



UTFA Bargaining Report

University of Toronto Faculty Association March 11, 2009

Bargaining Report #2 for 2009–2010

UTFA TO PROPOSE NEW LANGUAGE FOR WORKLOAD MANAGEMENT IN NEGOTIATIONS

In Bargaining Report #1 (January 13, 2009)¹, we discussed the importance of good-faith, face-to-face negotiations with the administration. In the recent Bargaining Survey, UTFA members in all three streams told us how much they agreed that this is indeed important. We are pleased to report that the administration has been agreeable to our request for meaningful discussions, and that a number of face-to-face meetings are scheduled – extending into April – for us to conduct our negotiations.

In this newsletter, we provide information regarding one of our highest priorities for the current round of negotiations, and one of the issues that make face-to-face discussions critical: workload.

We believe that collective bargaining provides the most appropriate and effective opportunity for UTFA to address workload issues with the administration. Indeed, workload is routinely addressed at many other universities through collective bargaining. Yet, for too long, our negotiations have been characterized by a very restrictive view of issues relevant to salary, benefits and pensions. As a result, the negotiating team strongly believes that it is critical for us to engage in direct, meaningful, and productive face-to-face discussions with the administration over workload and other critical issues at the bargaining table.

FACULTY AND LIBRARIAN WORKLOADS AND THE “QUANTITY/QUALITY” PROBLEM AT THE UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

Workload was perhaps the greatest source of concern among UTFA members responding to the 2006 Speaking Up survey conducted by the Office of Human Resources and Equity. Many respondents to that survey felt pressure to sacrifice the quality of their work to deal with the sheer quantity of it. These findings were echoed in UTFA’s own workload survey of November 2008: 40 percent of the 650 faculty respondents reported working *in excess of 60 hours in a typical week* during the academic term.

It also comes as no news that the University of Toronto is experiencing acute symptoms of the chronic underfunding of post-secondary education in Ontario. Surveys of undergraduates suggest that the “student experience” here is not always what it should be. One major reason is that enrolments have increased much faster than tenure stream, teaching stream, and librarian complements, particularly at the east and west campuses. Also, in more recent years, large jumps in graduate enrolments have been

¹ UTFA website at <http://utfa.org/images/file/Bargaining%20Report-1%20%202009-01-13a.pdf>

spurred by the promise of additional provincial funding. The result is more students, yet proportionally fewer faculty and librarians to support student needs.

We live these issues every day. We know the increased demands placed on faculty and librarians at the University of Toronto affect quality in teaching (graduate and undergraduate), in research, and in university “life” more generally. These are conjoined issues. Quite simply, *our working conditions are the same conditions as those in which our students learn*. Escalating enrolments, eroding levels of administrative staff support, and the resulting proliferation of teaching and administrative duties affect the ability of many colleagues to undertake research and professional development, and to achieve an acceptable balance between their work and their lives off campus (the “work/life balance” problem).

These signs all point in one direction: excessive workloads for faculty and librarians are undermining the quality and integrity of the University of Toronto, one of the oldest and proudest institutions in Canada, and one that is without peer in the higher education sector, if we take President Naylor at his word.

We must do something to arrest the unreasonable and unchecked escalation of faculty and librarian workloads, and uphold conditions conducive to quality teaching and research. This is why UTFA will be proposing new language to manage workloads in the upcoming salary and benefits negotiations with university administrators.

Why Now?

Much of the systemic and anecdotal research pointing to escalating workload problems has been gathered by UTFA directly. Over the course of the last 18 months, in parallel with the joint Working Group on Workload and Work/Life Balance, UTFA has undertaken significant research and outreach with its members on the workload issue. As noted, we conducted a survey of faculty and librarians in November of 2008. We found that workload is a serious concern for our members, particularly for those in more junior and mid-career stages. Also among our findings:

- More than half of faculty respondents indicated periodic, frequent, or chronic problems managing workload.
- Over 85 percent of faculty respondents reported regularly or always working through lunch or after hours to complete work; for librarians, this number was just under 70 percent.
- Close to 40 percent of faculty respondents were dissatisfied with the degree of control they have over their work; among librarians, this number was closer to 45 percent of respondents.
- As per the points raised above, *almost 80 percent of faculty respondents indicated that workload is affecting the quality of education at the university*.
- Finally, over 70 percent of faculty respondents indicated agreement or strong agreement that UTFA should have the right to help members manage workload (compared with less than 10 percent who disagreed). Among librarians, over 65 percent indicated agreement (compared to 9 percent who disagreed).

UTFA has also conducted workload focus groups with more than 200 faculty and librarians on all three campuses since February of 2008. Among the significant findings:

- Cross-appointed faculty experience workload problems associated with the proliferation of administrative duties in multiple units and with differing and sometimes conflicting research, scholarly, and professional expectations.
- Many members cite a general lack of transparency with regard to information about the workloads of their peers and with regard to workload assignment.
- Among the tenure stream, graduate enrolment growth has in many instances led to dramatic expansion in teaching and supervision, in both primary and secondary supervision. Graduate “seminars” with more than 20 students have become common in some units. Some tenure stream members are reporting serving on more than 20 graduate committees over and above those on which they act as supervisor.
- Librarians report little opportunity for input in workload assignment and workload management. Many librarians are quite isolated and are unable to attend meetings or interact regularly with other librarians.
- Many in the teaching stream are experiencing difficulty finding adequate time to undertake scholarly, research, and pedagogical development activities because of excessive course loads, teaching-related obligations, and administrative duties.
- Colleagues on the east and west campuses, particularly at UTSC, report extraordinarily high levels of stress associated with teaching and administrative duties. Numerous colleagues report being asked to undertake curriculum development and administrative duties *while on leave* as a result of inadequate staffing levels and administrative support.
- Increasing enrolments combined with less than proportional increases in resources devoted to teaching are leading to interlinked qualitative changes in pedagogy, student experience, and faculty workload. Classes that increase, for instance, from 40 to 100 can often not simply be “scaled up”. Resulting changes in curriculum (e.g. elimination of writing assignments or tutorials) undermine the student experience but are also a significant threat to academic freedom in teaching.

Other faculty associations in Canada, experiencing similar challenges, have negotiated workload provisions in their collective agreements which place them far ahead of the University of Toronto. Most of these faculty associations are certified bargaining agents and are therefore able by statute to negotiate “all terms and conditions of employment”. By contrast, at the U of T, we have been encumbered by the administration’s overly restrictive view of the scope of bargaining under the terms of our Memorandum of Agreement, which has to this point impeded us from substantive negotiations over key matters including workload.

On the basis of our research and our outreach, UTFA is taking the initiative on workload.

WORKLOAD TO BE PRIORITY BARGAINING ISSUE

It is clear from talking with our members, and from our research efforts working with CAUT and other faculty associations, that workload is a complex problem made difficult in part by the sheer diversity of work and working conditions that feature on our three campuses and across the various fields of inquiry and teaching. There is no “one size fits all” solution to redressing excessive workloads. We will not be proposing one. Rather, we seek ongoing workload negotiations involving UTFA and the administration. We will advocate an approach that is flexible but enforceable, and that puts power in the hands of our members, working in their various constituencies, to redress excessive workloads, to

safeguard quality in research and teaching, and to improve workload equity in ways that make sense in their specific settings.

In a preliminary meeting in January, we indicated to the administration that workload would be a priority for us in negotiations, and would be an emphasis in face-to-face meetings. We have also developed and shared documents with the administration (through the Joint Working Group on Workload and Work/Life Balance) detailing workload concerns and how they might be addressed for faculty and librarians via new provisions for managing workloads. Specifically, we have developed a preliminary document entitled “*Workload Principles for Faculty and Librarians at the University of Toronto*” which begins to lay out a general approach addressing workload regulation at the University of Toronto for all three of the streams we represent (i.e. tenure, teaching, and librarian). We have also developed a set of specific proposals unique to the teaching and librarian streams.

Our approach in these documents is underpinned by our view that workload for faculty and librarians shall be assigned in a *fair, reasonable, equitable, and timely* manner, to be guided by principles of *transparency, good governance, flexibility, enforceability, and proportionality*.

These principles have been individually defined in our documents and discussed through the working group and will be further refined in our bargaining proposals and through negotiations. We also take the view that workloads of faculty and librarians shall, consistent with the units in which these members are appointed and the particular appointments they hold, include all activities related to teaching, research, and scholarship (including creative/professional activities) along with service to the University.

We have also embraced the creation of what are called “Unit Workload Committees” as one facet of good governance, but also as a key institutional vehicle through which to allow our members, working with their colleagues and peers in their respective units (i.e. in most cases at the departmental level), to develop workload norms appropriate to their working environments. This concept is a common feature of numerous collective agreements negotiated by Canadian faculty associations in order to manage workload in a manner that is meaningful and enforceable, but is also flexible and collegial. Members looking for good examples of this approach may wish to consult the Western, Queen’s and York faculty association agreements.²

² See for example: the current UWOFA agreement at http://www.uwofa.ca/@storage/files/documents/80/ca_06_10.pdf, the “Workload” article beginning on page 206 (and the parallel section in a separate librarian’s agreement); the current YUFA agreement at <http://www.yufa.org/docs/ca/index.html>, Article 18 “Terms and Conditions of Employment”; and the current QUFA agreement at <http://www.qufa.ca/ca/>, Article 37 “Workload”.

GOING FORWARD

Your bargaining team is excited and motivated to make substantial progress. We appreciate that what we are trying to do is both unprecedented and of urgent necessity. Our success depends on much more than just the willingness of the administration to bargain in good faith. It depends first and last on the support of the members of UTFA.

We always welcome input from members on bargaining. Call the UTFA office, or email bargaining@utfa.org.

We look forward to your continuing support in the days ahead.

UTFA's 2009 Bargaining Team (approved by Council on February 12, 2009):

George Luste	Professor of Physics, UTFA President
Jeff Newman	Librarian, Chair, UTFA Librarian Stream
Scott Prudham	Associate Professor, Geography and Centre for Environment, UTFA VP Salaries, Benefits and Pensions
Peter Russell	Emeritus University Professor of Political Science
Peter Sawchuk	Associate Professor OISE, UTFA VP University and External Affairs
Judith Tiechman	Professor, UTSC Department of Social Sciences (Political Science)
Terezia Zoric	Lecturer in Social Diversity in Schooling, OISE, Chair UTFA Teaching Stream

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The University of Toronto Faculty Association
720 Spadina Avenue, Suite 419 Toronto ON M5S 2T9
Phone 416-978-3351 Fax 416-978-7061
Email faculty@utfa.org Website: www.utfa.org