

Union meets OUS to strike bargain

■ Last week's discussions began a bargaining process between the two groups

By Andrew Adams
Oregon Daily Emerald

Representatives from the public employees union and the Oregon University System met last week on campus for what both sides called a productive bargaining session.

Both sides are waiting until the state higher education budget is finalized before they begin to discuss economic issues. And as the economic outlook does not appear favorable for OUS, the current atmosphere of compromise may become strained if the financial horizon becomes more bleak.

While both the union and OUS representatives said the session was a good starting point, they also said they couldn't go into great detail of their respective positions.

Cynthia Beckwith, OUS assistant vice chancellor for human resources, said the sessions were "a very productive and constructive discussion with the union."

The Oregon Public Employees Union serves campus classified employees, including maintenance workers, landscapers and food service workers. The current contract between OUS and the union runs through 2003, but in light of the current budget situation, the union moved to reopen certain articles in the contract.

Beckwith said OUS also opened three contract articles that deal with contracting outside of the union, overtime and layoffs. She said during the session, both sides offered

their interpretations of the issues and identified their objectives.

Beckwith said OUS is interested in how overtime is being assigned. In contract language dealing with layoffs, she said OUS would like to discuss "when and how we provide info to the union."

James Jacobson, union negotiator for the University, said the union also opened the layoff article and two others that dealt with union recognition and rights. He said the two sides exchanged proposed language changes and said the session went into detail.

"It was pretty involved and kind of tedious," he said.

Bargaining will continue throughout June and July, but Jacobson said he was confident all issues will be resolved within 90 days even though "there are obviously some disagreements."

Jacobson said one issue the union is hoping to change is the right to access campus e-mail services during breaks.

"It's a very fundamental freedom of speech issue," he said.

Mark Zunich, University human resources employee relations manager, said the management's main argument is to be able to have the best business practices.

"The proposals we've put across are to do business as efficiently as possible," he said.

While Zunich also said discussions went smoothly, he added that once money is brought into the discussion, it could get a little more heated.

"The really intense part is when the financial issues are on the table," he said.

2001

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