

UFF-SEMINOLE NEWS & NOTES #6 JUNE 24, 2010

PERC Hearing Ends

The Public Employees Relations Commission (PERC) hearing concerning Seminole State College's challenge to our proposed collective bargaining unit adjourned on Tuesday, June 8, following a month continuance. The hearing officer granted both sides 15 days to file "statement of fact" briefs (with one opportunity to request an extension). Timing is important because the officer has 45 days from June 8 to present a recommendation to the commission. There will then be a 15-20 day period for both sides to challenge the findings. As of now, PERC's ruling is expected in late August/early September. According to PERC, elections are typically conducted within 30 days from the date the Commission orders an election which, for us, would mean late September/early October.

Employer Responses to Employee Organizing

Private sector employees in the U.S. have long had to endure trial by fire in their attempts to organize and seek collective bargaining. Employer tactics in the private sector run the gamut from interrogation and harassment to surveillance and retaliation. Historically, public sector efforts have occurred in an atmosphere in which employees are relatively free from coercion. This does not mean, however, that public sector employers remain neutral. The most common "negative" tactic is delay. While this takes various forms, challenges to a proposed bargaining unit are almost universal. Lengthy certification processes tend to reduce employee support for unionization and increase the likelihood that unions lose elections. Public sector employers are more likely to utilize an array of so-called "positive" actions to thwart unionization, including establishing or expanding employee participation programs, making administrative personnel changes, pledging managerial improvement, granting unscheduled and/or higher than expected salary increases, promoting union supporters, offering special favors, and increasing employer-employee meetings. While we remain hopeful that Seminole State's administration will eventually welcome unionization, we are also prepared to meet any and all challenges in the coming months/

A Model to Emulate

The Strategic Learning Initiative (SLI) at Lane Community College in Oregon is a unique partnership between the college administration and the faculty union that provides support for innovative, interdisciplinary and learning-centered projects. Lane's collectively bargained agreement establishing the SLI provides the means for stability and support that faculty and administration can count on in the long term.. The agreement provides authority and resources to a predominately faculty Leadership Team that in turn selects faculty-chaired Project Teams to carry out specific tasks. Imagine how invigorating an arrangement like this would be at Seminole State College; this is one of many ways that faculty unionization can benefit students, faculty, and even administration. For more information: <http://www.lanec.edu/sli/>

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