



Representing Faculty, Librarians,
Veterinarians & College Professors

Negotiator

September 20, 2022

Your UGFA bargaining team wants to thank members who attended the General Meeting on September 13, as well as members who followed up with emails and discussions afterwards.

General Meeting Feedback: Trust Issues

Both before and after the General Meeting on September 13, we have heard members express a strong lack of trust in the Administration, often offering a long list of reasons and sometimes highlighting a circumstance they found particularly egregious. Examples from members include, in no particular order:

- continual increases in workload, with no meaningful action by the Senior Administration;
- the huge record increase in first-year student acceptances, which necessarily represents an increased workload for members, coupled with the Provost's inadequate memo;
- numerous poor decisions by the Administration related to the pandemic and a sense that pandemic-related consultations and communications were phony;
- concerns over the functioning and integrity of Senate, with a clear perception that the Senior Administration has no interest in real collegial governance involving UGFA;
- statements from extremely sad members that the Senior Administration does not support academic departments, in hiring, in determining their direction(s), in developing and growing their programs;
- a belief that the Administration will not fulfill its commitment to grow the permanent UGFA membership by 40 members to 848, as per the Letter of Understanding (LOU) obtained as part of UGFA's consent to convert our pension plan to the UPP—with 9 months of the 54-month period of the LOU remaining, they are not even halfway, with 22 positions to go; and
- frustration with the top-down approach to many things, including dictating the nature of academic positions when permission to hire is given, "administrative downloading" and an increase in bureaucracy, and attempting to drive the direction of research and teaching.

The Erosion of Trust

As many members will recall from past newsletters, when the current President arrived as Provost in 2015, we felt a stark and negative change in how the Senior Administration interacted with the UGFA. This observation was echoed by many members and clearly reflected in the many grievances and disciplinary investigations with which the UGFA had to engage. Indeed, since 2015, at any typical moment the UGFA has had more active grievances, disciplinary investigations, and arbitrations than any other faculty associations in the province, in raw numbers (not per capita). The UGFA's legal bills have increased by a factor of ten. Since 2015, the Senior Administration has experienced a near-complete turnover, including in key staff positions in Faculty and Academic Staff Relations (FASR) and the Office of Diversity and Human Rights office. The Administration's bargaining team has acknowledged in bargaining that they have no "system memory" regarding the evolution of the Collective Agreement and the intent and/or understanding of some articles. Furthermore, whatever trust there had been between the UGFA and the Provost's Office and President's Office has vanished, creating difficulties at the bargaining table.

Bargaining in the Absence of Trust

We are bargaining our renewal Collective Agreement under a cloud of lack of trust. We have seen and/or heard the following:

The Administration wants to introduce “Teaching Stream Faculty.”

The only reason given for this set of proposals is that they say that, in some pockets of campus, “regular faculty,” by which they seem to mean faculty members engaged in discipline-based research, have trouble assessing the Scholarship of faculty who have a high Teaching DOE. Of course, we all appreciate the distinction between research and Scholarship and the role played by Scholarship in our Collective Agreement, and hence our DOE and, hopefully, our Departmental T&P Guidelines. In response to their reason, we have proposed clarifying in the Collective Agreement that certain scholarly activities, including supervision of students and scholarship related to education and/or teaching, are reasonably categorized as either Teaching or Scholarship, reflecting current practices in many departments across campus.

The Administration has explained to us that Guelph used to be a leader in teaching, but those days have passed. In the 2018 performance assessments, which included student feedback in the form of the old questionnaires and two levels of peer review, 99.4% of members were rated overall “Good” or better in Teaching, and more than 85% of members were rated overall “Very Good” or better in Teaching. They say that having “Teaching Stream Faculty” will enhance our teaching, but this is nonsense: what can they do with a “Teaching Stream” member whose DOE is 80/0/20 (Teaching/Scholarship/Service) that they cannot do with a “regular” member whose DOE is 80/10/10? They have not offered an answer to this question.

The idea is designed for negative impact:

- The insidious core element of their proposals is that these members lose their Academic Freedom, despite the Administration indicating that they would retain it. “Teaching Stream Faculty” would be assigned courses and committee work just like “regular faculty,” but, in addition, they would be expected to meet with the Dean to determine and sign an agreement on the “educational leadership activities” in which they must engage. We are asked to believe that a T&P Committee that the Administration says struggles to assess a person with an 80/10/10 DOE will have no trouble with an 80/0/20 DOE and this additional signed agreement with the Dean.
- It would create second-class faculty, as evidenced by the wording used in presenting the proposals (“regular faculty” and “Teaching Stream Faculty”), the proposal being that “regular faculty” can get Tenure while “Teaching Stream Faculty” can get Continuing Appointment, and the reduction in their Academic Freedom to pursue what they wish beyond their assigned workload. In introducing their idea of “Teaching Stream Faculty” by proposing an entirely new set of articles rather than by proposing changes to the existing language in the Collective Agreement, the Administration suggests that they are playing a long game: we believe that, if their proposed new articles were accepted, the Administration would attempt in future bargaining to further the divide between “Teaching Stream Faculty” and “regular faculty” by, for example, proposing different salary floors and other inequities.
- It would shatter the standard that UGFA members engage in all three areas of effort and that teaching at Guelph benefits from the fact that we are actively engaged in Scholarship. Zero-scholarship “Teaching Stream” appointments would allow the Administration to shift a department away from research and scholarship.
- Introducing a “Teaching Stream” now is regressive. We are aware of universities with teaching streams at which the Administration is proposing that the teaching stream should be faded out.

- At neighbouring institutions that have a teaching stream, perhaps including a Scholarship requirement, the faculty associations can struggle to represent the interests of “regular faculty” and “teaching stream faculty,” which are in clear conflict on certain matters. Introducing a teaching stream is a good way to try to fracture an association.

Since the General Meeting, many members have noted that the “Teaching Stream Faculty” proposal is a bad idea, typically for one of the reasons outlined above, sometimes for other reasons, and always because they felt that the Administration cannot be trusted to manage it given all of the negative directions that they could take.

In the past year or two, the administrations at some neighbouring institutions have pressed their faculty associations in bargaining to introduce a teaching stream. At those institutions, faculty associations held votes to have a strike vote or jumped directly to a strike vote, with the members understanding that a strong message on the unacceptability of the proposal had to be sent. In all cases, no teaching stream was introduced. Guelph’s Administration has proposed a teaching stream in the past and those proposals have similarly been vanquished.

The Administration provided not even one proposal addressing the ever-growing workload of members.

For clarity, we are not counting their claim that eliminating peer review helps resolve workload concerns. A record number of UGFA members are on Sick Leave, with a record number of them staying on such leave for the full 90 days allowed under the Collective Agreement. Many leaves are related to mental health. The Administration, in separate discussions, has signaled its frustration that so many members are taking the maximum allowed number of days to return. To be clear, some members do not return to work, in good health, from a 90 calendar-day Sick Leave, but they return because the alternative is going on Long-Term Disability Leave, which some cannot afford from either a monetary or stress standpoint. As UGFA regularly states, we do not have a problem of absenteeism but rather of presenteeism, such as members working when they should be resting or recovering from illness.

Some members will remember the Wellness@Work Town Hall meeting in 2018, where the results of the Administration’s 2017 survey showed that faculty members were strong negative outliers on many key criteria. What has happened since then? Well, the plan for a subsequent wellness survey was pulled by the Administration; members can join up for walks in the Arboretum and yoga on Johnston Green; and there is a record number of Sick Leaves, and, as evidenced in our survey, record-low morale and trust in the Administration. And, of course, we have letters from the Provost acknowledging the increased workload due to the pandemic, along with her expressed enthusiasm for the largest first-year cohort in our history.

Some UGFA bargaining proposals are intended to address the increase in workload or to help members and the UGFA better monitor workload issues, but the Administration has as of yet only responded to one of them.

The Administration is at best slow and at worst obstinate regarding Bill 124.

As you know, Bill 124 constrains our bargaining of salary and benefits. The UGFA team is well informed on bargaining outcomes in these areas across the sector thanks to regular meetings organized by OCUFA and our many discussions with our legal counsel. Surely, the Administration is similarly aware of sector outcomes. At some neighbouring universities, the administration entered bargaining well aware that everybody understood those outcomes and dispensed with any charades to the contrary, even expressing sincere regret that a 1% increase in salary and total compensation was all that could be done. Our Administration has not taken this approach, instead suggesting that they can offer less than 1%. We believe that the only way forward will be to involve our legal counsel directly in this aspect of bargaining.

The Administration has directly attacked peer review.

One proposal from the Administration suggested the elimination of peer review for a class of members, which has now been retracted. A second proposal was based on the rationale that members are incapable of assessing their own peers. In addition, the Administration has no interest in affording UGFA members the opportunity to assess the suitability of an externally-hired administrator whose term has ended to enter their Department as a colleague and UGFA member.

The Administration wants to make major changes to the LOU on the Assessment of Teaching.

This LOU was signed by the current Senior Administration leadership team in the middle of Fall 2019. Due to the pandemic, we have had exactly no experience with the use of this LOU, which was bargained by the UGFA and a Senior Administration team that included the AVP Academic, the Office of Teaching and Learning, FASR, and a Dean, among others. Of course, the natural “good faith” approach would be to renew the LOU in its current form in order to gain experience that may inform how each of the parties wishes to move forward with regard to the LOU. Instead, the Administration sought not just to increase the requirements of the LOU, but to dramatically change In-class Peer Observation to be peer review and to prioritize particular styles and/or philosophies of teaching. Those who established the LOU understood that we already have two peer review T&P Committees and that the Observation must be agnostic on teaching styles and philosophies. It would be too strong to call their proposal “bad faith,” but it sure seems hard to describe as “good faith.”

What’s Next?

Despite the foregoing misgivings, the UGFA continues to engage with the Administration’s bargaining team in good faith to protect and defend the interests of the membership. The UGFA will continue to update members on the status of bargaining. We will hold another General Meeting with the membership on September 28 at 10:00 a.m. via [Zoom](#), where we will provide you with the latest updates. You will also receive an email reminder for the General Meeting along with the Zoom link.

Thank you for your support!

As a reminder, your UGFA bargaining team is:

Bill Cormack, History
 Mary DeCoste, School of Languages and Literatures
 Jon Ferris, Membership Officer
 Steve Gismondi, Mathematics & Statistics
 Andy Hathaway, Sociology & Anthropology
 Susan Hubers, Executive Officer
 Herb Kunze (Chief Negotiator), Mathematics & Statistics
 Pavneesh Madan, Biomedical Sciences
 Kirsten Sanderson, Senior Secretary

We all thank you for your support!

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