



## VIUFA Bargainer

### 2023-24 Report

My biggest focus as Bargainer this year was bargaining our new Collective Agreement. It was a time-consuming and difficult process, but I learned a lot and I'm proud of what we were able to achieve. For details on our achievements in the new CA, refer to [Changes to the Collective Agreement](#). As always, bargaining was a team effort. Thanks go to Gara Pruesse, Bonnie Davidson, Clay Armstrong, Jamie Wood, Neil McLeod, and Laura Buechler for their dedication and their many important contributions to our success.

My activities as Bargainer in 23-24 are described below.

#### Work directly related to bargaining

1. After opening the round of bargaining at the beginning of 2023 (during my last term as Bargainer), we continued **actively bargaining with the Employer** until December 20, when the Tentative Agreement was signed. Between the last VIUFA AGM and the conclusion of bargaining, we met the Employer over 30 times and spent many more hours preparing for those meetings: analyzing data, developing strategies, and crafting proposed contract language.
2. The work of bargaining requires frequent **communication and consultation** with members. During this year of active bargaining, I held an average of two meetings per month with different member groups to understand their interests and priorities on bargaining issues that affect them. Those consultations were vital in shaping our proposals and our responses to the Employer's proposals. Indeed, there were several instances where we heard from member groups that a proposal we were considering would not work for them, so we abandoned the draft proposal and crafted a new one based on their feedback.
3. Throughout bargaining, I took steps to **engage members** in the process. For example, I coordinated bargaining observers— members who attended bargaining sessions to learn about the process. This was the first round of bargaining in which observers were allowed to be at the bargaining table, and members who attended as observers reported that they found the experience interesting and worthwhile. I believe there is value for the Union in fostering a more widespread understanding of the bargaining process among members, and perhaps, as a side effect, more members will become interested in serving on the Bargaining Team.

I also kept the membership apprised of the state of bargaining by publishing bargaining updates from time to time, although, admittedly, the updates were not very regular. If I have a chance to bargain another collective agreement, I would like to provide members with more frequent updates.

4. After signing the Tentative Agreement, in preparation for the **ratification vote**, I worked to share details of the tentative provisions with members. I published comprehensive primers on the Tentative Agreement, held multiple information/Q&A sessions, and answered dozens of questions by email. Member engagement in this information campaign was high, and I am confident that the results of the ratification vote reflect the will of an informed membership.
5. Gara and I continue to bargain with the Employer to further address workload inequity in Science & Tech. These negotiations flow from the new Collective Agreement: the parties made a commitment to bargain a **separate LOA** leveraging a new government investment in a program to address workload problems in that area. (For members familiar with the 2022 Nursing LOA, this is the same idea.) Negotiations began in January and are ongoing.

### **Other work of the Bargainer**

1. I was a member of the Executive Committee and the Table Officers Committee and participated in regular meetings of each. I also participated in the Community Engagement Awards Committee, an ad-hoc subcommittee of the Executive, and liaised with the Job Action Committee (thank you to the members of the JAC!).
2. I represented VIUFA on FPSE's **Bargaining Coordination Committee (BCC)**, a committee of Bargainers from all FPSE unions. This group met monthly during bargaining to share information and strategy among sibling unions, who all share PSEA as the Employer's Bargaining Agent, even though we have 20 different employers. Since all member unions finished bargaining, BCC meetings have returned to their usual twice-annual frequency, but collaboration continues through asynchronous channels.
3. VIUFA's two wonderful employees are members of CUPE Local 1004. Their collective agreement with VIUFA (in which VIUFA is the employer) expired in 2023 and had to be renewed. Along with Gara and Clay, I represented VIUFA in **bargaining a new collective agreement with our employees** and their rep from CUPE. Fortunately, that process went much more quickly than VIUFA's negotiations with *our* employer; we signed a tentative agreement after two days of bargaining, and it was promptly ratified by all

parties.

4. In this year of dramatic cuts, financial exigency and rapid change on campus, the Union has had to operate at heightened capacity on multiple fronts simultaneously. I continue to **support** the other members of the VIUFA Executive and the general operations of the Union as called upon.

This year presented me, as Bargainer, with many challenges and equally many learning opportunities. Despite the high workload and the challenges, it was a privilege to serve the Union in this role and to work with the other fierce and committed members of the Executive and the Bargaining Team. With another round of bargaining just around the corner and LOA negotiations still underway, I would like to continue in the role. I will carry many lessons learned in this round of bargaining forward into the next round.

Jane Wodlinger  
Chair, Contract Negotiating Committee (Chief Bargainer)