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## Teachers Strike at Bellingham Technical College

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By LIAM MORIARTY

A Whatcom County court has refused to order striking teachers back to the classroom at [Bellingham Technical College](#) Tuesday. They walked off the job after failing to reach an agreement with the school's administration on wages and other issues.

About 8,000 students who expected to start fall classes at BTC will have to wait as the school and [the teachers' union](#) continue to try to hammer out a deal. The faculty, represented by the Bellingham Education Association, has been working without a contract since June and instructors last week authorized a strike if they didn't get an agreement by the first day of school. Steve Mudd, who teaches psychology and communications, says instructors feel they're overdue for a raise.

*"We also feel like we're going backwards since we haven't had an increase in over five years, that inflation alone has taken a 12 to 15 percent bite out of our salaries in that time."*

The teachers are also seeking clarification of what they say are confusing and inequitable workload rules. They also object to the administration's use of "secret shopper-type" surveillance, where inspectors posing as students do undercover evaluations of classes. BTC officials say [their wage offer](#) – about half what the union is asking for – is fair. They note that, while faculty hasn't had a raise since 2008, they did avoid the pay cuts some other community colleges and technical schools in the state imposed in recent years.

Negotiations are expected to continue as both sides say they hope for a quick resolution.