

Eastern Michigan University

All Union Council

Press Release
June 27, 2011

EMU lays off 40 employees

At the June 21, 2011, Board of Regents meeting, President Sue Martin announced that more than 40 employees, 30 of which are union employees, would be laid off beginning the next day. President Martin seemed to tear up when discussing the layoffs. However, these near-tears mean nothing to employees whose lives were destroyed. What President Martin should have done is to stand up for the hard-working employees at EMU; this emotion should have been expended in standing up to the Regents and demanding that EMU put education first, not athletics first. By putting education first, these hard-working employees would still be serving our students. The breakdown of bargained- for employees that are being laid off:

- 12 clericals from UAW 1975
- 14 professional technical employees from UAW 1976 and
- 4 physical plant workers from AFSCME

EMU's All Union Council, which consists of the leaders of these unions, did not believe these lay offs were necessary. They met with President Martin and offered her many ideas on how to save money. There are several simple actions that should have been undertaken to save EVERY union job that was eliminated. We suggested the following actions:

- If the game guarantees of \$1.3 million were included in the General Fund, the vast majority of union job eliminations could have been saved. This is money that EMU will receive in 2011-12, but money that EMU decides to put in its Designated Fund, for no good reason other than to make bad decisions.

- If EMU had cut just 10% of the 10M General Fund Athletic budget, then this, combined with the game guarantees, would have saved \$2.3 million. These two actions alone would have saved EVERY union job.
- EMU is paying two schools \$730,000 to come to EMU for home football games next year. If these payments were not made, even some of the administration jobs could have been saved.
- If the police chief was not given a \$30,000 raise (increasing his salary to \$169,000 highest in the Mid-American Conference), then another job could have been saved.

President Martin flatly rejected all of these suggestions.

To make matters worse, the EMU Administration is mistreating its employees even as it lays them off. The following has occurred:

1. Last week the EMU Administration told some of the unions that their representatives would not be permitted to accompany their members to the meetings at which they would be laid off. Apparently, President Martin wanted the soon to be terminated employees to be alone and fearful with the groups of administrators doing the firing.

2. The EMU administration then called a meeting with the union leadership for 8:30 a.m. on Wednesday morning and announced that the layoffs would occur on Thursday and Friday of this week.

The unions were told that the EMU Executive Committee (chaired by President Martin) did not want prior notice of which employees were being laid off given to the unions. The reason this was very important for the unions to know ahead of time is that their contracts provide very specific procedures for 'bumping rights' based on seniority. The unions wanted to make sure that their contracts were followed correctly by the EMU administration and that the wrong people were not laid off.

The EMU administration claims that its Human Resource department has bumping order figured out correctly. The unions doubt this as there have been mistakes made in the past.

At this time:

- 33 clerical jobs will be affected with 12 people having lost their jobs
- 31 professional technical workers will be affected with 14 people having lost their jobs (2 of whom are currently on a medical leave)

- 12 physical plant workers being affected with 4 people having lost their jobs.

By Wednesday afternoon, the EMU Administration changed its mind and gave the unions the list of employees being laid off (including those who will be bumping). This gave the unions time to check for errors. They were also given itineraries of the scheduled meetings so that the employees being laid off could have union representation. The meetings began at 8:30 a.m. on Thursday, June 23, 2011 and ended at 4:30 p.m. on Friday, June 24, 2011.

UAW 1975 and 1976 leadership noticed there were errors in the layoff lists; the lists had the wrong people being laid off. The Union leaders notified Human Resources of these errors; however, their concerns were ignored, and HR went ahead with their itineraries to knowingly layoff people that they should not have. They told the unions that they will sort it next week.

3. Another concern for the unions is that the EMU administration is violating the layoff provisions of the union contracts. The unions have a long standing practice that employees receive written notice with the date they will be laid off. The EMU administration thought it would be best to ignore the contract and past practice and notified the employees on the day they were being laid off. Human Resources representatives even went as far as calling and leaving voicemails on the answering machines of people were on vacation and medical leaves; they were told via voicemail that they were being laid off and they would no longer have a job or health insurance. The callous and insensitive nature of how the EMU administration has handled the layoffs has forced the Union leadership's hands. The unions will be filing grievances and unfair labor practices as timelines, notices of layoffs, temporary employee rules, and past practices are being violated by the EMU administration.
4. The goal of the EMU administration seems to be to replace its AFSCME union employees with contract workers. The AFSCME union is at the negotiating table with the EMU administration currently. The EMU administration has a proposal that will give EMU the right to use contract workers whenever it wishes. Imagine the safety and security issues that EMU will face having contract workers in its dormitories and classrooms and labs. AFSCME employees are hired only after there have been background checks, and have been cleared to work at EMU. Our employees will keep us safe – let's keep them.

In summary, this week EMU has walked out 30 of their lowest paid employees. (these are front line, student-support employees) and told them that EMU values football more than it does them. These employees will get one month of salary and one month of health care.

If only President Martin cared about **all** of her employees as much as her tears would indicate. It is apparent she cares about some more than others. If she had not given her police chief a \$30,000 raise, she could have saved at least one clerical job. Her actions toward her employees are callous and mean spirited.

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