

Nov. 17 Faculty Demonstration

Background/statement

We recognize and understand the challenges our employees are facing. Stagnant wages and the high cost of living in Seattle are putting pressure on all state employees working in the region.

Community colleges in Seattle, Olympia, and the Tri-Cities all receive the same base funding per student. The funding formula does not account for our region's high operating costs or the differences in cost of living.* This is having a direct effect on the student experience and limits our ability to adjust wages. Our employees are doing similar work as other state employees across the state, yet they are denied an opportunity to have the same quality of life. A regional pay structure, like those instituted for the highway patrol and Washington State Department of Transportation, could provide the necessary relief.

In essence, we believe that a state system that funds colleges at the same amount is inadequate for high-cost urban areas, such as Seattle.

*According to Salary.com, the cost of living and working in Seattle is 13.4 percent higher than Olympia and 20.2 percent higher than Richmond (near the Tri-Cities).

Q&A

What's happening?

The faculty at Seattle Colleges are staging a demonstration on Thursday, Nov. 17, from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Why are they staging the demonstration?

Seattle Colleges is in contract negotiations with the AFT Seattle union. There has been progress made on several fronts, but the two sides have not come to an agreement on all areas, one of which is salary increases.

Enrollment shifts, increases in operating costs, and changes in the state's funding model have created a perfect storm, leaving Seattle Colleges with an \$8 million to \$10 million budget reduction over the next four years. Despite this, Seattle Colleges has offered increases of at least 11.1 percent for full-time faculty and 7.8 percent for part-time faculty over the three years of the contract (July 2016 through June 2019).

At the Nov. 4, 2016, session, the parties agreed to engage a mediator. This mediation is scheduled to begin Nov. 18, 2016.

When did faculty last receive raises?

Over the last five years, faculty salaries have increased, in total, 7 to 10 percent.

What's the current offer?

AFT Seattle has structured its requests around four pillars. The Seattle Colleges District (SCD) has tried to be responsive to each of those pillars as follows.

AFT PILLAR 1 – Increase pay for all faculty.

- SCD proposals include salary increases of at least 11.1 percent for full-time faculty and 7.8 percent for part-time faculty over the three years of the contract (July 2016 through June 2019).
 - Six percent of these proposals are contingent upon legislative funding being approved in line with what has been agreed to with our classified staff union (WFSE).

AFT PILLAR 2 – Increase the ratio of full-time to part-time faculty to 75 percent of courses taught by full-time faculty and 25 percent of courses taught by part-time faculty.

- SCD has proposed the addition of 30 new full-time faculty positions over the life of the contract (three years), a 10 percent increase. SCD has also proposed grandfathering the Priority Hire program.

AFT PILLAR 3 – Improve part-time faculty working conditions.

- SCD has proposed:
 - Multi-quarter contracts for part-time faculty in an effort to improve job certainty
 - Increased utilization of full-time temporary contracts for part-time faculty

AFT PILLAR 4 – Apply standard definition of workload to all faculty.

- SCD has proposed a comprehensive workload package to account for student-contact classroom time and out-of-classroom activities to recognize the differences in faculty classroom time obligations. The proposal provides for more proactive, coordinated, and focused nonclassroom efforts to enable student success.
- SCD has provided curriculum change options for Basic and Transitional Studies programs for faculty to consider to ameliorate the required 20 hours per week of classroom time. The proposal does not change classroom contact time for all faculty to 15 hours per week as the AFT has proposed.

Significant tentative agreements

- Creation of a district-faculty shared governance committee
- Creation of a faculty diversity and inclusion committee

How did you arrive at the impasse? How long have you been bargaining?

The parties have met 22 times since Feb. 12, 2016, and have been engaged in interest-based bargaining practices. At the Nov. 4, 2016, session, the parties agreed to engage a mediator. This mediation is scheduled to begin Nov. 18, 2016.

How does this demonstration affect students?

We trust that our faculty members who have chosen to participate have given their students prior notice of this action.

Why can't/don't you offer higher salaries?

We have squeezed as much as we can from our budget.

Enrollment shifts, increases in operating costs, and changes in the state's funding model have created a perfect storm, leaving Seattle Colleges with an \$8 million to \$10 million budget reduction over the next four years.

How can you offer raises when you have a budget shortfall?

Our low wages are making it increasingly difficult to hire and retain staff and faculty at the Seattle Colleges. We have an 18 percent turnover rate for exempt staff and 10 percent for classified staff. We believe the high turnover rates for these two groups is due in large part to low wages.

In an effort to prevent this trend from affecting our faculty, the administration decided to use local funds to offer raises. (This is the first year the district has had the authority to use local funds.)

What are you doing about the budget deficit?

We are actively working with legislators, the Washington State Board of Community and Technical Colleges, and local elected leaders to advocate for additional funding to support our student and employee needs.

We are also instituting a *selective* hiring freeze and implementing an aggressive review of operations. We will continue to proactively pursue federal and private foundation grants and additional scholarship and student support funds from the community.