25 to decide whether Association of Pennsylvania State College and University Faculty members will take a strike-authorization vote.

If a majority of delegates approve, APSCUF will set a date for a strike-authorization vote, APSCUF President Dr. Kenneth M. Mash said. A simple majority of full APSCUF faculty members then gives Mash, in consultation with APSCUF's negotiations committee, the authority to set a strike date.

In April, APSCUF delegates decided to postpone calling for a strike-authorization vote, out of concern for students.

“As the faculty and coaches responsible for providing a quality education, we place students at the center of our decisions,” Mash said. “But the changes the State System wants to make to our contract would make it nearly impossible for our members to deliver that quality. We are fully prepared to stand up for our current students, our future students, for all our alumni, and ourselves.”

Today’s session was a continuation of the June 10 negotiations, at which the State System put a 146-page document on the table, the first multi-year proposal since negotiations began in late 2014. APSCUF’s proposal was seven pages.

The State System’s proposal contained 249 changes, including:

- Increased teaching by adjuncts and graduate students
- Increased workload resulting in a 20 percent reduction in salary for adjunct faculty
- Increased workload for those teaching labs
- A new emphasis on distance education
- Several areas where there would be a reduction in compensation

The June 10 session consisted primarily of State System negotiators reading the proposed changes and responding to questions. Today’s meeting continued that presentation.

“They are proposing so many changes that it all just collectively seems like noise,” Mash said. “The one thing that rings out is that these changes would turn our universities into degree factories, not places for our students to earn a quality education.

“We knew our meetings in June would be important for determining the path that we’re headed down, and now we know we’re headed in an unproductive direction. None of us want to strike, but we will be prepared to do so, should we need to.”

Neither the faculty nor the coaches at the State System universities have been on strike.

June 30 is the one-year anniversary of the faculty contract’s expiration. Other statewide public-sector unions signed one-year deals that included step increases in January 2015. Previously, the State System offered one-year contract proposals that called for givebacks.

The next negotiations session is slated for July 19.

APSCUF represents about 5,500 faculty and coaches at the State System universities: Bloomsburg, California, Cheyney, Clarion, East Stroudsburg, Edinboro, Indiana, Kutztown, Lock Haven, Mansfield, Millersville, Shippensburg, Slippery Rock, and West Chester Universities of Pennsylvania.



Negotiators Discuss Distance Education, but No Major Progress on Contract

July 19, 2016

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Distance education was the focus of negotiations today between the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education and the union representing Pennsylvania's state-owned universities' faculties and coaches.

Among the most significant changes discussed: the value of face-to-face instruction, the definition of distance education, and the percentage of a course that must be delivered online to qualify it as distance education.

While the Association of Pennsylvania State College and University Faculties understands distance learning has its merits, its members believe classroom-based learning is optimal, APSCUF President Dr. Kenneth M. Mash said.

“Some of the language in the expired contract has indeed become outdated, and we are willing to work with the State System to modernize those definitions,” Mash said. “We believe firmly that face-to-face instruction benefits our students the most, even as we understand that distance education provides access to those who otherwise would not be able to obtain a degree.”

Today’s session was part 3 of the June 10 negotiations, at which the State System put on the table a 146-page document containing 249 changes. It was the System’s first multi-year proposal since negotiations began in late 2014. APSCUF’s proposal was seven pages.

This was the third consecutive meeting that consisted primarily of State System negotiators reading their proposed changes and responding to questions.

“After today’s session, we did find common ground on some minor issues, but there’s still no major progress,” Mash said. Thus, APSCUF’s emergency legislative assembly conference call will remain on the calendar for Aug. 25, he said. On that call, delegates from all 14 campuses in the State System will decide whether full APSCUF faculty members will take a strike-authorization vote on their campuses.

The faculty contract expired June 30, 2015.

The next negotiations session is slated for Aug. 2.

APSCUF represents about 5,500 faculty and coaches at the State System universities: Bloomsburg, California, Cheyney, Clarion, East Stroudsburg, Edinboro, Indiana, Kutztown, Lock Haven, Mansfield, Millersville, Shippensburg, Slippery Rock, and West Chester Universities of Pennsylvania.



Two-Day Negotiations Session Concludes

Aug. 10, 2016

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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On the docket of this week's negotiations sessions between the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education and the union representing Pennsylvania's state-owned universities' faculties and coaches: tenure, promotions, evaluations, and other non-economic matters.

Negotiators met at Indiana University of Pennsylvania for the two-day contract discussion that resulted in several minor agreements of concern to both parties.

"While it is always good to make progress, we don't want anyone to have too many expectations," said Dr. Jamie Martin, vice president of the Association of Pennsylvania State College and University Faculties and chair of APSCUF's negotiations team. "We have been working under an expired contract for 407 days and still have not begun to discuss anything related to economics. It is exasperating."

APSCUF's frustration comes on the heels of tentative multi-year contract agreements between the Common-

wealth and American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees Council 13 and with Service Employees International Union 668, both of which have members employed by the State System. Other statewide public-sector unions signed one-year deals that included step increases last year. APSCUF's contract expired June 30, 2015, and there has not been any successor agreement.

"Without serious progress on significant issues surrounding the quality of education we provide, there is no reason for us to adjust our existing plans," APSCUF President Dr. Kenneth M. Mash said.

APSCUF's emergency legislative assembly conference call remains on the calendar for Aug. 25. On that call, delegates from all 14 campuses in the State System will decide whether full APSCUF faculty members will take a strike-authorization vote on their campuses.

Negotiations are slated to continue Aug. 25–26, and classes will begin Aug. 29.

APSCUF represents about 5,500 faculty and coaches at the State System universities: Bloomsburg, California, Cheyney, Clarion, East Stroudsburg, Edinboro, Indiana, Kutztown, Lock Haven, Mansfield, Millersville, Shippensburg, Slippery Rock, and West Chester Universities of Pennsylvania.