

The Big Three: updates from your hard-working subcommittees!

► Salary

Joe Walls
Chair, LEO Salary Subcommittee

The Salary Subcommittee has met five times over the last few months. Below are several possible bargaining goals we are considering.

1. Obtain substantial annual raises for everyone
2. Make pay more equitable with comparable groups
3. Raise starting salaries
4. Establish a merit pay system
5. Reduce the gap between salaries in Ann Arbor and Flint/Dearborn
6. Reduce salary compression
7. Obtain a substantial raise for the third major review

One proposal being considered by the Subcommittee addresses the first three goals by achieving pay equity between lecturers and public school teachers within our respective geographic areas. For example, in Ann Arbor the current contractually stipulated starting salary for a Lecturer I is \$32,000, while the starting salary for a public school teacher with a Masters degree in the Ann Arbor district is \$47,000. To achieve parity would require a substantial salary adjustment of \$15,000. To make it easier for the Administration to manage this financially, the increase could be spread over six years, in increments of \$2,500 per year. Although Dearborn and Flint lecturers have a lower starting base salary as well as different starting public school teacher salaries, the proposal is to achieve \$2,500 annual increases on all campuses. We estimate that if undergraduate tuition continues to go up at historical rates, this kind of increase will keep total lecturer salaries at about the same percentage of total undergraduate tuition that it is now. Possible refinements to the proposal involve fixed increases for lower paid lecturers and percentage increases for others. The Subcommittee is considering an alternate proposal—using the salaries of tenure track faculty on the respective campuses or the

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► Benefits

Jennet Kirkpatrick
Chair, LEO Benefits Subcommittee

How much do your health and retirement benefits mean to you? That's a pretty vague question. Let's ask the same thing in a more concrete way. How often do you or your dependents make use of your health insurance benefits? And by "use" I mean things like visiting your primary care physician to check on a pesky cough that hasn't cleared up, driving to the urgent care unit to get relief from an earache that has beset you at 10 p.m., and rushing to the emergency room when your burgeoning soccer player breaks her leg.

These are just a few of the ways that we use benefits, of course. Even a full catalogue of visits to the doctor, prescriptions, immunizations, hospital stays, and the like is bound to be incomplete in one vital respect. Many of us "use" health and retirement benefits simply by having the invaluable peace of mind that they provide. Benefits give us the security and comfort of knowing that we're protected. Even if your concrete use of benefits is limited, you may well be using them for your long-term mental wellbeing.

On the Benefits Subcommittee, we've been thinking a great deal about how much health and retirement benefits mean to our bargaining unit because of the recent reductions in benefits for non-unionized faculty and staff that will be implemented by UM in January 2010. Since benefits for non-unionized employees will be reduced, it's likely that LEO will be presented with similar sorts of cutbacks when we sit down to negotiate in January.

We're particularly wary of these reductions because we believe our bargaining unit will be hit particularly hard by them. Why is that? Well, let's look at a concrete example. What would the Administration's proposed reductions mean to a Lecturer I on the Flint campus with a 75% appointment and healthcare

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► Job Security

Elizabeth Axelson
2010 LEO Chief Negotiator

The Job Security Subcommittee has met regularly over the summer and early fall to identify ways to strengthen job protections for employees in the new contract.

We envision the positive employment trajectory of a lecturer who is secure in his or her position and supported as an increasingly valuable resource to the University. Indeed, it is impressive how many lecturers achieve great growth in command of teaching and subject matter despite lack of security and support. Nevertheless, our Employer still tends to view us as more like a used car that loses value over time. They often seem eager to replace us with newer models! Never daunted, however, and stoked by the positive vision of what could be, we have developed proposals for enhancing job security at every stage of a lecturer's employment.

Across the board, we want to see an end to blanket lay-offs, a common and demoralizing practice in some departments. Imagine getting a lay-off letter every spring, despite successful evaluation and a multi-year employment contract. For some of us, this is the reality. For Lecturer Is, who must wait four long years for a major review and a modicum of job security, we would like to see some reward for a successful interim review, including a two-year contract that would carry this employee to his or her major review—if you pass your interim evaluation, we think you should have a right to make it to a major review.

For Lecturer IIs, in the event of program change requiring new skills, we would like to see no immediate lay-off but, rather, a period of retraining in and subsequent evaluation of the new skills. We also think a lecturer should retain benefits for a full semester if a late lay-off leads to less than 50% employment. In addition, Lecturer IIs should

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October 2009

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The Big Three (Salary, Benefits, Job Security)—How would you bargain them?

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LEO Annual Convention: conduct your union business in Henry Ford's pool room!

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salaries of lecturers at peer institutions rather than public school teacher salaries as a benchmark.

The issue of merit pay is a sticky one. Some lecturers are strongly in favor of it while others have their doubts. There are clear arguments for giving bigger increases to those whose performance is superior, but it is hard to ensure the fairness of such decisions. By contrast, no "academic judgment" is attached to fixed percentage salary increases. If merit pay were included in our bargaining platform, contract language would need to be developed that would maximize the equity of such a system.

Differences in salary scales among the three campuses were narrowed by the first two LEO contracts, but a substantial gap still exists. Salary compression occurs when long-term lecturer salaries fall behind the salaries of newer lecturer hires as a result of increased starting salaries and subsequent raises. Negotiating equity adjustments could help overcome this situation. In the current LEO contract there is no provision for a salary increase with the successful outcome of a third major review. The question we have asked is: why endure such a review if there is no payoff?

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coverage for herself as well as her spouse and children? This lecturer will pay almost \$200 more a month for her health care premium contributions. She will pay a projected \$5,000 in premium contributions for the year. A whopping 27% of her annual salary will be devoted to paying healthcare premiums.

And, what about her co-worker who has the exact same healthcare benefits but is not part-time? A lecturer with an 80% appointment—just a difference of 5%—will see an increase of about \$40 in monthly premiums. Just about 10% of her annual salary will be used to pay healthcare premiums. As you can see, the proposed increase of employee costs for benefits will be astounding for some lecturers. We need to think carefully as an organization whether this is acceptable to us.

► Job Security continued—

get first notice and a mandatory interview if they wish to apply for a Lecturer III position.

For Lecturer IIs and IVs, one of the biggest issues is the lack of value accorded to seniority in the order of lay-off, where the Employer seems blind to the

contribution of experience to expertise and ability. We also shudder at the specter of endless major reviews without salary bumps or other rewards beyond re-securing the employment one has long since demonstrated the necessary genius for. We want to see an end to more major reviews (no major review without a bump!), and propose instead open contracts with a "just cause" provision.

We are also looking at proposals to safeguard the employment of international lecturers, to make long-term sick pay and disability benefits available to those who pass an interim review, and to address continuing problems with the performance evaluation article. For one thing, let's end the practice in some departments of requiring book length annual reports!

In fact, the Job Security Subcommittee has probably generated more proposals than are feasible for one round of bargaining. We welcome the input of members through the fall survey and at the upcoming convention and membership meetings to help us winnow our ideas down to those that matter the most.



LEO Annual Convention

Saturday
October 24
10am-2pm

At the
Henry Ford
Estate
on the
UM Dearborn
campus

Lunch &
child care
provided

Carpool
available



Joel VanLaven, EECS, Ann Arbor
Member, LEO Bargaining Committee

My life inside UM: working on dissertation in Computer Science, full-time IT support job, sometimes teaching Electrical Engineering.

My life outside UM: father to 5 1/2 year old, knitting, reading science fiction.

Why me? I represent some groups that are under-represented in union activism (Engineering, Intermittents, and Adjuncts) and that I think don't get much from the contract. The Union can only represent people like me if people like me get involved in it.

I grew up on Welfare and Food Stamps because of catastrophic health problems my father had while at Carnegie Mellon University. I want to do what I can to help people not be in the position my family was in.

My favorite...Star Trek Episode is "The Inner Light." Because...the outward values of the show itself are questioned, and the main character is forever altered in a subtle unspoken but explicitly hinted-at way in later episodes.

Get Organized!

- Fill out the LEO survey by October 19 (tinyurl.com/yd2xd9q). Let us know what you think about salary, benefits, and job security!
- Find another lecturer to go to the annual convention with you.
- Meet the new lecturer in your department.
- Post your LEO office hours card.