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Bellingham Technical College board approves contracts reached during strike

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BELLINGHAM - Bellingham Technical College finalized contract agreements late Monday, Sept. 30, with two unions that represent the college's faculty and classified, clerical, technical, instructional and retail support staff.

The Board of Trustees approved a three-year agreement with faculty union Bellingham Education Association, and a four-year agreement with Bellingham Education Support Team after a weeklong strike delayed the start of classes.

Federal financial aid, which cannot be disbursed until classes start, was released to students Monday afternoon.

As a temporary fix for students who had counted on receiving their aid last week, the BTC Foundation offered emergency grants of \$250 to those most in need. The foundation gave 130 students grants worth \$32,400 between Sept. 27 and Sept. 30. The money came from the foundation, BTC President Patricia McKeown, and community donations.

The faculty union went on strike Sept. 24, the scheduled start of classes, after year-long negotiations with the college had not produced a proposal both sides could agree on. Though BEST was not technically on strike, some members chose to honor the faculty strike and did not work.

BEST had been in negotiations with the school since before May.

To make up the four class days missed for the strike, the fall quarter end date was extended three days to Dec. 18. In addition, faculty will make up the final day of missed time by their own arrangements, said Marni Saling Mayer, BTC spokeswoman.

BEST employees who missed four days of work for the strike will have the option of making up two work days and/or may use of vacation leave for two or more of the missed days, Saling Mayer said. There are other options of front-loading paid leave or using leave without pay, she said.

Faculty salary increases stipulated in the deal begin this fall quarter.

The first year of the BEA deal will cost the college \$222,268.

The four-year BEST deal could cost the college between \$57,214 and \$186,946 depending on cost-of-living adjustments.

The increases will be covered in multiple ways, Saling Mayer said. The school will not have layoffs but will continue to hold open some empty positions and may keep open other positions in the future, she said. Depending on enrollment levels and tuition and fee revenues, all or a portion of the increases will be paid from the college's reserve fund.

Here's a breakdown of the major points from the contracts:

BEA CONTRACT

2013-14

- Faculty salary increase of 3 percent when moving from one schedule step to the next. This year, all faculty on steps 1 through 13 received increases ranging from 2.5 percent to 7.1 percent.
- Faculty stipend increased by 17.6 percent to \$2,100.
- Adjunct faculty rate per instructional hour raised to \$57. Restricted rate increased by 0.6 percent; standard "teaching" rate increased by 3.1 percent.
- Changes to workload language.

2014-2016

- Increases to adjunct salary schedules each year.
- Faculty salaries and stipends receive cost-of-living adjustments each year.

BEST CONTRACT

2013-2014

- \$300 supplement to cover for lack of state-provided COLA.
- Increase pay for employees with 10 or more years at BTC.

2014-2017

- Salary COLAs of 1.5 percent, 1.8 percent and 2 percent minimum increases over next three years.
- One-time \$300 supplement for lack of state-provided COLA.
- Increases to salary schedule steps and pay for employees with 20 or more years at BTC.



Bellingham Technical College.

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