Bargaining & Member Updates, 10/20/26

aaup-ud

Bargaining & Member Update

October 20, 2026

BARGAINING UPDATE:

Mediation and Beyond

Dear Bargaining Unit Members,

As you may be aware, the administration announced on 10/13/26 that it was requesting mediation to assist in our collective bargaining process. Since November 2025, we have negotiated with the administration during more than 20 bargaining sessions, many of which have lasted 2-3 hours, and we have reached an impasse on multiple issues. Thus, we welcome the opportunity to move the process forward with mediation.

The lengthy nature of these negotiations arises in large part from the administration's unprecedented number of proposals to limit faculty rights and compensation. During the negotiations for the previous contract, the administration submitted only three proposals, which they withdrew shortly after we presented thorough and evidence-based objections at the table. During the current negotiations, the administration has submitted six proposals, along with numerous counter-proposals and a letter of understanding. Most of the administration's proposals involve limitations on faculty rights and/or compensation, and most of them have been resubmitted by the administration multiple times, despite our objections, with few substantive changes. They also have three separate attorneys working closely on bargaining, with two attorneys present at each face-to-face bargaining session. Put simply, the administration is investing heavily in bargaining for proposals that would be unfavorable to faculty. Moreover, there have been repeated inconsistencies in the administration's positions. What they have presented at the bargaining table has differed from what they have shared with the Faculty Senate, and what they have said in bargaining has not always matched their

bargaining updates and other communications. In addition, they have frequently presented documents with substantive and serious redlining errors, both in bargaining and in the Senate. These are not minor oversights. They are consequential errors that can mislead faculty, distort the record, and undermine trust in the process. With the involvement of a mediator, we hope that the administration will clarify and refine their proposals and positions, as well as gain a better understanding of ours, which will maximize the potential for reaching an agreement.

Below is a Q & A that provides an overview of the mediation process, followed by a flow chart to illustrate it:

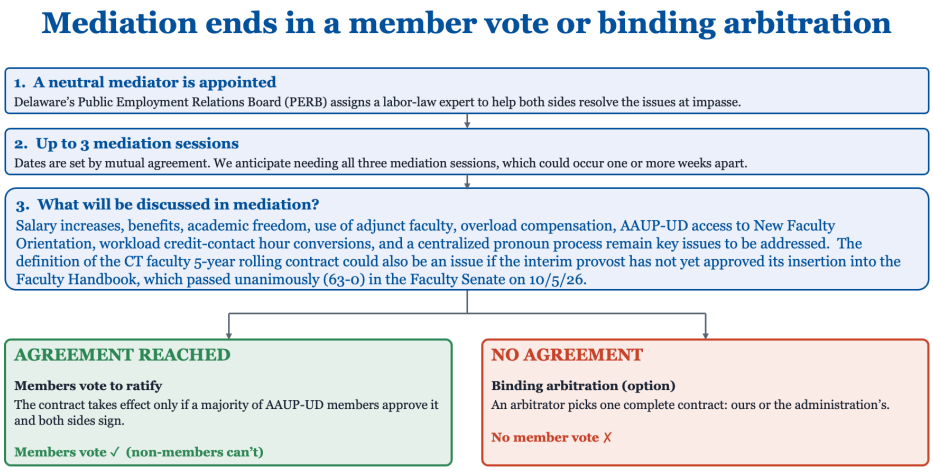
***What exactly is "mediation" in the context of collective bargaining?**
In Delaware, it is a process during which a bargaining team requests that the State Public Employment Relations Board (PERB) appoint a neutral third-party with expertise in labor law (i.e., a "mediator") to help both sides resolve issues about which they are at an impasse.

***What will be discussed at mediation?**
Salary increases, benefits, academic freedom, use of adjunct faculty, overload compensation, AAUP-UD access to New Faculty Orientation, workload credit-contact hour conversions, and a centralized pronoun process remain key issues to be addressed. The definition of the CT faculty 5-year rolling contract will also be an issue if the interim provost has not yet approved its insertion into the Faculty Handbook, which passed unanimously (63-0) in the Faculty Senate on 10/5/26.

***How long will the mediation process take?**
The state PERB will provide up to three separate mediation sessions with varying times in between (dates are set by mutual agreement). Based on the remaining number of unresolved issues and the administration's adamancy, we anticipate needing all three mediation sessions, which could occur one or more weeks apart.

***What will happen if we reach a tentative agreement with the administration during mediation?**
To become effective, the proposed contract must be agreed to by both negotiating teams, ratified by the majority of AAUP-UD members, and finally signed by parties on both sides.
(Non-members are ineligible to vote on the ratification of a contract. This is another reason to join the AAUP-UD now.)

***What will happen if we don't reach a tentative agreement within three mediation sessions?**
We have the option to go to binding arbitration, during which the arbitrator would decide which complete contract–one proposed by AAUP-UD or one proposed by the administration–would prevail. There would be no ratification process by AAUP-UD members in this case.



If you have any questions or comments about the bargaining process, please do not hesitate to reach out to us at admin@aaupud.org.

In solidarity,

The AAUP-UD Bargaining Team

MEMBER UPDATE:

The Administration's 10/13 Message on University Finances

Dear Colleagues,

On 10/13/26, the administration wrote to the campus about the University's financial challenges. The message outlined a strategic planning process and financial roadmap that could bring operational, organizational, and academic changes to UD, including ones involving resource (re)allocation.The message offered few specifics. It did not say which programs or units could be affected, how large the financial adjustment might be, or what role faculty will have before decisions are made.

What we're doing: The AAUP-UD Executive Council has requested a meeting with President Carlson and Executive Vice President Herbst. We've asked for the financial data behind their assessment, the criteria for and role of the faculty in future decision-making, and the possible effects on faculty positions, workload, and programs. We'll share an update as soon as we know more.

Why your membership matters now: The administration is planning changes that could reshape academic programs and affect faculty jobs. At the same time, it is pushing proposals at the bargaining table that would limit faculty rights and pay. A union's strength comes from its members. The more of us who join, the harder it is to make these decisions without us.

Membership gives you:

- **A vote** on any contract reached in mediation. Only AAUP-UD members can vote.
- **A stronger voice** when we meet with the administration about its plans for change.
- **Protection** of the rights and compensation every faculty member depends on.

If you're not a member, now is the time to join. Simply click here and follow the instructions.

In Solidarity,

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Further Reading

For additional information about the University's finances and the role of shared governance in (dis)establishing academic programs, see the documents below:

- **The Poverty Narrative Undercutting UD Education** (March 2025): In this article published on the AAUP-UD website, then-President Persephone Braham argues that a series of declared financial "crises" has been used to justify cuts to departments, staff, and student services, even as UD's total assets reached a record $4.65 billion. She points to $923 million spent on buildings from 2018 to 2024, nearly 600 added administrative positions since 2017, and the loss of 59 bargaining-unit faculty in a single year.
- **Financial Analysis from an Accounting Firm** (February 2021): This is a letter from an independent CPA review prepared during the mid-term contract negotiations in Summer 2021. It found that UD set its lowest-ever endowment spending rate during the pandemic, below its own 4–5% target, and still had more than $300 million in operating investments available for general expenses. It also showed UD routinely using operating funds to cover building costs.
- **Rudy Fichtenbaum's Report** (February 2025): Economist Rudy Fichtenbaum conducted an analysis of 20 years of UD financial statements and presented it to the faculty in Spring 2025. His report finds a strong balance sheet, $1.5 billion in spendable reserves, and a high Moody's credit rating. From 2018 to 2024, central administrative spending grew nearly three times as fast as instructional spending, and he attributes the recent operating deficits largely to administrative growth.
- **Protections Against Arbitrary Program Cuts:** This is a compilation of governance provisions on academic programs, beginning with the UD Charter's grant of authority over student instruction to the faculty as well as relevant excerpts from the Collective Bargaining Agreement and the Faculty Handbook. ***The key point:*** the Faculty Senate, not the administration, is responsible for establishing or discontinuing academic programs.