

Response to Anonymous Questions Posed at the UNF Faculty Association, October 13, 2016

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QUESTION SYNOPSIS-XII:

As you know, a number of faculty (I have heard 17) felt shortchanged last year when they did not receive the full raise amount they thought they should have gotten. I have heard that the annual cost of remedying this would have been approximately \$75,000. Is this correct?

The salary issue noted in the question refers specifically to the compression and inversion adjustments made as part of the current CBA (the faculty referenced above received the raises due to them following promotion as well as a 4% across the board raise). We believe that the amount quoted would be sufficient in order to bring these particular faculty members' salaries to where they wish them to be (excluding the additional costs for benefits).

However, the issue referenced in the question could not be solved even if university administration offered that amount (which has not been the case). First and most importantly, these 17 faculty members are a subset of a larger group. It would be unethical for the union to seek or for the university to provide C & I adjustments solely for the benefit of one group while others—including a number of senior faculty—remain compressed and inverted. Second, the operative term in the question is “[the] amount *they thought* they should have gotten.” Context is important (and the term “shortchanged” is moot). These 17 faculty members sought promotion and tenure in 2013-2014, the year during which our union negotiated the current contract with its 4% across the board raise and \$1 million in C & I adjustments. The official date for determining a faculty member's rank and thus for computing compression and inversion adjustments was—as it has always been for raises—June 30th (the end of the previous CBA and the end of the university's fiscal year). On that date, these individuals had not yet been promoted as all promotions in rank begin with the start of new contracts in August. Thus these faculty members were not compressed or inverted per the terms and conditions in the CBA (which itself incorporated the C & I computational methodology recommended by the American Association of University Professors). It is also important to note that while the traditional and logical date for determining C & I adjustments did not prove beneficial to these particular faculty members, using a different date would have other significant ramifications.

Our chapter has sought and will continue to seek much needed salary adjustments, including for the individuals in this group.

QUESTION SYNOPSIS-XIII:

On October 3rd, you emailed all faculty claiming that "Among the 11 established State University System schools in Florida, UNF ranks last in average faculty salary." Shouldn't UNF's faculty take this as a sign that our union has done a poor job negotiating salary increases?

I trust that as an integral part of their professional training, most faculty members have been taught to examine the evidence and to understand the relevant contexts before drawing conclusions. Faculty doing so in this case (as many have) would find that there are four major factors affecting their current pay and their union's ability to negotiate raises. First, they would learn that Florida is a "right to work" state, meaning that faculty and its union leadership are legally prohibited from even threatening to go on strike. Without the ability to strike and thus affect production, a union loses its strongest bargaining tool. Second, faculty would see that raises are reliant upon funding and that funding is completely controlled by university administration, the state legislature, and the Board of Governors. With no ability to threaten a walkout or a slowdown, the union has nothing to leverage or trade for raises (with the possible exception of demonstrating a willingness to sacrifice some faculty and staff to layoffs so that others can get a raise—a tactic that we vehemently oppose). Our success at the bargaining table is reliant upon bringing ongoing inequities to light, having a large and active union membership, and upon university administration prioritizing faculty needs. Third, by examining pay issues longitudinally, faculty will see that UNF's low faculty pay is directly related to an earlier era when contracts were negotiated statewide and the highest salaries went to the faculty at the preeminent and larger universities. Our chapter inherited the problem but has nonetheless made major strides in addressing the issue. Finally, just a year and a half ago our chapter negotiated the largest faculty raises in over a decade—raises that included 4% across the board, over \$1 million for C & I adjustments, a higher base for beginning and junior tenure-line professors, and the first-ever promotion/raise system for our many Instructors and Lecturers. I believe that once faculty members have examined these issues, they cannot logically conclude that their union "has done a poor job negotiating salary increases." And while faculty members are free to draw a different conclusion about their union's effectiveness, they should take into account how their pay, their academic freedom, their promotions and tenure, and their overall job security might have been affected were there no organized group (aka their union) lobbying on their behalf.