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October 1, 2006

DURHAM, N.H. -- The University of New Hampshire administration announced today that it has reached impasse in contract negotiations with the UNH chapter of the American Association of University Professors (AAUP).

Impasse occurs when no agreement is reached during contract negotiations and the parties seek help from a mediator. The administration and the AAUP negotiating teams have been meeting since early spring of this year. The administration presented its latest offer to the faculty union two weeks ago.

According to state labor law, the University and the AAUP will now engage in mediation and, if necessary, fact finding. These processes require a neutral, third party who is in a position to encourage further efforts to resolve the challenging issues that led to today's impasse. "We'll continue to work hard to achieve a settlement with the union through the prescribed process," said Bruce Mallory, UNH provost and executive vice president.

"We have reached tentative agreement on a number of issues," he said, "Both sides have worked very hard to negotiate a fair and equitable contract for our faculty, but we are in disagreement in some areas."

The two primary issues are salary and benefits. "Clearly, these are sensitive issues," Mallory explained, "but we are committed to providing our faculty with a fair, competitive and affordable compensation package."

The salary package offered to the AAUP totals 4.5 percent. This exceeds the national average for total faculty increases last year of 4.4 percent and is intended to sustain the progress made in the last contract, in which UNH achieved a long-held goal of exceeding the midpoint of faculty salaries at the five other New England state land-grant universities and reached the average of its national peer group of fourteen top-tier research universities.

A portion of the salary proposal is dedicated to merit and equity increases. "Now that we have made significant progress on raising faculty salaries as a whole, we need the flexibility to reward performance and address salary inequities that have been exacerbated by several years of across-the-board increases," said Mallory.

The University's benefits proposal mirrors similar benefits packages for faculty and staff throughout the university system campuses - UNH, Keene State College, Plymouth State University and Granite State College --and is consistent with national trends in employee benefits.
Mallory added that the administration has to be vigilant regarding the bigger picture during negotiation discussions. "We are committed to providing our students with an excellent undergraduate and graduate education experience. We need to be able to maintain that excellence, even in the face of our financial challenges - deferred critical maintenance on our facilities, growing financial aid costs, energy cost increases, and benefits costs for all UNH employees. Our goal is to successfully bring all of these into balance. The offer we put on the table just prior to impasse was the administration's best attempt at being mindful of all our competing needs."

The current three-year faculty collective bargaining agreement would have expired on June 30 of this year, but will now remain in force until a new contract can be negotiated.