Update (8-21-23)

Negotiations are now approaching the one-year mark since the USM and AFSCME teams’ first meeting under this new consolidated collective bargaining process. The parties have met twelve times over the past year and have reached tentative agreement on twenty or so provisions. While some progress has been made, the USM team continues to eagerly await receipt of all of AFSCME’s proposals; AFSCME indicated it still has one significant proposal remaining to present.

As noted previously, knowing and understanding the operational impact and the cost of proposals presented at the table, as well as the overall picture, is an important part of the collective bargaining process for our public sector institutions. Economic commitments at the table can last many years. The total estimated cost of AFSCME’s proposals to date is just under $1 billion over the course of a three-year agreement.

Though the parties have a long way to go yet, and careful consideration must be given to any operational and fiscal impact of the proposals, the USM team remains committed to this process and to reaching agreement on a consolidated Memorandum of Understanding.

Update (5-30-2023):

At the most recent consolidated collective bargaining session, held on May 17th, the USM team presented to AFSCME an updated comprehensive MOU proposal. The updated proposal functioned to identify those areas where tentative agreement has been reached, included language from counter proposals made by the USM team, and served to remind AFSCME of the many USM team’s proposals that remain on the table for their consideration and response.

At this tenth bargaining session, AFSCME provided the USM team with a multi-part wage proposal. The USM institutions are working to calculate the estimated cost of the wage proposal, which is expected to be significant.

The parties continue to make progress toward reaching agreement on a consolidated MOU; the USM team is fully committed to this process.

Update (5-1-2023):

The parties continue to engage in consolidated MOU negotiations and have met now a total of nine times. AFSCME has yet to provide a complete response to the comprehensive MOU proposal presented by the USM team in September 2022 and instead continues to present separate sets of proposals for consideration. The total estimated cost of AFSCME’s proposals to date, without wages, is over $800 million over the course of a three-year MOU. Despite the very significant cost of the proposals on the table, the USM team remains committed to negotiating in good faith to reach agreement on a consolidated MOU.

The parties have reached tentative agreement on approximately twenty provisions. Given the current pace of negotiations, this process is likely to continue for many more months or longer before a final agreement is reached.
Consolidated Collective Bargaining Update (3-24-2023):

The consolidated collective bargaining negotiations with AFSCME began in late August 2022 and are well underway. The bargaining teams, comprised of the USM Chancellor’s designee along with USM institution representatives, and AFSCME officials along with bargaining unit members, have met a total of seven times thus far. The teams have been operating under a set of established and agreed upon ground rules.

At the end of the second negotiating session with AFSCME in September 2022, the USM team presented a complete and comprehensive MOU proposal for exempt and nonexempt employees. The comprehensive MOU proposal – an entire collective bargaining agreement containing seventy proposed provisions, including subparts – was again presented to AFSCME at the December negotiating session, after the USM team addressed some union concerns.

Though at some point during negotiations the USM team expects AFSCME to provide a complete response to the comprehensive proposal from the AFSCME team, the USM team has not yet received one. AFSCME instead has presented its own sets of partial proposals, one group at a time, providing one package at each session. Even though there has been no real response to either of USM’s September or December comprehensive MOU proposal, the USM team has countered AFSCME’s proposals dozens of times.

Knowing and understanding the operational impact and the cost of proposals presented at the table is an important part of the collective bargaining process for our public sector institutions. Economic commitments at the table can last many years. After receiving its first set of truly substantive proposals from AFSCME on December 7th, the USM institutions were asked to estimate the cost of those proposals. Notably, without wages, the total estimated cost of AFSCME’s December 7th proposals amounted to more than $500 million over the course of a three-year MOU (approximately $160+ million per year).

Careful consideration must be given to how taxpayer dollars are spent.

The USM team expressed concern over the significant cost of the proposals to AFSCME when they met with them on February 1st, when AFSCME presented more proposals with additional costs. AFSCME was asked to go back and identify their priorities. They have yet to do so.

The parties have tentatively agreed so far to approximately twelve provisions. Progress is being made, and the USM team expects to put in the hard work necessary to reach agreement on a consolidated MOU with AFSCME.

The next bargaining session is scheduled for March 29th.