Bellingham Technical College board approves contracts reached during strike

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

The Board of Trustees approved a three-year agreement with faculty union Bellingham Education Association, and a five-year agreement with Bellingham Education Support Team after a work stoppage 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 aid week the BTC Foundation offered emergency grants of $250 to those most in need. The foundation gave 135 students grants, worth $32,450 between Sept. 27 and Sept. 30. The money came from the foundation, BTC President Patrick Mahownen, and community donations.

The faculty union went on strike Sept. 30, and 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 technologically on strike, some members chose to honor the faculty strike and did not work.

BEST had been in negotiations with the school since May.

To make up the four class days missed for the strike, the fall quarter end date was extended three days to Dec. 16. In addition, faculty will make up the first day of missed time by their own, arrangements, said Saige Mayer, BTC spokesperson.

BEST employers who missed four days of work for the strike will have the option of making up two work days and the other two days of the month of November. Saige Mayer said. There are other options of split-breaking paid leave or using leave with an paid pay, she said.

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

The first year of the BEST deal will cost the college $222,298.

The two-year BEST deal cost the college between $57,214 and $189,854 depending on cost of living adjustments.

The increases will be covered in multiple years, Saige Mayer said. The school will not have layoffs next year, but will continue to hold open some empty positions and may keep open other positions in the future, she said. In addition, employees will receive 80 percent of their sick leave.

The following is the breakdown of the major points from the contracts.

**CONTRACT 2013-14**
- Faculty salary increase of 5 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.
- Adjust faculty rate per instructional hour rate increased to $57. Restricted rate increased by 0.6 percent.
- Standard “teaching” rate increased by 3.1 percent.
- Changes to workload language.

**CONTRACT 2014-15**
- Increases to adjust salary schedules each year.
- Faculty salaries and stipends receive cost of living adjustments each year.

**BEST CONTRACT**

2015-2016
- $300 supplement to core for lack of state-provided COLA.
- Increase pay for employees with 10 or more years at BTC.
- Salary COLA of 1.5 percent. 1.5 percent and 2 percent minimum increases over next three years.
- One-time $500 supplement for lack of state-provided COLA.
- Increase to salary schedule steps and pay for employees with 20 or more years at BTC.

Reach Sarah Jyoo Fulf at 360-759-1293 or sarahj@bellinghamwest.com.