

## STATEMENT FROM OAKLAND UNIVERSITY PRESIDENT ORA HIRSCH PESCOVITZ

On September 4, 2021, Oakland University reached a contract settlement with the OU Chapter of the American Association of University Professors (AAUP). We respect the diligence, dedication, and passion of those who negotiated on behalf of the OU administration and AAUP. The new contract reflects good-faith negotiations and represents a fair and equitable agreement. We look forward to the faculty taking all necessary and feasible steps to make sure students receive the course content, learning objectives, and support needed to succeed academically.

As we move ahead, we look forward to working together with AAUP as we plan and respond strategically to the many challenges facing OU and higher education institutions across the country. In the upcoming days and months, we must find common ground in the values, priorities and mission we share.

The demands, uncertainty and challenges of the last year-and-a-half of the pandemic have tested our resolve. As we make the transition to the fall semester, let's all take the opportunity to do our part in providing the best possible educational experience to OU students.

From Joi Cunningham, Assistant Vice President of Academic Human Resources.

“We appreciate the fact that AAUP president Dr. Karen Miller and the other faculty representatives were willing to extend the current contract by a year due to the pandemic. Faculty members also moved their courses online quickly and efficiently this past year in an effort to keep our students on track and moving forward despite the COVID challenges. We had a constructive kickoff bargaining session and look forward to negotiating a new contract in good faith this summer. We want to reach a fair agreement that will be beneficial to both the university and our faculty members, and in turn, allow our students to attain their academic and career aspirations.”

The current extended agreement is set to expire on August 15.

May 26, 2021 - The bargaining teams for both Oakland and its faculty union met today during which the union presented a few proposals to change some contract language. Discussions on those proposals were held but further discussion was tabled so that the full context of the union’s proposed changes are shared. The parties are set to meet again next Wednesday during which Oakland hopes to receive more information as to the union’s initial set of proposals. Oakland welcomes those proposals and the opportunity to address both those proposals and those Oakland will present towards the goal of reaching a new agreement that is in the best interests of all concerned.

June 2, 2021 – AAUP and Oakland representatives met again today during which they discussed some of the AAUP’s previously submitted proposals. The union then presented the balance of its non-economic items, on which further discussion was held. The dialogue was both professional and constructive. Oakland plans to begin presenting its language issues when the parties meet again next week. It is hoped that with that presentation, the parties can start agreeing to contract language changes and otherwise narrowing down the issues. Oakland looks forward to the parties continuing their productive negotiations towards reaching a new agreement in the near future.

June 9, 2021 – Oakland and AAUP bargaining teams met again today towards negotiating a new collective bargaining agreement. Today, the parties agreed to leave 18 full articles and appendixes unchanged and signed-on those articles. Oakland also identified the handful of non-economic provisions in other articles that it still wishes for the parties to address and the parties had a general discussion regarding Oakland’s concerns with those provisions. These items are generally aimed at eliminating some undue complexities in the contract and to otherwise address ways that the contract can work better for the AAUP, the faculty, and Oakland. Oakland also provided some counterproposals to proposals previously made by the AAUP, and the parties were able to resolve one of those items. The parties are making progress. Oakland hopes that the momentum will continue and that a new contract will be concluded soon.

June 25, 2021 - The AAUP and Oakland bargaining teams met twice this week. During their sessions they engaged in productive discussions on a number of language issues raised by each party, and a few counterproposals were exchanged. They are slated to meet again next week and it is hoped that many of the

remaining language issues can be resolved so that they can begin discussing more direct economic matters by early July. Oakland is encouraged by the professional manner in which both teams are working towards the shared goal of concluding a fair contract for the faculty, the students, Oakland, and the overall Oakland community.

June 30 – The parties met again this week and discussed a number of their respective non-economic proposals on the table. The discussions were productive, though none of the items were resolved. Hopefully, and in light of their discussions, these items will be resolved soon and the parties will soon address economic issues. We are encouraged by the progress being made. The parties are slated to continue meeting throughout July, with their next session to occur on July 8th.

July 16, 2021 - The parties have met a few times over the past two weeks and have had discussions about many of the non-economic issues “on the table.” Those discussions have been productive since it appears that mutual resolutions of most of those items are near. Two major items will remain if these other items are resolved: 1) a means for workload policies to be updated; and 2) a means to manage reductions in force in an clear manner balancing the financial and operational demands which the University may confront in the years ahead with the desire to continue to offer excellent programs through our excellent faculty. Discussions on these points have been in-depth and also productive. It is hoped that those efforts will soon resolve those items, as well, and that the more direct economic terms of the contract will then be the focus of discussions as the teams strive towards finalizing the new contract in August. We are encouraged by how the parties are working towards practical solutions to all of the issues, to date. That professional collaboration can best assure that the final contract will be fair for all involved.

August 6, 2021 – The parties have continued to meet and have exchanged a variety of proposals and counterproposals. Unfortunately, progress has been slow. The challenges relate to a common theme in most cases, i.e., Oakland’s desire and need to be able to conform to the current climate of economic and enrollment uncertainties. Along these lines, for instance, Oakland is proposing a more streamlined and flexible approach should the need for layoffs arise through a system that would collaborate with the units involved, the Senate and the FRPC, versus the existing language written decades ago that unduly limits the way exigencies can be addressed. If Oakland is unable to react to these exigencies in a meaningful way should the need arise, then resources will be unduly drained and the challenges could become more severe.

Also, Oakland has proposed an initial economic package. The package was proposed in response to the AAUP’s proposal that disregards the unprecedented economic and enrollment uncertainties we face in 2021, a proposal Oakland believes would jeopardize the ability to sustain programs and unduly aggravate Oakland’s financial stability. The package proposed, though, was just an initial proposal; Oakland stressed that it intends to improve the package but only if it is confident that the AAUP will be open to modifying its burdensome proposal to one that would be more sustainable. Further, Oakland is seeking some repositioning of elements of the compensation package so that more dollars can be directed towards pay while still providing a competitive and fair set of benefits, benefits that are at least as favorable as those

already provided to non-faculty employees, both through policies and union agreements. The AAUP has yet to indicate a willingness to address these objectives.

That said, bargaining is a process, a process that allows the ability to resolve and compromise differences. Oakland respects this process and is hopeful that it will enable the parties to narrow and ultimately eliminate the gap currently before them. Oakland's goal is to come to an agreement that will serve the best interests of the entire community, including our students, faculty and staff, as we collectively strive to meet our strategic priorities of student success, research, community engagement, and diversity, equity and inclusion.

Bargaining is scheduled to resume on Tuesday, August 10.

August 12, 2021 – The parties continued to bargain this week towards a new faculty agreement. Both parties made movement on key issues, but there are still some significant gaps to close. In light of the progress and the contract's August 14th expiration date, the parties agreed to extend the contract by one week and continue to meet over the course of multiple sessions next week. Oakland is hopeful that those discussions are productive and will culminate in a new agreement. To be fair for all parties, though, that contract must reflect the economic and enrollment challenges Oakland and the entire university community have been facing for the past few years. Oakland has been striving to maintain programs and faculty staffing levels in the face of diminishing resources and enrollment. Oakland's resources have diminished by nearly \$40 million over the course of recent years while still employing and supporting the same corps of faculty. In response to this reality, Oakland's focus at the bargaining table has been to find the means to support pay increases while at the same time provide a more affordable (but still robust) benefit package. If this is accomplished, then Oakland will be better able to move forward. If modifications are not realized, though, then Oakland's ability to retain employees and students will be frustrated, an outcome that could result in dramatic restructuring when the parties return to the table when the new contract expires. Oakland's goal is to reach a fair contract under these unprecedented circumstances, a contract that is fair for our faculty, our students, and Oakland. We are confident that the faculty share in this quest.

September 2, 2021 - University administrators and representatives of the Oakland University Chapter of the American Association of University Professors are continuing to negotiate to reach a tentative contract agreement.

The University hopes to resolve remaining contract issues as soon as possible and with minimal disruption to fall classes, which will not be canceled.

Students are advised to report to classes as scheduled and wait at least 15 minutes to determine whether their instructor will be teaching. Students may also contact their instructors in advance to determine whether classes will be taking place. Students will be responsible for all course content and assignments delivered during and subsequent to the negotiation period.

While contract talks continue, all University classes, support services, extracurricular activities and other operations will continue on their normal schedules.

The university regrets that this faculty union strike is taking place, particularly given that public sector strikes are illegal under Michigan law. The university's negotiating team urges faculty to teach and requests

that non-faculty employees urge faculty to do the same.

This message will be updated as further information becomes available.

September 3, 2021 - After more than 16 hours of bargaining yesterday, the issues dividing the faculty union and university administrators are minimal. Despite this and the mediator's willingness to work through the night if necessary, union negotiators decided to extend an illegal strike and end the bargaining session. Oakland has proposed a pay increase to all faculty of 5.25% over three years; however, the union has not accepted this.

Oakland University offers all employees outstanding health benefits, for which most employees pay a premium of just 10 percent. Faculty pay just 5 percent. Negotiators expect parity between the faculty and the rest of university employees. This would result in an increase in health premiums to some faculty of as much as \$6 per week (just \$312 per year) beginning midway into the second year of the contract. However, this increase in health care costs would be more than offset by proposed salary increases.

Oakland University offers the opportunity for dependents of faculty to obtain degrees at virtually no charge – an attractive benefit for recruiting and retaining faculty. The union has demanded that this benefit be extended indefinitely when students fail to complete a class and must retake a course. All other employees at OU are expected to pay for classes that are retaken when dependents fail a course. Again, Oakland seeks parity with the rest of its employees, but this issue was unresolved last night.

University administrators want to be clear that OU's outstanding faculty are highly valued. Administrators regret that union negotiators left last night's session with so few matters unresolved. Oakland is working hard to provide a fair and equitable compensation package to faculty, but that package must also be fiscally responsible given unprecedented revenue losses this year. Oakland is navigating an economic challenge in a way that still provides for increases to faculty compensation in every year of the proposed contract; in a way that does not touch the generous, above-market retirement package current faculty receive; and in a way that does not call for any cuts to academic programming.

The parties appear to be and should be close to a settlement. Bargaining is scheduled to resume at 10 a.m. today. Meanwhile, faculty are expected to report to work and classes are to be held as scheduled.

University administrators look forward to resolving remaining issues today so that the campus community can focus its attention on the exciting start of a new school year.

September 4, 2021 - While this year got off to a rocky-start, Oakland University and the faculty are anxious to start afresh and focus on our collective mission.

Towards that end, Oakland University and its faculty, through their union, restate their commitment to offering our students a superior educational experience by focusing our collective energies on engaging in what we value most – serving our students and facilitating their success.

Accordingly, to make up for the delays experienced over the past few days, the faculty will undertake all feasible measures to assure that full course content and learning objectives are delivered to their students, and that all requirements for credits and program accreditations are satisfied.

Further, to the extent that faculty have not already done so, they will promptly engage with their students, through Moodle and other means, with respect to course expectations, syllabi, assignments for this weekend (if applicable) and the coming week, clinical programming, orientations, and other appropriate interventions.