

GET THE **FACTS**

THE BARGAINING PROCESS

WSU-CASE
Coalition of Academic
Student Employees



SUMMARY:

1 Academic Student Employees (ASEs) elect a bargaining committee made up of ASEs.

2 The bargaining committee uses feedback from all ASEs from surveys, one-on-one conversations, and meetings to draft a set of initial bargaining demands.

3 All ASEs vote to approve or reject the draft of initial bargaining demands.

4 The ASE bargaining committee (with support from the union) negotiates as equals with the WSU bargaining team and sends updates to all ASEs after each bargaining session.

5 ASEs participate in bargaining in a wide variety of ways, including attending bargaining sessions, soliciting the support of strategic allies, and grassroots actions.

6 Once a tentative agreement is reached at the bargaining table, all ASEs vote on whether or not to ratify the agreement.

ASEs set our bargaining agenda

ASEs can complete a preliminary survey when signing a union authorization card. There will be many opportunities to meet and discuss current working conditions and what kinds of improvements we would like to see. This preliminary feedback will be used to design a comprehensive bargaining survey, which will be circulated to all ASEs.

Results from the bargaining survey will be used to create a set of initial bargaining proposals.

All ASEs will have an opportunity to vote to ratify these initial proposals before they are presented to the WSU administration at the bargaining table.

ASEs elect a Bargaining Committee and negotiate with WSU

ASEs will nominate and elect colleagues from across WSU to serve on the WSU-CASE / UAW bargaining committee. The bargaining committee (supported by UAW staff members who have experience negotiating with UW and other universities) will draft proposals, exchange proposals with WSU's bargaining team, and make counter-proposals. Throughout this process, the bargaining team will regularly update all ASEs and solicit feedback.

The result of the bargaining process is a tentative agreement with WSU administration on a union contract. The tentative agreement is presented to all ASEs for approval. If ASEs vote to ratify the tentative agreement, it becomes a contract. Once ratified, the terms of the contract can only be modified by mutual agreement of ASEs and WSU for the duration of the contract (typically 1 - 3 years). The contract itself will set out a process for negotiating subsequent agreements, through which future ASEs will have the opportunity to negotiate for further improvements.

WSU's bargaining team

The WSU administration chooses their own bargaining team, but they must have authority to negotiate over terms and conditions of employment. Their team will likely include human resources administrators, representatives from campus research offices, and benefits experts (for example, administrators responsible for health care and retirement plans).

ASE participation in the bargaining process

In addition to giving input through surveys, votes, and meetings, ASEs are encouraged to assist the bargaining committee by helping research and draft proposals, decide how best to present proposals to WSU's bargaining team, and attend bargaining sessions. ASEs can also help demonstrate the importance of the bargaining team's proposals. This includes actions like signing petitions, enlisting the support of administrators or faculty, publishing op-ed articles, and reaching out to State and Federal legislators.

Addressing the needs of a diverse workforce

Active participation by ASEs from different backgrounds, campuses, departments, and points in their program will help ensure the contract is tailored to meet the needs of a diverse and highly specialized workforce. Collective bargaining allows for creative proposals, which means problems need not be solved in a "one size fits all" manner. Some examples include:

- The contract for Academic Student Employees at the University of Washington protects against excessive workload by setting an hourly limit to the amount of work that may be assigned, but allows work assignments to exceed their hourly limit if that work contributes to their dissertation project.
- The compensation article of the UW Postdoc contract guarantees minimum salary levels for all Postdocs, but allows and encourages UW to pay more than the required minimums as individual circumstances dictate.
- The union contract for UC Academic Researchers contains different language for different job titles throughout much of the contract to account for differences between hourly and salaried employees and differences in job duties.

Legal foundation of collective bargaining

Washington law clearly defines collective bargaining in RCW 41.56.030(4): "'Collective bargaining' means the performance of the mutual obligations of the public employer and the exclusive bargaining representative to meet at reasonable times, to confer and negotiate in good faith, and to execute a written agreement with respect to grievance procedures and collective negotiations on personnel matters, including wages, hours and working conditions, which may be peculiar to an appropriate bargaining unit of such public employer, except that by such obligation neither party shall be compelled to agree to a proposal or be required to make a concession unless otherwise provided in this chapter."

This law applies to ASEs, like other already-unionized groups of Washington state public employees. By forming a union, ASEs will have greater power to negotiate with WSU administrators and democratically shape working conditions.

The scope of bargaining for Academic Student Employees at Washington State University is governed by RCW 41.56.205, which recognizes which employees constitute an appropriate bargaining unit, and recognizes that the Legislature does not intend to restrict the activities of the Graduate and Professional Student Association or other student government outside the scope of bargaining.

More information

If you'd like more information or to get more involved, you can ask an ASE who is helping organize WSU CASE / UAW, email us at contact@wsucase.org, or visit www.wsucase.org.

