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CAS Negotiations, 2010-11: Newsletter

WLUFA
Wilfrid Laurier University
Faculty Association



Bargaining Unit Meeting: The highs, the lows and the “no’s”

Members met on both March 21 and 22 in order to update our Bargaining Unit on the status of negotiations which are slated to go before a conciliator on March 30 and April 6.

Chief Negotiator, Sheila McKee-Protopapas, began the meeting by providing a summary of the articles and clauses that have already reached tentative agreement.

To this date, improvements have been negotiated that will standardize CAS application and appointment procedures – including standardized forms for both job postings and for roster applications – as well as improved transparency in the hiring process itself. These provisions will also provide more consistency in hiring practices across departments and programs.

In addition, improvements have been negotiated for CAS working environments, including access to office space over the spring/summer term, the ability for Members to increase meeting room booking times (DAWB especially), and regular updating of computer equipment in CAS offices.

McKee-Protopapas also informed the Membership of more recently agreed-to clauses. There are improvements in Article 18: Leaves, and improvements in Article 13: Appointments

for Members in the Faculty of Music.

Unfortunately, though, the good news stopped there, with the Chief Negotiator’s confirmation that a number of the most important items up for negotiation have continued to meet with the University’s consistent refusal to enter into discussion.

Proposals for an improved seniority system that will recognize long-serving Members through both expanded seniority rights and increased compensation have been flatly denied.

This refusal is regardless of the negotiating team’s repeated efforts – through their revising of WLUFA’s proposals – to satisfy the University’s concerns that it needs the “freedom” to hire the “best qualified” candidates.

Most CAS, of course, are left to wonder what the University means by “qualified” if our Members have already been hired to teach twenty or thirty or sixty times for their departments.

The negotiation of a Part-time Continuing Appointment has also proved to be troublesome, with the Parties differing significantly on the basis for, and make-up and implementation of, this type of hiring.

While a Part-time Continuing Appointment will remain on the table into conciliation,
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This “Wordle” was generated from the responses by members of the CAS Bargaining Unit to last summer’s questionnaire about issues that were important to them as we entered negotiations.

Questions or comments?

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Bargaining Unit meeting (>continued from page 1)

the contradictions inherent in the University's willingness to bargain for a CAS appointment that is *continuing*, juxtaposed against its refusal to recognize Members' long-term service, will continue to make the negotiations of Article 13: Appointments, problematic.

Less surprising, of course, is the University's stand on any matters connected to money.

These include not only CAS compensation for courses, but also marking/grading allowance and assistance, professional expense reimbursements, large-class supplementary remuneration, health-care spending accounts, research funds and grants, and funds to recog-

nize Members who provide service to academic groups, committees and associations.

Of this list, the University has provided answers only on salary and on the proposed health-care spending accounts – each of which has been less than satisfactory.

Standing behind a claim of “financial crisis” (see the article included in this newsletter, below, for WLUFAs response on the “crisis”), the University's compensation offer looks to turn what was a “gap”, between Wilfrid Laurier CAS and their colleagues at both Guelph and Waterloo, into a chasm – a fact that, again, the negotiating team expects the conciliator to notice.

Crisis – What Crisis?

In the wake of the University's recent claims at the negotiating table that, due to its current “financial crisis” it cannot possibly entertain the compensation proposals put forward on behalf of our Members by the negotiating team, WLUFAs requested an overview of the University's financial situation from one of our full-time colleagues. His report follows:

CAS Members make substantial contributions to Laurier at very low cost. These Members currently teach approximately 33 % of all classes and 40% of WLU's students. Paradoxically, however, CAS Members cost Laurier only six to seven percent of its total revenues. Even in the face of these statistics, the University contends that Laurier is facing a financial crisis and cannot pay CAS Members compensation that is commensurate with their contributions.

The fact, though, is that there never has been, nor is there currently, a financial crisis at Laurier and there are a number of reliable indicators that uphold this view:

(1) The Dominion Bond Rating Service has rated Laurier debt as investment grade and stable with low risk of default for each of the last five years. This fact

alone renders the University concerns re: pension liabilities a non-issue.

(2) The unrestricted fund of the University has generated a cumulative surplus (2006-2010) of over \$50 Million. In every year a surplus was observed.

(3) The 2010 surplus of almost \$18 Million was the largest in Laurier's history.

(4) The Province has fully funded all unfunded students this year. This will result in many millions of extra revenue well into the future.

(5) Tuition rates and the number of students have increased in the past three years generating millions of extra revenue.

(6) Over \$58 Million was transferred out of the unrestricted fund for capital assets. In other words, inflation-related operational concerns are not an issue.

The overall picture here is that there are substantial revenues and increases in revenues available to the University to pay its CAS Members competitive wages. Given their substantial contributions – to the University, to its students and to University coffers – CAS Members deserve to be paid appropriately.

Strategy Committee Member Contacts

At any time during the negotiations, feel free to contact a member of the Strategy Committee with questions, input, or suggestions:

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