

Communication Workers of America protest negotiations

On April 5, the Communication Workers of America held a protest at the University of Toledo concerning contract negotiations that have been ongoing since November 2016.

The protest, which was held outside of the Lancelot Thompson Student Union, was motivated, according to the President of CWA 3319 Bob Hull, by the fact that communication workers have been without a contract since December 31, 2016. Negotiations have reached a standstill.

“I don’t think that it’s fair that the leadership of this university gets to hide when the workers of this university are out here fighting for fair pay, fair benefits and fair treatments at this university,” said Nolan Rosenkranz during the protest.

The protest occurred at the same time as President Sharon Gaber’s State of the University address. The University of Toledo responded to the protest in a statement.

“Negotiations are ongoing with the CWA, and we look forward to having a new contract in place soon. We respect the CWA employees and their right to demonstrate,” said Christine Billau, UT media relations specialist.

One of the main issues discussed during the protest is the existence of a third party to negotiate the contract between the university and CWA. Another issue is the recent administrative raises, according to Hull.

“We believe that the University of Toledo needs to come to the table and bargain in good faith and we don’t believe they are doing that,” Hull said.

Hull continued that the group's main concern is that this is the first time the university has brought in an out-of-city third-party negotiator in 30 years. Hull also expressed concerns that the firm itself is anti-union.

"This is a labor-intensive community; this is a blue-collar university," Hull said. "For them to hire an anti-union attorney from a far-off city of Cleveland shows disrespect."

According to Angie Crawford, a custodial worker at UT, a key example of problematic administrative raises that concerns the CWA is when President Sharon Gaber received a \$90,000 bonus and a two percent raise in September 2016 after her first year as president.

The CWA contract committee, who organized the original protest, aimed to get the word out to about these issues to the university and its student body.

"The CWA has issues with the fact that the university constantly says they don't have any money, and we as students hear that all the time," said Ronald Talon, president of UT's College Democrats, who also attended the protest.

The CWA reached out to the College Democrats regarding the protest a week in advance and have received their full support, according to Talon.

"The CWA is the backbone of this campus," Talon said. "They do everything from residence halls, to the custodial work in the regular academic buildings, electricians, carpenters. It doesn't matter what they do; they are represented by the CWA."

Talon said that he had not yet heard anything about additional demonstrations being planned by CWA, but that if they were to be organized, the College Democrats would attend.

"The CWA: without them, we wouldn't be able to get half the benefits student orgs do," Talon said. "Your dorms wouldn't be

cleaned as often, all of the workers that do your mail, everything like that is CWA. There's a lot of normal, everyday benefits that students enjoy that don't even realize it's communication workers."