LETTER TO THE EDITOR

A joint statement from the Brookdale Community College Board of Trustees and Executive Cabinet

Recent news reports have indicated that Brookdale Community College’s negotiations with the College's faculty association over a renewed collective negotiations agreement have been unsuccessful. This letter is intended to outline details of the negotiations and provide context to recent news reports.

Negotiations with the faculty association have been ongoing since November 2015. After many sessions, the faculty association unilaterally declared an impasse on June 14, requesting the appointment of a state mediator.  The parties met with a state-appointed mediator on Aug. 15 and again on Sept. 16.  Faculty members are required to teach their regular course load under the terms of the former contract until a new agreement is reached.

Following their unilateral declaration of impasse, faculty association members have resigned their posts as department chairs and assistant chairs and stepped down as advisors to student clubs. Administrators and staff are intervening to minimize the disruption to student services.

The major negotiating points between the College and the faculty association include faculty workload, compensation and health benefits.  Faculty currently teach for 150 days per year and have nine required professional development days.  Each semester, faculty members are contractually required to teach 15 hours a week and hold five office hours on campus, totaling 20 hours of direct student contact per week. Department chairs and assistant chairs are partially released from their teaching assignments.

The College has offered to pay faculty members an additional $2,250 in base salaries to teach one additional course or to provide 105 hours of student advising each year, which equates to 3 hours a week over 35 weeks. The faculty association rejected that offer.

The College also offered the faculty association a general wage increase of $1,550 this year, $1,600 in 2017-18, and $1,625 in 2018-19, which was also rejected by the association. The faculty association also rejected the College’s offer to increase pay for overload credit hours in each of the next three years.

Another major negotiating point involves health insurance coverage. The College has already negotiated with its administrative association and professional staff association to move all new hires into a Direct 15 health plan. In previous negotiations with the administrative association and professional staff association, current employees who chose to remain in the Direct 10 plan received a far smaller annual wage increase than those employees who elected to change to the Direct 15 plan. Non-represented administrators and employees have followed suit. Faculty association members were offered the Direct 15 plan for all new hires and the ability for current members to “buy up” to the Direct 10 plan at their cost. The faculty association rejected this proposal.

The faculty association proposed that librarians and counselors – who are considered faculty at the College – work 163, seven-hour work days each year; a decrease from their current work year of 180 seven-hour work days. The College offered to reduce librarian and counselor workloads to 163, eight-hour days each year, which the faculty association rejected.

More recently, on Friday September 9, the College revised its offer and presented the association with an alternative to the contract proposal outlined above, the College offered the faculty association the ability for current faculty to remain in the Direct 10 health benefits plan so long as it is offered through the State and all new faculty members would be enrolled in the Direct 15 plan. Under this contract proposal, the College also offered the faculty association annual raises of $1,050 in the first year and $1,100 for each of the next two years of the agreement (2016-2019).  The faculty association rejected this alternate proposal.

The parties met with the State-appointed mediator on August 16, 2016 and again last Friday, September 16, 2016. The State-appointed mediator presented a recommended settlement, but the parties were unable to reach agreement. As a result, the State-appointed mediator is transmitting this matter to fact-finding.