



Jessica Waters Photo Editor

SEIU members and supporters gather on the lawn in front of Oregon Hall to protest contract negotiations with OUS.

OUS, SEIU head off strike with updated labor agreement

The proposed deal includes full health care benefits for half- and full-time workers

By Jared Paben
News Reporter

The Oregon University System and the Service Employees International Union local 503 reached an agreement Aug. 21, averting a strike that would have begun less than two weeks before fall term.

"The individual commitment and dedication of the bargainers, and the campuses' involvement since the beginning of the year, is what enabled us to reach an agreement and be able to start the new academic year with a focus on our students," OUS Chancellor Richard Jarvis said in a press release.

The agreement is the culmination of more than nine months of bargaining between the statewide classified-workers' union and OUS. The union must still ratify the agreement by a vote of its members, OUS Senior Vice Chancellor for Finance and Administration Tom Anders said.

If union members agree to the negotiated terms, the strike — threatened by the University's 1,250 classified workers after OUS declared an impasse to negotiations on Aug. 8 — will be prevented.

The proposed two-year contract itself satisfies many of the union's demands.

First, both full-time and part-time employees who work at least 80 paid hours in a month will continue to receive fully paid health care, which is the same as in the previous two-year contract, OUS Spokeswoman Di Saunders said.

OUS pulled its proposals for altering employee work schedules and unpaid furloughs, representing a big victory for the union, said Star Holmberg, the union's bargaining table representative.

The union won a clear-cut victory with respect to the right to "bump" laid-off employees, maintaining the current rules for bumping into geographical areas. Under the contract language, laid-off employees may take the position of any employee, including those with lesser seniority, within the geographic area of the campus.

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