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Report of the Vice-President, Salary, Benefits, Pensions and Workload, 2025-2026

April 20, 2026

During the 2025-2026 year, in my role as VP, SBPW, I have served as Co-chief Negotiator for UTFA's Negotiating Team as we work to secure better working conditions for you and your colleagues. This year, our bargaining priorities were guided by two central goals: 1) develop a bargaining platform informed by member feedback to advance key issues, and 2) address the fact that the Administration has delayed negotiations to the extent that we were several years behind. To these ends, we finalized a round of bargaining for the three years from July 1, 2023, to June 30, 2026, and have begun bargaining for July 2026 to June 2027.

Bargaining for the 2023 - 2026 years

This past academic year involved finishing a round of bargaining for July 1, 2023, to June 30, 2026. Your Negotiation Team was guided by survey responses, town halls, and one-on-one discussions to develop proposals on three bargaining priorities: salary, benefits, and workload. Some of the resulting gains are highlighted below; a full overview of updates can be found here, here, and here.

Salary

During salary negotiations, UTFA's Negotiating Team has put forward arguments relating to inflation, excellence, trends in the university sector, and U of T's financial position. The Administration put forward proposals that constitute real wage loss and has argued that U of T cannot afford to compensate UTFA members enough to keep up with inflation. At an impasse between these positions, salaries for the past three years have been decided through arbitration. In the past year, Arbitrator Eli Gedalof has issued awards which include Across-the-Board (ATB) salary adjustments for the period July 1, 2023, to June 30, 2026. These increases are as follows:

- Effective July 1, 2023: 3.5%

● Effective July 1, 2024: 2.5%

● Effective July 1, 2025: 2.5%

We did not receive the final award until January, 2026, and in that decision, there were several disappointments. We are disappointed that while Arbitrator Gedalof acknowledged the need for full inflationary catch-up as per arguments advanced by UTFA, he declined to close the gap between our wage increases and the long-term effects of inflation. This impact is compounded by the fact that the benefits improvements he awarded were wholly inadequate, since they should have represented cumulative improvements over the entire three-year period.

Additionally, there had been a dispute about the implementation of ATB for the previous two years, with the Administration arguing that in any given year, retroactive ATB did not apply to newly hired faculty who had signed letters of offer stating that the salary offered was a firm offer and that any ATB negotiated with UTFA did not apply. In parallel to a member-led initiative to address this unfair and inequitable position, UTFA submitted legal arguments that the July 2025 award did not exclude any of our members. Unfortunately, the January 2026 award clarified this point, with the arbitrator saying that the retroactive ATB did not apply to anyone in their first year of hire. UTFA will continue to work on this issue.

Benefits and Workload

Despite the Administration's unwillingness to consider or agree to financial increases to benefits, and arbitration awards being inadequate to address members' benefits and workload needs, we have succeeded in gaining some improvements. The bargaining survey was clear: improvements to the Child Care Benefit were a top priority for members. Despite the Administration's refusal to consider financial improvements, we reached an agreement on a restructuring of the Child Care Benefit, implemented this year, which includes an increase in the age of an eligible child from 6 to 9 and changes to the application and reimbursement system, which reduce the need to submit expense details.

We also succeeded in gaining improvements to the Long-Term Disability (LTD) plan. Maximum earnings covered under the LTD plan have been increased to $200,000 (effective September 1, 2025).

There were several other top priorities in benefits and workload, including the improvement of benefits for retirees and more equitable and transparent assignment of workload. Unfortunately, the Administration refused to engage, and Arbitrator Gedalof declined to award improvements in these areas. This work continues as the new round of bargaining has already started!

Current Round of Bargaining

In parallel with the finalization of the three-year award, preparation for the next round of bargaining started in December with the release of a bargaining survey that closed on January 9, 2026. Motivated by ensuring UTFA members receive timely wage increases and are not waiting months or years for retroactive payments, your UTFA Negotiating Team is insisting that the Admin adhere to an expedited process outlined in Article 6 of the Memorandum of Agreement. The goal is either a bilateral agreement or a final and binding decision by an arbitrator on all bargaining items by no later than June 30, 2026, so members will receive timely ATB and PTR adjustments.

With this limited timeline in mind, UTFA's Negotiating Team tabled a streamlined set of proposals, including limited benefits improvements and relatively few policy changes. The bargaining priorities were

approved by UTFA Council and developed through individual discussions, the January Bargaining Town Hall, and the bargaining survey. Guided by this feedback, UTFA has tabled proposals on the following:

Salary

● Catching up on inflation

● Obtaining ATB adjustments for new hires in their first year

● Raising salary floors for the lowest-paid members

Benefits

● Maintaining equal access to benefits for retirees

● Improving Child Care Benefit scope and coverage

● Improving housing (including housing loans) benefits

● Increasing coverage for vision, mental health, hearing aids, and dispensing fees

● Expanding the scope of prescription drug coverage, including medically necessary compounded medications

● Expanding the scope of paramedical services (e.g., kinesiology)

● Expanding the scope of coverage for overage dependents with complex health needs

Workload

● Guaranteeing adequate supports for all three components of workload in the face of the downloading of administrative functions to faculty and librarians

● Addressing workload issues associated with the increase in student accommodations

● Addressing workload issues associated with AI

Other

● Indexing PERA amounts and making tuition an eligible expense

● Allowing grievance rights for part-time members who have been terminated without cause

● Enhancing pay for the first Research and Study Leave for part-time members

Between January and March of this year, we have had five bilateral meetings with the Administration with agreement on some minor items, but we remain far apart on other issues, particularly with respect to compensation and workload. We are pleased that the parties have now agreed to work for the first time with Jasbir Parmar, an experienced mediator and arbitrator in the university sector. We are currently working out the process and timelines to ensure a bargaining round that results in meaningful and timely increases to members' compensation, and we will post updates as the bargaining round develops.

Acknowledgments

Thanks to the dedicated members of the SBPW Negotiating Teams for the current and previous bargaining rounds. I would also like to thank the members of the SBPW Committee for their work this year in achieving UTFA's goals.

I would also like to thank Terezia Zorić for her continued leadership and engagement, the crucial supports provided by Executive Director Nellie De Lorenzi, legal support from Emily McBain-Ashfield, Director, Legal & Advice Services, Counsel Sarah Millman, and logistical support from Jessica Martin.

It has also been a pleasure to work with our external counsel at Ravenlaw LLP led by Wassim Garzouzi.

Jun Nogami
Vice-President, Salary, Benefits, Pensions and Workload President-elect

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