

Faculty settles; ACE still on line

By: Bill Rodgers
NEWS EDITOR

Youngstown State University students and faculty will be going back to school on schedule today. Yesterday, Ohio Education Association members approved a three-year contract with the university.

However, members of the YSU Association of Classified Employees union remained on strike as of Jambar press time last night. ACE rejected a proposed agreement with the university yesterday morning. Christine Domhoff, ACE union president, said they would meet with university negotiators and mediator Senator Mark Dann in an attempt to resolve contract talks before school begins today.

An informational phone-line for the university said that classes would continue as scheduled, with the exception of interactive distance learning classes which would be postponed until Wednesday.

The informational number can be reached by calling (330) 941-2222 or extension 2222 on any campus phone.

Last night, the Youngstown State University Ohio Education Association union voted 182 for and 119 against the agreement. The Association of Classified voted 211 to reject and 85 to accept the new contract. Major sticking points for the ACE union include a tiered salary plan and co-pays for health care benefits.

President David Sweet said in a meeting with Student Government Association officials on Friday that the agreement with the OEA union would assume maximum tuition increases of six percent each year over the next three years, in

accordance with the maximum tuition increase cap of six percent allowed by Ohio.

The OEA agreement includes retroactive pay, covering the time the union spent on strike. The ACE union is being offered no retroactive pay, but is being offered seamless health care benefits under the stipulation that they sign the contract in time for classes today. Under the seamless health care agreement, the

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Union strikes not limited to YSU's campus

By: Eric Grosso
FEATURES REPORTER

In the throes of a strike of nearly 800 workers, Youngstown State University got everyone's attention recently. Area news personalities flocked to campus for live reports as early as 5 a.m. and journalists scribbled quotes for the latest print updates. While making headlines in this area, YSU is just one of many colleges and universities facing similar disputes.

Kent State University avoided a potential strike by reaching an agreement earlier this month. The KSU American Association of University Professors took a

different route than the YSU Ohio Education Association and Association of Classified Employees. Instead of striking after the semester had started, KSU professors worked without contracts for almost one year.

Dr. Cheryl Casper, president of the KSU AAUP, said professors didn't want to interrupt school.

"The teachers didn't want to harm the students. We already started the semester when the contract ran out, so they just kept teaching," Casper said.

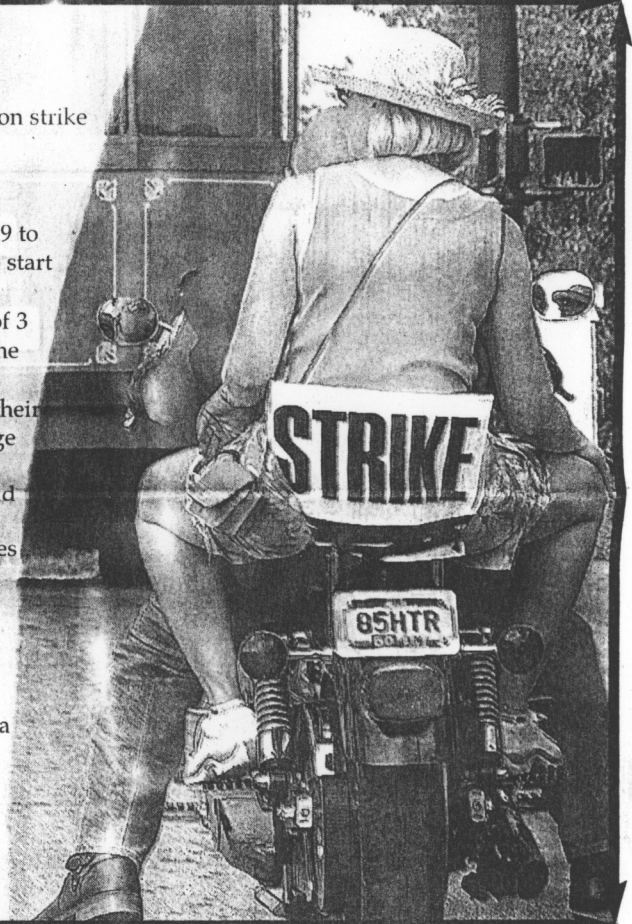
KSU AAUP had planned to strike in

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YSU On Strike

- ▶ The Ohio Education Association went on strike Aug. 23.
- ▶ The OEA union represents 390 faculty members.
- ▶ Sunday night, the OEA voted 182 to 119 to accept a contract, allowing the semester to start on schedule.
- ▶ The contract calls for salary increases of 3 percent, 3.5 percent and 3.5 percent over the three years of the contract.
- ▶ OEA members will pay 1.5 percent of their salary for family health insurance coverage or .75 percent for single coverage.
- ▶ OEA members will be retroactively paid for their time on strike.
- ▶ The Association of Classified Employees have been on strike Aug. 16
- ▶ The ACE union represents more than 400 non-faculty staff.
- ▶ Sunday morning, ACE voted 211 to 85 to reject the new contract.
- ▶ Major sticking points for ACE include a tiered salary plan and co-pays for health care benefits.

The Jambar



The Jambar / Leonard Glenn Crist

YSU Associated of Classified Employees representative Chris Domhoff is shown here on the back of a motorcycle near campus recently. See more photos from the strike on page 8.

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early August, but new contracts were in place before any members hit the picket lines.

Casper said that strikes in education are rare because faculty is reluctant to harm students.

But Casper added, "It may be necessary to strike because of the situation we find ourselves in."

She noted a strike last year at Eastern Michigan University, which lasted just seven hours. Union leaders and school administrators worked throughout the night and agreed on a contract 30 minutes before classes were set to start, according to the Detroit News.

In some cases, strikes among university workers affect classes.

In 2002, 400 workers protested on the campus of the University of California Santa Barbara. A report in the Daily Nexus, the UCSB student newspaper, noted six classes were canceled, an administration building was closed and some teachers moved their classes away from campus.

The sticking point in the KSU and YSU strikes, and what seems to be many others, is the debate over health-care costs.

A study by Robert Half Management Resources of California showed the average cost of health care rose by 10.1 percent in 2003, then 12.5 percent in 2004. The same study also revealed a majority of 1,400 CEOs naming health care as the biggest increase in overall cost in 2005.

Kent State administration originally wanted union members to pay for a percent of the increase in medical costs, citing a 45 percent increase in spending on health care in 2001. After rejecting the contract, union members agreed to pay a monthly premium.

Last night, OEA accepted a contract that calls for members of the bargaining unit to pay 1.5 percent of their salary to health insurance premi-

ums for family coverage and 0.75 of their salary for single coverage, which was offered in a previous contract offer that was voted down. Domestic partners will be provided the same health-care benefits as spouses.

YSU President David Sweet has noted that YSU health care premiums increased by 132 percent over the past six years.

"We're the last and only public university to not have the faculty and staff pay toward health care premiums," said Sweet, during a recent interview with The Vindicator.

In the same interview, Sweet said the lack of financial support from the state affects YSU's budget.

"It has to be in our balanced budget," said Walt Ulbricht, executive director of Marketing and Communications, during an early morning television interview last week. "We can't offer more than what we have."

University and worker finances might not be only thing affected after the strike ends, but two professors say the working relationship between union members and administrators probably won't change.

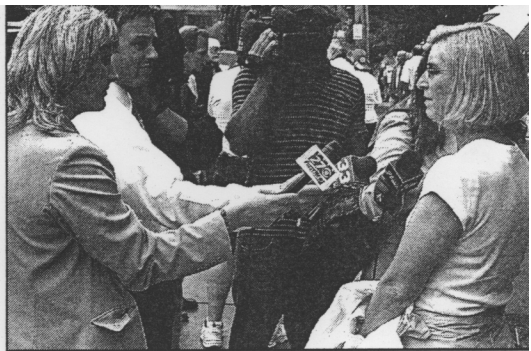
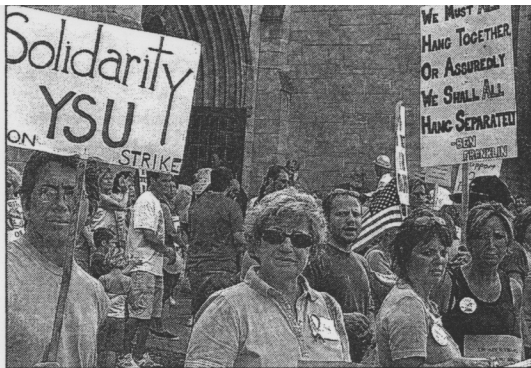
"There might be some dissension, but probably not. We're all professionals, so everything should be fine," Michael Gelfand commented before the strike's end.

Gelfand is a professor of cello at the Dana School of Music.

Dr. Glenn Schaft, percussion professor, said that he thought the strike would predominately affect a professor's work load.

"All this time we're supposed to be doing the things we usually do at work. When we get back, it's going to take some time to get all the work done and get everything back to normal," Schaft said.

Call Eric Grosso at (330) 941-1913



▲ Striking members of the Association of Classified Employees rally Sunday outside the First Christian Church before the faculty voted to accept a new contract.

◀ A protester holds an anti-administration sign Tuesday while picketing on the corner of Wick Avenue and Spring Street.

ABOVE RIGHT: Christine Domhoff, president of the Association of Classified Employees, speaks with reporters Saturday morning following a negotiating session with Youngstown State University that she termed "disrespectful" to her union.

Photos: Jambar / Leonard Glenn Crist