

Background: Every senator and indeed virtually every member of our academic community, administrators, faculty, staff, and students, share a common goal: to make Rutgers as good as it can be. The articulation of this goal in terms of a “Beloved Community” is a very important step forward and a break with the past. But an even more important step would be the recognition and implementation of the principle that all of us, administrators, employees in collective bargaining units, and students are on the same team.

We are now at a moment in time when this principle is being sorely tested. The collective bargaining agreements of all the faculty unions and many of the staff unions expired this past June 30. Indeed, at this time, more than 15000 workers at Rutgers, represented by 17 bargaining units are working under expired contracts. Despite many attempts by unions to begin negotiations earlier, they are only now underway. Collective bargaining inevitably will have some adversarial aspects. But a focus on the “same team” principle and a recognition that we have many mutual interests are especially important now.

Here are some examples that may be concerning toward the goal of negotiation.

- Rutgers has retained the law firm of Jackson Lewis, the leading anti-union law firm in the United States, to advise on labor relations.
- RWJ Medical School has made an agreement with RWJ Barnabas under which all new Professional-Practice Track faculty hired by Barnabas will not be members of the faculty union."
- Serious demoralization of many of our staff has resulted from a number of the aspects of negotiations and interactions between the labor relations administrators and the 13 staff collective bargaining units. When staff feel undervalued and believe that there is no concern for their fundamental needs, the resulting work environment is not only bad for the staff, but also for the students and faculty to whom they provide essential services.
- A number of faculty bargaining units have voted to merge into one unit in order to be covered by one faculty contract. The labor relations administrators refuse to recognize such a new unit.
- More than 2/3rds of the faculty has no job security or health insurance. Many are even working semester to semester. Such working conditions have a negative effect on student learning conditions. Attempts by the unions to reach agreement on improvements to these conditions have been rejected.
- The principle of “Equal pay for equal work” regardless of campus or faculty title or gender or race, has long been embraced by Rutgers unions. But only in the previous collective bargaining agreement with full time faculty was any slight consideration given to this important principle. Transparency is an especially important feature of an academic community. Yet negotiators for the administration have objected vigorously to union members attending bargaining sessions remotely and have canceled bargaining sessions for that reason.

Resolved: The University Senate calls upon the University Administration and all the Employee Collective Bargaining Units to work as quickly and collegially as possible to reach new collective bargaining agreements that best serve the interests of the entire academic community and reflect principles and values previously endorsed by the University Senate.