

# **No Agreement Reached At Eastern Illinois University After Administration Walks Away - Strike Begins Thursday, April 6**

April 5 2023 10:37 AM



CHARLESTON, Ill. - More than 95% of union members surveyed at tonight's well-attended membership meeting endorsed the option to declare a strike on April 6. The union – EIU University Professionals of Illinois (EIU UPI, IFT Local 4100) – is standing firm in its efforts to strengthen EIU by calling for an investment in students.

The decision to strike comes after an eight-hour bargaining session yesterday, where EIU administration walked away from the bargaining table after offering an effective pay cut for all members of the union. Compensation and workload are the remaining issues on the table.

EIU UPI President Jennifer Stringfellow took this difficult decision to the union. “After our members saw the administration walk away from the table, we knew we had no choice but to move forward with a strike. We are still very far apart on key financial issues, including wage adjustment to catch up on lost wages and adjusting minimum salary so that no faculty teaching at EIU would make less than minimum wage. We offered to meet again today before our membership meeting, but administration refused to schedule another session to avert a strike.”

“The university has the funding for sufficient increases for faculty and staff pay because the Auditor General’s office has shown that EIU gained \$15.4 million in surplus by the end of the last fiscal year,” Stringfellow continued. “They managed to work out a deal for outgoing President Glassman to become the highest-paid professor on campus – with the lightest course load. Yet they won’t give the faculty and staff who work closely with students every day adequate compensation, even as they ask us to take on more work. It simply doesn’t make sense. The overwhelming decision of our members to commit to a strike means we are now taking up the charge to fight for a better learning environment on our campus.”

Billy Hung, EIU UPI lead negotiator, said, “I am disappointed by the administration’s decision to stop the process yesterday. We managed to narrow our differences down to less than \$900,000 per year over the length of the contract. On top of beginning the year with \$15.4 million dollars in surplus, EIU is slated to receive over \$3 million in additional funding from our state next year. Yet, they refused to find a compromise to close the gap and offer a fair contract.”

The union and university have been bargaining for more than a year, and faculty and staff have been working without a contract since September 2022. The strike is a demonstration of the resolve and the commitment of advisors, faculty, and counselors to improve the learning conditions of our students. Administration refuses to accept what needs to be done to give our students the education they deserve.

University Professionals of Illinois President and IFT Vice President of Higher Education John Miller are seeing a pattern by university administrations around the state refusing to make the needed investments in faculty and staff to solve challenges facing the institutions. “On Monday, our brothers and sisters at Chicago State were forced to strike, and now our members at EIU will be walking the picket lines. We will stand strong on every campus so that students at Illinois public universities get the education

they deserve. We must hold these institutions accountable to the fact that investing in our faculty and staff is a direct investment in students, and it will only strengthen EIU's future as a high-quality institution of higher education and an economic engine in this rural community."

EIU UPI members will begin their strike on Thursday, April 6. The two sides bargain again on Friday at 9 AM.