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Sent: Friday, May 15, 2020 7:04 PM

To: aaup_bhsnj_faculty@email.rutgers.edu

Subject: From the RBHS Chancellor: Status of Negotiations between the University and the AAUP-BHSNJ

Dear AAUP-BHSNJ Members:

Let me start off by thanking you for your tireless efforts and dedication as you continue to rise to the challenge of the COVID-19 pandemic. We greatly appreciate and recognize your heroic efforts on behalf of our patients and the community.

I am writing to you to express our deep concern about recent statements you may have read concerning negotiations with AAUP-BHSNJ for a new collective negotiations agreement. I write to clarify the status of negotiations.

As a preliminary matter, you should know that the University takes its negotiations obligations very seriously, as is evidenced by the agreements that it has reached with the majority of its 22 negotiations units to date. It is also important to remember that the University has a history of negotiating successfully with AAUP-BHSNJ. Rutgers negotiated the agreement with AAUP-BHSNJ that expired in 2018, after faculty had been without a contract for six years. Further, Rutgers proposed, negotiated, and implemented during the term of that contract both a one-time RWJMS Clinical Practice Faculty Incentive Plan and later a Clinical Incentive Program for all eligible clinical faculty, in both cases without asking for anything in return from the Union.

In that same vein, the University began negotiations with the AAUP-BHSNJ in the spring of 2018, and since that time, has met with the Union a total of 59 sessions in the hopes that the parties could reach agreement. The University has come prepared for each negotiation session with a full team of RBHS representatives. In fact, even in the midst of the current pandemic, on April 29, 2020 the University again met with the Union, albeit remotely, in an attempt to make progress in negotiations.

Although the parties have reached a number of tentative agreements to date, on a variety of issues, the Union most recently rejected the comprehensive contract proposal that had been proposed by the University. That package included, among other things, an increase to academic base salaries matching what all other unions had received, as well as continuation of the Clinical Incentive Program (which sunset at the end of Fiscal Year 2019), plus an enriched extramural research incentive, and an integrated Dental Clinical Incentive Program. The University's proposal, which was intended to reward excellence and productivity, also included providing a mechanism to increase the salaries of clinical and research faculty based on productivity and salary benchmarks. Without even having been asked by the Union, the University also recently had added to its compensation proposal a robust research incentive for faculty who receive large or unique grants. Furthermore, the University's compensation proposal sought to expand its out-of-cycle process by adding a pay equity review process and by allowing for one-time lump sum payments to those who achieve extraordinary achievements in a particular year.

The University and the Union each have rejected a number of proposals. Neither side in a negotiation expects to achieve everything that it proposes. For example, the University did reject a proposal to increase the amount of paid leave available to negotiations unit members given the other significant economic concessions the University already had made and the significant paid leave benefits negotiations unit members already enjoy. On the whole, however, the University made substantial

offers in many areas, including compensation. These offers were not accepted. Yet, the parties will already be in negotiations for the next agreement in another year.

Unfortunately, after the Union rejected the University's last comprehensive proposal, COVID-19 impacted all of our lives and the operations of the University. As a result, the University is facing dramatic fiscal issues it never envisioned. The financial impact of this pandemic has affected the state, the country, and many individuals. In negotiations, we cannot simply ignore that impact. In fact, we are working with a coalition of all unions, including AAUP-BHSNJ, to discuss the financial impact of the COVID-19 crisis on the University's finances.

For more than two years, the University has negotiated earnestly, and in good faith, with the desire of reaching an agreement with the Union. We want nothing more than to reach a contract that is fair and equitable, as well as prudent in these uncertain times. Our preference has been to negotiate at the table and not in the media or public communications; however, the Union continues to present an incomplete picture of what has transpired during these negotiations.

I, along with the rest of the University community, express our sincere gratitude to the extraordinary efforts of our healthcare workers. We remain committed to supporting our faculty now more than ever, and even in these most trying times when the primary focus must be on the front lines of the pandemic, we remain committed to reaching an Agreement with the Union and remain hopeful that we will do so.

Sincerely,
Brian L. Strom, MD, MPH
RBHS Chancellor