

NEWS FROM UWFA

EDITOR: DANIEL STONE

1997 / 1998 UWFA EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

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resident's Report

I am happy to report that at its meeting on Friday, September 5th, the Executive Council of UWFA supported unanimously a proposal to resolve our long-standing policy grievance over pensions with the Administration. Accordingly, I have signed a Letter of Understanding with the Administration ending the conflict.

This, I believe, is good news and allows us to move along to other matters, especially negotiations which are about to enter a crucial stage. (I will be reporting on this to you before the end of the month.)

The pension grievance arose out of the first early retirement plan of 1988. This was so popular that it gobbled up a large amount of the Pension Plan's actuarial surplus. UWFA had been given an undertaking that this early plan would not have a "detrimental" effect on the Pension Plan. Thus was launched the germ of the eventual grievance.

In April, 1994, UWFA brought a Policy Grievance against the Administration. If this course had been proceeded with, it would have gone to arbitration. This would have been costly and divisive. Therefore, without withdrawing the threat of arbitration, UWFA also sought a negotiated solution. Off and on negotiations have been underway for some time.

Last winter one solution pursued was to separate the UWFA component of the Pension Plan from the rest of the Plan, leaving a free-standing, purely UWFA Plan. That option was not supported by the

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membership and, this summer, fresh negotiations proceeded. With the change of Executive, four of us negotiated on your behalf: Alden Turner, Tim Babcock, Jim Clark and myself. Out of this emerged the draft Letter of Understanding that the Executive Council agreed to last week and which I have signed. The matter now rests with the Board of Regents for their approval, which I believe will be forthcoming.

As I said to the Executive Council, this agreement represents another step in a long march toward greater control by the membership over the Pension Plan.

The University's Pension Plan includes everybody: all unions, all administrators, all employees. UWFA's proportion of the Plan Members is about 45%, but its share of individual contributions to the Plan is about 70%. UWFA has felt for some time that holding such a large stake in the resources of the Plan entitles it to a greater say in its operation. Particularly our concern about early retirement plans is that, judiciously introduced, they can benefit everybody. Improperly introduced, they can draw down the assets of the Plan and make difficult improvements in other areas of its operation. This has been our concern.

The agreement reached provides a number of advantages:

1. It restructures the Pension Committee. First, it provides for an independent, neutral Chair; it provides for 50 - 50 representation from Administration and Plan members; and, thirdly, it puts limits on Senior Administration representing support staff excluded from bargaining units. Altogether the purpose of these changes will be to ensure a fairer, more equal balance between Board of Regents representation and Pension Plan members' representation on the Pension Committee.
2. It provides for a clear declaration from the Board of Regents that it is committed to an "open" and "transparent" operation of the Pension Committee;
3. It provides for a clear declaration from the Board of Regents that Pension Plan surpluses will only be used to make "improvements" to the Plan;
4. It provides UWFA an opportunity to organize a rejection of a proposed new early retirement plan if it is deemed unacceptable to its members. If 50% of the Plan's Members vote against a proposed early retirement plan, the scheme will be withdrawn.

These are the particulars of the resolution of a long-standing grievance. I am happy to see this day and it is time to move on. My hope is that the Administration, in its own mind free of what it saw as impediments, will now introduce a carefully crafted, exciting early retirement plan that will allow some of us to move along, improve employment conditions for the rest of us and, as well, further the process of the "greening" of the faculty. This is a good note on which to begin the new year.

ALLEN MILLS

EDITOR'S REPORT

Welcome, new UWFA members! -- and for continuing members, welcome back! This brief issue of the NEWSLETTER carries an important report from Allen Mills on the settlement of the long-standing pension grievance and a short negotiating report from Reg Skene.

I hope to get another issue out in early October. Please send me information and/or topics for future issues.

DAN STONE

CHIEF NEGOTIATOR'S REPORT

Negotiations began again Thursday, September 11, after a summer recess. Plans are to proceed in a concentrated fashion in the next few weeks, with emphasis on the important matters of compensation and benefits.

REG SKENE