



## Chair of Contract Negotiations Report 2018

This year has been a busy one. While it is not a bargaining year, the preparatory conversations around bargaining have begun. I have divided my report into the areas of activity for my position.

### 1. Labour Relations Work

I engage in analysis and decision-making on labour relations cases and issues with our Labour Relations Advisor, and our Chief Steward. The cases that I consult on are usually more complex cases and/or are cases which set precedent or practice in relation to the interpretation of the Collective Agreement. These discussions are helpful to my work as Bargainer as I become more aware of how the Contract is applied from day-to-day.

I also field questions from members on interpretations of the Collective Agreement.

### 2. Collective Agreement Editing Work

When I assumed the role of Chair of Contract Negotiations, we did not yet have final copies of three previous collective agreements. We are now caught up and have a final copy of our 2014-2019 agreement.

### 3. Implementing the Collective Agreement

I have 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 worked with the Employer to achieve pay gains for our members through an alternate mechanism of labour market adjustments. Other LOAs include addressing the teaching roles and compensation of VIUFA members in Experiential Education, and the elimination of "discounted hours" in Dental Hygiene.

### 4. Midterm Bargaining

Due to some inconsistencies in application and competing interpretations of the contractual language related to Limited Contract Instructors, largely around the rights of qualified internal candidates to LTC work, both parties decided to return to formal bargaining to address the issues. The positive outcome was two practice letters related to hiring protocol and seniority. We hope that the practice letter on hiring protocol will be finalized soon and shared widely as it offers clear guidance on the contractual obligations to qualified internal candidates in LTC

hirings. The process also represented a willingness on the part of the University to come to the table to address VIUFA's concerns.

#### 5. CUPE Negotiations

VIUFA employs two staff members who are unionized, and their contract expired this year. Kathleen Reed joined me to renegotiate this contract.

#### 6. Labour Management Committee Work

I attend monthly Labour Management meetings.

I sit on two ad-hoc subcommittees of Labour Management:

(1) *Course Evaluations*: This subcommittee was struck to address issues in the online course evaluation tool, including the inclusion of questions that may be invalid, and the fact that the qualitative comments section often invited comments that were too general and/or personalized. It is comprised of three representatives from the University and two VIUFA representatives. We developed a pilot tool for lecture-based courses with an edited preamble and an edited set of questions, and tested the tool in two Faculties. The feedback was that most found the pilot tool improved. Of course, the tool could not address larger problems of course evaluations such as age or gender bias. The subcommittee still needs to look at course evaluation tools for other delivery formats (e.g. seminar or labs). Again, VIUFA members will be asked for their feedback.

Thanks to the diligence of a faculty member who participated voluntarily in the pilot, it was discovered that some Deans may have access to the results of those participating voluntarily in course evaluations (i.e. those faculty members who are post-probation). It should be noted that while some Deans may have had access, this did not mean that they looked at the course evaluations from those who use course evaluations for their own pedagogical purposes. Nonetheless, members of the subcommittee agreed that confidentiality must be highly protected for voluntary participants and measures are now being implemented to ensure confidentiality.

(2) *Workload*: The aim of this subcommittee was to explore possibilities for creating more workload equity across Faculties, and to explore models and costs for reducing workload for teaching faculty. A report was produced, and the work of this subcommittee is now complete.

#### 7. VIUFA Committee Work

I have also been involved in establishing the *Joint Early Intervention 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.

#### 8. FPSE Work

I attend FPSE Bargaining Coordination Committees twice a year. Soon after the election of the NDP government, there was discussion of whether some public sector unions would try and

renegotiate their contracts and “go early” to the bargaining table, but this conversation has since died down.

I also joined other VIUFA Executive members at a bargaining conference in February of 2018. The aim of the conference was for locals to share ideas on bargaining priorities and membership engagement. As many locals have joined a Common and/or Template table in past rounds, there was also discussion of future bargaining collaboration, though such discussions are very, very preliminary given that little is known about the bargaining context of the next round. One area of emphasis in discussions at FPSE has been “secondary scales”. The term essentially refers to any pay scales that are reduced or “secondary” in comparison to the faculty scale. At VIU, the most obvious secondary scale is the one applied to non-regular faculty. Some locals at FPSE see the next round as an opportunity to make significant gains for non-regular faculty.

Thanks to funding provided by FPSE and our members, I was able to attend a one week advanced training session on Collective Bargaining put on by the Canadian Labour Council. I found this session intense but productive.

#### 9. Looking Forward

Our current Collective Agreement expires on March 31, 2019. VIUFA has begun discussions and preparations for the next round of bargaining. Members can expect to engage in a bargaining survey in the early Fall of 2018. A Contract Negotiating Committee will also be struck.

Many of the members of the last bargaining team for the University have now left the institution and we have many new Deans and administrators. It will be interesting to see who sits at the table for the Employer in the next round.

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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.

Thank you to all my fellow members of the Executive, and, particular thanks to the Table Officers and to Neil McLeod, for their support of my work over the past year.

Respectfully Submitted, Laura Suski