

UFF UNITED FACULTY OF FLORIDA

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Faculty Union at University of Florida Declares Impasse

The United Faculty of Florida-University of Florida (UFF-UF) declared impasse Friday in its contract negotiations with the University of Florida Board of Trustees (UFBOT). UFF-UF represents more than 1,800 faculty members at UF.

A declaration of impasse means that the contract negotiations will be subject to the review of a special magistrate, who will offer a recommendation to both parties in an effort to settle the contract dispute.

UFF-UF and UFBOT have been negotiating the contract since November 2005. Since then, the union and the trustees have come to agreement on more than 60 articles, appendices, and memoranda of understanding, and they have signed a memorandum of agreement implementing the rights and procedures these provide. However, the issues of salaries, sabbaticals and "Faculty Enhancement Opportunities" (FEOs), a raise program for senior faculty ("Salary Plan for Professors" or SPP), and intellectual property remain unresolved. Over the past several months, instead of wrapping up the new contract and immediately reopening some articles, as previously agreed, the trustees have tried to nullify already-finished articles and start over. According to UFF-UF, no contract can be completed if one party keeps signing agreements, then later backing out, again and again.

"It's imperative that we bring negotiations to a close and complete the contract," said Chris Snodgrass, chief negotiator for UFF-UF. "Unfortunately, it's impossible to negotiate with a party that will not honor its commitments." For UFF-UF, commitment of funds to programs and enforceable contractual criteria and procedures are bottom lines. The UFBOT, however, insists on total discretion over key criteria and procedures, and refuses to commit specific funds.

In refusing to offer UFF-UF funding commitments to these issues, the university repeatedly cites the state financial crisis, but UFF-UF representatives maintain that recent university actions do not reflect that crisis. The first step in nearly any fiscal downturn is to institute a hiring freeze immediately, but UF this year hired more than 100 new faculty, as well as costly administrators. In addition, a 2008 audit completed by the state shows the university (and all its components) has nearly \$1 billion in *unrestricted* net assets (page 11 of http://www.myflorida.com/audgen/pages/pdf_files/2009-103.pdf).

UFF-UF points to the results of the trustees' actions over the past several years:

- UF faculty salaries have gone from being in the middle range of reporting members of the American Association of Universities (AAU) to being now in the bottom 10 percent. At the same time and in the same group, UF administrative salaries have risen into the top 10 percent.
- The percentage of faculty raises in the Salary Plan for Professors fell to less than half of those judged to have qualified for the raise.