

Employer's Opening Statement
March 5, 2024

This statement has been prepared to accompany the opening proposals tabled on March 5, 2024, by the Bargaining Committee representing the Governors of the University of Alberta (the "Employer"). The purpose of this statement is twofold: to highlight proposals which are of priority to the Employer, and to provide some contextual rationale for those proposals.

The Employer enters this round of bargaining with a confidence that, over the most recent rounds, the parties have established together a bargaining process that is professional, respectful and collegial. We look forward to a continuation of that as we work together toward a renewal of the collective agreement. To the members of AASUA's bargaining team, the Employer thanks them for their commitment and engagement.

Consistent with previous rounds of collective bargaining with AASUA, the Employer reiterates here the principles which underpin the Employer's process and objectives, as follows:

- The University's mission and academic priorities are paramount in all decision making; collective bargaining outcomes must further the mission and academic priorities while promoting administrative efficiency and effectiveness.
- The University negotiates with its bargaining partners in good faith, with professionalism, and in the spirit of collegiality on all matters relating to the terms and conditions of employment of bargaining unit members.
- Collective bargaining outcomes must reflect the valuable contributions of employees to the University's core mandate of teaching and research.
- The interests of students, faculty, staff, and all internal and external stakeholders within the University community are important and will be considered.
- The economic outcomes of collective bargaining must be fair, equitable, responsible and sustainable.

As in every round of collective bargaining, the Employer's Bargaining Committee has been provided a collective bargaining mandate, developed and approved by the Board Human Resources Compensation Committee ("BHRCC"). Additionally, the Employer has been issued bargaining directives by the provincial government having the legislative authority of the Public Sector Employers Act. The BHRCC-approved mandate is consistent with these directives.

The Employer Bargaining Committee confirms its authority to reach a tentative agreement with AASUA, provided the tentative agreement meets the parameters stipulated by mandate. Upon reaching a tentative agreement, we will initiate the ratification process as set out in our response to AASUA's Notice to Bargain. The tentative agreement will not become a binding renewal collective agreement until all the steps of the ratification process have been completed, including ratification of the tentative agreement by AASUA's members.

The Employer's proposals are tabled acknowledging the following context:

- Since 2017, when the legislative framework for collective bargaining in Alberta for (most) public sector employers changed to permit strike/lockout, collective bargaining outcomes regarding both the duration (term) of renewal agreements and compensation adjustments have followed a consistent pattern across the sector.
- The provincial government continues to be a significant contributor to the university's total annual operating budget from which the majority of the costs of salary and benefits for all faculty and staff are paid.
- Compliance with the bargaining directives issued by the provincial government and alignment with sectoral bargaining norms in Alberta is a top priority for which we strive to achieve without the need for a work stoppage.

In light of those contextual factors, the Employer's proposals in this round of bargaining can be summarized as follows:

- regarding compensation, proposals to align with provincial directives, for instance:
 - a 4 year term
 - across-the-board wage increases in each year consistent with sectoral norms
- proposals to enhance the health, safety and security of employees, for instance:
 - through express recognition of, and more robust protections against, discrimination, harassment and sexual violence offences in the context of disciplinary action
- proposals to enhance administrative, operational and academic efficiencies, for instance:
 - alignment of pay frequency with other employee groups at the university
 - recognizing year-round academic programming, increased flexibility to assign teaching to faculty in the spring/summer term
 - to reduce the frequency of performance evaluation at FEC for post-tenure faculty (in certain circumstances)
 - regarding the probationary period for TRAS members
- proposals to streamline, simplify and/or provide clarity of process regarding, for instance:
 - consultation with the AASUA prior to amending policies and procedures
 - disciplinary decisions following culpable misconduct
 - complaints against members
 - benefits governance
 - performance evaluation, including a more express recognition of graduate student supervision
 - performance evaluation appeals process (ATS)
 - job evaluation (APO)
- proposals to update/modernize language regarding, for instance:

- intellectual property
- employment equity
- removal allowances

In recent rounds of bargaining, the Employer and its bargaining partners have reached renewal collective agreements aligned with sectoral patterns in the province without having to resolve any differences through strike/lockout. The Employer is proud of that accomplishment and strives for a similar outcome in 2024. We look forward to working with the AASUA bargaining committee and to achieving a mutually acceptable renewal agreement.

Tabled by the Employer Bargaining Committee, 5 March 2024