MOREHEAD - The Morehead State University board of regents reached a tentative agreement last night to end its contract dispute with Morris Norfleet.

The former president will get less money this year, a different job title and less liberal benefits under the tentative pact, reached after a 4 1/2-hour executive session marked by a shuffle of negotiators between the regents' meeting room and a nearby guest room, where Norfleet huddled with his lawyers.

Norfleet had threatened to sue if the university did not live up to the terms of its earlier, more generous contract, which was approved in June. The regents, stung by criticism of the contract, decided to try to renegotiate.

Here are the main points of the proposed agreement, which is expected to be submitted to the regents for their approval:

Norfleet will be paid $59,500 during his sabbatical this academic year - down from the $72,000 agreed to originally. During his year off, Norfleet will serve as a consultant for the Washington-based American Association of State Colleges and Universities.

With only James Richardson of Owingsville dissenting, the regents voted 9-1 to start paying Norfleet the $59,500. Richardson could not be reached for comment last night.

Norfleet's title will be special consultant to the president - not chancellor for corporate relations, the title approved for him in the earlier contract.

Norfleet's responsibilities will include assignments "of an important nature and commensurate with his experience, background and abilities," said his attorney, M. Stephen Pitt of Louisville.

When Norfleet returns to the university on July 1, he will be paid $49,500 a year for three years. That is the same salary originally agreed to for that time period.

Norfleet will have expenses "required to be incurred by him in connection with the performance of his duties . . . including travel, office and secretary upon the same terms and conditions as tenured professors and administrators of the university," according to the tentative agreement.
Apparently gone, however, are the more liberal use of an expense account, secretarial help and a car, as well as the housing allowance included in the original contract.

Norfleet said he agreed to renegotiate and agreed to the tentative contract "because of my concern for the university and out of respect for the individuals involved."

"I certainly have no bitter feeling whatsoever to the board for action taken," he said. "As far as I'm concerned, it's behind me."

Board chairman Robert M. Duncan said that the summerlong renegotiation process "will not . . . do irreparable harm to Morehead State University."

"I do think that reason has prevailed today," he said.

However, he added, "I do think this process has detracted from what the new administration has done."

Herb Reinhard, Norfleet's successor as president, took office in July and has instituted a complete university reorganization.

Duncan said the university would come out ahead under the new agreement because it would not have to pay for such items as Norfleet's housing and a car.

The agreement "shows that Dr. Norfleet . . . was willing to make a sacrifice and I applaud him for that," Duncan said.

Norfleet said he brought the board three options to consider, but he would not give details. At an earlier board meeting, he had offered to take a reduction in his first year's salary and eliminate his housing allowance.

He said the current agreement was not a great sacrifice. "I'm not looking at it as giving up any more than I did the first time I came" before the board, he said. "Money is not everything."