

BENTON TWP.

LMC reaches labor deals

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BENTON TOWNSHIP — Lake Michigan College's faculty and facilities unions have new agreements that provide 1 to 2.5 percent salary increases and better defined performance benchmarks.

Board members unanimously signed off Tuesday on contracts with the LMC Education Association and Facilities Workers Union. The deals meet two major goals, LMC President Bob Harrison said.

"These agreements help us recognize the important contributions of these employee groups to the delivery of high-quality education while remaining fiscally conservative in planning for the future," Harrison said.

LMC's vice president of administrative service, Anne Erdman, said that the new contracts allowed both sides to satisfy their respective goals.

"We both were coming from a direction of trying to be fiscally conservative, and also, to create a better communication on both sides — and I think that really worked," she said after the board meeting.

Both unions ratified their new deals earlier this month.

The new four-year faculty contract runs from July 1 to June 30, 2018, and calls for raises of about 1 to 2.5 percent per year, based on step increases, according to a college news release.

The facilities contract is a five-year deal, running from July 1 through June 30, 2019. Members get no wage increase during the first year, followed by increases of 2 to 2.5 percent

during the remaining years, the release said.

The faculty and facilities unions have 59 and 20 members, respectively, whose performance standards also underwent some changes, Erdman said.

"In both cases, they worked to create more meaningful evaluations for themselves. In the faculty case, it's extremely goal-oriented, and measured," Erdman said. "In the case of the facility contract, it is skill-oriented, where there are layers of skills that they'll retain in their respective classifications."

Negotiations went smoothly overall, Erdman said before the vote.

"They came to the (bargaining) table early, before we even started negotiating — and started talking through the issues — rather than it being a back and forth. That made it a lot easier on all of us," she said.

Vice President Paul Bergan said he appreciated the work that went into the negotiations.

"I'm glad to have it passed, and start the school year with this behind us," he said.

Trustee Stephen Small agreed, saying, "I also appreciate the new attitude that seems to be appearing at the bargaining table."

Both sides spent most of the summer working in a collaborative spirit on both contracts, Harrison said.

"I think they're good for members of the unions, as well as the college, and the students. We're pleased that we were able to come to an agreement, and extend the contract periods. It was a good tone, (with) good suggestions from both sides," he said.