

Board of Trustees Meeting
Friday, April 4, 2008

Chair Kevin Raymond
Verbatim response to UFWW

Kevin Raymond:

The next item that we were going to do was to go into Executive Session for about an hour to talk about various issues, including Collective Bargaining. We've got a lot of guests this morning and we really are glad you are here. I think we know why you're here and so before we go into Executive Session, I want to invite Kristie Lemm to come forward on behalf of the Faculty Union. Kristie, please join us at the table. I understand that you'd like to make a statement and we would like to receive it.

Kristie Lemm, Vice President of the UFWW spoke and presented a letter to the Trustees. See <http://www.ufws.org/western/>

Kevin Raymond:

Kristie, thank you for that statement and thanks to all of the faculty for being here this morning. We appreciate it. One of the things that unites everyone in this room is that we all care about this university. It is going to take all of us to help the university continue to move forward in the direction that we want it to.

Kristie, it is nice to see you again. I think that the last time you and I spoke was in September after the President announced her intention to retire. We started a conversation with many on campus about the process that would lead to the appointment of her successor. It's nice to see you again.

This is an important issue to the Board. I want to respond briefly to the comments that you made. I want to start and finish with the same point. I hope to emphasize how important it is to us.

The first is that as a Board we are deeply committed to good faith bargaining at the table where all sides and all issues are put on the table; and are committed to it as a process that works toward resolution of a contract that is in the best interest of the campus. And, like you, we look forward with anticipation to the next sessions that are scheduled with the mediator later this month. I hope that those are fruitful.

When we came in this morning we were given a document from the Union that outlines the main issues that you see as outstanding. I wanted to respond just very briefly on a couple of comments that were made at the end, because it goes to the tone of the process and the next steps.

The first is a statement that “the Union remains ready as always to listen to the administration and to meet them halfway on issues where they can demonstrate they have a reasonable position that is in the best interest of the university.” That’s a great statement. As a partial response to it on behalf of the Board -- we’re not at the table -- it’s our understanding that the administration, a week ago Wednesday, put a proposal on the table that has not yet been responded to. That proposal includes a recommended salary increase percentage that would exceed that embodied in the negotiated collective bargaining agreements at Eastern and Central, as well as at Washington State University. So, it strikes us that a response to that proposal would be a helpful next step in moving the process forward. From the Board’s perspective, knowing that there’s a proposal on the table that is awaiting a response, we would hope that as you are ready, the Union will respond to that proposal and that response will bring the sides closer together. We all want this collective bargaining agreement to be completed.

The second thing I want to say is that we continue to have confidence in the bargaining teams and the bargaining process. We really do honestly and sincerely believe that this process can work and that the teams will find a way to make it work because it is so clearly in the best interest of the university that it succeed. And as I think we all know, with a presidential search and other issues, this is a critical time in the life of a university. We really do need to resolve these issues as quickly and as happily as we can. We have confidence in the process; we urge that both sides continue to work in faith toward a prompt resolution of these remaining issues so that we can get this done.

The last thing I want to say is that as a Board we do feel strong commitment to the faculty and to our Strategic Plan, and to the broad mission of the university to serve students and the public. We want and expect this agreement, as part of our efforts to implement our Strategic Plan and look out for the best interest of the university, to take those things into appropriate account and we really are committed to that.

The last comment I want to make really goes back to the first one and it relates to the statement, Kristie, that you made and it’s included in the materials that we were given this morning. “The Board of Trustees should instruct their bargaining team to work toward a fair contract that protects Western’s future.” That is our direction to the administration team. We do want to continue to work toward a fair contract that protects Western’s future and we hope and expect that that’s a goal shared by the Bargaining Team and the Union and that the teams will be able to come together around a contract. I hope that’s helpful.

We really are glad you are here. We hear you on an issue that is a concern to you and that is a concern to us and the administration’s team. Let’s get this done.

Thank you very much for coming here; we really appreciate it. Kristie, unless you have other comments, we are going to go into Executive Session for approximately one hour...