

NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

University of Hawaii Professional Assembly Declares Impasse in Bargaining with Governor, UH President and Board of Regents

Eight months have passed since the UHPA sent contract proposals to the State of Hawaii and the UH Administration. After seven months of negotiations that began in late May 2008, the University of Hawaii Professional Assembly (UHPA), the union that represents 3900 faculty members, has declared an impasse in its bargaining efforts with the Governor, UH President, and the Board of Regents. UHPA's current contract expires June 30, 2009.

J. N. Musto, UHPA executive director and chief negotiator, has indicated that a significant difference in opinion has evolved between the State and UHPA over the importance of having a successor contract between the faculty, the University, and the State in place on July 1, 2008. "This is not just about whether there will be salary increases," Musto said.

Gov. Linda Lingle has asked all public sector unions (with the exception of SHOPO and the Firefighters who are in the middle of four-contracts) to extend their current contracts for another year from June 30, 2009, to June 30, 2010, pointing to the state's projected \$900 million budget shortfall over the next three years and the instability in global financial markets.

Although the UHPA leadership is still considering the Governor's request, UHPA believes that the parties should work diligently towards a new two-year new contract. At

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this point, the parties have reached a stalemate over the issue of whether there should be a new contract on July 1, 2009, regardless of the terms.

“It is unfortunate that the parties have been unable to reach to an agreement, and we find ourselves having to declare impasse. However, this impasse results not from whether the contract should include salary increases, but rather whether it is wise to put all negotiations on hold for a year,” Musto said. “We all recognize that our economy is at a critical point, but it is important for the continuing viability of the University that we reach an agreement that can carry the University forward over the next two years.”

Musto went on to say, “The contract provides the basis for restructuring all aspects of the conditions of faculty employment at the University, and for this reason we are disappointed that the Governor does not wish to agree to a contract with UHPA at this time, even within the spending parameters the Governor has set for this next Legislative session. There are many other non-cost issues that also need to be addressed with the UH administration.”

The UH is experiencing the highest number of enrollees in the history of the institution, particularly in the community colleges. People are returning to school because of the slowing economy to learn new skills and to be retrained to increase their earning potential. The UH system and faculty are critical to a stable, flourishing local economy. The contract provides a plan to address the critical employment needs of the institution, particularly with respect to the recruitment and retention of faculty.

It is precisely during times of uncertainty like these that higher education should receive more attention. “Higher education is one of those countercyclical sectors that require counterintuitive thinking. Even the federal government recognizes that higher education is a key component in getting us through this economic turmoil. As part of an economic

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recovery plan, the federal government plans more countercyclical investments to support individual states to minimize or avoid cuts to programs to balance budgets,” according to Musto.

Musto also said he hopes that a mediator will help resolve the contract issues quickly because delays beyond the contract expiration date may cause some faculty to leave for better opportunities. “Faculty are part of a unique category of professionals. We are dealing with a global labor pool; we have to compete nationally and internationally for quality faculty who may be lured away by other offers in other areas of the country that understand the value of higher education.”

“Faculty members attract dollars into the state, providing a significant return on their salaries and benefits,” Musto said. “Currently, we invest \$280 million in our faculty and, in return, they generate \$450 million in research grants and other funding from outside our state. Investing in the faculty is an investment in our University, which is a prudent investment in our State economy. By any measure, we should be proud of our faculty and be doing all we can to retain them for the benefit of Hawaii’s people.”

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About the University of Hawaii Professional Assembly (UHPA)

The UHPA has been the exclusive bargaining agent for all faculty members of the University of Hawaii system since November 1, 1974. The UH System is governed by one Board of Regents and includes seven Community Colleges, UH-Hilo, UH-Manoa, and UH-West Oahu. The UHPA is the elected faculty union as set forth in Hawaii Revised Statutes, Chapter 89.