

UPEI Community Bulletin #14: UPEI FA members are striking for these proposals

The UPEI Faculty Association (UPEI FA) has proposed a significant number of extensive revisions to the Collective Agreement; as a result, the majority of outstanding issues are changes proposed by the UPEI FA. Further, there are many proposals still on the table that the University considers neither fair nor reasonable. (View the Outstanding Issues as of March 10, 2023.)

The FA has repeatedly requested a breakdown of these costing estimates over the last year...with no response. Are these numbers based on fact?

Together, these remaining issues have financial impacts with an estimated capital and operating cost of more than \$350 million over the three-year contract period proposed by the UPEI FA. The University believes that many also have significant structural impacts that are unworkable and represent far-reaching and, in some cases, unprecedented changes among Canadian universities.

Yes! Let's innovate to solve problems in our unique context!

Some of the remaining UPEI FA proposals include:

* Conversion of all sessional positions to 0.2 full-time equivalent (FTE) term contracts, with a pro-rated salary and requirement to provide one day/week for the entire year to teaching, research, and service. The proposal cost is estimated at \$19.7 million over three years. The University believes that this proposal will have a negative impact on many sessional instructors who work in local government, business, industry, and other UPEI employment groups, and on the programs that rely on the expertise of these individuals.

In order to address the concerns of the UPEI FA, the University has proposed many improvements for sessional instructors as well as a Memorandum of Understanding to explore continuing teaching appointments (to which the UPEI FA has not responded).

* Automatic conversion of all term faculty (including those formerly in sessional positions) to tenure track after teaching the equivalent of three years. The cost of this proposal is estimated to be an additional \$4.7 million and will limit the ability of faculties to prioritize hiring of tenure-track positions in the areas of greatest need.

* The establishment of minimum faculty/student ratios in each academic unit. A committee of five faculty members (or librarians) and the Dean (or University Librarian) chaired by a faculty member would review complement annually to decide the ratios, which the University must then implement and maintain. Initial ratios embedded in the proposal would lead to a minimum 50 per cent increase of faculty numbers. The UPEI FA also proposes that faculty members and librarians are "the only people" to determine how to prioritize full-time versus part-time positions.

The cost of this proposal is estimated at \$66 million over three years plus an estimated \$122 million needed to construct and operate new buildings to house these new faculty members. The University notes that UPEI has one of the lowest student/faculty ratios in the country according to Maclean's University Rankings, and that the numbers of full-time faculty have increased 16 per cent since 2016 (the life of the current extended collective agreement).

The FA is willing to consider other proposals, but so far the Board of Governors Team has not proposed anything that would make a real difference to our exploited members...

An MOU to "explore" is not the same as action...we are happy to talk, but in the meantime, our members need meaningful change NOW.

In other words, it's ok to keep some people precarious if it's good for other people?

Yes, this was the initial proposal - and they have refused to even discuss what a manageable number could look like...

Not true! The FA has proposed that term members who have been through a formal hiring process have the opportunity to convert to tenure-track. UPEI has agreed to similar proposals from CUPE 1870.

Full-time faculty numbers are FLAT over the last decade, but enrolments are up 30%. The life of the agreement is irrelevant.

Yes! Counting your work as part of your workload is a major principle of our proposals.

* Change in workload for full-time faculty to include more releases from teaching duties for student supervision, and additional releases for serving as co-op directors, holding research grants, and to include these releases automatically in the teaching workload calculation. Current language already provides a mechanism for tracking and redeeming these teaching releases, which have been prioritized in the new UPEI Strategic Research Plan (2023–2028). The proposal would result in faculty members who supervise large research groups never having to teach undergraduate courses. This would be a tremendous loss to our students who benefit from learning from world-class researchers.

World-class researchers need time in which to do their research!

UPEI's proposed MOU has the status quo as their "interim measures". Once meaningful measures have been agreed-to, we will withdraw the original proposal.

* Change in workload for Atlantic Veterinary College faculty who do clinical teaching and service to 15 contact hours. Consistent with other veterinary colleges, when many AVC faculty are hired, they are given clear expectations that specify higher percentage of clinical teaching and service and lower percentage of research.

The University has recognized that there are workload issues at AVC and has proposed an MOU for a task force with a limited timeline to address these issues, and with interim measures, to be implemented upon signing.

This is still the initial proposal, because UPEI has flatly refused to even discuss defining CNI workloads.

We have signaled our willingness to move on these numbers, if we see movement on other major priorities.

* Change in workload for Clinical Nursing Instructors (CNIs) to 15 contact hours. CNIs (now predominantly full-time employed) are paid on an hourly basis for the clinical teaching, with allocation of time for preparation and service. There is no research expectation of CNIs.

* A three-year salary proposal which includes: 6%, 6%, and a cost-of-living adjustment of at least an increase of 2% in the third year. This is much more than any settlements in the region and is estimated to cost \$15.87 million over three years.

How on earth could expanded childcare cost so much?? The whole federal childcare transfer to PEI is only \$4 million....

* A fitness spending account and also free membership to both UPEI Chi-Wan Young Sports Centre and Bell Aliant Centre aquatics facility (the latter not owned by UPEI). Total estimated cost including membership fees and the increased cost of operation and maintenance would be \$2.45 million over three years.

We have made it clear that we would drop these in exchange for mental health benefits.

* On-campus childcare with priority for UPEI FA members at an estimated cost of \$10.6 million for the construction and operation of a new daycare building.

* Mandatory humidity and temperature ranges, which are more stringent than those required by health and safety standards, in all UPEI FA member offices and any other workspaces with specifications that would require an overhaul of heating, ventilation, and air conditioning systems in nearly every campus building at an estimated cost of \$42.1 million.

Provincial legislation has no upper limit on temperatures, but we believe that room temperatures at 30C are not conducive to education or research.

* Removal of the requirement for Student Opinion of Teaching Surveys (SOTS) to be included in faculty tenure and promotion files. The University has remained steadfast in our support of a mandatory student voice in the evaluation of professors for both tenure and promotion.

The FA has proposed making these discretionary due to their well-documented bias. Read more about our position on SOTS.

The FA has proposed that Selection Committees make recommendations on rank and step in hiring, rather than this being decided unilaterally by the VPAR.

* Superior scholarly endeavors would partially offset the standard of evidence required for teaching performance for promotion to Associate Professor, in other words, requiring less than "evidence of continued success in university teaching."

* Selection Committees having a role in determining confidential employment information for new faculty members.

* Addition of named benefits, including mental health care, in the Collective Agreement. The University has advised that mental health care can be made available through the Joint Benefits Management Committee provided under the Collective Agreement and has provided written direction on how this could be accomplished.

What the Employer is offering via this committee is unacceptable, and this proposal will stay on the table until an acceptable solution is agreed upon.

In addition, the Faculty Association has not agreed to the following University proposals which aim to create a more equitable and inclusive workplace, including:

The University's proposal includes no actionable language - if it isn't "taken into account" there is no recourse. The FA has proposed actionable language that the University has rejected.

* UPEI FA disagreeing with the University's proposal that Indigenous knowledge and ways of knowing shall be taken into account when considering candidates for appointment and tenure/permanency and promotion.

* UPEI FA disagreeing with the University's proposed Memorandum of Understanding to consider the use of Equity Champions in appointment, tenure/permanency and promotion processes.

The FA has not disagreed...only pointed out that this program would require significant resources above what UPEI currently supports.

The issues noted above are a sample of what is unresolved. The majority of these outstanding proposals have not been modified since the UPEI FA tabled them in April 2022.

These and other outstanding proposals represent far-reaching changes, and the number of items remaining in dispute will make it very difficult to achieve a fair and reasonable agreement that is in the best interests of our students.

Especially since they are refusing to come to the table at all!