

Recap of the October 11 Bargaining Session.

Friday was our first session presenting proposals. We appreciated the tone of collegiality and respect of Friday's session, and we took to heart that management, like us, is interested in finding solutions to problems.

Just to look ahead a little bit: According to the ground rules, we alternate between 2 sessions on zoom, and one session in person. In addition, all initial proposals will be put on the table in the first six sessions. So we are really just getting started. Our next session will be on October 21st in person at Fitchburg State University, where we'll be talking about health and safety issues, ensuring part-time faculty as well as full time faculty get the basic technology and space to do their jobs, and some smaller (but important) pay, workload, and financial proposals. We also have a proposal allowing faculty to hold remote office hours - so if you can, show up and let management know that remote office hours is about being reasonable and meeting student needs, and not out of a lack of desire to show up on campus. Then we'll be back on zoom for two sessions, where we'll address Part Time faculty (Session 3), and then Librarians and Chairs work conditions (Session 4). In December we'll have an in-person session at Mass Maritime Academy where we have several proposals specific to MMA. If you've been keeping count, that means we'll have one last session (on zoom) where we'll present our last group of proposals that we hope will be relatively simple to resolve at the bargaining table.

OK, back to Friday. Management opened with their proposal, which was a financial proposal. This reflects "the parameters" set by the Governor. This means that the state decides the money we will be offered, and there is very little wiggle room as to the money the state will put up (in the last contract, we did some concerted organizing with other unions to help raise the parameters, which is how we got the 8% increase). Management offered a 12.5% over 3 years, starting with 3.5% in January 2025, and the 2.25% every six months through January 2027. However, we reject the argument that the parameters limit other ways to negotiate around financials.

Again, today was about presenting proposals, asking clarifying questions to understand the other side's position, and not yet negotiating about what is possible.

We presented our 7 proposals:

1. **Workload relief:** 3 credits of course releases each semester for faculty and an equivalent workload reduction for librarians. We need this change for multiple reasons, which we probably don't need to enumerate for you: a lot has changed

since the 4/4 load was first negotiated in our contracts (over 40 years ago). We are expected to use high impact practices to provide quality education students deserve. Covid learning disruptions are not going away any time soon, and we are working overtime to adapt our teaching to our students and to support our students. Technology and AI is changing how we can teach our students. Our students need more individualized attention. We are burnt out.

2. **Class size:** Class size needs to be determined by pedagogy. Our proposal creates a process to determine class size, using the Curriculum Committee and the governance process, and then once caps are set, gives faculty the power to refuse increases in students over the cap (whether it's because you'd have to remove an assignment because you have more students than you can reasonably assess, or because the room simply can't accommodate an additional person), and provides a system of payment for students who register over the cap at your discretion.
3. **Reasonable Advising Loads:** Our proposal would lower the number of reasonable advisees to 20, and for every additional 10 advisees over that, faculty would get one more credit. Currently our load carries up to 30, and additional advisees above that count towards service.
4. **Equivalencies:** Work is work. When a faculty spends an hour teaching, whether it's a lab or a traditional class, they receive one credit. And high impact practices need to be compensated fairly. For our proposal, we used the equivalencies that Bridgewater State – the largest of our state universities – is currently using. If Bridgewater can make it work (and there are at least 2 other colleges that have different and better equivalency charts than what is in the contract) because they know the value of internships, independent studies, and experiential learning, then we think all nine state universities can do it too.
5. **Undergraduate Teaching Assistant Supervision:** We provided a definition of this type of faculty supervision.
6. & 7. **Compensation:** Our financial proposal on salaries and increases to salary minimums, and salary increases for promotion and degrees. We discussed the simple fact that our salaries have not kept pace with the cost of living in Massachusetts, and that our salaries are not competitive with neighboring states, where state university faculty and librarians make significantly more money. Searches are failing, faculty are leaving. Our proposal also addresses the fact that when raises are calculated purely on a percentage basis, those at the top of the pay scale get a much larger raise than those at the bottom. Our proposal takes a balanced approach with a combination of a percentage increase and a dollar amount on base increase.

We're asking for big things – and we're asking for them because we know that you need them in order to do your jobs effectively and well. We're asking for them because our students deserve to be taught by faculty who have the time to teach them well, with working conditions that support their learning. We're asking for them because we know that faculty teaching and librarians working at Massachusetts state universities in one of the wealthiest states in the union should not have to worry about whether or not they can make their rent payments. We are asking for them, using strong arguments, and we believe that there's a receptive audience on the other side of the table for those arguments.

But we are asking that the state universities be redesigned and rethought, so that worries about enrollment, about the financial viability of the institution, and about student retention involve an equivalent commitment to us, the faculty and librarians who teach and support them. Right now, there's money to try to solve campus problems, without another software package, another Executive Director, another consultant, or another Associate Vice President, etc.. If there's money for those things, there is money for the things we need to do our jobs effectively.

We look forward to turning their sympathy to our – and our students' – situation into action to actually make it better.

In Solidarity,

The Day Bargaining Team

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