



Associated Faculties of the Universities of Maine

August 29, 2024

Dear Colleagues,

Welcome back to the new academic year. I hope you can enjoy the last of the beautiful Maine summer before classes begin but suspect any folks will be tweaking syllabi and class preparations. This update is lengthy because we have a negotiating report from Jim McClymer and Lisa Leduc below. While Lisa is the incoming lead of our Negotiating Team; Jim has agreed to continue (post-retirement!) during Lisa's medical leave this Fall. I remain on the Negotiating Team as the USM representative. I am incredibly appreciative of Jim's continued leadership.

AFUM leadership has worked through the summer as the System and campus administration doesn't stop. We have accompanied colleagues to meetings, replied to many emails from members, met with campus leadership and System Labor Relations and the Negotiating Team has met all summer as we try and reach agreement on a new Collective Bargaining Agreement.

Our colleagues in [UMPSA](#) and ASCUM and the new Graduate Student union ([UMGWUA-UAW](#)) are also in negotiations. (Their updates are linked above). Unfortunately, we learned Tuesday, August 27 that the Director of Labor Relations and Lead negotiator of the System, Vanria DeMay, has separated from UMS and we await news of who will be their lead negotiator. Ria was a good partner, and we will miss her – even when we disagreed, she was ethical, clear, direct and brought a sense of humor and humanity to the position.

We learned just Wednesday, August 28 that the System Risk and Safety Management has sent an email and decreed **Masks: At this time, faculty cannot require students to wear masks in class. Our current guidelines...do not include provisions for such mandates.** This was not discussed with AFUM and we were informed at the same time you were. In the meantime, express to your students a preference for masks in your classroom if you have one and seek ADA accommodations as appropriate.

I expect that AFUM will have another busy year of reminding administrators that we have a collective bargaining agreement.

In solidarity,
Lydia Savage

Negotiating Update from Jim McClymer and Lisa Leduc

We remain without a new contract as the academic year starts. Previous contractual terms continue. Please let AFUM know if anyone claims that contractual terms will not be honored, including promotions or steps.

It has been an extremely difficult negotiation session throughout the Spring and Summer. While we have managed to make some progress, we remain far apart on many issues.

WORKING ISSUES:

1. Distance Education

AFUM proposed following the Fact-Finding recommendations to settle the issue of Distance Education Past Practice (DEPP) and we proposed MANY alternatives, no agreement could be reached so we are moving to arbitration. Please let AFUM know if anyone attempts to alter the past practice.

2. Retiree Health Insurance

When we enacted the Special Retirement Incentive (SRI) a couple years ago an issue arose that we, and UMS leadership, was not aware of: it is the UMS position that if you or your spouse are not covered under UMS health when you retire, you are not eligible for post-retirement insurance.

AFUM never agreed to such a mean spirited, unethical arrangement. Indeed, on EHPTF UMS has been seeking ways to move spouses off of insurance for years with no knowledge that by doing so, in UMS opinion, would bar them from a negotiated benefit.

When the issue arose during the SRI UMS made an exception and agreed to end that practice. The CHRO left before this could be done. Now UMS is saying it is fine to steal your family's retirement benefits.

We have a special meeting being set up to discuss. With open enrolment approaching it is critical for members to know that, in UMS opinion, if either employee or spouse opts out then they lose retiree health insurance for ever.

Nor should we forget the unethical, and illegal, action perpetuated by UMS administration to unilaterally change retiree health insurance to the detriment of many, and to the advantage of UMS. During that debacle, Chancellor Malloy committed to the Maine Legislature that the HRA would be adjusted. But these commitments, like so many others, turned out to be meaningless. There have been no adjustments to the HRA amount.

When AFUM inquired what it was indexed to we were told it hadn't been indexed. When we proposed an objective means to increase the HRA using US Medicare data UMS countered that they would review and change when they decided. Such a proposal is clearly not in keeping with Malloy's commitment but is keeping with the contempt UMS continues to show faculty and staff.

3. Childcare

While Child Care is a critical issue, UMS has little of concrete value to offer. We have proposed MANY potential options over the years for UMS to help with the childcare challenges our member's face, their responses remain focused on cost and not the detrimental impact of these issues on faculty and staff. The UMS plan appears to continue to do little to plan to address this long-standing issue.

4. System-wide Library Access

The emptiness of "Unified Accreditation" continues to be exposed as AFUM efforts to ensure that our members and students have access to library and other academic resources from all the campuses are rebuffed as "too expensive". Competent leadership would have worked through these and more issues before moving forward with Single Accreditation. As was clear, neither the Bot nor the System really gave a damn about honestly discussing Unified Accreditation, content to peddle misinformation about the inability to transfer classes.

We are working on an agreement to have CAO assist faculty on an individual basis with issues. We thank in advance those CAO's who will do what the System should have designed in from the beginning.

5. Salary

As we all know the large inflation spike in 2022, coupled with adjacent year inflation exceeding salary increases, have left members earning less while often doing more under worse circumstances.

It seems reasonable that any salary increase at least return us to even. UMS however continues to show how faculty, indeed all employees, are not valued.

There is money for salary increases that don't have us working each year for less and less, it is a matter of priorities. For example, UMS continues to divert public money to private interests in Portland, primarily associated with the open spigot of money for the Law School.

These issues are just some highlights of the long list of proposals we have been making and working on over the last several months. While we have reached agreement on some issues, the work continues.

Yours in solidarity and wishing you a great semester,
Jim McClymer
Lisa Leduc

Ps. (From Jim) I want to thank the many people who thanked me and wished me well on my coming retirement, effective September 1. I have yet to respond but want to assure you these comments meant a lot. As Lisa said, I shall stick around as long as needed to assist in negotiations and arbitrations.