

SAA Union Brown Bag Forum

Friday, September 3, 2010

These are notes, and not exact quotes of what was said during the forum. A video of the entire forum is available online at www.alaska.edu/opa. The times listed by each question indicate the time in the video when the discussion occurred. Anyone interested in the exact phrasing of any of these answers is encouraged to visit the appropriate point in the video.

Statewide Administration Assembly (SAA)

Lisa Sporleder, president- moderator
Dana Platta, vice president- time keeper
Monique Musick, secretary- minutes

ASEA for UA

Jim Duncan- Business Manager, Chief Officer
Dan LaSota- UAF employee, member of ASEA for UA organizing committee

UA Statewide Human Resources

Beth Behner

Welcome from Lisa Sporleder, SAA President

Welcome to the SAA staff employee forum with ASEA and UA HR

We're here to get questions answered

Lots of staff sent in questions. They were prioritized and compiled by Lisa

Sporleder and Dan LaSota for their help.

SAA secretary Monique Musick will take notes

SAA members will gather questions from the crowd.

Note cards and pens are distributed for submitting questions.

At a quarter till one the floor will open to audience questions.

Anchorage is on the line and will also have the opportunity to ask questions.

Introductions:

Dan LaSota

UA employee, College of Engineering and Mines, Institute of Northern
Engineering, web master
10+ yrs at UA

Active in the organizing committee trying to get information out to fellow employees
Here to answer questions as best I can

Jim Duncan

Business manager of ASEA Local 52
Chief Administrative Officer
Number of duties including overseeing staff
Make sure ASEA is addressing needs of members
Involved in collective bargaining
Relationship with university
Former UAS adjunct professor
Familiar with university and with Labor Relations and collective bargaining

Beth Behner

Chief HR Officer, UA system office
10 yrs. with university
Formerly worked in labor relations for the university
Involved in collective bargaining
Am familiar with unions and their relationship with the university
Here to share information to help employees be as informed as possible.

Compiled questions:

1.) How much would a union cost in money and time? What is the total amount of money in dues/fees expected to be collected annually from university employees who would be in the bargaining unit represented by ASEA? Can additional fees, dues, etc., be added to the UA staff employee's total cost at the discretion of the union? If so what is the union's legal and moral responsibility to the employee to notify the employees in advance of the new costs?
(Video- 4:00 min.)

Duncan

No firm figure on how much will be collected, it will depend on the number in the bargaining unit

Progressive dues structure:

How much you pay is dependent on your base salary
Using an average salary of \$40,000, using progressive structure
Ballpark figure: \$1.3 million from 2500 members
Average dues of \$530 per year, for an employee with \$40,000 annual salary

Can additional fees be added:

Have a progressive dues structure, sees no need to change,
Can only be changed by a vote of membership
Executive board and staff cannot change it

Notification:

Members would decide if they want to change dues structure

Two step process:

Constitutional amendment- vote by members or reps at the annual convention

ASFME per capita, national organization provides expertise, but also does lobbying for political candidates and issues, with which some employees may not agree with

If this is of interest do some research on the national agency

3.) Why should we pay if we don't want to be in the union? If the vote is in favor for a union and I don't want a union, am I forced to pay the union? I've heard agency fees are less than dues, but read that they cost the same. Is there an agency fee table showing the actual differences, if there are any? If there is no difference in cost, why aren't agency fees less expensive than the cost of membership dues?

(Video- 11:04 min.)

Behner

Initially we believed agency fees would be less, that is how other unions work
From union perspective, it requires them to spend the same amount of money to do the work for members and fee payers

Now we understand they are identical for agency fees or full member dues

Individual choice: affects voting, membership, contract ratification

Typically a condition of employment within a union contract

Must pay dues to keep your job

Happens within the adjunct unit currently

Routinely terminate for non-payment of fees in the adjunct unit

Very serious issue, they enforce it, applicable to anyone in unit

Duncan

Agency fees and dues are the same amount

Partial rebate for agency fees available, by request

8500 state employees, 400 agency fee payers

Some request rebate: we pay small rebate

Difference: agency fee payers have no voice, can't vote, can't hold office

If you are going to be paying fees or dues you are better off having a voice than not

Same benefits for members and fee payers

All the benefits of the contract

Clear advantage to being full member: having a voice, vote, hold office, elect officers

Some individuals choose not to, and become agency fee payers

Rebate amount is computed on a yearly basis, agency fees payers have to request a rebate

Behner quoted what ASEA shares back to the 19 GGU chapters

Computation for university chapters: can expect \$300,000 shared back from dues, would not be the same rate as to GGU chapters

Want folks out in your areas instituting community programs

Scholarship programs for staff families for example

Do other work that benefits community and brings them together

4.) Criteria for union representation.

representatives that conduct negotiations with the University? Are they staff or union employees? How are they determined?
(Video- 24:28 min.)

LaSota

Both responses technically correct
Elections are held, that is the process by which ASEA determines who is on the team
Once a union is established it is us- we are ASEA
ASEA staff is there to help negotiate
UA staff may not be familiar with labor law
That is why there are people like Jim to help with negotiations
“We” come up with the proposals

Duncan

Negotiations are done by members elected by union members
Recommendations on how to run the election come from ASEA
Members provide input on important issues
Elected team makes decisions on what goes on the table
ASEA provides guidance and advice
Duncan has been involved, provides expertise and guidance
Serves as chief spokesman
Not the decision maker, just there to help h

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Examples of Retention offers in United Academics contract
That is an approved process
Not always included in contracts
Pay raises are the

9.) Miscellaneous. If the UA staff vote to unionize, would ASEA want to include them as participants in the union's Health Trust instead of being in the current health care plan of the university? I looked at the website regarding the trust and could not find a listing which doctors or medical facilities accept the trust as insurance. Where is this information provided?
(Video- 31:52 min.)

Duncan

Before we begin to negotiate a contract we will solicit input from members on what they want included

Look at options, may want to stay where we are, look at the ASEA trust or another option or approach

It's a negotiated item

Bargaining team will decide what goes on the table and what you want to talk about

No one from ASEA management or the health trust will force a decision

Will lay out what you may want to consider

In the end it is your final decision

Sitka city employees decided to stay in their plan

Do negotiate employee/employer contribution

Example: State GGU this year

Health costs have gone up

Employee contribution has not increased

Plan costs went up 19%, the employer paid, not the employee

I understand that in your plan your contribution has gone up \$1000 a year

Major difference. That's the kind of thing the union can do for you

Behner

Agree that health care is a negotiated provision

This would be negotiated and bargained for

10.) How much would a union cost in money and time?

11. Miscellaneous. If I don't want to be in the union, I understand there is an administrative fee I have to pay, and I would not be considered a full voting member. If the union members vote for a strike, would I also be expected to honor the strike?
(Video- 40:20 min.)

Behner

We've addressed this in part, agency fees are what non-voting members pay
Restrictions to agency fee members: don't vote on officers or bargaining agreements
Strike? Expectation and encouragement to participate in a strike if called
No fines per Mr. Duncan's earlier response

Duncan

The one vote agency fee payers do get is on strikes
No one really wants to strike
There are a lot of other processes, mediation etc. to use to get to an agreement before a strike
Haven't fined anyone for anything
Would encourage employees not to cross line, but won't force it
Getting to a strike is not easy, we don't want to go there- it can't just happen
Negotiate in a mediation process to contract
The contract negotiating committee would have to recommend a strike vote to the Executive Board
The Executive board would have to agree
Strike vote would have to be conducted by all members
Then the action would still need to be initiated
Strikes seldom happen- won't happen with our union
Don't want to go there: Get to an agreement well before it gets to a strike

On -the- spot questions:

1.) Is the union considered a non-profit entity by the IRS?
(Video- 43:25 min.)

Behner

They are tax exempt

Duncan

Not sure what category, but we are non-profit

2.) In your union, is there a practice of "bumping" another person from their job if someone else who has more seniority loses theirs? How does that work? Can a term-funded, but more senior employee bump a new, regular employee?
(Video- 43:57 min.)

Behner

Staff governance: campus and statewide representatives participate

9.) I have been working at the university for 4 years. I have seen many of my co-workers and friends try to go through the grievance procedure at the university. What is the difference between having the HR grievance procedure and union representation using a grievance procedure we have negotiated?

(Video- 54:01 min.)

Duncan

Two specific differences: our process includes a professional agent to help
Current system: you are on your own unless you hire an attorney
In current system the final decision is made by person with vested interest in the university: the President or his designee
Union: final decision by third party arbitrator with no vested interest
Better system, more fair, more responsible decision

Behner

Ability to have neutral party within union contracts
Shared expense on arbitrator
Currently the union process rarely goes that far
Short of arbitration, the systems are not that different
University officials are the decision makers in lower level decisions in other union contracts
Current UA regulations do provide for mediation services
Heard of a lack of awareness of that among UA staff
We have trained mediators that can help resolve issues between a grievant and the university

10.) Are ASEA organizers unionized? If not, why not?

(Video- 56:25 min.)

Duncan

Yes, ASEA organizers are unionized
All ASEA staff are unionized
I pay ASEA dues, though not represented
We are union, we believe in unions

Behner

I don't know, but I believe him
Reflect on how many outside organizers, from out of state, are here on behalf of ASEA
That is part of what your dues would pay for: organizing other locations

11.) I don't see any advantages to having a union. We seem to be more fairly represented than state employees who are losing ground every year. What has the union done for them? What has the union done for faculty?

(Video- 57:24 min.)

