

UMFA - Bargaining Update #6 - Reaffirming our Priorities

Dear Colleagues,

At our Special Membership Meeting last March, a lecture theatre full of UMFA members endorsed a set of bargaining priorities. These priorities come from the ground up, having been developed through a survey, communications with Board Reps, constituency meetings, and the Special General Membership meeting. Here are some of the major items you asked us to fight for at the table:

- Closing the salary gap between UM and its comparators in the “U15” group of universities;
- Preventing the administration’s use of performance indicators to evaluate our work;
- Increasing the collegial power of UMFA Members, relative to the power of the administration, in developing or changing new policies affecting our work;
- Forbidding any further increase in teaching loads unilaterally imposed by deans/directors;
- Making the administration exercise its management rights fairly, reasonably, and equitably.

How is the administration Doing?

Last week, the administration put forward a comprehensive package of proposals in response to UMFA’s own proposals. What progress does it offer on your priorities?

Salary – Closing the Gap?

The administration is offering a 4 year deal, contingent on our acceptance of their full set of proposals—including governance issues. Their salary proposal contains scale increases of 1%, 2%, 2%, and 2%, plus a \$1500 market adjustment ONLY for those below both the senior level (Full Prof, Senior Instructor, Librarian) and the salary threshold. This means fewer than 1/3 of Members would receive the market adjustment.

UMFA members’ salaries are at the bottom of the U15. A USask Assistant Prof makes about \$10,000 more than their counterpart at UM. The administration’s salary offer will not improve this situation. At the end of the four-year deal, we will in all likelihood remain at the bottom of the chart.

No movement on Performance Indicators

The sole limit that the administration has agreed to place on metrics is that they won’t be used as the **exclusive** basis of evaluation for promotion, tenure, or performance assessment. In other words, they have proposed enshrining the legitimacy of performance indicators as a basis of evaluation in the CA, while providing almost no limitations on their use or misuse. The administration’s proposal would mean that assessments of the quality of our scholarship for tenure or promotion could be based almost entirely on a set of reductive, quantitative measures (citation counts, h-indexes, the impact factors of the journals in which we publish, etc...).

Diminished collegial governance:

In the UM's proposal, deans/directors would be given MORE power to unilaterally impose changes to tenure, promotion, or performance evaluation criteria. The power of faculty over such issues, under the administration's proposal, would be purely advisory, and deans/directors would be able to hand-pick advisory committees.

No Guarantee not to Increase Teaching Workloads

As a compromise position from our initial proposal to freeze teaching loads at their March 31, 2016 levels, UMFA proposed a "dual veto" system, in which deans/directors would be responsible for putting together teaching guidelines that would then have to be approved by a vote of UMFA Members in the faculty. If the guidelines weren't acceptable, deans/directors would have to revise them. Until they were accepted, loads would remain as they are.

In response, administration proposes leaving teaching loads entirely at the discretion of deans/directors, stipulating only that they must tell faculty members what their "general approach" to the assignment of teaching is, and that they consider members' preferences prior to assigning loads.

No agreement on Fair and Reasonable management

In response to UMFA's proposal that the administration act fairly, reasonably, and equitably in the exercise of its management rights, the administration responds: "Although the University endeavours to exercise its management rights in a fair and reasonable way, this is currently something within management's discretion." They prefer to keep it that way.

There are several more issues being discussed at the table, and in some cases we see progress. But on these very significant issues, there is a considerable gulf between UMFA Members' expressed priorities and what the administration has offered. **We will be bargaining again on Monday**, and hope to see new proposals that respond to our priorities. We will update you again after that meeting.

We would also like the opportunity to talk in more detail, hear your thoughts, and answer questions you might have about bargaining. UMFA Board Reps are organizing constituency meetings to make this happen. **If you haven't heard from your Rep on this, and you'd like a meeting to take place, please ask them about setting one up.** A list of Reps [can be found here](#). If you don't have a Rep, email FAUM@UMFA.ca, or call the office at 474-8272 to arrange a meeting.

If your Rep has already organized a meeting, please make every effort to attend.

Yours,

Mark Hudson
President, UMFA