

Butler Eagle

BC3 faculty has new contract

Trustees, union pass 6-year term

Article published April 18, 2013

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BUTLER TWP — After about 18 months of negotiations and almost a year without a contract, Butler County Community College and the union representing its faculty have a new six-year contract.

BC3's contract with the BC3 Education Association, PSEA/NEA, which represents about 70 full-time faculty and 44 regular, part-time adjunct faculty, expired on June 30, 2012. The new agreement is retroactive to July 1, 2012, and runs through June 30, 2018.

The new contract, which was approved Wednesday by the BC3 trustees, has no pay raise for 2012-13. Then it has annual pay raises of 2.75 percent to 3 percent each year thereafter. The contract also contains early retirement incentives and increased employee contributions to health care costs.

With the new contract, the lowest paid employee gets \$34,500; the highest paid gets \$87,065; and the average pay is \$54,928.

Using the percentage increase range of 2.75 percent to 3 percent, the lowest paid employee would get from \$35,449 to \$35,535 next school year and from \$39,482 to \$39,995 in the final year of the contract; the highest paid employee would get from \$89,459 to \$89,677 next school year and from \$99,713 to \$100,932 in the final year of the contract; and the employee currently earning the average pay will get from \$56,439 to \$56,576 next school year and from \$62,909 to \$63,677 in the final year of the contract.

Linda Dodd, director of human relations for BC3, said the contract prepares the college for implementation of the Affordable Health Care Act by increasing employee health care contributions from 2.13 percent to up to 10 percent in 2013-14.

Over the six-year contract, the average full-time faculty member will see an overall net increase of 2.71 percent per year in their health care contributions, plus other payments based on tenure, advancement in rank and faculty workload.

Dodd said, "I think, throughout this process, both parties understood the importance of what each was seeking in this contract."

The contract includes early retirement incentives for faculty, with 15 years of service or more, in the school years of 2013-14, 2015-16 and 2017-18.

The early retirement incentive for 2013-14 includes a one-time, \$20,000 payment, which drops to \$12,500 in 2015-16 and \$10,000 in 2017-18. No health care benefits are tied to early retirement.

Both parties also agreed to an opt-out clause, giving each the opportunity to terminate the contract early, as of June 30, 2016, or June 30, 2017, by giving written notice by Oct. 31 of the preceding year.

The opt-out clause gives the college a safety net in case, for example, health care costs skyrocket past predicted levels and the employee contribution becomes inadequate, Dodd said. Another example of its use may be faculty backing out if they feel the pay raises are inadequate.

“It would not be fiscally responsible for us to negotiate a contract without an opt-out,” Dodd said.

BC3 and the union began negotiations in January 2012, but talks stagnated by July last year, when the old contract expired. Both sides then commissioned a fact finding report to aid the process, the results of which each side accepted this March.

A copy of the fact-finding report is available online at the Pennsylvania Labor Relations Board's website.

“After all those months, I think both sides were getting very wary,” Dodd said, who also credited BC3 President Nick Neupauer and Jim Hrabosky, vice president for administration and finance, for their efforts in the negotiations.

The faculty contract bears similarities to those approved by BC3 trustees in June 2012, when the board extended contracts with several groups of employees, as well as President Nick Neupauer, whose contract was extended through June 30, 2015.

Neupauer received the same \$2,000 wage increase in 2012-13 as other administrators and professional/technical employees.

Also receiving one-year contract extensions at that time, all with new expiration dates of June 30, 2014, were the education support professionals, maintenance, shipping and receiving services and custodial employees, and campus police officers.