Subject: Proposed Settlement of Part-Time Faculty Compensation Lawsuit
Date: Wednesday, October 28, 2026 at 4:16:22 PM Pacific Daylight Time
From: Duncan, Willy
To: Duncan, Willy
Category: Pres
Attachments: image.png

Dear Sierra College Colleagues,

I want to share an important update on the part-time faculty compensation lawsuit that Sierra College, like many California community colleges, has been facing.

As you know, Sierra was named as one of several defendants in a class action lawsuit in October 2024. This lawsuit – and similar suits lodged against other colleges – claimed that negotiated compensation agreements with part-time faculty did not comply with California's wage and hour requirements for non-exempt employees. We believe our agreements negotiated with the Sierra College Faculty Association did compensate for non-classroom hours, but a 2025 ruling in a similar case posed legal uncertainty and potential liability to Sierra College.

Earlier this year, through our new agreement with SCFA, we updated our contract to more explicitly tie part-time faculty pay to hours worked both inside and outside the classroom. While it addresses the issue going forward, the agreement did not resolve the lawsuit's claims about past work.

This week, the plaintiff's attorneys in the case have submitted settlement terms reached with Sierra College to the court for approval. While the college continues to believe it has a strong legal position, a full trial would continue to pose risk to our finances, our programs and student services. Settling allows us to bring this matter to a close on terms we believe are fiscally responsible, rather than face the uncertainty of a lengthy court proceeding.

What the settlement would provide

Under the proposed agreement, the college would pay a total of $2.8 million. After court-approved attorneys' fees and costs, an award to the named plaintiff, and settlement administration costs, the remainder will be distributed to eligible current and former part-time faculty. Each person's payment will be based on their proportional share of units taught during the covered period.

What happens next

The court is tentatively scheduled to consider the proposed settlement in late November. If the court grants tentative approval, eligible faculty will receive a notice explaining their options. The Agreement will remain subject to the final approval by the Court.

As an important note, Sierra College will not administer any claim applications or payments. These will be handled entirely by an independent, third-party settlement administrator, not by the college's Payroll or Human Resources offices. Questions about individual eligibility or payment amounts should go to the administrator once notices are sent.

Sierra deeply values our part-time faculty and the exceptional teaching and service they provide our

students. I'm grateful for the patience of our faculty, department leaders and staff as we've worked through the transition to the new compensation framework, and I'm hopeful this proposed settlement will let all of us move forward together and best serve our students.

We will continue to share updates as the court process moves forward. Additional information will also be posted on the Collective Bargaining webpage.

Sincerely,

Willy

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