

January 25, 2012

CWA Local 1031 UMDNJ Update

Higher Education Advisory Committee Final Report

The Governor announced that the Higher Education Advisory Committee has provided the Governor with their final report. The Governor fully endorses the report.

The report recommends that UMDNJ and all of the schools in Newark, along with the SOM in Stratford, be renamed the NJ Health Sciences University (NJHSU). It also recommends that University Hospital (UH) have a private partnership to run the hospital but that UH will continue to be owned by the State of NJ.

The report continues to recommend that the Robert Wood Johnson Medical School, the Cancer Institute and the School of Public Health be transferred to Rutgers by July 1, 2012.

The report also recommends that the Rutgers Schools in Camden merge with Rowan University and Cooper University Medical School.

The Governor wants the recommendations implemented this year. He claims that these realignments are revenue neutral and will be absorbed by each University. How this will happen, through Legislation or Executive Order, is still unclear. Lastly, he stated, that the State is not eliminating anything, but reorganizing. It will be up to the management of each institution to make decisions about the workforce numbers.

Analysis and Updates

The Governor gave this report at 11:00 a.m. today. CWA Local 1031 has not yet read the report in its entirety. We have many questions about the report and the process. The Coalition of UMDNJ Unions has been speaking with politicians and the community and has drafted legislation to protect our members. We are speaking with politicians about sponsoring the bills and we will keep you posted on this. Now that the final report is out and the legislature will be involved in the process, we hope to have meetings and get answers to all of your questions.

The legislation that the Coalition drafted seeks to ensure that any employee involved in a merge or realignment maintain their years of seniority, salary, hire date, pension, health benefits and Union protection. We will supply a link to this bill once sponsors have been obtained. The process of obtaining sponsors, supporters and posting of the bills will mean that the bill will be changed along the way. The Coalition of UMDNJ Unions will maintain that the core protections remain intact.

The Coalition of Unions met with UMDNJ last week regarding the merger with Rutgers. UMDNJ shared information that they have been meeting with Rutgers and the State, but UMDNJ was not able to supply any concrete answers. UMDNJ stated that they have continued to take the position that no UMDNJ employees will be “harmed”. No one from Rutgers or the State has objected to this, but they have not committed to this either. UMDNJ was not yet able to identify the employees who will be involved in the merger. There are a lot of gray areas with the Physical Plant, Logistical Services, Human Resources etc. Lastly, UMDNJ did identify many obstacles to the merger taking place on July 1, 2012. Specifically, that UMDNJ and Rutgers have different operating systems for payroll and HR information.

The Coalition of Unions also met with Dr. Rodgers and Senior Management at UMDNJ on Monday this week. Dr. Rodgers sounded confident that UMDNJ would remain and that it would be renamed. She wants to move forward to protect UMDNJ (NJHSU) and stabilize it so that students and faculty will remain. She stated that UMDNJ is lobbying for UMDNJ employees to be “grandfathered” into the Rutgers system. The Unions have addressed our concerns with UMDNJ in the past. Dr. Rodgers indicated that she is willing to review these. The Unions have asked to be at the table when merger talks are taking place and we have stated that workers should retain their collective bargaining rights. Dr. Rodgers did not support the request that Unions be at the table since the process has already began and she did not take a position on collective bargaining rights.

What next?

The Coalition of Unions will be speaking with politicians to try and get answers. Will employees have protections? Can this be accomplished in 2012? Will there be layoffs? What about bond issues and funding? What does a private partnership at UH mean? All of our questions in the past were not answered by the Advisory Committee or the Governor’s Office. Now that the recommendations must move forward with Legislation or an Executive Order, the Coalition will be able to press the Legislators for answers and support. We will also need you to contact your Legislators. We will provide additional information in the near future.