

ITEM 121-105-R1103

To: Board of Regents

From: Sue I. Hill, Director
Labor Relations and Personnel

Re: Approval of Tentative Agreement with Montana
Public Employees Association

Date: November 20-21, 2003

Attached is a summary of the tentative agreement reached with the Montana Public Employees Association (MPEA). The tentative agreement shows only the changes to the prior agreement. The entire agreement can be accessed electronically at <http://www.montana.edu/wochelp/collbarg/collbarg.html>. The MPEA bargaining unit is the largest in the system and is comprised of approximately 1650 employees at MSU-Bozeman, UM-Missoula, Montana Tech, MSU-Billings, and the colleges of technology who perform a wide range of diverse jobs in clerical, technical, paraprofessional, professional, safety, food service, and maintenance occupations.

The tentative agreement with MPEA provides for a 25 cent per hour increase for all employees, effective January 1, 2005. This increase is consistent with House Bill 13. The tentative agreement continues to endorse the Montana University System Achievement Program (MAP) and provides for .5% Achievement Pay effective the last day of each fiscal year for employees who receive an overall performance rating of "exceeded expectations" or "met expectations." Employees who receive an overall performance rating of "did not meet expectations" are not eligible for Achievement Pay. The tentative agreement also includes a partial tuition waiver benefit for dependents in FY 2005 that will be administered in accordance with Regent policy.

Most of the language changes included in the tentative agreement are not very substantive. The changes in item 1 of the attached summary were necessitated by the implementation of the new MAP pay structure and are housekeeping in nature. The prior agreement provided for 4 months of continued health insurance contribution for employees on a workers' compensation leave of absence. The tentative agreement added a requirement that an employee must be employed for 4 or more years before becoming eligible to receive this benefit twice in a 2-year period. Two changes were made to the provisions controlling leaves without pay: one change clarified that seniority continues to accrue during a leave of absence because the employee was called to active military duty; the other changed the amount of time that an employee may remain on a leave without pay status in the event of a disability from a maximum of 1 year to 6 months with a possible extension for an additional 6 months. A 1-year limitation with a possible 1-year extension was placed on employees' entitlement to recall to their former position in the event of a layoff. Rather than printing and

distributing copies of the agreement to all employees and supervisors, the contract will now direct interested parties to the electronic copy that is posted on various web pages. The use of a grievance committee prior to arbitration that was previously optional was made mandatory.

I recommend approval of the tentative agreement with MPEA. If the bargaining unit does not ratify the tentative agreement prior to the Regent meeting, this item will be withdrawn.