



Representing Faculty, Librarians,
Veterinarians & College Professors

Negotiator February 2022

At the end of the Fall semester, we asked you to participate in a pre-bargaining survey. Thank you to the one-third of UGFA members who participated and who represented a good cross-section of the membership; we know how busy and stressful the last two years have been, and we thank you for taking the time to complete the survey. The survey results will help to inform the work of the bargaining committee as we undertake negotiations in the spring. The bargaining committee will develop a set of priorities that will lead to a proposed bargaining mandate, for which we will seek approval at a General Meeting of the membership to be held later this semester. This newsletter summarizes key results of the survey.

Morale

In answer to the question “To what extent do you feel that your morale (your feelings about work and your place of employment) has changed over the past five years?,” nearly three-quarters of respondents (72%) said their morale had been declining, with one in three respondents (32%) indicating that their morale had “declined substantially” in the last five years. Fewer than one in twenty (4%) felt that their morale had improved.

Ranking Concerns

The areas of most concern to respondents, assessed on a 1-5 scale and ranked by mean score, are: workload (4.04), the pandemic (3.77), collegial governance (3.45), salary and benefits (3.42), and academic freedom (2.97).

Workload

The survey asked about changes in workload over the past few years related to a list of tasks to be rated from “decreased substantially” (1) to “increased substantially” (5). The highest mean scores, in decreasing order, are: efforts devoted to completion of bureaucratic tasks (4.35), SAS accommodations (4.31), preparing and delivering course material (4.16), answering student questions (4.11), and service activities (4.03). Over 50% of respondents said work related to bureaucratic tasks and SAS accommodations has increased significantly, and 70-80% of respondents said work related to these tasks has increased (somewhat or significantly). For almost all tasks, no members reported a substantial decrease, and just a handful reported somewhat of a decrease. An exception is Scholarship/Research effort, where 7% of respondents reported a substantial decrease and 12% reported somewhat of a decrease.

The Pandemic

The top concerns of respondents related to the pandemic are its potential impact on T&P assessments (4.52) and the freedom to choose the mode of course delivery (4.31). Approximately half of all respondents strongly agreed that they should have the freedom to choose to teach remotely (45%) or partially remotely (52%) due to pandemic-related concerns; including respondents who somewhat agreed raises the percentages to over 72% and 75%, respectively. More generally, “if pandemic-related circumstances ‘require’ work outside of the Collective Agreement,” 82% of respondents agree that they “should have full freedom in deciding how [they] do such work.”

Articles 24 and 37 Reminder

The results of the survey suggested that some UGFA members do not fully understand Articles 24 and 37 of our Collective Agreement.

Under Article 24, restructuring includes substantive changes in curriculum, strategic direction, and/or the structure of a department/school, while reorganization includes closure, reduction, amalgamation, or transfer of an academic program that may lead to the transfer of a member. Very loosely, if the Administration decides to implement such a change, faculty and librarian members who are identified as “affected” (1) cannot be laid off; (2) maintain their current entitlements (like rank and salary); and, (3) in certain situations, are offered the option of leaving the University with a buyout equal to one month’s salary per year of service, up to two years’ salary. Article 24 requires that, if restructuring and/or reorganizing, the Administration must work with the Faculty Association in consideration of the interests of affected faculty and librarian members.

Article 37 considers both reorganization and significant change in demand of services. “Affected” Veterinarian members may be reassigned or potentially laid off with severance.

Collegial Governance

The top concern of respondents related to collegial governance is that departments should have the freedom to determine their hiring decisions and strategic directions (4.46). Ninety percent of all respondents were in agreement with this statement, and nearly two-thirds said they strongly agreed. Only 17% of respondents felt that members of the Administration should be able to serve as faculty members on Senate and other committees.

Four in five respondents felt that the Administration would not support them and defend them in an altercation with a student. The same proportion of respondents indicated that the return-to-campus plan for Fall 2021 and beyond has not been developed and implemented in a collegial way.

Job Security

Survey questions on this topic suggest a low concern among respondents, but that Articles 24 and 37 are not well understood. See the side note for an explanation of these articles.

Academic Freedom

Ninety-five percent of respondents were in agreement that “Academic Freedom is essential to the University.” Seventy-nine percent stated that they strongly agreed. Views were more equivocal on whether the Administration protects/respects their academic freedom and intellectual property rights.

Salary & Benefits

Fifty-nine percent of respondents are satisfied with their current salary. The most important benefits for respondents, ordered by mean score, are vision (4.74), dental (4.71), paramedical (4.02), psychologists (4.00), orthotics (3.21), and hearing aids (3.20).

Bill 124 Reminder

Our compensation is captured in the net of Bill 124 (the Protecting a Sustainable Public Sector for Future Generations Act, 2019), which, loosely, caps cost-of-living increases at 1% and total compensation increases at 1% per year for three years.

The “roll-over” of our Collective Agreement for 2021-2022 counts as our first year of compliance with the Act. In that year, we also received a 1% salary offset for converting our pension plan to the UPP.

We face two more years under the constraints of Bill 124, which also does not allow Agreements that include a final year (or years) of “catch-up” salary increases. Some groups in the broader public sector have had some luck bargaining small increases in benefits.

A Few Words on Bargaining

Our Collective Agreement expires on June 30. During the life of a Collective Agreement, the UGFA maintains a list of issues and concerns that arise from grievances and arbitrations, our many interactions with UGFA members and the Administration, and other activities of the Faculty Association. Our Chief Negotiator attends weekly meetings of the OCUFA Collective Bargaining Committee, so we also have a strong understanding of the experiences of other associations. Between now and the start of bargaining, your Negotiating Team and the Negotiating Preparation Committee are working on developing the list of bargaining priorities, informed by the survey, our experience, and the aforementioned list. We will bring the proposed bargaining mandate to the membership for approval at a General Meeting later in this semester.

Formal bargaining with the Administration typically begins in May. The precise date is determined through discussion after the UGFA provides its formal notice to bargain to the Administration.

The UGFA always enters bargaining with a positive and optimistic attitude, hoping to reach a fair and equitable agreement with the Administration through constructive discussions.

A number of members have contacted us to ensure that the UGFA has given support to faculty associations at other institutions who find themselves in the unfortunate situation of a job action or strike. You will likely have heard that UOITFA, the faculty association at Ontario Tech University (previously UOIT), went on strike on Thursday, February 10, for the first time in their history, joining other associations in Canada currently on strike (Acadia, Lethbridge). In all cases, UGFA sends monetary support and a letter of support (as mandated by the UGFA Constitution). For a prolonged strike, we send additional monetary support.

Your Negotiating Team & Negotiating Preparation Committee

Negotiating Team

Bill Cormack, History
 Mary DeCoste, SOLAL
 Jonathan Ferris, Membership Officer
 Steve Gismondi, Math & Stats
 Andrew Hathaway, Sociology & Anthropology
 Susan Hubers, Executive Officer
 Herb Kunze (Chief Negotiator), Math & Stats
 Pavneesh Madan, Biomedical Sciences
 Kirsten Sanderson, Senior Secretary

Negotiating Preparation Committee

Nita Chhinzer, Lang School
 Shoshanah Jacobs, Integrative Biology
 Kevin James, History
 Philippe Lassou, Lang School
 Peter Goddard, History
 Louise Grogan, Lang School
 Stefan Kremer, School of Computer Science
 Ryan Prosser, School of Environmental Sciences
 Denise Sanderson, Assistant Executive Officer
 Ali Versluis, Library
 + The Negotiating Team

Thank you for your support!

As always, please e-mail facassoc@uoguelph.ca if you have any questions.