



WLUF

Wilfrid Laurier University
Faculty Association

You are probably wondering why we have not been communicating with you about the current state of negotiations between WLUF and the Administration. We have been honouring the request by the Conciliator not to bargain in public. Unfortunately, given the Administration's decision to communicate directly with you by way of the university website and e-mail, we have been forced to respond.

We don't believe that negotiating through the media or through you will resolve the current issues in negotiations. We are very concerned that this has generated unnecessary and unhelpful anxiety among students. We hope to encourage calm and well-reasoned responses. We are committed to reaching an agreement so that we can carry on with our work. The WLUF Bargaining Team is prepared to be at the negotiating table at any time. Please understand that we are not "choosing" to go on strike and will take job action only if the administration forces us.

One of the greatest principles of scholarship is that we develop conclusions based on evidence. We encourage you to seek out as much information as you can, to ask questions, even hard questions, of both sides and to arrive at your own conclusions. We hope that by giving you the information you require to assess the evidence from both sides in negotiations, you will see that our position seeks the best outcome for our community, our Laurier. Remember the motto of our Laurier community: "Veritas Omnia Vincit," "Truth Conquers All."

(1) The Administration claims: "The University is facing significant financial challenges, but it is managing those challenges well. The uncertainty of funding remains a constant concern." We have all contributed to generating a cumulative surplus of \$43 million over the last three years. But, the Administration has been involved in hiring more senior administrators and managers than faculty. For example, when student enrollment increased by 18.5% between 2005 and 2010, the Administration hired 48% more managers but only 13% more faculty. It has also been spending a lot more on "Capital Assets" (e.g. buildings and property): velodrome (a pledge); Brantford's 'Eiffel Tower'; Global Innovation Exchange building, and much more to come.

There's plenty of money for senior administrators, property and buildings, but nothing for faculty and professional librarians.

(2) The Administration claims: "Laurier's pension challenges are real. The current pension plan design is simply not sustainable, and the issue was not caused by the University contribution holidays in the 1990s." WLUF commissioned an independent actuarial analysis that shows that the pension plan is sound and that over 90% of the shortfall (as of 2010) is the result of underfunding by the Administration. Faculty are now being compelled to pay for the Administration's choice to go into debt. *It's like being forced by your roommate to pay for his student loan.*

(3) The Administration claims: "The teaching stream works for everyone – students and faculty." The teaching stream works only for the Administration because fewer people will be teaching more. It will not result in smaller class sizes and is unlikely to mean greater course selection, and if new hires are teaching more, they'll have less time for you. A university education is different from a college education because it is teaching grounded in research. We have already got institutions that are teaching only. These are called community colleges. Why would you pay university tuition for a college education? Our proposal for professional teaching-intensive appointments maintains the integrity of the university education and experience. They are meant for professional Departments such as Business and Journalism.

(4) The Administration claims: "Salary wise, the University's faculty members are close to the provincial average when you compare salary by years of experience." However, even the Administration's own figures undermine this claim. For example, their figures indicate that 383 out of 488 faculty members are paid below the provincial average. This means that nearly 4 out of every 5 (78.5%) Laurier faculty members are below the Ontario average. And, at Brantford it is even worse. Here, students pay the same tuition and get the same degree, but faculty earnings are estimated to be \$11,294 less on average than other WLUF Faculty. According to Maclean's, Laurier is now a comprehensive university. Laurier faculty and librarians are now also the lowest paid in this category. Their data show we're underpaid. Our data show we're underpaid. Therefore, it is safe to conclude that we are underpaid and some (e.g. Brantford) are more egregiously underpaid than others. This is taking place in the same context where the number of Administrators is growing.

(5) The Administration claims: "Settlements at other universities reflect pension adjustment and the kinds of increases that are consistent with financial challenges." It is not easy to compare pension funds as they are tailor-made. However, we would like to correct some omissions the Administration has made in its claims.

- 1) Our pension contributions have been higher for longer to make our pension plan sustainable;
- 2) While contributions at other universities are just getting up to 7% or averaging out at 7% over time, we have been paying that amount for a long time;
- 3) The Administration is demanding that we contribute more at the same time as it wants to cut our benefits, effectively demanding we pay more for less.

The end result of all of this is that the longer one works at Laurier, the worse off one becomes. In terms of salaries, the Administration neglects to mention that the salaries of faculty and professional librarians have been at or close to the bottom of the Ontario University System for years. The Administration wants to reduce pension and health benefits for faculty and librarians who have laboured under low compensation for years. We believe that our proposals are fair and reasonable and are consistent with Laurier's fiscal reality. They are comparable with settlements reached elsewhere.

It's all about choices. The Administration wants to borrow against your education and our future. It is neither fair nor reasonable.

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or by going to the WLUF website at <http://www.wluf.ca>.**