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ATU, LTD reconcile; bus service resumes

Union members approved the contract offer 185-6, ending the strike that began March 7

BY MEGHANN M. CUNIFF
SENIOR NEWS REPORTER

Lane Transit District is back in business.

After more than 25 total hours of mediation marathons during the past four days, members of the union representing more than three-fourths of the district's employees approved LTD's latest contract offer 185-6 on Sunday.

Amalgamated Transit Union Division 757's approval of the contract concludes nearly 11 months of contract negotiations and puts an end to a county-wide driver strike that left LTD buses immobile since March 7.

LTD mechanics went back to work Sunday night to get the buses ready to resume service today.

"We won, we know we won, but let's not gloat openly," ATU Division 757 President Al Zullo said at the beginning of Sunday's membership meeting.

Both parties said they are satisfied with the contract settlement and are eager to see the buses back on the streets.

"Both sides certainly gave up on some of the interests they had in their packages to get an agreement, and ultimately that means the community wins because bus service will be back on the street," LTD Service Planning and Marketing Manager Andy Vobora said.

LTD and ATU had been at odds over their 2005-07 contract since May, with professional mediator Wendy Greenwald leading more than six mediation sessions between the two groups over the course of three months.

After each failed mediation session, both sides contended the other did not make any notable concession, with the main point of conflict consistently being the cost of health-care coverage.

After the strike began, Eugene Mayor Kitty Piercy, former state labor commissioner Jack Roberts and local attorney Art Johnson formed a mediation team that served as a negotiation facilitator and room-to-room messenger between LTD and union representatives.

LTD and union representatives credited the team with paving the way for a contract that both sides find satisfactory.

"If they wouldn't have stepped in, we'd still be on strike, without a doubt," LTD driver and union wage committee member Walt Boynton said. Boynton has worked for LTD for 31 years.

"I think there's a lot of bright people on that group, and though they certainly didn't have all the background and detail, I think that they really did help accelerate the process," Vobora said.

Piercy said in a phone interview that the district's desire to look out for the long-term well-being of the company and the union's desire to preserve health-care benefits was the biggest issue to balance during the mediation sessions.

"I believe a resolution was found that responded to both of those needs," Piercy said.

Piercy commended the involvement of her husband, David Piercy, Roberts, and Johnson and Margaret Hallock of the Wayne Morse Law Center, who she said were all "very skilled at working together and thinking outside the box."

Carol Allred, LTD bus driver and executive board officer for ATU Division 757, said the mediation team's "innovative" thinking was pivotal in getting both sides to take a step back and reevaluate their positions on a number of issues.

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"You only get the benefits of diversity if you have enough numbers to break down isolation and stereotypes."

GREG VINCENT | Vice provost for institutional equity and diversity

The FACE of EDUCATION

The University is attempting to increase its recruitment and retention of faculty of color

BY MORIAH BALINGIT & ADAM CHERRY
NEWS REPORTERS

Five percent of University employees are Asian or Pacific Islander, 3 percent are Hispanic, 1 percent is black and 1 percent is American Indian. The vast majority, 86 percent, is white.

"I look at the numbers, and they're troubling," said ASUO Women's Center Interim Director Erin O'Brien, who is Asian-American. "But it feels even more isolating when you're actually living in it."

Faculty and staff of color have struggled to find their place at the University. Although their numbers have risen in the past few years, some say it hasn't gotten much easier.

"It's pretty bleak, despite what the administration often says," Ethnic Studies Director Martin Summers, also an associate professor of history, said of the situation on campus. "Numbers have increased, but it's not very apparent as far as moving around campus."

The University is struggling to attract and hold onto these faculty members. It has taken the first steps in revamping efforts to recruit and retain faculty of color with the proposed Diversity Action Plan, a comprehensive set of policies, initiatives and action items intended to address issues of diversity in faculty, among other things.

Greg Vincent, vice provost for institutional equity and diversity, was hired in January 2004 to address issues of diversity and equity on campus and was charged with the task of developing the plan. The five-year plan is currently in development, and Vincent said the first set of policy recommendations will be done by the beginning of spring term and will be ready for implementation the following term.

"One of the University's goals is to build a critical mass of people from diverse backgrounds through active recruitment and retention of students and faculty," Vincent told the Emerald in December. "You only get the benefits of diversity if you have enough numbers to break down isolation and stereotypes."

Recruitment and retention

A main challenge the University faces in building "critical mass" is the low retention rate of faculty of color, something Lyllye Parker, an academic adviser in the Office of Multicultural Affairs, referred to as the "revolving door."

"Faculty of color are being hired, staying for one to two years, then moving on," Parker said.

Retention rates have long been central to the discussion surrounding diversity in faculty. In 2001, Kenneth Lehrman III, then the director of the Office of Affirmative Action and Equal



KATE HORTON | PHOTOGRAPHER

Greg Vincent is the vice provost of institutional equity and diversity.



KATE HORTON | PHOTOGRAPHER

Erin O'Brien, interim director of the ASUO Women's Center, said the Diversity Action Plan brings about huge potential for change. "The University is at a crossroads, and there's a really good opportunity to make a change."



KATE HORTON | PHOTOGRAPHER

Affirmative Action Director Penny Daugherty said increasing diversity benefits everyone. "This isn't a matter of just benefiting women or racial or ethnic minorities, it benefits us all. It makes our community more innovative."

Opportunity, said retention of minority employees was disproportionate; employees of color were leaving at greater rates than their white peers.

"Although minority faculty have been successful, the overall retention of minority employees remains troublesome," Lehrman wrote in a report to University President Dave Frohnmayer.

That same year, the Office of Academic Affairs initiated exit interviews of faculty of color who had left the University between 1996 and 2000, in part to address these concerns. The final report contained responses from 12 faculty of color, although 36 faculty members had left during that period.

The report summarized the respondents' answers to a number of questions regarding their experiences at the University and their reasons for leaving. While many respondents cited reasons that were not related to diversity, some indicated clear frustration with the University's handling of diversity issues.

"Colleagues/department were paternalistic on issues of diversity," the report stated.

"I felt wounded and hopeless when I left. Felt my hire was classic tokenism," read another paraphrased quote.

One respondent said "some faculty attitudes were that a faculty of color person was inferior."

Lorraine Davis, vice president for academic affairs, said no discernible pattern for leaving could be found among the respondents' answers.

The University's history has been marred with the departures of prominent faculty of color.

In 1985, the University School of Law lost its dean and one of its most prestigious scholars, Derrick Bell. Bell, who is black, resigned after the law school faculty committee refused to extend a professorship to an Asian-American woman.

After the committee had conducted interviews, it selected its top three candidates. When the first two candidates, both white males, refused the offer, the committee decided to restart the search rather than hire the woman.

"I felt a conflict between my responsibilities as a dean and my beliefs in how hiring should be done," Bell told the Emerald in 1985. "I was faced with having to reject a person I thought was very well-qualified on the basis of a procedure I couldn't go along with."

Two years ago, professor Robin Morris Collin also left the School of Law for

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