



August 04, 2025

Volume 3, Issue 2

# SOLIDARITY

## NEWSLETTER - NEGOTIATIONS COMMITTEE

### Message from Your Union: Update

This is an update on the three matters that were discussed at our last Emergency General Meeting held on July 9, 2025. These were 1) Proposed reductions in the health scheme and pension contributions for individuals who become employed on August 1, 2025, 2) Compensation Review, and 3) Appointing Deans without consulting members of the faculty. After each update, we give recommendations as to the actions that members should take.

#### 1. Proposed Reduction in Health and Pension Benefits for Post-July 31, 2025 Employees

WIGUT (Jamaica) took industrial action on June 16, 2025, over the reduction in the employer's contribution to health and pension for staff members entering the service of the University post-July 31, 2025. The Ministry of Labour intervened on the same day and made two recommendations.



Solidarity (image: John Hain)

The first was that the industrial action cease. The second was that the matter be handled at the local level via the grievance procedures that exist in the collective bargaining agreements and Blue Book. The Union complied with both recommendations. The Union raised the matter as a grievance. The 10 days required by the grievance procedure expired without a conclusion that satisfied the Union. We, therefore, referred the matter to the Ministry of Labour for conciliation.

A conciliation meeting was held on July 17, 2025. At that meeting the University stuck to its position that it had the right to change the terms of employment of anyone not yet in its employ. This was linked to their position that they were willing to negotiate with the Union on the matter but with a condition.

If they thought that the outcome of such negotiations was not satisfactory to them, they had the right to implement unilaterally the proposal that was being negotiated. **The Union insisted that the University had no such right.**

The conciliation process came to a halt. The officer of the Ministry conducting the conciliation suggested an adjournment to another date. Since then, the Ministry of Labour has indicated that they will be making written recommendations to the Union on how the matter should or could be resolved. The Union awaits these recommendations. While the matter is in the hands of the Ministry of Labour, it is the understanding of the Union that the University has suspended the implementation of the proposed new measures.

#### Actions Recommended to Members

1. Await the recommendations from the Ministry of Labour.
2. Remain patient but vigilant.

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(Image, courtesy of blogs.oregonstate.edu)



(Image, courtesy of the Jamaica Gleaner)

### Actions Recommended to Members

1. Agree that the Emergency General Meeting promised for Monday August 11, 2025, would be postponed to Monday August 25, 2025, to allow for

- accommodations to the WIGUT (Jamaica) corrective review in the final report of the Ernst & Young consulting team.

### 2. **Compensation Review**

The Union, by letter dated July 6, 2025 had insisted that a meeting between the three unions at UWI and the University on compensation review should be held in July or no later than August 8, 2025. The University acceded to this request and scheduled a meeting for July 28, 2025. At that meeting, WIGUT (Jamaica) tabled its Corrective Review of the Comparative Market Review document produced by the Ernst & Young consultants. This was done to implement the resolution passed at the Emergency General Meeting of July 9, 2025. That resolution stated that the corrective review would be the basis of the negotiating position of the Union. The expectation of the Union at the meeting held on July 28, 2025, was that both documents would go to the Ministry of Finance as part of negotiating with the government on how much of a compensation increase it was willing to fund.

The Ernst & Young report, in its current form, proposes no significant salary increases for WIGUT (Jamaica) staff. Despite this, the University took a surprising but positive position. It declared that the Ernst & Young consultants should be made to respond to or take account of the objections of WIGUT (Jamaica). These are as contained in the corrective review which had been tabled.

The Union document should now be with Ernst & Young and we await a response in the form of calculations that take into account our objections.

Some members are bound to be suspicious of this sudden change in the position of the University. The suspicion would be that this is a manoeuvre to waste time and erode the bargaining position of the Union at this politically sensitive period. **At the same time, the Union needs to give reasonable time for our objections to be considered.**

- the development of a clear process for engagement between the Ministry of Finance, on one hand, and the University and the unions on the other, with a timetable that reflects the urgency of the financial plight of members.
2. Be vigilant and be ready for a sudden call to action if the situation warrants it.

***Do You Have a Question or a Comment? Please Contact us:***

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## NEWSLETTER - NEGOTIATIONS COMMITTEE

### 3. Appointing Deans Without Consulting Members of the Faculty.



#### WEST INDIES GROUP OF UNIVERSITY TEACHERS (Jamaica)

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July 31, 2025

Dear members:

As we celebrate Emancipation and Independence, we are reminded of the many struggles that were necessary for our freedoms, rights and privileges that we now enjoy, and for those we are thankful. This serves as another reminder why we must remain vigilant and ready for action, as some things that were not gifted or bequeathed, but achieved through blood, sweat and tears, could be wrested from our grasp.

At an Emergency General Meeting of the West Indies Group of University Teachers (WIGUT) (Jamaica) held July 9, 2025, several members informed the meeting that University Council had approved the appointment of two Deans on the Mona Campus. They pointed out that no consultation with staff within the respective Faculties had taken place, thus a breach of Statute 12.1 had occurred. The Statute states that:

Deans of Faculties shall be appointed by the Council, acting subject to Section 11 of this Statute on the recommendation of the relevant Campus Principal through the Vice-Chancellor **after the Campus Principal has conducted consultations within the Faculty.** (our emphasis)

In response to letters from staff, the University's administration stated that given that the vacancies had been advertised, this removed the need for consultation with members of staff. This interpretation of the provisions of the Statute is curious since the Statute 12.5 states that:

Invitations to fill vacancies in the office of Dean shall be advertised throughout the University **and** [our emphasis] if the Vice-Chancellor so determines, externally.

Note that Statute 12 calls for both advertisement **and** consultation and does not treat them as mutually exclusive.

WIGUT (Jamaica), in support of its members, wrote to PVC and Principal, Professor Densil Williams, on May 25, 2025, challenging the procedure used to appoint the deans. In his response, PVC Williams expressed the view that, "this is an HR issue, which is handled by the Office of Administration at The UWI's regional headquarters; as such, I think the letter should be directed to the appropriate office."

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The Union has been informed since that the Chancellor, along with the University Registrar, met with the Board of the Faculty of Humanities and Education on 10 July 2025 to discuss the matter; however, there was no acknowledgement that Statute 12 had been violated.

In the face of the Statute itself and long-standing tradition and practice which involved administration writing to members to ask for comments on candidates, the administration has now taken the line that the Statute is unclear, especially with regard to the term 'consultation'. WIGUT (Jamaica) further notes with concern that the appointees were announced but no public statement has been made on the challenge that was mounted by members who felt that their rights were violated because the University did not follow the established procedure. The overall approach of the University in this matter also creates several uncertainties regarding what staff should expect for appointments to such positions going forward, and what staff can expect with regard to how administration treats with the Statutes and Ordinances of the institution.

WIGUT (Jamaica) takes breaches of the Statutes and Ordinances of this premier institution seriously and therefore invites members to meet with the Union if they wish to prepare a collective appeal to the Visitor for a clear statement on the operationalisation of "consultation" as laid out in Statute 12.

Sincerely,

  
.....  
Paul D. Brown, JP, PhD  
President  
WIGUT (Jamaica)