

College Faculty united on “Bargaining for Better”

On April 9 - 10, delegates from Ontario's 24 College Academic OPSEU/SEFPO Locals met for a Final Demand-Setting meeting. At that meeting, they approved and ranked 17 demands for the elected CAAT-A bargaining team to negotiate with the College Employer Council this summer.

“These demands represent the clear changes faculty know are necessary to ensure that colleges are the engine that drives our province's economic recovery. Faculty—both full time and contract—are united behind issues of fairness for all faculty and a college education that provides students with a solid foundation. We embrace our responsibility to bargain for a better system and a better future for all,” said JP Hornick, chair of the faculty bargaining team.

The meeting began with introductions from OPSEU President Warren “Smokey” Thomas and First Vice-President/Treasurer Eddy Almeida, who offered OPSEU's full support for the bargaining process and the bargaining team.

OPSEU Senior Campaigns Officer Megan Park also presented at the meeting, on

this round's theme: “Bargaining for Better”. Delegates and observers readily responded to that theme, noting that Bargaining for Better included striving for improvements at the bargaining table for our members, our students and the Province. A number also shared that it reflected the importance of striving to achieve greater equity and social justice through the bargaining process.

“It was clear that the delegates and observers were focused on ‘Bargaining for Better’ – better for the staff and faculty; better for students; better for everyone”, said bargaining team member Shawn Pentecost. “The overall tone was positive, passionate dialogue.”

By the end of the meeting, delegates had approved demands that encompassed many of the 338 demands that came out of the 24 Local Demand-Setting meetings. The final demands that the Bargaining Team have now been tasked with negotiating include strengthening the Collective Agreement's language around the work performed by and working conditions of partial load faculty, recognition of changes to the workload of all faculty –

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including counsellors and librarians, creating greater balance and equity in staffing at the Colleges, and establishing meaningful roles for faculty in academic decision making.

“This meeting is what the Employer had tried to prevent”, said Jonathan Singer, vice-chair of the bargaining team. “Our refusal of the Employer’s premature offer meant that the members of our Union get to decide our bargaining priorities, in response to the needs of faculty and students”.

Much of the meeting’s dialogue reflected a careful effort on the part of the attendees to balance ‘global’ demands (like workload or benefits) that would benefit all faculty (full time and partial load, professors, instructors, counsellors, and librarians), with demands that recognize the need for improvements in the Collective Agreement for specific faculty groups, including contract faculty, counsellors, librarians, and coordinators.

The final approved demands addressed particular workload and staffing needs of counsellors and librarians in the current online environment, as well as our students’ urgent need for those workers at each College.

Additionally, partial load Bargaining Advisory Committee member Julie Stewart (L110) highlighted the attention that was given to partial load issues: “Partial load members were given time and consideration on the floor, and supported by many full time delegates. Partial load issues are also definitely in many, many of the demands

Fighting for Transparency at the Bargaining Table

Notably, the most popular idea of the two-day meeting wasn’t any bargaining demand, but rather a motion to permit the bargaining team to invite Local Presidents and Bargaining Advisory Committee members from each Local to observe the actual process of bargaining with the Employer at the bargaining table.

This was the only motion of the meeting to pass unanimously, with every Local delegate in attendance voting in favour of it.

“I’m incredibly excited by the delegates’ enthusiasm for a more open bargaining table”, said JP Hornick. “This motion passed by the delegates means greater transparency around the bargaining process, and holds the CEC accountable for what they say at the table. This will absolutely help to build member engagement, capacity, and solidarity.”

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that were passed, and the Bargaining Team has made it clear that these are a priority.”

This emphasis tied in with the broader concern for equity and social justice that was reflected both by speakers and bargaining team members. “Equity and social justice is the lens through which we view all of these demands, and each of these demands is a crucial element of our bargaining ecosystem”, said J.P. Hornick.

“The need to address the inequities in

the working conditions of partial load faculty was clearly apparent,” said bargaining team member Rebecca Ward. “The need to address the working conditions faced by racialized faculty was also evidenced, as well as the need to ensure the unique issues of inequity in smaller northern colleges also rose to the top. It was a passionate and robust process that included challenges to privilege and power. The determination and commitment of our membership cannot be overstated. We are stronger because of it.”

Better for partial load faculty

Much of the discussion throughout the meeting concerned ensuring that the needs of partial load faculty were reflected in the demands and in the bargaining team’s understanding of those demands.

To that end, 16 of the 17 final approved demands directly apply to improving conditions for partial load faculty. Taken as a whole, they give the bargaining team a mandate to address the systemic abuse of partial load faculty by negotiating improvements to partial load workload, job security, benefits, seniority language, and transparency around hiring.

On a more systemwide level, global demands around intellectual property aim to benefit partial load job security by strengthening the language around their ownership of materials they produce in the course of employment.

Similarly, the approved demands would seek to resolve issues affecting individual contract faculty, with greater protection to the faculty member. Demands around equity reflect the degree to which equity-seeking groups are disproportionately represented among contract faculty, and the degree to which the pursuit of equity in the college system requires the equitable treatment of contract faculty.

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Stages of Bargaining

November 20 - 21, 2020

- Pre-Bargaining conference; election of Bargaining Team

January, 2021

- Provincewide bargaining survey of membership (with 4,471 responses)

February 3 - March 12, 2021

- Local demand-setting meetings at all 24 CAAT-A Locals

February 16, 2021

- College Employer Council sends OPSEU a preemptive extension offer with zero improvements to core issues

April 9 - 10, 2021

- Final demand-setting meeting with delegates from all 24 CAAT-A Locals

May - June, 2021

- Bargaining team drafts changes to the Collective Agreement based on approved demands

July 2, 2021

- Earliest date that either party can give notice of intent to bargain

July - August, 2021

- Likely period for continued bargaining

September 30, 2021

- Expiry of current Collective Agreement

October, 2021

- Earliest period at which a strike or lockout could be called

Better for counsellors and librarians

The unique needs of counsellors and librarians were highlighted in January's provincewide survey and reiterated in the Local demand setting meetings. As a consequence of this input from the membership and their delegates, demands have been designed to encompass the needs of these members.

Of the 17 demands that were passed at the final demand setting meeting, 13 apply to the personal and professional needs of counsellors, librarians, and the students that they serve.

The demands that were passed permit the bargaining team to address these needs at the bargaining table, and to negotiate for improvements in accurately measuring actual workload, in decision-making authority over their work, and access to a dispute resolution system for workload disputes.

To ensure that students have access to the vital work performed by counsellors and librarians, delegates also passed a demand for the bargaining team to negotiate minimum complements of these categories at each college.

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A Broad Overview of the Approved Demands

Bargaining for better working conditions for all

- Ensuring that all faculty workload is accurately measured, recorded and compensated
- Ensuring that faculty workload measurements reflected current changes in our profession, including student needs and delivery modes
- Improving wages and benefits, including dental implants and medical cannabis
- Strengthening language around the role and workload of coordinators
- Strengthening faculty ability to choose to engage in work opportunities outside the college, which supports research, currency, and industry expertise

Bargaining for a better College system

- Creating shared governance structures to ensure a meaningful role for faculty in academic decision-making
- Establishing faculty ownership of all educational materials produced in the course of employment; recognize faculty ownership of all educational performances in the course of employment
- Strengthening decision-making authority over course materials and modes of evaluation
- Ensure that all academic work is performed by faculty who are employees of that College
- Ensuring a responsible balance between full time and non-full time faculty at each college
- Strengthening language to prevent bullying/harassment/racism and to provide oversight and accountability
- Improving efficiency, fairness, equitability, and cultural sensitivity of dispute resolution processes
- Strengthening language to ensure equity, diversity, and inclusion of equity-seeking groups in hiring, retention, advancement, workload, and compensation

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Bargaining for partial load faculty

- Ensuring that all work performed by partial load faculty is appropriately and equitably recognized, recorded, and compensated – including work done outside the contract period
- Improving partial load staffing and job security

Bargaining for counsellors

- Establish minimum complements of full time counsellors at each College

Bargaining for librarians

- Establish minimum complements of full time librarians at each College

In solidarity,

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Jonathan Singer, Vice-chair, L560
Michelle Arbour, L125
Kathleen Flynn, L354
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