

Strike Update: November 15

Dear Colleagues:

We will be back at the bargaining table tomorrow. In a scheduled afternoon session, we will be bringing a proposal forward on workload that we think will satisfy the Admin's complaints and still give all members the protection that they deserve. It is based on language that works successfully at another Canadian university. It turns out that many other universities in Canada already have workload language in their collective agreements. In fact, David Robinson, the Executive Director of CAUT, told us that it would be quicker to name the universities who did NOT have such language, than it would be to list the universities that did. It is absolutely crucial that we continue to fight for these basic protections. Job security for Instructors and Librarians also remains a top priority, as does satisfactory language on performance metrics. Tomorrow, we will be sending to you our proposals on all three of these key issues.

Away from the table, thanks to all of you, our strike remains strong. We have been building solidarity and pressure in a variety of ways. I hope you have had the chance to view the extraordinary video featuring several Indigenous faculty members talking about how the Admin's project to indigenize the university has repeated a pattern seen across UM, in which Administrative costs trump faculty and student needs. We were able to post the video last night, and it's already been viewed over 8000 times. You can find it on the UMFA YouTube channel, on our Facebook page, or by following our twitter account.

Today I was able to walk the line—although all-too-briefly—in solidarity with our colleagues and students at the Inner City Social Work Program on Selkirk Avenue. My thanks to all those who welcomed me there and shared their views on bargaining, the UM, and the strike. This kind is an amazing program—one that relies on the kind of community engagement that doesn't appear in performance metrics.

On a more troubling note, Members in several faculties have received messages from their Deans concerning the administration's request that we bring their stale offer to our Members for a vote. Apparently unhappy with the results of decisions made by UMFA's leadership and confirmed unanimously by the elected board reps, the Administration appears now to be sending out its Deans to lobby faculty on this issue. These are not personal messages from your Dean. They appear to be based on a template sent to Deans by central administration. We have seen several versions, some of which are slightly modified. One Dean invited his faculty members to cross UMFA picket lines and attend a meeting he organized on campus to "learn more about the current situation." You should feel no pressure to accept these invitations: your boots on the picket line and your support at strike HQ are invaluable. I have been really moved by UMFA Members' powerful commitment to our bargaining issues, and their willingness to work so hard in support of them. The bargaining team is back at the table, but you are driving negotiations.

Finally, in mid-afternoon we received the thrilling news that the Graduate Students' Association executive had passed a motion formally endorsing our positions on workload, job security, and performance indicators. This is particularly uplifting because the GSA had originally had an officially neutral position. The fact that both UMSU and the GSA support us shows the close connections that we know exist between UMFA members and students, and that students understand how tightly entwined our bargaining priorities are with the integrity of the UM.

In Solidarity,

Mark Hudson
UMFA President.