

UMFA STRIKE VOTE 2021 INFORMATION FOR STUDENTS

Everyone's talking about my professors, instructors, librarians discussing a strike. Is this true? How likely is a strike?

UMFA is committed to reaching a fair deal with administration at the bargaining table. We intend to give negotiations every possible chance to succeed in order to avoid a strike.

The strike vote is taking place October 16-18. A 'yes' vote doesn't necessarily mean that there will be a strike. Professors, instructors, and librarians will *only go on strike if negotiations fail*. We hope that a "yes" vote will motivate the administration to reach a fair settlement before the strike deadline.

In its 50 years, UMFA has only gone on strike three times (1995, 2001, and 2016). More commonly, negotiations occur up to the last minute of a strike deadline. It's nerve-wracking, but it's often how bargaining plays out. Faculty will *only go on strike if negotiations fail*.

What are the issues?

The current round of bargaining involves many issues including equity, diversity and inclusion, childcare, intellectual property, and more. The most important issue is salary. UMFA salaries have been frozen since 2016, as part of an austerity agenda embodied in the still-unproclaimed Public Services Sustainability Act (PSSA), which was used to freeze salaries in the public sector. While the legislation was used to justify freezes for UMFA members, other public-sector workers, like Nurses and Hydro workers, were able to achieve settlements that were greater than those outlined in the PSSA. Even though the PSSA was declared constitutional in October 2021, the Manitoba Court of Appeal upheld the lower court's finding that the government acted unlawfully in its interventions in bargaining at the University in 2016. However, the university has yet to compensate UMFA members for wage increases that were unlawfully removed from the bargaining table. President Michael Benarroch has indicated that our salaries have fallen behind by 8% compared to inflation alone, yet he also admitted that the government has once again instructed him to offer salary increases that mimic the PSSA. The government should not be involved in our bargaining!

Why are you thinking of striking during the COVID-19 pandemic?

No one wants a strike. Last year alone, the UofM posted a **\$94 Million surplus**, while your tuition went up, and our salaries remained frozen. We think the university can make student education a higher budgetary priority - and that includes ensuring that we can recruit and retain UMFA faculty members. We want to ensure students remain a priority at the U of M and get the best education possible.

How can you say it's about the students when you're just fighting for higher pay?

Of the 15 research intensive universities in Canada, U of M ranks at the bottom in terms of salaries. That means it is increasingly difficult to hire new faculty because job candidates are accepting offers that offer better pay elsewhere. New and established faculty are leaving the U of M for jobs in other provinces because the pay is better.

What this means for students is that finishing your degree could take longer if departments don't have enough faculty to offer requisite courses every year. It could mean your advisors have less time for you, or fewer research opportunities, if there are fewer faculty in their department. We want to ensure the U of M remains a university you are proud to attend, and that offers you a world-class education.

Why is the strike vote in the middle of term? Are we going to lose this term if there's a strike?

Our Bargaining Team has been meeting with Administration twice a week since the start of term, and will continue to offer to meet, in the hopes of settling an Agreement at the bargaining table. We don't have an Agreement yet because the university insists they can't afford to offer us a reasonable pay raise.

What will a strike mean to me? What can I expect?

If a strike is called, UMFA members will not be teaching, supervising, or doing any committee work while the strike lasts. They won't be grading papers or submitting grades. They won't be answering emails from students or using UMLearn. There will be pickets that are carefully organized to adhere to safety and public health measures.

How can I show my support for UMFA?

We appreciate all messages of support we are receiving from students and staff. You can share your message of support by emailing UMFA at faum@umfa.ca. You can find us on Facebook and Twitter and can help share our messages there. Other opportunities to show support will be shared on these social media channels.

You can call (204-474-9345) or email the University of Manitoba's President, Dr. Michael Benarroch at president@umanitoba.ca and ask that he take every possible step to prevent the strike by negotiating a fair agreement.

You can ask your program's Student Association to pass a motion expressing support for UMFA, and have them send it to us and President Benarroch. You can also join the newly formed 'Students Supporting UMFA' on Instagram, or email standwithumfa@gmail.com. You can speak to your UMSU or UMGSA representatives and ask them to pass a motion in support of our demands. The more voices the administration hears, the more likely they are to listen!