

# UFF-LSSC

**United Faculty of Florida  
Lake-Sumter State College**

May 17, 2020

District Board of Trustees  
Lake-Sumter State College

Dear District Board of Trustees,

We write to you during a difficult time. All areas of the college have moved swiftly and effectively to serve our students during this global pandemic. The faculty have made numerous adjustments in our instruction and academic support including moving seated classes online, completing committee work virtually, adapting labs to distance learning, creating proctored online testing environments, offering online student library and research assistance, and supporting our adjuncts among other adjustments to make the unexpected transition for students less arduous. While all areas of the college have moved swiftly and effectively to serve our students in this challenging time, the college has stalled in its legally mandated labor negotiations with the faculty union. Many negotiation meetings have been cancelled, and when negotiation meetings have occurred the administration has shown up unprepared and unable to negotiate significant portions of the contract. This and other issues at the college (outlined below) have brought faculty morale to an all-time low. We write to inform you of these matters so that you may have all of the information you need in order to serve and act in the best interest of the college community.

Our working conditions as faculty members were necessarily and understandably affected by the pandemic. Per our legal responsibility, we presented the administration with a letter requesting impact bargaining (Appendix 1) and a proposed Memorandum of Understanding (Appendix 2) on March 23 to address the adjustments known at the time. Additional issues such as new course delivery methods and online lab requirements have arisen since. We have not heard back from them about these issues or any others. Faculty work conditions can only be addressed via the union at the bargaining table. However, negotiations have ceased altogether, we are told, per order of the District Board of Trustees. A cease and desist letter was sent to the board attorney concerning this matter on May 8.

These recent cancellations are far from a new development but rather part of a consistent pattern of delays that has persisted throughout the negotiation process. Since our initial, nearly complete, contract proposal was shared with administration in April of 2019, the administration has unilaterally cancelled five of our previously scheduled negotiation sessions (August 14<sup>th</sup>, December 3<sup>rd</sup>, January 14<sup>th</sup>, April 3<sup>rd</sup>, and April 23<sup>rd</sup>). This represents nearly 40% of all scheduled bargaining sessions. When the sessions are held, administration frequently fails to bring the portions of the contract they have agreed to negotiate. For example, we were told in October that they would aim to have a counter proposal on workload ready to negotiate at our

November session. They did not, and then they cancelled the December session so we could not discuss it then either. They also cancelled the January 14<sup>th</sup> session, so discussing it then was not possible either, but they assured us they would bring it to the January 31<sup>st</sup> session. Once again, they did not. At the February session, they informed us that they could not negotiate workload because they had to meet with the Board of Trustees “to see how they felt about certain parts of the contract before starting to negotiate them.” We have no objection to them consulting with you, but this consultation could easily have taken place at any point in the ten months that occurred between the time we gave them the contract and the time they said they had to consult with you. In the year since we shared our contract proposal with administration, we have only managed to pass one complete article, and this is not because our requests are unreasonable. For example, one article we proposed was essentially just a codification of our existing, already-agreed-upon procedures, but administration has refused to sign it for months because they do not want to be held to any included deadlines. We are not making progress on the contract negotiations because the college has not made us a high priority.

The faculty union (UFF-LSSC) was officially established in 2018 to collectively address the considerable issues currently facing faculty, which include a lack of shared governance, problems with the working conditions, and concerns regarding compensation. For more specific information regarding our reasons for unionization, we ask that you read through Appendix 3. This appendix features the text of our opening statement from the first bargaining session, which was held in April of 2019. We are able to present it here, in its entirety, as a representation of our current concerns because, in the year since this statement was initially delivered, none of the issues we raised have been addressed. New issues have also arisen, and samples of those, and the faculty’s unacknowledged attempts to address them, have been included in Appendices 4-6.

The issues facing our faculty are pressing, and the consistent delays in addressing these issues are not in the best interest of the college or our students. As such, while we know and fully acknowledge the difficulties we are all facing as a result of the pandemic, we urge you to publicly affirm a strategy of good faith bargaining and allow us to bargain virtually until it is safe for us to do so on campus. This request is supported by considerable precedent, and even the college’s own attorney, Brian Koji, is currently conducting bargaining sessions virtually for other Florida state colleges. The faculty bargaining team is ready to get to work, but we need your support in order to once again begin building better working relationships at the college. We also encourage you to swiftly confer with the administration regarding specific content areas of the labor contract so that they may arrive to the bargaining table fully prepared. Our working conditions are the students’ learning conditions. The first and only way to rectify these issues is by ratifying a mutually beneficial labor contract as soon as possible.

In order to provide the District Board of Trustees with all necessary information needed to perform public duties to taxpayers, we plan to write monthly updates to you leading up to each monthly District Board of Trustees meeting. We ask that you publicly acknowledge these letters as formal agenda items and publicly discuss the status and progress of contract negotiations at each meeting. To demonstrate that this letter was not written by an outside party or a radical

minority within the faculty, we list all faculty who support the content of this letter. Thank you for doing what you can to guide this process. We look forward to your swift response.

Sincerely,

Mr. Kevin Arms  
Dr. Lloyd Beckles  
Ms. Agnes Bereczky  
Mr. Graham Bourne  
Ms. Julie Brooks-Fason  
Ms. Sybil Brown  
Dr. Nancy Browne  
Mr. Alexander Bruno  
Ms. Colleen Carter  
Mr. James Cason  
Ms. Kristen Chancey  
Ms. Marilyn Cole  
Mr. Gary Connelly  
Ms. Kelly Cornell  
Mr. Gregory Craig  
Mr. Matthew Drum  
Ms. Jessica George  
Ms. Kathy Hamilton  
Dr. Minerva Haugabrooks  
Ms. Mary Heikkinen  
Dr. Debby Hicks  
Dr. Steven Husebye  
Ms. Joan Johnson  
Mr. James Jackson  
Dr. Linda Karp  
Ms. Amber Karlins  
Mr. Matthew Kennedy  
Ms. Amanda Kirchner  
Ms. Karen Lanctot  
Ms. Kathleen Larke  
Mr. Christopher Leibner  
Mr. Alberto Luma  
Dr. Betti McTurk  
Mr. Jeff Melton  
Dr. Michael Morse  
Ms. Cynthia Nash  
Mr. Jeremy Norton  
Dr. Peter Olen

Dr. Luis Ortiz  
Ms. Nancy Parks  
Ms. Deborah Pate  
Ms. Jacklyn Pierce  
Ms. Taralyn Pierce  
Ms. Nora Rackley  
Mr. Patrick Rader  
Dr. Claude Richards  
Mr. James Brian Rogers  
Dr. Katie Roles  
Dr. Michele Rudden  
Mr. Christopher Sargent  
Mr. John Shea  
Ms. Brenda Skoczelas  
Mr. Brandon Smith  
Ms. Alissa Sustarsic  
Ms. Julia Sweitzer  
Ms. Toni Upchurch  
Dr. Katherine Urquhart  
Ms. Kristina Van Amerongen  
Ms. Winter Walker  
Dr. David Walton  
Mr. Daniel Weber  
Mr. Andrew Young  
Ms. Brandy Ziesemer

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