

## UMFA Picket Cluster Captain Duties 2020

Code red restrictions imposed in Manitoba due to the rapid spread of COVID-19 render conventional picketing impossible. We will thus adopt online picketing strategies, as outlined in the *UMFA Strike Duties* document. This means that you will not be leading members in physical picketing, avoiding the physical dangers of coordinating pickets on public roadways, and/or mitigating conflict between picketers and motorists, but your leadership role as online Picket Cluster Captains is no less critical in promoting the effective communication of UMFA's message, bolstering morale, and building solidarity among members in the process of advancing our bargaining position.

### *Twice daily meetings with Picket Clusters*

Your role as a Picket Cluster Captain involves serving as a facilitator for the one-hour/day Zoom-based picket cluster meetings which each member is **required** to participate in on a daily basis to receive their strike benefit. It is anticipated that approximately 800 UMFA members will participate in job action, which means that each of the 26 Picket Cluster Captains will be required to host two 1-hour online Picket Cluster Meetings daily, with 14-20 members participating in each of those two daily meetings.

Picket Cluster Captains will be provided with lists of members assigned to their two picket clusters. These clusters have been created by the Job Action Committee based on member's operating system preference, social media preference, and preferred time to meet each weekday between 1000 and 2200 hrs. To the extent possible, each cluster includes a breadth of perspectives that will promote collegiality in much the same way as the connections fostered on physical picket lines.

Picket Cluster Captains will be responsible for inviting members to their daily Zoom meetings at their designated meeting times each weekday. It is recommended that in scheduling each meeting for a given picket cluster, you:

- use the recurring meeting setting within Zoom, so a new link does not have to be shared for each meeting;
- do not require a password;
- allow members to join without the host granting entry. That way, members are not left lingering in the waiting room waiting for the host to admit them;
- do not record these online meetings to maintain members privacy;
- mention to members that if they miss their originally scheduled cluster meeting, they can join the other daily you offer, though we will leave the decision as to whether to provide such flexibility to your discretion.

Initial picket cluster meetings will take place on the first day of the strike (Monday, November 16). If possible, Captains should send Zoom invitations to their groups at least 24 hours ahead of time with the first invitation to be sent on Sunday, November 15.

*Meeting agenda: Inaugural*

In the inaugural meeting of each of your two Picket Clusters, ask members to introduce themselves, and as they're doing this, record attendance on your cluster roster spreadsheet (provided by the Job Action Committee).

1. You may want to begin by introducing yourself, providing your name, a description of your position with the UofM (academic position, department, faculty), primary research area, teaching and/or support function, number of years served, and involvement with UMFA. It would be useful at the outset, just after introducing yourself as the Picket Cluster Captain, to explain that you are charged with ensuring a harassment-free environment and will be obliged to mute any participant, who, in your judgment, expresses inappropriate, discriminatory or harassing views. Try not to be too heavy-handed in explaining this role.
2. Following the round of introductions, ask members to describe the services they normally provide in the context of their employment that they have withdrawn in the present strike.
3. This should then lead into a facilitated discussion of how members feel about the current strike, which may involve the expression of member perceptions and feelings toward administration, UMFA, the provincial government, and who knows what else.
4. From that discussion, the next topic to raise is what activities members are engaged in during their "online pickets". Reinforce each and every member for their efforts, and yet try to lead the discussion in such a way to promote the adoption of particularly effective strategies.
5. Do let members express themselves, but be careful to maintain civility, keeping the tone respectful and free of any element of harassment, inappropriate language, or topics that may make members feel uncomfortable. As host of each Picket Cluster meeting, you are within your rights to mute any member whom you feel has crossed the line, but please use this power judiciously, and apologize to all, if and when you do find yourself having to mute a member, as we don't want Captains censoring members in a way that would impinge upon their right to free speech.

*Meeting agenda: Subsequent meetings*

Captains will be e-mailed a list of priority issues/messages (developed by the Communications Subcommittee) that members will be encouraged to promote in the course of their day's picketing activities, along with suggested venues in which to communicate them the night before their Picket Cluster meetings. This will be among the primary foci of subsequent Picket Cluster meetings.

1. the Picket Cluster Captain will commence each meeting by encouraging members to share their successes, and yes, failures, in their previous day's online picketing activities, and any related topics arising from that.
2. Discuss the next day's priorities and how to communicate those effectively.
3. Toward the end of each meeting, encourage members to share their frustrations, anxieties, and strategies they're employing to keep their spirits high throughout the course of the strike.
4. Picket Cluster Captains may, of course, allow screen sharing to show news stories or demonstrations of support for UMFA, and at their discretion, could even use breakout rooms to have small groups work on distinct problems or tasks.

5. Finally, within meetings, do try to keep the tone positive, as negativity is more contagious than COVID-19 itself. If we work together, we will be able to achieve our goal of obtaining a fair deal in our salary reopener!

*Additional Picket Captain duties*

Your role as a Picket Cluster Captain does not end with hosting two Picket Cluster meetings each weekday.

1. You also need to send a copy of your picket roster spreadsheets to Jim Hare as the Chair of the Job Action Committee (via email to [mbgopherman@gmail.com](mailto:mbgopherman@gmail.com)) each Friday evening by 11:00 PM, so that strike pay can be arranged for participating UMFA members.
2. You will be required to attend "All Captains" meetings for 1 hour on Monday, Wednesday and Friday nights. (that's 13 hours of active meetings each week if we add the 3 hours to the 10 hours of meetings with members in your cluster, in exchange for \$1400/week tax free in Strike Benefits). Invitations to these Zoom-based meetings will be sent to you at least 24 hours in advance of each meeting. These meetings will provide an opportunity to offer feedback to the Job Action Committee on what's working and what isn't, what member concerns are being expressed, which messages are resonating well and which aren't, and allow us to keep a collective "finger on the pulse" of the membership over the course of the strike. Material garnered in these meetings will be communicated by the Job Action Committee to the Communications Subcommittee, Executive, and Bargaining Team as appropriate, and people from those bodies may participate in some All Captains meetings. Further, these meetings will provide a forum for Picket Cluster Captains to share ideas, promoting the development and adoption of the most effective COVID-modified picketing strategies, and exchange strategies for effectively hosting Picket Cluster Meetings.

We thank you in advance for your service as an UMFA Picket Cluster Captain, and appreciate that the duties you are now being asked to perform are decidedly different from those you originally agreed to perform as a Picket Captain. We hope that you will embrace the challenge of serving in this modified role, and look forward to working with you to achieve our common goal of a fair settlement in the current salary reopener.

Questions can be directed to Jim Hare as Chair of the Job Action Committee (<mailto:mbgopherman@gmail.com>) but for now, expect to hear from us via e-mail to the alternative e-mail address you provided before noon on Sunday November 15th with your Picket Cluster Rosters, a list of initial communication priorities, and an invitation to an initial Sunday evening All Captains meeting hosted by Sherri Vokey, our Job Action Committee Picket Cluster Captains Coordinator.

In solidarity,  
James Hare  
Chair, UMFA Job Action Committee