

Dear Faculty and Librarians,

Today, MSCA President CJ O'Donnell notified the DHE and Salem State's legal counsel that the MSCA would not be entering negotiations to furlough faculty and librarians at Salem State.

In his notification email, O'Donnell wrote: "The MSCA Board of Directors considered SSU's request to enter mid-term negotiations on the proposal that you sent at a meeting on Friday, July 10, 2020. The Board voted - unanimously - not to authorize the MSCA day Bargaining Committee to enter mid-term negotiations."

To this, O'Donnell further added: "The MSCA is committed to the financial viability of the university, but I believe the furloughing of faculty and librarians - the heart and soul of any university - is not necessary and that the university has other avenues to address the budget shortfall. Perhaps the SSU Board of Trustees should have listened to the chapter and not preemptively included furloughs as a ploy to balance the budget."

To help our chapter members understand where we currently stand, here is a recap of what transpired prior to the decision made by the MSCA Board of Directors.

On **June 30th**, Salem State President John Keenan proposed furloughing all Salem State employees for five weeks during Fiscal Year 2021 (FY2021), citing a fiscal crisis. (A summary of management's proposal as it relates to MSCA members may be found at the end of this email.)

In response, the MSCA/Salem State Chapter executive committee solicited feedback from members at an emergency meeting (attended by 109 members) and in a survey questionnaire (to which 209 members responded). In your comments and responses, many themes emerged, including concerns such as the following:

- Five weeks is "extreme", especially on a nine month contract, and out-of-step with furloughs at other Commonwealth campuses, with costs that could be financially devastating to some employees.
- Extensive furloughs would harm students, making it harder for students to access the support they need during this time of national crisis, and making it impossible for faculty to prepare to teach their courses between the fall and spring semester. (Federal law prohibits furloughed workers from engaging in any work activity during their furloughs.)
- A lack of equity across members and units. For example, members noted that the proposal didn't address impact disparities by reducing the number of furlough days for employees in the lowest salary brackets.
- Despite management's proposal that faculty eliminate scholarly productivity throughout FY2021 as compensation for taking furloughs, this does not work

legally (see note about federal law in bullet #2), and it is not professionally, ethically, or logistically reasonable. (As our last two provosts have made clear, scholarship is an important, central part of faculty members' work. As such, faculty have commitments to publications, collaborators, grant projects, and professional associations, and members noted that we cannot ethically withdraw from those commitments because of furloughs.)

- In making this proposal, management seems to have disregarded other options available to bridge the financial gap, such as using some portion of the university's "rainy day" reserve funds, which would be appropriate to use at this time. (As one member put it, this isn't just a rainy day -- it's a monsoon.)
- Management proposed the furloughs too early: We will not know the actual budget shortfall until the fall, due to unknown variables such as final fall enrollment numbers, the state appropriation, and whether there will be an additional Federal relief act, e.g. the Heroes bill.
- The proposed furloughs would be a one-year-only solution. Members noted that furloughs would not fix the pre-existing structural financial problems that resulted from years of fiscal mismanagement by our Board of Trustees and the upper administration.
- The proposal failed to guarantee that agreeing to furloughs would prevent retrenchment. E.g., our members noted that the unions agreed to a VSIP (voluntary retirement) proposal only one year ago, and that management had threatened retrenchment as a possible consequence if the unions did not agree to the VSIP. Many departments have made significant sacrifices in FY2020 due to the understaffing that resulted from the VSIP; and yet only a year later, after millions of dollars of savings that should span many years, management is threatening employees with retrenchment yet again.

Additionally, as O'Donnell explained to the chapter in his brief on July 8th, "In mid-term negotiations, once management declares an impasse, they can implement their '**last best offer**.' In this case, should the MSCA enter mid-term negotiations, and should SSU not move off their initial proposal, the proposal for five weeks of furloughs could be implemented."

Therefore, at this time, ***furloughs are off the table***. Should management choose to return to the MSCA with a new proposal and a new request to enter into negotiations, we will let you know.

Please continue to check your email for messages from the union while you are off contract this summer, and also feel free to reach out to us at any time with any concerns you may have. But please do avoid making suggestions to management (publicly or privately) about what you would have personally agreed to, or might agree to in the

future: Per state law, we must avoid indirect bargaining (and management is supposed to, as well).

Please remember to always bring any ideas or requests you may have about your labor conditions to union leadership. We are here to negotiate for you, as we are stronger and have greater power when we stand together.

In solidarity,
Tiffany Gayle Chenault
MSCA/Salem Chapter President

Proposal recap:

In their furlough proposal, management proposed that faculty and librarians would take 5 weeks of furloughs in week-long increments in FY2021. During the furloughed weeks, our members would receive **no pay**; would need to **write checks** to pay for continued health insurance coverage; and would be obliged to **do no work**.

The proposal suggested that **librarians** would take 25 furlough days in 1-week increments over the course of FY2021, with individual dates arranged collaboratively by librarians and their supervisors, while suggesting that **faculty** be furloughed on all the weeks we will be on contract but not in the classroom for undergraduate day courses. The proposed dates were:

- December 27, 2020 - January 2, 2021
- January 3 - 9, 2021
- January 10 - 16, 2021
- March 14 - 20, 2021
- May 23 - 29, 2021