

All Campus message from President Miller re: Hamline Adjunct Union

November 6, 2015

Dear Hamline Students, Faculty, and Staff, As many of you are aware, SEIU, a labor union ("Union") organized certain members of our undergraduate adjunct faculty last year. I am writing in the interest of helping you better understand our relationship with the Union in light of our work together and our commitment to keeping the Hamline community strong and thriving.

For much of the past year and a half, Hamline has been engaged in collective bargaining with the Union, seeking common ground and agreement on the terms and conditions of employment for the undergraduate adjunct faculty to become embedded in a union contract.

I have been in close contact with Interim Provost John Matachek, who is deeply involved in this collective bargaining process, and he has kept me informed of its progress. I am confident that the University has at all times bargained in good faith and worked diligently toward an agreement with the Union on contract terms.

I understand that bargaining such a contract can be challenging for all involved; and that it is not too uncommon for it to be an often painstaking, slow, and tedious process. We have exchanged many proposals with the Union, and have reached tentative agreement on many issues. These include, for example, the establishment of a collaborative committee comprised of adjunct faculty and administrators to confer on an ongoing basis about matters of general importance to our adjunct faculty.

Although we have not yet reached agreement on compensation and other economic terms, we remain committed to working toward a complete agreement with the Union and are hopeful for a resolution soon. We certainly intend to continue bargaining in good faith as long as that hope is alive.

As this important work moves forward, it has come to our attention that the Union is engaging in activities meant to pull our students, full-time faculty, and staff into their efforts to put pressure on the University for an agreement on their terms. I understand, in particular, that the Union is seeking to apply pressure on the University to provide a level of compensation to our adjunct faculty that, frankly, may not be in the best interest of the University or the University community as a whole. I worry that these Union efforts, which we understand have been occurring quite publicly both on campus and online, increasingly embody inaccurate or misleading information, and that this may detract from our progress toward finding a reasonable common ground with the Union. Accordingly, I felt it was important to provide you some of the University's perspective.

First, the majority of our undergraduate classes are taught by full-time faculty. Just 15% of undergraduate classes, on average, in a given semester, are taught by adjunct faculty, not 50% of classes as some Union communications apparently suggest. It is important for you to know that adjunct faculty are not hired at Hamline to replace full-time faculty positions or to save money. On the contrary, adjunct faculty are generally employed to teach here in order to fill short-term needs; and more broadly, to help us provide the flexibility that is essential for responding to all the variables encountered by and on behalf of our student body. When we see an established record of our needing to employ adjunct faculty in a particular school or discipline with a frequency or consistency that may warrant creating a

new full-time position, we often do so. Adjunct faculty are certainly welcomed to apply for any such new full-time position.

And second, Hamline already compensates its adjunct faculty at a competitive rate that is about in the middle of the range for adjunct faculty among schools (like Hamline) that are within the Associated Colleges of the Twin Cities. Even before the unionization of certain undergraduate adjunct faculty on our main campus, we had given wage increases to adjunct faculty who taught summer classes, to those in the business school, to those in the education school teaching continuing studies courses, and to others in the College who have negotiated a higher rate because of their subject area or expertise.

Further, the compensation proposals we've now put forward to the Union at the bargaining table contemplate a double-digit percentage increase in the base compensation rate for our undergraduate adjuncts.

We wholeheartedly acknowledge and embrace the fact that Hamline adjuncts are important contributors to our community. They are often knowledgeable practitioners who bring a wealth of real world experience, or who offer expertise in a particular field, or who supplement teaching while a full-time faculty member is on sabbatical or takes on administrative work. At the same time, we must balance the Union's interest in, and persistent demands for, further increases to our proposals for adjunct compensation with the interests and needs of our full-time faculty, the University staff, and, of course, our students. For the well-being of the University and *all* of its constituencies it is necessary that we take into account competing perspectives, both on fiscal responsibility and on fairness, as we continually engage in this balancing act. In this context it is noteworthy that for the past several years wage increases for full-time faculty and staff here have not been given at the level we might have considered most desirable, despite all the dedicated hard work our full-time employees have done during that time. It concerns me that we have not always had the financial wherewithal to get exactly where we would like to go in this regard; but it is also the reality of how we have balanced competing interests knowing there are (as always) limited resources. As we come together in our commitment to a stronger University, I believe it is important that we push forward in a focused and reasonable way, set on the hope that our efforts will lead us to a place that is better for everyone concerned.

In the coming days and weeks, I expect you will hear more from the Union about its views of the bargaining process and the choices the University is making in that process. That is, of course, to be expected. Please consider in this context that as we continue to bargain in good faith with the Union, the University is working hard and doing its best to support the needs of its adjunct faculty, and that it is also, always, responsibly balancing those needs with the needs of our students, our full-time faculty, and our staff.

We all walk this journey together; and we make the road by walking. We may differ in our perspectives and opinions, but I invite you to join me in a firm commitment to respecting one another along the way, and to working together based on the fundamental shared understanding that balance and fairness must always be inextricably connected as we each exercise our best judgment and discretion in all our endeavors here. Thanks to each of you for all you do on a daily basis to keep our Hamline community strong.

President Fayneese Miller