

5/3/24

“The irony of conducting online negotiations while demanding zoom be shut down shouldn’t be lost on anyone.”

- FSU Expanded Team Member

Dear FSU members,

We had an inspiring turnout of faculty and librarians for the bargaining session yesterday. Unfortunately, the administration refused to bargain with us. Mickey Gallagher, the UMB Director of Labor Relations arrived at the start of the meeting, handed the FSU team a statement requesting third-party arbitration to resolve the disputed ground rules, then said their team was going to take a short caucus and come back. **But they never came back. They stayed in their caucus room the entire time. After almost an hour of us waiting around, they texted us, saying they would only come to the room if we promised to turn off Zoom, excluding some of our team from the session. Our reply? We refuse to negotiate over text message.**

The situation would be laughable if it weren’t so outrageous. As another member of our expanded team put it: **“The meeting was a dumpster fire of disrespect and honestly almost contempt. Not on the part of the union, on Mickey’s part. I was pretty surprised.”**

We have agreed to meet on-campus for bargaining. We also have asked admin many times what the problem is with allowing Zoom for those who want to participate but cannot be there in-person, and they have refused to answer that question. We are left to conclude that the answer is quite simply about power: the administration is trying to control who is on our team and can participate (and who cannot).

“Yesterday's 'bargaining' session was yet another demonstration of the administration's lack of respect for the time and dedication of faculty and librarians. While the FSU was physically and virtually present in large numbers, the administration's only presence was a brief initial visit by Mickey Gallagher who left the room after 5 minutes supposedly to 'caucus' with other members of admin's team but never to return to the bargaining table. Disrespectful.”

- FSU Expanded Team Member

Admin has told librarians that to attend bargaining as silent observers, they must first get approval from their dean (**herself a member of the Admin bargaining team**) and, then, either take PTO or arrange to make up their work hours, **a complete violation of past practice.**

The refusal to allow Zoom in the room and the requirement of librarians to take paid time off to attend bargaining are repressive moves intended to divide our union and impose restrictions on who can be on our team.

For the FSU, this is about our values. Are we a university that lives up to its stated values of anti-racism and health promotion? Will this administration support inclusion, participation, and shared governance? As the administration put it, **in its own statement of their bargaining principles**, is this behavior **“enriching the human core?”**

Or, rather, are we a university whose administration refuses to compromise, that seeks to enforce its own rigid, exclusionary, and, frankly, outdated form of contract bargaining? An administration that seems eager to delay bargaining by bringing in a third-party arbitrator in order to prevent members from participating in their own contract negotiations?

**We are bringing this issue to the next Faculty Council meeting,
Monday, May 6 at 1pm.**

**It is first on the agenda.
Please consider attending, participating, and
helping us build consensus and power vis-à-vis this authoritarian administration.**

**(we note that all FC meetings are held hybrid
and administrators frequently join those meetings via Zoom).**

We will let our expanded team members have the last word:

"I joined the expanded bargaining team because it's important to bear witness to contract negotiations and maintain a democratic ethic that is at the heart of that process. I was appalled to see management make demands and then leave the room to caucus at the start of the meeting. 30 minutes later they texted that they were ready to meet in person if their demands were met."

"As full time NTT faculty parents of a lovely but demanding toddler, it has been especially insulting to us to see UMB Management doubling down on their ridiculous refusal to allow Zoom in the room for bargaining sessions. By trying to shut down remote participation, Admin is effectively telling all our members with serious home-care responsibilities that we are to be excluded from these negotiations. This is discriminatory and unacceptable. Zoom access is a life-saver for overloaded workers, and it's become a normal part of university life: it's absurd and outright cruel to deny it to us as union members: Let Zoom in the Room!"

4/24/24

Dear Member,

Here is the latest on the 24-27 FSU contract negotiations. ***Don't forget to register to attend the May 1st bargaining session (see [attached flyer](#) for more information).***

Where Are We Currently?

- FSU bargaining team has met with management twice (Feb. 26 & April 8). Both meetings were focused on concerns about modality/scheduling for this negotiations season. **Unfortunately, despite the fact that both teams have submitted a set of substantive proposals, negotiations have been stuck talking about zoom instead of the important issues that matter to faculty and librarians.**
 - See FSU Proposals [HERE](#)
 - See Management Proposals [HERE](#)

What Is the Issue?

- At the center of our disagreement with management is whether bargaining should be **completely in-person** or whether there should be a **zoom option for members of either team who cannot attend in-person**.
- This disagreement already represents a compromise for the union. FSU originally requested that negotiations be conducted completely on zoom (for reasons of inclusion, transparency, scheduling, and convenience). We met with management and they explained why they believe in-person negotiations are beneficial. The union listened, took their concerns into account, and revised our position. From this we agreed to hold negotiations in-person, with one request - that core bargaining team members who have an occasional conflict (from either side), as well as silent bargaining representatives (who do not participate in the back-and-forth at the table), be able to attend via zoom. This would allow full team participation despite scheduling difficulties and still ensure a primarily in-person process management desires.
- Management has so far refused to accept this modest request for a zoom option.

Why Does This Matter?

- *What management says:* both teams agreed to **ground rules** in the last negotiation session that stated bargaining would take place “on campus” unless, via “mutual agreement,” the parties determined to meet on zoom.
- *What FSU says:* expanded bargaining is about building a democratic union that centers member voices and concerns. The refusal to allow a hybrid option necessarily excludes many members, either as part of our core team or as silent representatives. Faculty and librarians have diverse work schedules, significant life responsibilities (child/elder care), and often live far from campus (often due to affordability issues). Each of these make participating in in-person bargaining difficult. A hybrid option, which has already proven successful (we used this format in our first two bargaining sessions with no problems) allows for a much more inclusive and democratic union and a transparent negotiation process. FSU wants to ensure that all faculty and librarians can participate in bargaining well into the future.

What's Next?

- If FSU is to continue our efforts to build a democratic and inclusive union, we need to fight for the opportunity for ALL our members to be able to participate in our work. This means **asking management to allow Zoom in the Room**.
- If you agree with this fight for a democratic union, please consider standing with your bargaining team and helping make our concerns known. You can:
 - **Write to our university leaders:** Ask them to allow a hybrid option for bargaining. This compromise would allow the FSU to exercise its right to build an inclusive union and show management’s willingness to embrace the spirit of negotiations, a spirit the FSU bargaining team has already demonstrated in our engagement with management.
 - **Attend our next negotiation session:** The next bargaining session is **May 1, 1:00-2:30 pm**. Please consider coming to show your support and provide your feedback to the core bargaining team. You can sign up to attend either in person or on zoom by emailing fsu.bargaining@umb.edu at least 48 hours in advance of the session. (No need to attend the whole time—come when you can and leave when you have to; see [attached flyer](#) for more information).
 - **Talk to your colleagues!** Explain why this issue matters. Zoom in the room allows any faculty member or librarian to play a significant role in their union. It means that even those who do not have the time to fight traffic for an hour or more each way to get to campus and back home again, those who have to get a kid off the bus, those who may

prefer to limit their exposure to indoor spaces, especially in places where there is no mask mandate, and those who may need technology support to participate, can all be part of the bargaining process.

Sincerely,

The FSU Core Bargaining Team

Caroline Coscia, Senior Lecturer II, Political Science
Katie D'Urso, MTA Field Representative
Ellen Frank, Senior Lecturer II, Economics
Keith Jones, Lecturer, Africana Studies
Maria Hegbloom, MTA Field Representative
Jessica Holden, Librarian IV, Healey Library
Lorenzo Nencioli, FSU Senior Staff Member
Jason Rodriguez, Associate Professor, Sociology
Heike Schotten, Professor, Political Science
Steve Striffler, Professor, Labor Studies

For information on the FSU, links to our contract and bargaining updates, and a calendar of events, see the [FSU webpage](#)

4/9/2024

Dear FSU Members,

We had a fantastic bargaining session yesterday. Over 20 of our members were present as part of our expanded bargaining team and we were pleasantly surprised to see that the Administration's bargaining team showed up after they said they would not be coming because a few of our members had to be on Zoom.

Unfortunately, the administration is still refusing to bargain over the issues and is continuing to waste time insisting that *no one can ever* be on Zoom.

The FSU has already agreed to bargain on campus and committed our team to making every effort to be there in-person. But some of our members for varied and entirely legitimate reasons may be unable to attend in-person and should be able to access the meeting with Zoom. This is 2024, not 2019, and quite frankly, we're not asking for a lot. Every day on campus we use Zoom to increase participation, accessibility, and inclusion, and that's all we want. Nevertheless, we argued with the admin team for 90 minutes about this, wasting valuable time that should be spent bargaining over substantive issues. The FSU bargaining team is ready and eager to negotiate.

What can you do to?

1. Join the Contract Action Team (CAT). The CAT's primary role is to strategize and organize. The next CAT meeting is on Friday at 1pm on Zoom. Email fsu.bargaining@umb.edu if you'd like to join in the fun.

2. Email the admin bargaining team directly and tell them to “Let Zoom in the Room.” You’ll see a template and their email addresses below.

Thanks for all your support,
The FSU Core Bargaining Team

Template email to Admin bargaining team:

Dear Administrative Bargaining Team,

The FSU is ready to begin bargaining. It is ridiculous that you are refusing to bargain because a few members need to be on Zoom. Please bargain now.

Sincerely,

Send the above to the following members of the Administrative Bargaining Team:

Sophie Coddington (Sophie.Coddington@umb.edu)

Mickey Gallagher (Mickey.Gallagher@umb.edu)

Aduagna Lemi (Aduagna.Lemi@umb.edu)

Denise McNair (Denise.McNair@umb.edu)

Anita Miller (Anita.Miller@umb.edu)

David Pantalone (David.Pantalone@umb.edu)

Stephanie Walker (Stephanie.Walker@umb.edu)

4/3/2024

Dear FSU Members,

Soooooooo...guess what? Admin is refusing to bargain with us because, even though we’ve agreed to meet them in-person, a few of us still need to be able to join via Zoom – and they won’t permit it. Despite the fact that Administrators are working on a “3-2” schedule (meaning they are expected to be on campus 3 days a week but can work from home the other two), Admin’s bargaining team cannot tolerate that faculty and librarians might have obstacles to being on campus (E.g., some of us have two jobs or teach on two campuses; others of us have to pick up kids from daycare, care for elders, and/or face accessibility and transportation issues getting to and from campus).

Refusing a hybrid option is not only unreasonable in the post-Covid moment but also sets limits on the autonomy of our union. Admin is trying to dictate who can (and cannot) be on our team by rigidly refusing to negotiate because a few of us would be on Zoom. We have tried our best to accommodate their demand to meet in-person. Their lack of flexibility and understanding is not just out of touch with reality; it is also a blow to our union’s right to determine the members of its own bargaining team. All we need is a tiny bit of flexibility on their part and we can start bargaining.

Please support bargaining and tell Admin this unproductive intransigence must stop!

Here are three easy ways to do this:

- Show up on Monday, April 8th, 1-2:30 p.m. for our first bargaining session with Admin. We will be there – please join us to see if *they* will be!
ROOM: Campus Center - 3540
ZOOM: Email fsu.bargaining@umb.edu to register.
- Please email Admin’s bargaining team and tell them they are being unreasonable (email addresses and a template are below)
- Join FSU members at the Chancellor’s Inauguration on Friday, April 5th as we support the Classified Staff Union in their action and hand out flyers demanding that the Administration bargain now with the FSU. We will meet on the first floor of Wheatley at 10:30am this Friday.

For those of you who like the fine print, we’ve included the details of this now-protracted dispute with Admin about bargaining modality below the email template.

Thanks for all your support,

The FSU Core Bargaining Team

Template email to Admin bargaining team:

Dear Administrative Bargaining Team,

The FSU is ready to begin bargaining. It is ridiculous that you are refusing to bargain because a few members need to be on Zoom. I expect that you will attend the first bargaining session scheduled (by mutual agreement) for April 8th at 1pm in CC 3540.

Sincerely,

Send the above to the following members of the Administrative Bargaining Team:

- Sophie Coddington (Sophie.Coddington@umb.edu)
- Mickey Gallagher (Mickey.Gallagher@umb.edu)
- Adugna Lemi (Adugna.Lemi@umb.edu)
- Denise McNair (Denise.McNair@umb.edu)
- Anita Miller (Anita.Miller@umb.edu)
- David Pantalone (David.Pantalone@umb.edu)
- Stephanie Walker (Stephanie.Walker@umb.edu)

The Weeds; a.k.a. the Finer Points of the Modality Disagreement

For this contract negotiation, the Administration has been insisting that bargaining take place exclusively through in-person meetings. We agreed to this, saying that the vast majority of our core bargaining team will be physically present for every bargaining session – but we also want to maintain a hybrid option for both core team and expanded team members.

The origin of this dispute stems in part from different interpretations of an earlier agreement about the scheduling for this round of bargaining. The FSU and the administration agreed that bargaining sessions would take place on campus or on Zoom by mutual agreement. FSU made the agreement in good faith, believing that both sides would be able to work out scheduling so that all members from both teams could participate, and would recognize the complexities of organizing meetings with 17 negotiators. After a meeting earlier this semester to talk about scheduling, in which both teams had members participating on Zoom, the FSU agreed to bargain in-person with the understanding that a few of our members would have to participate on Zoom. The administration, however, took the position that bargaining must be exclusively in-person and that *no one* can ever attend via Zoom. In addition to making it impossible to find times that work for everyone to be there in-person, their insistence excludes members of our expanded team who simply watch the sessions as silent observers (and can do this more easily via Zoom as they cannot be seen or heard), and occasional members of our core team who, for a variety of legitimate reasons, cannot always be on campus.

The FSU is committed to an open, transparent, and democratic bargaining process in which all our members can participate as part of our expanded team. For this, a Zoom option is essential.