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### Collective Bargaining

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## Collective bargaining:

Spurred by the loss of faculty jobs because of declining enrollment, the KSCP faculty became the first at a Kansas state college to adopt collective bargaining.

All eyes turned to this campus during fall semester as the faculty overwhelmingly approved Kansas Higher Education Association as its designated bargaining agent.

Under provisions of a 1971 law the faculty had the right to form and join employee organizations to negotiate with employers and settle grievances.

KHEA received 92 of the 175 votes cast in the Oct. 23 election. Some 47 voted for the American Association of University Professors and 36 voted not to have a bargaining agent. Thus, nearly 80 per cent favored bargaining.

The campaign to institute collective bargaining ran smoothly and without apparent divisiveness or friction between elements on campus. It began in the spring of 1974 when KHEA filed the original petition with the Kansas Public Employee Relations Board to establish a bargaining unit for KSCP faculty. AAUP later also applied to represent the faculty. The two organizations then presented authorization cards to members qualified for membership in the bargaining unit. They received 65 per cent approval of the faculty calling for an election, well beyond the required 30 per cent.

Dr. Denmark Cope, chief negotiator for the faculty in collective bargaining proceedings, explained the low key style of the campaign to introduce collective bargaining.

# 'A game without a referee'

"It was deliberately done this way. The premise was that the faculty ought to have a choice whether they wanted to go this route or not. We did not want them to feel that they had to or that anybody was going to force them to. The organizations who were potential representatives agreed among themselves that they would present this question in a low key manner and not make a partisan campaign out of it."

Cope and other observers believed KHEA won the election because the faculty believed it could offer more organizational support through its offices in Topeka.

The diversity of people and institutions makes the issue of collective bargaining in higher education an extremely complex one. Many believed bargaining would eliminate abuses of managerial discrimination. Others said it would remove rewards for superior performance and deprive administrations of ways to stimulate effort.

As Dr. Cope said, "When you have a game without a referee, it is an interesting and sometimes confusing process."

He does not believe bargaining will harm the standards of teaching at KSCP. "I think people get into the academic world because they are a particular kind of person with particular interests. I don't think you find faculty members are opposed to the concept of merit. The only problem is, what is merit? In the academic world, that's not an easy thing to determine, particularly in an institution where your primary mission is teaching as opposed to research and publication. It's

very hard to measure the quality of teaching."

Although most faculty surveyed said they voted for collective bargaining because of the loss of faculty jobs, particularly faculty on tenure, others cited salaries as their reason for approving the issue.

Faculty salaries at KSCP are considerably lower than those in institutions with similar characteristics. Data collected by the National Education Association shows salaries for all ranks in peer institutions. Several studies have shown that average pay of unionized faculty in Colleges increases substantially compared to those without bargaining.

Once bargaining was approved, the KHEA unit appointed a 15-member bargaining council, five of whom formed the negotiating team. The bargaining council developed the proposals which were ultimately presented for negotiation. This was done through an extensive questionnaire submitted to all faculty members eligible to join the unit.

The state's negotiating team was made up of a labor relations lawyer hired to represent the Board of Regents, the local director of personnel, and a representative from the Secretary of Administration. The executive officer for the Regents also attended negotiation sessions, along with observers from the KSCP administration. Faculty members were asked to rate issues on their relative importance, positive or negative. The results of the questionnaire served as the foundation for formal proposals.

The bargaining council next split into five subcommittees, each with an area of responsibility, and developed proposals. These were later reviewed and refined by the full council and until they were accepted or rejected unanimously.

Eventually, the council presented articles on tenure, grievance procedures, faculty participation in governance, arbitration, retrenchment, and personnel files. The latter issue was negotiated quickly, but others were still unresolved and under discussion in early summer 1975.

Dr. Cope and others view collective bargaining as a mechanism for achieving ends which otherwise would be either remotely attainable or totally impossible. Although he does not see bargaining as a panacea, Dr. Cope believes it will bring changes. "What form these changes will take, no one knows. I suspect that other campuses (in Kansas) will follow and the long range consequences of that will be for the good of higher education in the state. It will generate support for a permanence that is needed if the quality of higher education is to remain high, or higher, than it is right now.

"We're involved in a process here that'll keep on going until it arrives at some sort of conclusion, and we hope that the conclusion will be in the best interests of the faculty, the college, the students and higher education in general. The people who are involved in this process, in a very real sense, have invested their professional lives in this institution and higher education in general. They certainly don't want anything to damage it."