



DAILY LABOR REPORT



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Education

UNITE HERE Locals at Yale Ratify New Three-Year Contracts

BOSTON—Members of the unions representing 4,600 workers at Yale University overwhelmingly ratified new three-year collective bargaining agreements April 14, more than nine months before the scheduled expiration of their current contracts.

Early ratification of the contracts between the private university located in New Haven, Conn., and UNITE HERE Locals 34 and 35 comes in stark contrast to the previous round of contentious negotiations, which finally ended with an agreement in September 2003 following 20 months of heated talks and a three-week strike by workers (183 DLR AA-1, 9/22/03).

The members of Local 35, which represents some 1,200 service and maintenance workers at the school, will receive a 2 percent increase in January 2010 and 3.25 percent wage hikes in January 2011 and January 2012. The contract also includes a continuation of a no-layoff clause contained in the prior agreement, which will continue through 2015, according to union spokesman Evan Cobb.

The members of Local 34, which represents 3,400 clerical and technical workers, will forgo a wage increase in January 2010 in exchange for greater assurances on job security, but will receive salary hikes of 2 percent in January 2011 and January 2012.

The new agreements were ratified by voice vote, Cobb said, and are scheduled to expire Jan. 14, 2013.

“These agreements signal a turning point in the history of labor relations at Yale,” President Richard C. Levin said in a statement announcing the accord. “With these early and peacefully negotiated contracts, Yale and its unions have proven that our future together does not have to repeat our troubled past.”

Bob Proto, president of Local 35, said in a statement that the two sides were able to reach an early accord be-

cause “key decision makers on both sides decided to do the hard work together and come to an agreement.”

“We are confident that the trust we have built through this process is the foundation for a greatly improved, new relationship between the unions and Yale,” he added.

New Language. Both university and union officials said the new contracts address the major economic issues of wages and fringe benefits, but also union growth and workplace productivity.

This includes changes to accommodate work tied to a nonacademic calendar in the clinical and research areas of the university, adjustments in language that allows laid-off workers in Local 34 to be moved into an interim employment pool for specified time periods, and the expansion of the unions’ jurisdiction to include the Yale’s new West Campus in West Haven and Orange, Conn.

In addition, the university said it has agreed to expand the criteria for the highest clerical and technical labor grade and to re-examine potentially misclassified management positions.

“With these new agreements, the unions at Yale will grow as the University does,” Laura Smith, president of Local 34, added in the statement. “We are pleased to have reached agreements that meet our members’ needs and provide stability for the New Haven region’s economy.”

Under the newly negotiated agreements, union members and their families will continue to have the option of fully paid health coverage under Yale’s internal health management organization, the Yale Health Plan, as well as external options.

But to control costs, newly hired employees will be automatically enrolled in the Yale Health Plan during their first three years of employment. Only after this initial period will employees have the option of choosing the more expensive health coverage offered by an external insurer.

Cobb said the two sides also reached agreement on a revised prescription drug plan that will eliminate de-

ductibles and co-insurance payments, as well as an annual cap, and instead institute a new three-tier copayment program under which most employees and retirees will pay less for pharmaceuticals.

Both sides said in a joint statement that to “ensure that the labor relations progress of recent years continues,” they had agreed to “reaffirm the role and importance of the Labor-Management Policy Board and the

‘Best Practice’ initiatives that are being jointly pursued.”

The new contracts also call for negotiations to begin on successor agreements a minimum of 12 months prior to their expiration, “in hopes of once again achieving early and peaceful settlements,” union and college leaders said.

BY MARTHA KESSLER