

Faculty Association

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Dear colleagues,

The UMFA bargaining team met with Central administration's team on Wednesday and Friday last week, to begin the full round of bargaining.

UMFA tabled its full set of proposals on Wednesday, and in order to advance our priorities, we have asked Central for information on their plans to change the budgeting model, and on their intentions with regard to the development and mobilization of performance indicators. Central has pledged to provide that information shortly.

Central then submitted their own proposals. While we will be treating each of these seriously and in detail, there were several items of particular note:

1. No minimum staff complement, and administrative freedom to discontinue faculty positions for academic reasons:

The current Collective Agreement (CA) contains a Letter of Understanding (LOU) that says the University—as long as its budget is constant or rising in real terms—has to employ a minimum number of UMFA Members, and a minimum number of tenured or probationary Members. This is one way we have tried to keep administration from replacing tenured, tenure-track and other UMFA positions with less well-remunerated and more insecure kinds of academic positions. The LOU prevents the administration from discontinuing the positions of probationary and tenured faculty members, as well as probationary and continuing librarians and instructors, for academic reasons.

Central has proposed that this LOU not be renewed. We have renewed versions of this LOU in every round since 1998, and the administration was even willing to sign it in the recent fast-track round of bargaining that failed. We are deeply concerned that they have proposed not to renew it this time. The absence of this LOU will create a situation in which every single UMFA Member is susceptible to academic redundancy.

2. No "Past Practices":

One of the priorities expressed by the Membership for this round is limiting the extent to which administrators can impose new policies, systems, or practices that change the nature or composition of our work. The current CA has a provision that, while in our view insufficient, provides some protection against any diminishment of benefits or privileges that arise from University by-laws or policies. Where we aim to expand collegial authority over our conditions of work, Central has proposed scrapping this protection.

3. Salary:

No offer has yet been made. Central proposes that we discuss salary later on in the process. This has been the standard pattern in the last couple of rounds of bargaining. We have submitted our own salary

proposal, so we are disappointed that the administration has not come to the table with a full package, including salary.

4. Even less security for term and contingent staff:

Under the current CA, if an UMFA Member on a term or contingent appointment does a satisfactory job for six consecutive years, they have the right to be offered any position with the same duties, should one be offered, within four months of the end of the appointment.

Central would like to scrap this provision. This would remove the right of first refusal for Members whose work has been deemed satisfactory for six years running. Their lives and careers would be made yet more insecure, and they would suffer a serious erosion of their professional autonomy and stability. Without this provision, your future at the UM, even with a record of satisfactory performance and six years of dedication, is entirely up to the discretion of upper administration and the Board.

The bargaining team and I are extremely disappointed with Central's opening proposals, particularly when Central had made early overtures about increasing the level of trust at the table. Our strong objections to the attempt to eliminate the letter of understanding on renewal and our protections of past practices in particular were expressed at Friday's meeting. The teams will meet again on June 8 to continue bargaining, and we will keep you informed as the process moves forward.

Meanwhile, I encourage you to talk to your colleagues about these proposals from Central, so that we are all aware of administration's priorities. Feel free to let me know your thoughts about them, though I can't guarantee I can respond to every one of you. You can reach me at faum@umfa.ca.

In solidarity,



Mark Hudson
UMFA President