University, USW Local 4120 Reach Tentative Agreement

September 13, 2014 – Campus Bulletin News Release

Working together with the assistance of a provincially appointed mediator, the University of Guelph and United Steelworkers (USW) Local 4120 reached a tentative agreement a few moments ago, which now requires ratification by both parties.

The University and USW 4120, the union that represents approximately 900 University administrative and technical staff, have been negotiating a new agreement since the spring.

Details of the agreement remain confidential pending ratification by the union and the Board of Governors.

Update on Negotiations with United Steelworkers Local 4120

September 11, 2014 – Campus Bulletin

This bulletin is intended to update the U of G community on the talks between the University and United Steelworkers Local 4120, the union that represents approximately 800 University administrative and technical staff.

The University is currently negotiating a new collective agreement with the union. Negotiations began in late spring and since that time the parties have made progress on many outstanding issues.

To date, talks have yet to result in the signing of a new collective agreement. As a result, employees represented by USW Local 4120 will be in a legal strike position as of 12:01 a.m. Saturday, Sept. 13, 2014.

It’s important to note that this does not mean there will be a labour disruption.

The University is encouraged by the union’s commitment to continue discussions and we remain dedicated to negotiating a new collective agreement.

However, given that a number of important issues still need to be resolved, the University community should prepare for the possibility of a labour disruption.

In the event of a labour disruption, the University will remain open, classes will continue and essential services will be provided to faculty, students, staff and the community. However, some services will be affected.

The labour dispute would only involve members of USW Local 4120, so if there is a strike, all other University employees will report to work as usual. It’s expected that picket lines will be located at all entrances to the University.

If there is a labour disruption you can anticipate delays and inconveniences while entering or leaving campus, and take these delays into consideration when planning your schedule. You may wish to start making contingency plans such as taking public transportation.
We will communicate with the community on a regular basis to ensure that you remain informed. Updates will be posted to this website. Again, the University values the work of all its employees, and is committed to negotiating a fair settlement. We ask for your patience and understanding during this time.

**Negotiation Update - September 6, 2014**

On September 10 and 12th, the bargaining committees for the University and the USW will participate in mediation in an effort to negotiate a new collective agreement and avoid a strike. This follows eight previous bargaining sessions.

The University’s offer to the USW bargaining team includes wage increases and no concessions, or changes that will affect the job security of USW members.

We know members have a number of questions. As we head into mediation, we want to take this opportunity to further clarify some issues that have been raised by USW Local 4120 in public communications:

- **The University has threatened the job security of USW members.**

  There have been no proposals from the University that would change the current job security of USW members.

- **The University wants to change our pension.**

  There is no question that the issues surrounding pensions are the biggest ones that all universities in Ontario are facing.

Following the last round of negotiations, the University and the USW completed a study exploring the feasibility of a Jointly Sponsored Pension Plan (JSPP). This study spanned eighteen (18) months, and while the discussions were productive, the outcome of the study was that it was not feasible as consensus could not be reached on most fundamental components (e.g., dispute resolution). The Combined Report of the Joint Pension Committee (USW 4120 and the University of Guelph) can be found at [https://www.uoguelph.ca/hr/staff-faculty/pensions](https://www.uoguelph.ca/hr/staff-faculty/pensions) and can be accessed using your Central Login I.D.

While the University has committed to the Union that it is prepared to further explore a more sustainable and secure pension option, in the interim it has requested that members increase their contributions to the pension plan. This request is intended to move to an equal cost sharing of only a portion of total plan costs. The University is not requesting USW local 4120 members to fund the current pension plan deficits. This proposal to USW members is no different than those made, and agreed to, by other employee groups leading up to this round of negotiations.

We are also prepared to continue discussions toward a JSPP solution that is feasible and reflects the best practices for these types of plans in the Province. We feel this is the best way towards ensuring that members have a secure pension plan when they retire.

**Negotiation Update - September 2, 2014**

The University met with the Union and a provincially appointed Conciliator on August 26 2014.
discussions included the university’s proposed wage increase. The main issue that remains outstanding is finding a pension solution that is acceptable to all parties, including the pension regulator and the government.

The Conciliator confirmed that the parties would be in a legal strike/lockout position at 12:01 am on September 13, 2014.

In an effort to reach a renewal agreement without a labour disruption the parties have agreed to mediation on September 10 and 12, 2014. The University’s proposals are consistent with what it has achieved with other employee groups, which is aimed at addressing the University’s financial realities along with the long term sustainability of the pension plan.

The University values the contribution of these employees, and remains committed to achieving a fair, affordable and realistic renewal agreement and is hopeful that mediation is effective in achieving this result. However, the University has a responsibility to ensure we meet the needs of our campus community and, to that end contingency planning is well underway.

Negotiation Update - August 22, 2014

The University and USW 4120 bargaining teams mutually agreed and were committed to meet today to continue negotiations even though the Ministry appointed conciliator was not available to assist the parties. The two parties have been able, over the course of bargaining, to reach agreement on the vast majority of non-monetary issues.

The University today presented the Union with a monetary offer that includes wage improvements as well as steps towards protecting the long-term sustainability of the University’s defined benefits pension plan. In addition, the University has reaffirmed its commitment to continue to explore realistic pension alternatives with the Union that is acceptable to both parties, as well as the Government.

While the University remains committed to productive discussions to achieve a collective agreement, today the Union notified the University of its decision to request that the Ontario Ministry of Labour issue a “no board” report. The request for a “no board” report means 17 days after it is issued, a legal strike, or lockout, can be called. As a result, employees represented by USW 4120 could be in a legal strike position as early as 12:01 a.m. September 10th (date yet to be determined/confirmed).

The University values the contributions of the employees represented by USW 4120 and is fully committed to achieving a fair and equitable negotiated settlement. The next scheduled date for continued discussion is August 26th. The contract with USW 4120 expired April 30, 2014.

Negotiation Update - August 13, 2014

The University and the USW 4120 have met on six occasions to date, most recently on August 5, 2014. With the assistance of a provincially appointed Conciliator, the parties were able to make significant progress on outstanding language issues. The parties have August 22nd and 26th scheduled to continue discussions aimed at achieving a renewal agreement. Given progress made on language, the University is now in a position to table its monetary proposal on the August 22, 2014.

The University is committed to keeping all members of community up to date on the status of negotiations and will continue to provide updates. The University remains optimistic that discussions will continue to be productive, and a settlement will be achieved that is consistent with those already,
negotiated with its other employee groups.

**Negotiation Update - July 15, 2014**

The University and USW Local 4120, representing our administrative, clerical and technical staff on the main campus, have been in contract negotiations since June 16, 2014. The current agreement expired April 30 2014. The parties have met on three occasions, with an additional four dates scheduled in July and August. The tone of discussions has been encouraging and positive progress has been made on resolving a number of language issues.

On July 8, 2014 the University was advised by the Union that it had filed for conciliation. The University received confirmation of this application from the Ministry of Labour on July 11th. Conciliation is where one or both parties (in this case USW) apply to the Ministry of Labour seeking the appointment of a conciliation officer to assist the parties in achieving a renewal agreement. While the University was surprised by the Union’s decision to file for conciliation given the current stage of discussions, particularly given that monetary proposals have not yet been exchanged, the University remains optimistic about the ongoing discussions and is committed to working with the Union to reach a fair and realistic Collective Agreement which balances the contribution of members with the real financial challenges facing the University.

Over the coming days and weeks we will endeavor to keep you informed of our progress.