



Reduce harmful work stressors.
Improve job quality and health.

Healthy Work Strategies

Collective bargaining agreement (contract) designed to improve working conditions and reduce stressors for Rutgers University faculty, graduate and teaching assistants

The American Association of University Professors, American Federation of Teachers (AAUP-AFT), AFL-CIO and Rutgers University reached a tentative agreement in April 2019, effective July 1, 2018 through June 30, 2022, designed to decrease discrimination and harassment, and improve job security, pay, pay equity (fairness), and employee influence or control through improved grievance procedures.^{1,2}

Summary of improvements in the contract:

- If non-tenure track faculty are reappointed, their term must be at least as long as their previous term; they will be given, at least, a three-year contract after serving as faculty for six years.
- New grievance procedures for tenure, non-tenure track, and graduate and teaching assistants, with binding arbitration in case a grievance cannot be resolved. Examples include:
 - The Office of Employment Equity will review faculty grievances that include elements of discrimination.
 - A randomly selected three-member committee will review and make decisions on issues related to promotion and reappointments of non-tenure track faculty.
 - Appointments to Teaching Assistant positions will be permitted for full time PhD students, paid to teach academic courses at Rutgers, after completing the fifth year of the PhD program, or if admission to PhD candidacy is not granted.
- Pay increases in each year of the contract
- Changes and additions to language on discrimination, harassment, medical/parental leave, and academic freedom. These include:
 - Contacting Office of Employment Equity if grievance includes claims of discrimination.

- o Inclusion of genetic information, results of genetic testing, and/or refusal to undergo genetic testing is prohibited as a basis for discrimination and harassment.
- Rutgers will establish a Committee on Diversity, Race, Gender (UCD); this group will be responsible for diversity initiative efforts, such as matters regarding “...diversity training, recruitment, retention, mentoring, and professional development.”²
- A fund for greater race and gender diversity in hiring
- Sponsorship of non-tenured faculty for permanent residency

How was this contract achieved?

Union activism appeared to play a major role in achieving these contract provisions. Graduate students, faculty, and the union did research and surveyed faculty and staff to better understand their priorities, and used that information to engage in picketing, and to create educational videos and seminars. The union emphasized issues of race and gender diversity, and immigrants’ rights. Such efforts appeared to increase support for the union’s demands on campus and in the media. In addition, the threat of a strike (following a national strike wave by public school teachers in 2018) may have also contributed to the agreement.^{1,2}

Conclusions

Efforts by unionized faculty and graduate students at Rutgers University to reduce work stressors and improve working conditions were negotiated into their labor-management contract. Follow-up is needed to determine whether improvements in working conditions will be maintained, the effectiveness of the grievance procedure, and what impact the new contract will have on employees’ health.

References:

1. Kumar D. "If You Struggle, You Can Win." Jacobin. <https://www.jacobinmag.com/>. Published April 29, 2019. Accessed July 15, 2019.
2. Rutgers AAUP-AFT. Summary of Our Historic Contract. Equity Security Dignity. <http://equitysecuritydignity.org/>. Published June 24, 2019. Accessed July 15, 2019.
3. Sitrin C. Rutgers Reaches Tentative Deal with Faculty Union, Part-Timers Still Negotiate - NJ Spotlight. <https://www.njspotlight.com/>. Published April 17, 2019. Accessed July 15, 2019.