Presdent

On April 5, 2018, Cynthia Messenger was re-elected UTFA President for her second two-year term. Cynthia was first elected on April 5, 2016, when she became UTFA’s 17th President. She is the third woman in UTFA’s history to be elected President.

Cynthia is currently one of the lead employee negotiators for the University Pension Plan (UPP) initiative, which involves negotiation and collaboration across employee groups and administrations at three universities: U of T, Guelph, and Queen’s. For more than two years, Cynthia has worked collegially with Angela Hildyard, who is Advisor to the President and Provost, and Alex McKinnon, Department Leader, Research, Public Policy & Bargaining Support for USW. Cynthia has also worked closely with pension experts and the faculty associations and Steelworkers locals at U of T, Guelph, and Queen’s. At U of T, Cynthia led a highly successful UPP education campaign for faculty and librarians, resulting in a 93.8% “Yes” vote, in February 2019, in favour of the UPP. Once it is up and running, the UPP will be the first significant jointly sponsored pension plan in Ontario that has been created through the voluntary agreement of employees and employers. This new pension plan will represent an important achievement for UTFA, the Steelworkers, other employee groups, and the University. The current U of T pension plan serves over 10,000 members.

Cynthia has held several leadership roles at UTFA. She began her service at UTFA as a representative of the contract faculty. Cynthia went on to chair the Status of Women Committee, the Teaching Stream Committee, and the Appointments Committee. Cynthia organized the first UTFA-sponsored university-wide conference on teaching in 2006. Before running for UTFA President, she served as Vice-President, Grievances, for over six years, during which time she represented UTFA members from all three streams. As VP Grievances, Cynthia supervised many files in the grievance mediation process, at the Grievance Review Panel, and at the University Tenure Appeal Committee. In various capacities, Cynthia has worked successfully with UTFA’s in-house counsel, external counsel, mediators, and arbitrators.

Cynthia was chief negotiator in the years-long SJAC teaching stream discussions with the U of T Administration, which resulted in landmark policy changes in 2014-15. These advancements included securing the place of discipline-based scholarship in teaching stream appointments policy; achieving professorial titles for teaching stream faculty; and creating the rank of full professor, teaching stream
and its accompanying policy.

Cynthia has used her deep knowledge of U of T’s policies, guidelines, and practices as a team member in several rounds of salaries/benefits/pensions/workload bargaining. In the current round, Cynthia has tabled for bargaining a revision of the University’s merit pay (PTR) instructions. Cynthia is currently leading a side-table negotiation on the policy that covers part-time appointments, where improvements in security, academic freedom, and rank are top priorities. Cynthia holds the rank of Associate Professor, Teaching Stream, at Innis College, where she teaches in the Writing and Rhetoric Program, which she spearheaded in 2003 and for which she served as director until 2016.

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