

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – JULY 28, 2020**

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## **UNION DECLARES IMPASSE IN FIRST CONTRACT NEGOTIATIONS WITH PASCO-HERNANDO STATE COLLEGE ADMINISTRATION**

The United Faculty of Florida, Pasco-Hernando State College Chapter (“UFF”) notified Florida’s Public Employee Relations Commission (“PERC”) that it has declared impasse in its negotiations with the administration of Pasco-Hernando State College (“PHSC”) following a bargaining session this morning. UFF was certified by PERC—the state’s labor board for public sector employees—as the union representative for about 150 full-time faculty at PHSC in April of 2018 following an at-times acrimonious unionization campaign in which UFF was ultimately successful.

The parties have been actively negotiating since their first union contract since February of 2019, and the process has largely been smooth, civil, and efficient. Despite reaching agreement on the vast majority of issues brought to the table—including compensation and benefits—procedures for employee discipline and performance evaluations have proven major sticking points.

The impasse declaration followed a unanimous vote taken by the bargaining team and 30 faculty present at today’s bargaining session. “The faculty are very happy with the progress we’ve been able to make in negotiations,” said Caitlin Gille, a biology professor at PHSC’s Spring Hill campus and the union’s president. “But a clear message was sent today that President Beard and the rest of the PHSC administration need to do more.”

The procedures for resolving impasses in union negotiations are governed by state law and administered by PERC. The parties can opt to retain the services of an independent mediator to assist in reaching settlement. Either party can request a hearing before a Special Magistrate, who would hear each side’s positions and issue recommendations for how the dispute should be settled. If none of these succeeds in breaking the impasse, the PHSC District Board of Trustees will have the final word.

“Everything we’re proposing is either standard in the rest of the state, just plain common sense, or both,” said Gary Oesch, a psychology professor at PHSC’s East Campus and Chair of the union’s Bargaining Committee. “Everyone—administration, faculty, students, and the general public—should be able to pick up this contract and see what the process is for disciplining an employee. Evaluations shouldn’t be kept secret from employees until the minute they walk into a meeting with their supervisor. We’re after transparency and fairness—really basic stuff.”

Despite the declaration of impasse, union leaders are optimistic that the parties can reach agreement. “We’ve been at this for a long time, and the COVID-19 crisis has left everyone exhausted, maybe stepping back and taking a break will be helpful” Oesch said. Gille concurred: “We’re confident that cooler heads will prevail and the administration will come around, eventually.”

The parties do not currently have another bargaining session scheduled.