

Summary of UWMC-WSNA Negotiations – Current August 13, 2015

SUMMARY

- UWMC and WSNA have not reached an agreement on a new contract, so the previous contract remains in effect.
- UWMC has proposed 3% and 2% increases in 2015 and 2016, but no wage increases go into effect until the contract is ratified.
- UWMC proposes to maintain large portions of the successful current contract. WSNA seeks to require mandatory union membership for new nurses, eliminate on-call from certain units, and increase grievances over staffing plans.

Negotiations between UWMC management and WSNA are still ongoing, and the parties are down to just a few key issues. Throughout these negotiations, UWMC management has prioritized a contract that optimizes patient care and recognizes the extraordinary work performed daily by our nurses. Our UWMC management team includes Grace Parker, Carla Brannen, Leslie Hampton, Dortha McMahon, Keri Nasenbeny, Christine Sampson, and representatives from UW Human Resources.

Nurses at UWMC are unique, unmatched in their ability and spirit, and are core to making UWMC the first 5-time recipient of the Magnet Hospital certification.

STATUS OF NEGOTIATIONS

UWMC management and WSNA have met for 10 bargaining sessions to date. The parties recently agreed to enlist the help of a state-appointed third-party mediator to help facilitate a mutually agreeable resolution. The existing contract expired on July 1, 2015, which means that the previous contract will remain in effect until the parties reach agreement on a successor contract.

PAY IMPACTS

Until a new contract is finalized, no new provisions (including wage increases) can be applied. On June 30 the UWMC management team requested that WSNA take the proposed contract to the nurses for a vote so they could obtain wage increases by July 1. UWMC is concerned about the delay in nurse wage increases and has worked hard to prevent this.

The University's long-standing practice is to only provide wage increases prospectively, meaning pay raises will not be backdated to an earlier date (such as last July 1). This has been discussed on numerous occasions with WSNA: that delays in the contract are delaying well-earned salary increases for nurses.

OUTSTANDING ISSUES

Wages: UW has proposed wage increases for UWMC nurses of 3% in year 1 of the contract and 2% in year 2, as well as the addition of a new step 30 to the top of the pay range. This is one of the largest economic packages that UWMC has presented in years of bargaining with

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WSNA, and is among the largest pay increases both within the University and among other nurses in the area over the time period covered by the contract.

WSNA's latest proposal is for a 3 percent across-the-board increase in 2015 and a 4 percent across-the-board increase in 2016, as well as the new top step. Given the cost of the robust health insurance and other benefits enjoyed at UW, we must strike a balance between rewarding and retaining our nurses, while ensuring responsible stewardship of public resources and the long-term success of UWMC.

Union Shop Requirement (Mandatory Union Dues): UWMC proposes to maintain the current union membership system in which nurses have the option to join WSNA or opt out. WSNA is proposing to require all newly-hired UWMC nurses to pay union dues without the possibility of opting out. UWMC has resisted imposing this new requirement on its nurses. UWMC supports each nurse's ability to choose whether or not they want to pay union dues, recognizing that the unique working conditions and professional autonomy at UWMC play an important role in nurse satisfaction. UWMC is also concerned about introducing a two-tier system for our nurses.

WSNA has contended that this position is "anti-union." In reality, UWMC does not oppose the union or nurses' right to join it. UWMC is simply defending each nurse's ability to make this decision based on what is right for them, rather than having the decision made for them.

On-Call: WSNA is proposing several changes to the status quo, including to limit on-call to the Operating Room, PACUs, Interventional Radiology, and the Cath Lab, and to prevent new hires from accepting mandatory call as a condition of hire. UW has dropped its proposals to extend mandatory on-call and is proposing to maintain existing, agreed-upon practices. The union's proposal to roll back the call requirements that are already in place could ultimately impact the hospital's ability to ensure optimal patient care.

Staffing: UWMC has accepted WSNA's language regarding staffing to facilitate rest breaks, meal breaks, and ultimately nurse safety. The remaining point of disagreement is WSNA's proposal to eliminate the long-standing contract language clarifying that the content of a staffing plan is not subject to the grievance procedure.

The union already has the power to grieve several elements of staffing, including missed breaks and unsafe staffing conditions, but staffing plans are essential to successfully operate the hospital. Our Staffing Committee, with staff nurse representation from almost every unit, is our established and preferred venue to address staffing questions and concerns.

When asked, the union has not provided specific and compelling reasons for what it hopes to gain that is not already covered by existing language.

UPCOMING CONTRACT CHANGES

We have reached agreement with the union on many items, and we are proud of the added gains for nurses that this new contract will provide once finalized. Improvements include

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increasing certification pay to \$1.25 per hour, and introducing a \$4 per hour ECLS nurse premium and a \$2 per hour Vascular Access Team nurse premium, both with the potential to stack with the Charge nurse premium. Expansions to call back and standby premiums will increase the minimum work period guaranteed to nurses at a time-and-one-half rate to 3 hours. UWMC also agreed to increase WSNA's access to new-hires and transfers during orientation. But in order for these and the other benefits of this new contract to go into effect, the parties must reach agreement on the few issues that remain outstanding.

NEXT STEPS

Future negotiations sessions will be held in the presence of a mediator from the State Public Employment Relations Commission. We will keep you apprised of important developments as this process progresses, and more detailed summaries of each bargaining session can be found at: <http://www.washington.edu/admin/hr/laborrel/negotiation-updates/wsna/index.html>.