



TIME TO ORGANIZE!

PSC RF-CUNY Central Office Chapter

Issue 13

December 11, 2009

TENTATIVE AGREEMENT ON FOUR-YEAR CONTRACT

The PSC bargaining team reached a tentative settlement for a four-year contract with the CUNY Research Foundation late Tuesday afternoon. Since the announcement of the strike deadline last week, management moved dramatically: the RF agreed to delay an increase in the employees' share of the healthcare premium, and increased the salary offer by 3.25%, adding a fourth year to the contract and an additional one-time cash amount of \$500. After a series of phone calls between PSC President Barbara Bowen and RF President Richard Rothbard on Tuesday—during which the bargaining team held firm in their resolve not to recommend management's last, best final offer—the RF made their final movement after 4:00pm, just prior to our 5:00pm deadline. That final movement enabled the bargaining team to recommend the following package:

Salary and Health Insurance

- Year 1: 3.0% increase
17% payment of healthcare premium
+ \$500 signing bonus for employees who were on the payroll as of 12/8/09
- Year 2: 3.25% increase, compounded
18% payment of healthcare premium
- Year 3: 3.5% increase, compounded
18% payment of healthcare premium
- Year 4: 3.25% increase, compounded
19% payment of healthcare premium

This table shows the effect of these increases at three different salary levels:

Salary	1/1/2009	Bonus	1/1/2010	1/1/2011	1/1/2012
\$40,000	\$41,200	\$500	\$42,539	\$44,028	\$45,459
\$50,000	\$51,500	\$500	\$53,174	\$55,035	\$56,823
\$60,000	\$61,800	\$500	\$63,809	\$66,042	\$68,188

Management's initial wage offer was 0%, 1% and 1%. As recently as 11/12/09, management's proposal was 3.0% per year for three years. The tentative settlement is worth 13.65% compounded over four years.

After an increase in the employee share of the health insurance premium from 11% to 17% in the last contract, management proposed increasing our share to as much as 30% for people with family coverage. Through the power of our organizing, we kept all employees at the same contribution level, and the total percentage increases only 2 points over 4 years.

Other accomplishments in this round of bargaining include:

Vision Coverage: Increased vision benefit by 100% from \$100 every 2 years to \$200 every 2 years.

Longevity Increases: Increased each longevity increment by \$50 and retained all longevity increments in base pay so that they count in future salary increases and in pension calculations. Management dropped their demand to remove longevity increments from base pay.

No Co-insurance: Management asked the union to consider an option for 2010 that would reduce the increase in the overall health insurance premium by introducing co-insurance into the PPO for in-network tests and procedures with a 10%/90% split. We rejected this option and threatened to file an unfair labor practice if management proceeded to implement it.

No Two-Tier System: Management dropped their proposal to reduce annual leave, sick leave, and severance benefits for employees hired after 1/1/09.

Compensation for Meals and Travel: Increased meal and travel allowances for employees who work overtime, and the amounts will be included in a side letter to the contract so employees will know what they are entitled to.

Life Insurance: Increased life insurance to \$30,000 from \$15,000 for employees in salary grades III, IV and V so that all members of the union receive the same benefit.

Although the tentative settlement is not everything we wanted, it is a real victory—won because of our unity and courage—at a time when the Consumer Price Index for the New York region is at 0% for the year, the state and city budgets are in dire straits, and the average increase for private-sector non-manufacturing contracts is 2.9% compared to 4.1% in 2008.

The next step is to submit the tentative settlement to the PSC Executive Council and Delegate Assembly for their approval. That will happen on 12/17/09. All PSC members at the RF central office are warmly invited to attend the Delegate Assembly and participate in the discussion. The tentative agreement will then be subject to a ratification vote by the central office employees.

On the management side, the RF Board of Directors must approve the agreement. The union is doing everything we can to expedite the approval process. President Bowen has asked Mr. Rothbard to schedule a special meeting of the Board of Directors so that we do not have to wait until the next regularly scheduled board meeting on 1/21/10.

Congratulations to all, and special thanks to the bargaining team and department representatives. This was a collective effort—a real example of the power of solidarity and sheer tenacity.