**WLUFA BARGAINING ADVISORY**

**The Bargaining Challenge Ahead**

Bill Salatka, WLUFA Chief Negotiator

WLUFA and the Administration exchanged proposals for the negotiation of the Collective Agreement for Full-Time Faculty and Professional Librarians in mid-September. We have been at the negotiating table since that time working to reach a new agreement to replace the one that expired on June 30th. While this pace may seem slow, this is not unusual since the issues on which we are working are demanding and complicated. There are a number of issues about which WLUFA does have concerns, however, and we would like to share these with you. These concerns are central to the bargaining challenge ahead.

**Teaching, Research and Service:**

WLUFA is concerned that Administration proposals for changes in the teaching structure at Laurier will have the dual effect of seriously decreasing the research capabilities of full time-faculty while simultaneously dramatically increasing their service responsibilities.

We are also concerned that the Administration proposals will create a two-tier faculty structure in which some Members have greater privileges and access to career-enhancing resources than other Members.

At the table, WLUFA is defending the integrity of the core academic values of teaching, scholarship and service. We are committed to protecting the academic quality at Laurier. We are facing the same uphill battle that several other Faculty Associations in Ontario have faced to in order to maintain the full-time faculty commitment to our key duties and commitments.

**Governance:**

Administration proposals to change the composition of some search committees in the governance article may reduce the role of faculty in reviewing senior administrators. This will have profound implications for the principle and practice of collegial governance and the role of faculty in it.

WLUFA is committed to protecting collegial governance.

**Promotion and Tenure:**

The Administration is proposing extending the duration of Provisional appointments and introducing external evaluation to the tenure application process.

WLUFA will work to retain current practices in tenure and promotion.

**Pensions and Health Benefits:**

As we suspected, the Administration has proposed significant cutbacks in pension benefits for future retirees as well as benefits arising from future service. WLUFA’s actuary has reviewed our pension plan and views it as sustainable into the future.

The Administration is proposing significant cutbacks to retiree health benefits. Our health benefit consultant has not recommended any changes to our health benefits.

We believe cutbacks to pensions or retiree health benefits will have profound consequences, not only for Members approaching retirement, but also for the future financial security for all our Members. Furthermore, these cutbacks will result in another two-tier structure at Laurier with some Members having better pensions and health benefits than others.

WLUFA will fight to protect pensions and health benefits.

**Compensation:**

Laurier ranks 14 out of 16 universities in the Ontario system for full-time faculty salaries. This comes at the same time that Laurier has been classified by *Maclean’s* as a comprehensive university, the category for universities with significant research activity and that offer numerous undergraduate and graduate programs. Laurier was promoted to this category by *Maclean’s* from its former designation as a primarily undergraduate university. Our salary levels do not reflect our new reality since they are aligned with those of lower-paid salaries of faculty from universities designated as primarily undergraduate institutions. Every other comprehensive university in Ontario has higher salary levels than Laurier. The initial salary proposal offered by the Administration will not change our salary ranking.

WLUFA will vie to bring Laurier’s faculty compensation to a level that reflects our place both in the Ontario system and as a comprehensive university.

**Financial Condition of Laurier:**

We are pleased to discover that Laurier’s financial condition is very healthy, as evidenced by the financial statements and stable bond ratings for the past three years. In fact, the General Fund has generated record surpluses in the last two years and a cumulative surplus of over $43 million over the past three years. With such a healthy financial condition, WLUFA is puzzled by the Administration’s proposals to cut pension benefits, reduce retiree health benefits, and keep salaries very low.

**Academic Freedom:**

WLUFA has made proposals to protect the academic freedom of Members through defending the need for privacy in academic matters, protecting Members from surveillance, and ensuring Members files, records and communications are in the custody and control of the Member and not the Administration.

**The Future:**

Although the pace of the negotiations is expected to be slow and the issues complex, your WLUFA bargaining team is optimistic that an agreement can be reached. We will update you about our progress as the bargaining unfolds.

**DID YOU KNOW…**

Laurier has a cumulative surplus of more than

$43 million

over the past three years.