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Bargaining Report #2: Bargaining Continues – Preparation for Mediation Begins

February 17, 2015

Background

In the winter of 2014, UTFA surveyed its membership on concerns for the next round of salary, benefits, pensions and workload bargaining under the terms of Article 6 of the Memorandum of Agreement. The survey's high response rate helped us determine the proposals that featured in the bargaining platform presented to UTFA Council in March 2014.

The University of Toronto's outstanding reputation as a research and teaching institution has been factored into the compensation awards made by arbitrators in past rounds of bargaining. Our colleagues at the U of T and throughout Ontario look to us to set the standard for academic achievement and this for the monetary and non-monetary conditions of our academic employment. The members of the bargaining team take this responsibility very seriously.

Our bargaining team has met with the Administration's team on eight occasions, and while our conversations have been cordial and, on occasion, productive, we continue to be disappointed by the relative lack of progress toward a productive settlement. The Article 6 terms under which we engage in these bilateral negotiations do not, it must be said, provide much incentive for the Administration to commit as fully to the process as UTFA. Nevertheless, we believe that the University as a whole stands to gain from a good faith, joint effort to reach agreement on these important monetary and non-monetary issues in as timely a manner as possible.

The Administration has stressed the climate of "austerity" and has invoked government directives calling for "no net compensation increases" for public sector employees. At the same time, they have indicated a strong interest in cutting the cost of the benefits that our active members would currently be eligible for in retirement. UTFA's bargaining team has questioned the rationale for, and the outcomes associated with, such cuts and has resisted the pressure to submit to a blanket policy of austerity for public sector employees (not least based on very real questions about whether any such policy exists as it is meant to

be applied to our sector).

In particular, we have made a strong case for the following salary, benefit, pension and workload improvements:

1. **ATB (Across-the-Board salary increase)**. As stated in Bargaining Report #1, the ATB for 2014-2015 has not yet been agreed. UTFA seeks a fair and reasonable increase based on CPI and settlements already reached in our sector. Total faculty compensation as a percentage of the University's overall operating expense has fallen dramatically and consistently for many years.

   For example, in 1997-98, faculty salaries and benefits made up 47% of the total operating budget. In 2012-13 this figure had dropped to 27%. Measured in relationship to the number of FTE's (i.e. in relationship to the number of students taught at the University), faculty compensation has remained virtually unchanged (in constant dollar terms) over the same period. If the University of Toronto faces ongoing budget challenges, it is for reasons *other* than that of faculty compensation.
2. **PTR (Progress through the Ranks).** UTFA and the administration have been discussing ways to address the depletion of the pool of funds available for PTR distribution relative to some of our peer institutions and relative to the size of that fund in previous years (the total PTR amount distributed is down from almost 3% of the total salary mass twenty years ago to about 1.7% today).

   UTFA also seeks to address the wide discrepancy between average PTR awards in the teaching and tenure streams. This discrepancy exacerbates a structural inequality that is at odds with the claim, made repeatedly by the administration, that teaching and research are equally vital components of the university's mission.
3. **Pensions**. The Administration is under pressure from the provincial government to move toward a 50-50 cost-sharing model as soon as possible. This would entail further contribution increases for our members. As part of an effort to look for alternatives to such increases, UTFA has agreed to join a committee with the Administration and other labour groups on campus to look into the pros and cons of converting to a JSPP (Jointly Sponsored Pension Plan) model.

   The Administration has also indicated they are interested in re-introducing an SRA (Supplementary Retirement Arrangement) to allow for pension to be accrued on salary in excess of the current legislated cap for registered pension plans.
4. **Pension augmentation**. Our pensions are currently protected from 75% of annual cost of living increases as measured by CPI. For many years prior to 2008, our retired members saw that protection "augmented" in bargaining to provide 100% protection. Augmentation was not awarded in the last round, resulting in a real and compounding loss of value for retirees' incomes. UTFA will continue to argue for full inflation protection for retirees.
5. **Improvements to Librarian salaries**. UTFA believes that compensation for librarians at U of T should be consistent with the library's preeminent national and international status. We are concerned by the extent of the discrepancy between average librarian salaries at U of T and comparable averages elsewhere in Canada. We have proposed an increase in librarian salaries that would bring them closer to "top of market" compensation.
6. **Anomaly adjustment policy**. UTFA has proposed separating retention awards from anomaly adjustments, increasing transparency in the anomaly adjustment process, and establishing a procedure for requesting equity-related anomaly adjustments.
7. **PERA (Professional Expense Reimbursement Allowance)**. We have proposed modest increases to our annual PERA amounts and we have provided compelling rationales for the

practice, common to many of our members, of storing up PERA amounts over a number of years in order to supplement funding shortfalls or to pay for expensive research trips or equipment.

8. **Revisions to the workload policy**. We have produced a comprehensive set of improvements to the workload policy language based on what we have learned from our members' experience over the past three years.

   The workload policy was introduced in order to help members to balance teaching, research and service responsibilities and to encourage transparency and collegiality in the distribution of responsibilities within units. These revisions have been designed with a view to encourage more consistent and effective implementation of the policy's original goals. UTFA also seeks to introduce a new provision of the workload policy, specifically designed to link our members' workload to undergraduate enrollment figures.
9. **Salary during research and study leaves.** In the last round of bargaining, UTFA secured an improvement in the level of compensation during the first research and study leave after being awarded tenure (up from 82.5% to 90% of regular salary). In this round, we are seeking a similar increase for subsequent research and study leaves. Some members report that they have declined the full twelve-month leave opportunity for financial reasons. We believe that the University could only benefit from having its faculty take full advantage of the leave time available to them. Moreover, our proposal is in keeping with sectoral comparators.
10. **Benefit improvements.** We are seeking some benefit improvements, based on norms in our sector and on what we believe to be fair and reasonable benefits for our members. In particular, we are working on the following areas:
    a. a paid leave policy for compassionate care;
    b. an increase in the maximum age of eligibility for the childcare benefit (currently six) and an increase in the overall pool of funds available;
    c. improvements to the major restorative dental benefit;
    d. increased coverage for physiotherapy treatment;
    e. addition of acupuncture, osteopathy, occupational therapy and dieticians' services to the list of eligible complementary health services, and a modest increase to the overall cap for these benefits;
    f. enhanced tuition relief for members pursuing post-graduate degrees;
    g. reimbursement for faculty on the east and west campuses who incur transportation expenses in order to attend meetings on the St. George campus;
    h. free athletic centre membership for all faculty and librarians;
    i. improvements to the vision care benefit;
    j. an increase in the tuition scholarship to 100% for dependents ;
    k. provision for both members in a two-member household to qualify for childcare and tuition benefits; and
    l. an increase to the per course stipend rate

While we plan to continue discussing these issues with the Administration, we have also agreed on dates in the spring to sit down with a mutually agreed-upon mediator, Mr. Kevin Burkett, in an effort to reach a mutually agreeable settlement. The slow pace of this process can be disheartening, and we certainly understand any frustration our members may be feeling. While PTR amounts agreed to in the last round of bargaining have already been applied to your 2014-15 salary, any ATB increases secured in this round of bargaining will have to be applied retroactively to July of 2014. Although the bargaining team is eager to reach agreement on a new contract, we also recognize the complexity of some of the issues and the value of taking the time to represent our members' concerns in face-to-face discussions with the

Administration. Thank you for your patience as we try to secure the fairest deal possible for our members.

Please feel free to contact the bargaining team at any time with comments or questions. We can be reached at bargaining@utfa.org.

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Chair, UTFA Bargaining Committee

Members of the Negotiating Team:

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Paul Hamel – Professor, Department of Laboratory Medicine & Pathobilogy; UTFA Executive Member

Linda Kohn – Professor, UTM Biology; UTFA Vice-President, University and External Affairs

Cynthia Messenger – Senior Lecturer, Director of the Writing and Rhetoric Program, Innis College; UTFA Vice-President Grievances

George Milbrandt – Retired Professor, Faculty of Education

Scott Prudham – Professor, Department of Geography and School of the Environment; UTFA President

Katharine Rankin – Professor, Department of Geography; UTFA Council member

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