

August 27, 2018

Michael White
President

Elizabeth Sullivan
Executive Director
University of Connecticut Professional Employees Association
18 Dog Lane
Storrs, CT 06268

Dear Michael and Elizabeth:

I am in receipt of your letter of dated July 27, 2018 regarding your evaluation of the University's request to extend the dates for the Article 31 classification project.

Your correspondence indicates that you are evaluating the request for an extension of deadlines, but unfortunately ends with a declaration that UCPEA cannot and will not agree to the proposed dates for the extension on the classification project. The value of the classification project was mutually recognized by both parties and as a result, was agreed to and included in the 2016-2021 collective bargaining agreement.

The University agrees with you that the classification project is a large and complex project. We have met with UCPEA to address concerns, identify issues and obtain feedback. We responded to the communications challenges, self-corrected internally to ensure better communication outcomes and made communication proposals for your membership. We have also kept you informed of the progress on the project and the challenges with resources as it relates to the existing timelines set forth in the agreement. It is not uncommon in a project of this scale to incur delays and encounter issues that can affect the deliverables. We have strived to keep you informed and to work with you to adjust the timeline in order that the project properly achieve the outcomes specified in the agreement and that quality is not sacrificed. Both parties acknowledged the need to adjust the timeline.

You state that you "have continually provided feedback on the lack of information, communication and tangible progress associated with this project. It doesn't seem to make a difference." The revised timeline proposals from the University were modified to address the exact concern you have raised – we have informed you of challenges we are confronting in gathering and processing information and we have provided you with information about what is happening behind the scenes whenever possible. We offered to create joint communications to UCPEA membership and the larger University community to let people know that the project is moving forward and what to expect, and we continue to meet with you to talk and to collaborate because UCPEA's cooperation with the project is an essential ingredient if we want to be successful. The dates we have proposed are realistic. We do not want to simply throw out a date that will satisfy you and your members if it cannot be achieved by us. It does nothing for our relationship, for the expectations of our employees and your members to approach the issue in this manner.

I recognize UCPEA's frustration when it seems to take an extended period of time to address information requests. In the spirit of partnership, I have told you the resource constraints including data systems and paper archival issues that we have historically had. I feel I must address your assertion that your requests are "blatantly disregarded" – they are not. The University takes seriously its contractual obligations and its working relationship with its collective bargaining units. We will continue to endeavor to make timely and appropriate responses to UCPEA's information requests. In the modernization of the University's HR organization, I am making every effort to account for an increased volume of complex requests. However, I must acknowledge that when complex requests for data are made by UCPEA requiring data that is close to two years old or older and are received with deadlines two weeks from the date of request (a recent example) - you can understand our opinion that such requests are unrealistic given our explanation regarding resources - yet such requests from UCPEA representatives continue to be framed in this manner.

You have raised a number of other matters in your letter that are the day to day issues of labor relations. We do, have and will continue to disagree on matters of contract interpretation and the application of contract provisions to particular circumstances. In fact, the contract and the statutory collective bargaining scheme anticipate such disputes and provide the framework for resolving those disputes. This fact was in evidence on August 10th when we were able to resolve the grievance to everyone's satisfaction regarding the proration of personal leave time.

We have and will always approach those disputes in a professional and respectful manner and I presume that you will do the same. To that end, I respectfully request that if you have concerns regarding UCPEA's relationship with the University that you allow the Department of Human Resources to respond to your issues. Long term relationships are built between professionals and teams who exhibit a courageous mind, a strong heart and the ability to speak one's mind in an open professional manner that allow for a true partnership to grow – I encourage us all to do so moving forward. In order for us to build this relationship and to realize the collaborative, consistent and vibrant work environment at UConn that I know that UCPEA, the University and each of us strive for daily, your office and the Department of Human Resources must be able to resolve issues that arise *together* in a manner that is fully collaborative and transparent. The University's goal will be to work together with UCPEA on a mutually agreed to list of outstanding and new issues that both our teams have regardless of reaching agreement on the classification timeline.

To that end, it is unfortunate that you appear to have made the decision to cut off discussions with the Department of Human Resources over a matter that is of great concern to your members and our employees. If you choose to have further discussions over the matter of an achievable timeline, my team and I stand ready and willing to have those discussions. The classification project will continue to move forward as contemplated by our agreement.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Christopher Delello". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Christopher J. Delello
Chief Human Resources Officer

Cc: Scott Jordan
Michael Kirk
Rachel Rubin
Deborah Shelby
Jeffrey Shoulson

