

**2017 VIUFA AGM Report**

**Chair of Contract Negotiations Committee**

I was elected to the position in April 2016 when Gara Pruesse stepped down after many years of service. I am extremely grateful to Gara for her willingness to mentor me in this position. The mentoring began when I assumed the Associate Bargainer position in 2015, and continues to the present. Gara is always willing to provide information on bargaining history and past practice. I am also grateful for the help of Neil McLeod, our Labour Relations Advisor, who ensures that I am engaged in any conversations that affect interpretations of or practices around the Collective Agreement, and who also offers guidance from his extensive experience in labour law.

Collective Agreement Work

My work this year has largely centred around implementing the 2014-2019 Collective Agreement. As with any contract, issues of interpretation arise. I sat on the bargaining committee on the last round of bargaining and this has proven invaluable as I am able to bring my knowledge of those discussions to contract implementation work. While we have tackled some serious issues in contract interpretations, our work with Human Resources and at Labour Management has generally been very good and productive.

Most of the contract interpretation issues have centred around hiring protocols related to the new employment category of Limited Term Contracts. In particular, we are concerned to develop protocol that protects the rights of qualified internal candidates to LTC work.

I have also worked on implementing Letters of Agreement (LOA) from the last round of bargaining. One serious issue that arose was regarding a LOA for increased pay for some positions in our IT unit. After bargaining was complete, the Employer was informed by PSEA that this LOA deviated from the mandate, and in turn, that the Employer could not fulfil the obligations of the letter. We are working with the Employer to achieve pay gains for our members through an alternate mechanism of labour market adjustments.

When I assumed the role of Chair of Contract Negotiations, we did not yet have final copies of three previous collective agreements. Working with Human Resources, I edited and produced final copies of two previous agreements, and we are currently working on our most recent 2014-2019 agreement. I know that both the Administration and the Faculty are anxious to have a working copy of the current Collective Agreement.

Committee Work

I attend monthly Labour Management meetings.

I sit on two ad hoc subcommittees of Labour Management:

(1) *Course Evaluations*: This committee was struck to address issues in the online course evaluation tool, including the low response rate and the inclusion of questions that may be invalid.

(2) *Workload*: The aims of this committee are to explore possibilities for creating more workload equity across Faculties, and explore models and costs for reducing workload for teaching faculty.

I have also been involved in establishing the *Joint Early Intervention Program Committee*, which was bargained in the last round. The aim of this committee is to support employees who are facing health issues that extend beyond short term illness and/or may be more complex.

FPSE Work

I attend FPSE Bargaining Coordination Committee meetings twice a year. This year the committee has primarily discussed issues around implementing our respective Collective Agreements. I also attended a FPSE organized “Secondary Scales” Conference (for VIU, secondary scales essentially apply to temporary instructional work). The conference was called to share information around temporary and discounted work in the sector, and discuss possible bargaining initiatives.

Looking Forward

Within FPSE, discussions have already begun on the next round of bargaining with much speculation as to whether a possible change of government might change the possibilities around bargaining, even regarding the tight grip that PSEA has held on our bargaining processes and mandate.

Looking more locally, we have seen, and will continue to see more changes in Administrators at VIU. Many of the members of the last bargaining team for the Employer have now left the institution. It will be interesting to see who sits at the table in the next round of bargaining.

I have found it quite rewarding to work on implementing and defending the bargaining achievements of the last round. I will be putting my name forward for re-election.

Respectfully submitted, Laura Suski