

Tuesday, September 8, 2009

Classes are officially canceled at OU for Tuesday, Sept. 8

Oakland University officials, who have been bargaining in good faith with the Oakland University chapter of the American Association of University Professors, are disappointed that despite marathon bargaining and a substantial contract offer, faculty representatives walked away from negotiations at approximately 5 a.m. on Tuesday.

All classes for Tuesday were officially canceled.

Hopeful the offer would be accepted and a strike the AAUP called last week would come to an end, administrators were surprised by the union negotiators' decision.

"The university sincerely regrets the inconvenience caused by this illegal strike, which the AAUP called despite a proposal suggested by a state mediator to continue working while negotiations continue," said University President Gary Russi. "It is a great disservice to our students, their families and the university as a whole, and we will continue working in earnest to resolve the situation as soon as possible."

To minimize the detrimental effects this action is having on students, the university will ask an Oakland County Circuit Court judge to order faculty members back to work. Classes will remain canceled on Tuesday, but students should check the **OU homepage** and their university e-mail accounts regularly for updates on negotiations.

Meanwhile, university faculty pay has been docked over the last eight days and will continue to be docked so long as a work stoppage continues.

Since negotiations began in May and through the last five days of continuous bargaining, university administrators have observed a policy of leaving discussions at the negotiating table rather than bargaining in the press. As result of a great deal of inaccurate information the AAUP has given to the media, however, officials have been compelled to set the record straight.

The claim that administrators are trying to take away tenure and summer pay, for example is completely inaccurate. Faculty members with tenure and those on tenure tracks are protected, as is the summer pay of all faculty. In addition, the faculty's role in shared governance of the university will not be impacted in any way.

Also untrue is the claim that the university is taking away health care benefits. OU has offered faculty members a choice of three HMO plans — HAP, BlueCare Network and Priority Health — all at no cost.

There is no truth to the claim that administrators are bargaining to reduce faculty pay. In fact, an offer has been made to raise pay in the second and third years of the proposed, three-year contract, as well as to increase research and travel funding. The university simply cannot, however, offer the more than 11 percent in pay increases faculty representatives have requested over the next three years.

It also should be noted that faculty members have made a number of erroneous claims about the university's financial condition, including that it has a Aaa credit rating. Faculty union members have since recanted some of these claims, but not publicly.

Though the university and its faculty face a number of obstacles in terms of reaching a contract agreement, students and their families should remain assured that a full semester of instruction will be delivered during the fall semester. The university recognizes the toll missed educational opportunities would have on students and will do whatever it takes to deliver a top-notch educational experience.

SUMMARY

Despite marathon bargaining and a substantial contract offer, faculty representatives walked away from negotiations, causing Tuesday's classes to be canceled.

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