

WLUF ADVOCATE

Building community through dialogue, discussion and debate.

It's about fairness

In this series of articles, the Advocate explores the relationship of Contract Faculty members with the University, taking on prevalent misconceptions or "myths" about their working conditions, and providing some hard facts and figures so readers can assess the fairness of the two-tiered employment standards that are now well entrenched at Laurier. As we prepare to renew the Part-time Faculty Collective Agreement this spring, all faculty have the opportunity to press the Administration to address these and other issues.

Myth #3: Contract Faculty can do their jobs in makeshift spaces

Kimberly Ellis-Hale, Sociology

You may have seen or tripped over us somewhere on campus. We try to stay out of the way by grabbing a library carrel or a table at Starbucks, but sometimes we just need to settle in to a corner or stairwell while we finish the grading or organizing our lecture notes for a class that day. And sometimes, you'll see that we're not alone, but have arranged to meet our students in these makeshift spaces. We are the not-quite-officeless workers at the University, Contract Faculty.

According to the Part-Time Facul-

ty Collective Agreement, the University is required to provide one and a half hours per week of office time for every course we teach. It's intended not so much for class prep or grading (though that would be nice) but rather as office time to meet with students—time that is conducive to discussion, affording some privacy. One and a half hours may sound adequate for this limited purpose. But it is not. To begin, the arrangement presumes students have flexible enough schedules that they will be free during your allotted time. Ask any permanent faculty member how often they have to schedule times outside of their regular, posted, hours to meet with students, and you'll see the problem. Without greater access to office space, however, Contract Faculty either need to meet with students somewhere in public, or ask that the student miss the class of one instructor in order to speak with another.



Add to this challenge the changes in our class sizes and composition. As student numbers in any given class climb higher, the lines outside our office doors grow longer, sometimes too long to handle in ninety minutes. And centralized scheduling appears to have made identification of times accessible to students even more

difficult (let's not even mention office hours for student groups). Moreover, with seven percent of our student population presenting with accommodations, up 12 percent from last year, more is demanded by way of student support and mentoring. If student demand for greater instructor flexibility around office hours is difficult for regular faculty, it presents an almost impossible challenge for Contract Faculty.

Yet Contract Faculty have fewer options for dealing with the demand. With our future employment hanging in the balance, we can't risk being seen as unsupportive, uncooperative or unreachable. And so we hold additional office hours in unorthodox places with no compensation. The next time you see a Contract Faculty member surrounded by students in a stairwell, at a picnic or in a coffee shop know they are not there because of the view, the weather or the coffee. They are there working because they can't work where they should.

Your CAS Negotiating Team has been working hard and meeting regularly. Stay tuned for information about Part-time Bargaining Unit meetings.

**“If you need me,
I will be in my office.”**



**Contract Faculty:
Working where we can, because we
can't work where we should.**

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