

DGCE Bargaining Report, January 20, 2021:

The MSCA and BHE bargaining teams met on January 19.

- 1) Our proposal for a **one-year extension** reflected some substantial withdrawals from our last offer, and included only these requests:
 - a. We accepted management's language here from last session: tech support to convert courses to a remote/online format "as practicable."
 - b. No collection of data or analytics of faculty online courses and websites.
 - c. Limit the window for classroom observation on distance education courses to three days.

Management proposed further limiting item a. to reflect that this provision would end on December 31, 2021. Management also rejected item b. on grounds that that it was not pandemic related and was something grieved at Westfield State, where analytics on several faculty members were collected and used in evaluations and course appointments. The union believes that ensuring the confidentiality of faculty and students is especially important at a time when most of us teach in a remote environment. Management objected to item c. stating the same reason as for item b. The union believes it is important to have a reasonable process outlined in the contract about how classroom observations of online/remote classes be conducted that is in line with a face-to- face classroom observation.

Management's last proposal was to reflect a 0% increase on stipends, as to "memorialize" the lack of raises for DGCE faculty.

- 2) Our proposal for a **COVID-related Memorandum of Agreement** reflected the following:
 - a. Deletion of our request to expunge Fall 2020 student evaluations and classroom observations, at the request of our members.
 - b. That classroom observations be suspended until Phase 4 of the Governor's re-opening plan is well under way. This time period includes the Spring 2021, Summer 2021 and very likely Fall 2021 instructional periods.
 - c. That student evaluations not be administered until Phase 4 of the Governor's re-opening plan is well under way. This time period includes the Spring 2021, Summer 2021 and very likely the Fall 2021 instructional periods.

Management agreed to item a., and to the language the union offered as a compromise at the last session regarding offering a safe workspace for faculty who are required to work on campus between classes. However, they objected strongly to items b. and c. As to student evaluations, management wishes to conduct both beginning in the Spring 2021 instructional period on grounds that "student evaluations are important." Granted, student evaluations are important, however, management appears unaware of the extraordinary pedagogical circumstances faculty across the state face due to the pandemic. In terms of classroom observations, management offered not to perform them in the Spring 2021 and Summer 2021 instructional periods.

The union's proposal was to suspend student evaluations and classroom observations until the end of these extraordinary circumstances when we enter Phase 4 or at the termination of the contract on December 31st, whichever comes first. It is worth noting that DGCE faculty are observed only every 6th course, so the lack of classroom observations would not affect faculty members in multiple instructional periods. Also, management is not willing to suspend student evaluations for even a single instructional period despite the challenges faculty are facing, and the fact that student evaluations are currently suspended for day faculty.

Management also limited the health and safety provisions until the end of Summer 2021, while the union proposed they be in place until the Commonwealth enters Phase 4 (potentially including the Fall 2021 instructional period). In our view, management is being overly optimistic regarding the eradication of COVID-19 by the beginning of the next academic year. We were disappointed to see their disregard for our health and safety proposals.

After much deliberation, we agreed to meet again on February 17, 2021 and have proposed dates in March. The union is still interested in reaching a one-year agreement, but management's proposals lead us to believe that, perhaps, they are not.

In closing, and on behalf of the DGCE Bargaining Committee, I would like to extend our heartfelt thanks to our silent representatives who have attended our bargaining sessions since last summer.

In solidarity,

Graziana Ramsden (MCLA), DGCE Bargaining Chair
Irina Seceleanu (Bridgewater), DGCE Bargaining Vice Chair
Rala Diakite (Fitchburg)
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