SUNY union pushes ahead with 'landmark' contract. Here's what it includes.

The contract provides salary increases for both full-time and adjunct faculty, job security for adjunct faculty, holiday pay for SUNY hospital faculty and 12 weeks of paid parental leave.

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The union representing SUNY facility and staff are nearing approval of a new contract with the university system. | Jim McKnight/AP Photo

ALBANY, N.Y. — An agreement between the United University Professions and the state that accounts for salary increases, benefit expansions and more job security is moving on to its next step in the ratification process.
Last week, the contract which union president Fred Kowal is describing as a “landmark” agreement was unanimously approved by the union’s negotiation committee. Next, it will be put up to a vote by union members between Aug. 10-24.

The contract provides salary increases for both full-time and adjunct faculty, job security for adjunct faculty, holiday pay for SUNY hospital faculty and 12 weeks of paid parental leave.

“It’s the richest contract in decades, and it points to the governor being committed to SUNY. That’s exemplified by working with us closely on issues and at no point being dismissive on our issues or our right to negotiate and sometimes even exist,” Kowal said of negotiations with the state in an interview. “I think that bodes well for the future of SUNY.”

The contract includes a 2 percent retroactive raise for 2022 and 3 percent annual increases from 2023 to 2025. It would be in effect until April 1, 2026. The union represents more than 37,000 SUNY faculty and staff.

Kowal noted that the agreement includes a raise between 60 percent to 69 percent for adjunct faculty, as well as policies that would leave room for part-time staff to become full-time or secure long-term contracts.

**Here are some of the details about the tentative agreement:**

- Members would get salary increases for full-time SUNY employees at the seven-year and 12-year mark in their employment.
- Additionally, adjunct professors would get salary boosts to per-course minimum payments.
- Adjunct professors that have lectured for three years would be offered a one-year contract, and those who have lectured for seven years would have the option for a three-year contract.
- Members living on Long Island, New York City and in parts of the Hudson Valley would see an increased location adjustment pay.
- Members in the three SUNY hospitals would have a choice between holiday pay or comp-time pay for all state holidays and an increase in on-call pay.
- Paid parental leave would be extended to 12 weeks of leave at full pay for birth, adoption or foster placement.

Chief union negotiator Bret Benjamin said his team had to push back on the state’s proposals for a post-tenure review and to establish mandatory drug and alcohol testing for members.
“I think that we have bargained a principled contract and a contract that achieves substantial gains in a lot of areas,” Benjamin said in a statement.

“It’s not just the gains you make; it’s what you keep out of the contract,” he said.

Kowal said that while SUNY and the governor's office were receptive to their requests, he was disappointed to see measures put on the negotiating table that would undercut tenure. He also said the union was able to fend off demands that would eliminate job security at the three SUNY-operated hospitals. But in the end, he said the process and the final agreement are a win for members.

“It was nothing like the Cuomo years. There was a real understanding on the part of SUNY and the executive branch on the issues we are dealing with and a keen interest in the agreements that we were making on behalf of the members to make the workplace more professional and supportive,” Kowal said.

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