



District Contract Proposal Promises Contentious Negotiations

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During the Faculty Association's spring Flex luncheon, SOCCCD Chancellor Raghu Mathur stood up during the meeting to state that the District is interested in quickly resolving negotiations over the new faculty contract, and in not repeating extended negotiations necessary to produce the last contract. To a faculty still weary from the last round of negotiations, it sounded almost too good to be true. It was.

On April 19th, when the agenda for the April 23rd meeting of the SOCCCD Board of Trustees meeting is published—including the District's initial contract (aka "sunshine") proposal—the Chancellor's promise will be proved false.

Some Background

The process of negotiating a new contract is spelled out in the Educational Employees Relations Act (also known as the EERA, or Rodda Act). According to the EERA, bargaining a new contract between faculty and the District may begin after each side presents its initial proposal at a public meeting, and the public is allowed the opportunity to comment on the proposals. The Faculty Association presented its initial proposal at the March meeting, and the District will follow with its initial proposal at the April meeting. Bargaining will commence after the public has an opportunity to comment at the May Board meeting.

After a detailed faculty survey and careful deliberations, the Faculty Association decided to present a conservative initial proposal, hoping to

quickly resolve negotiations, but to avoid losing any hard-won ground from the previous contract, while gaining a fair raise in compensation. The Executive Committee and Negotiating Team reasoned that a contributing factor to the length of the previous negotiations was that the contract was heavily rewritten to replace a dated document, which had been revised so often that it had become awkward and confusing. Now that the contract had been entirely rewritten into a mutually acceptable document, all that remained was to clean up some problems that had come up in practice, resolve some issues left over from the previous round of negotiations, respond to faculty concerns about working conditions and benefits, and develop a fair salary proposal. The plan was to get a new, fair contract quickly, and let the faculty enjoy its raises as soon as possible, rather than go even one year without a contract, or a raise.

The District's Proposal

The District's initial proposal, to be distributed on Thursday, indicates that its strategy for negotiation is rather different, and certainly contradicts the Chancellor's hopeful comments from the spring. Indeed, if the District tries to hold firm to its proposal during negotiations, it may be some time before a new contract can be achieved.

The District has chosen to present a provocative sunshine proposal, containing many proposed provisions apparently designed to anger the faculty, and start negotiations on a contentious footing. The District's negotiators seem determined to revisit contractual provisions apparently resolved in the previous round of negotiations, and to introduce some new take-aways at the same time.

The District's proposal raises the possibility that negotiations may continue into the next trustee election cycle in 2008, requiring the involvement of an angry and very well funded Faculty Association PAC to take action through the political process.

Included in the proposal are the following revisions, along with others:

- rewriting Article VII (Management Rights) to re-insert the (completely unnecessary) "comprehensive recitation of Management's rights" that were deleted in the last round of negotiations;

- deleting the provision from Article IX (Unit Stability) which requires the District to negotiate with the Association changes in faculty job titles, which would allow the District to alter faculty members' jobs unilaterally;
- requiring faculty to attend the Chancellor's and Presidents' Flex Week Opening Sessions, departmental and division/school meetings, and Commencement;
- requiring faculty members to work a set minimum number of days on campus;
- allowing in faculty evaluations the use of information not collected through the evaluation process;
- including curriculum (presumably a faculty member's participation in the curriculum review and development processes) in the evaluation;
- including student evaluations in the evaluation (presumably to make them part of the permanent evaluation report, since they already exist for the use of the faculty in the current contract);
- including in the evaluation a recommendation for retaining or firing faculty members(!);
- connecting the ability to teach overload to evaluations;
- heavily revising Article XXII (Lay-Off Procedures) into a "comprehensive layoff article, which shall include a meaningful process for identifying Faculty Service Areas" (currently, we have one FSA. Allowing the District to define more limited FSAs would make it possible for it to do focused layoffs, in preparation for outsourcing, for instance);
- revising Article XXVII (Benefits) to "include cost containment provisions" (presumably, passing along to faculty increased benefit costs);
- eliminating retiree medical, dental and vision insurance for future hires;
- and the kicker—proposing the development of a *new, "comprehensive 'No Strike' provision"!*

The Solution

There is only one way to avoid lengthy negotiations: stand up and show the Board that

their proposal is an insult, and that their administration has made you angry. Show them that we are committed to a fair contract, and unified behind our Association. We can no longer sit back and let others speak for us. We all need to work together to make sure each of our voices is heard.

Here's what you must do, if you want to resolve the contract quickly:

- If you're not a member of the Faculty Association, join. There is strength in numbers.
- If you know a colleague—either full- or part-time—who has not joined the Faculty Association, urge her to sign up. There is strength in unity.
- Attend the Board meetings until the contract is resolved. Before the meeting, obtain a yellow slip, fill it out, and hand it to Association President Ken Woodward, and then stand up and tell the Board how mad you are, and how committed you are to a fair resolution of the contract. Even if you choose not to speak, show up for the Board meetings, and stand in support of your colleagues. There is strength in visibility.

Above all, there is strength in standing united, speaking with one voice, and showing the Board that we won't tolerate any more of this nonsense.

SOCCCD Board of Trustees Meeting Schedule

HS 145, Saddleback College

Public session begins at 6 pm (unless otherwise noted)

Monday, April 23

Monday, May 21

Monday, June 25

Monday, July 23

Monday, August 27

Monday, September 24

Monday, October 22

Tuesday, November 20

Monday, December 10

Public comments are near the beginning of the meeting. You don't need to stay for the whole meeting (probably no more than an hour).