

Wright State administration makes offer to negotiate new contract; faculty union declines

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Published: Thursday, January 17, 2019 @ 6:04 PM

By: Max Filby - Staff Writer



FILE: Cheryl B. Schrader, president, Wright State University, during a Dayton Daily News editorial meeting. TY GREENLEES / STAFF

Wright State University's faculty union will decline an offer made by the administration this week to begin negotiating a new contract ahead of a strike planned for Tuesday.

The university's general counsel told the union's negotiator via email Wednesday night that the administration was willing to begin negotiating the group's next contract if the Wright State chapter of the American Association of University Professors agreed to withdraw its unfair labor practice complaint with prejudice. It's an offer AAUP-WSU president Martin Kich said union leaders would turn down.

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"No, and the reason is obvious," Kich said. "Our members didn't vote to strike over the next contract."

The union filed a complaint last week with the State Employment Relations Board accusing administrators of breaking collective bargaining ruled by negotiating in public, telling the news media about their "last, best offer" before telling the union, and failing to give the union requested information that was needed to continue negotiations.

The union has already begun scheduling picketers for a possible strike that could start at 8 a.m. Tuesday. Members plan to picket near the campus's main entrances on Colonel Glenn Highway and near the Nutter Center.

Around 560 of Wright State's 1,700 faculty are members of the AAUP-WSU, according to the university.

The administration's offer to begin negotiating a "successor agreement" to the terms implemented earlier this month is a "show of good faith," Larry Chan, vice president of WSU legal affairs said in an email to the union's chief negotiator.

"If they want to talk about the successor agreement we can open that up if they remove their unfair labor practice... so that's the offer on the table," president Cheryl Schrader said.

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The possible strike comes after the WSU board of trustees decision to implement terms moves faculty union members into a "uniform" health care plan, maintains current rules of retrenchment, includes no pay raises and would allow faculty to be furloughed as part of "cost savings days." In its

strike notice, the union took issue with the furlough policy, changes to health care, new provisions for promotions and tenure appointment, workload and a merit pay system.

Wright State's finances have contributed to trouble at the negotiating table. The university reduced its spending by around \$53 million in fiscal year 2018 in an attempt to begin correcting years of overspending.

Though the terms and conditions could remain in effect until June 30, 2020, Schrader said if a new agreement is reached before then it could be implemented right away. If negotiations on the next contract were to begin, Schrader said the administration and union could discuss some of the major issues raised by the AAUP-WSU.

"I certainly am hopeful that union leadership would understand that terms and conditions are not negotiable," Schrader said. "But our way forward is to say let's look at a successor agreement immediately, we don't have to wait until 2020."

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