

UMFA early career researchers call on the University of Manitoba to present a fair offer addressing recruitment and retention

Members write open letter to President Michael Benarroch, Premier Heather Stefanson

November, 24, 2021

Winnipeg- Early-career professors, instructors, and librarians at the University of Manitoba have written an open letter calling on U of M President Michael Benarroch and Premier Heather Stefanson to solve the problem of recruitment and retention at the province's largest university. These UMFA members have, in many instances, recently relocated to Manitoba and are already receiving job offers with better salaries from out-of-province universities. The letter, signed by over eighty members of the University of Manitoba Faculty Association (UMFA), calls on the administration to present a fair deal to their union and end the current strike.

"These researchers have only recently joined the U of M and are already being drawn away by better offers from out-of-province universities. This demonstrates how dire the recruitment and retention problem is at the University of Manitoba," said Orvie Dingwall, UMFA President. "These recruitment and retention problems are the result of interference by the provincial government which have caused U of M faculty salaries to be the least competitive of Canada's top 15 research institutions."

The signatories of the letter include a diverse group of UMFA members across multiple disciplines and faculties. They include researchers, instructors, and librarians, in addition to professors. These members have attracted millions of research dollars to the university and the province.

"I chose to come back to Manitoba because I saw a wonderful opportunity to develop my research program in human fungal pathogens here," said Aleeza Gerstein, an assistant professor in Microbiology and Statistics. "As a third-generation Manitoban I am deeply invested in this province, but I'm worried that we are at a tipping point where researchers won't be able to afford to stay here, or come here, and we will lose many of these members who stand to contribute so much to our province."

These early-career researchers and educators emphasize that they believe the University of Manitoba can become one of Canada's premier research institutions, supporting economic and social development in the province. The largest barrier to achieving this, are the budget cuts and government mandates which have made it difficult to fill vacant positions, as faculty members leave the University of Manitoba to pursue their work elsewhere.

"We want President Benarroch to invest in U of M faculty so we can continue to provide students the education they deserve," said Dingwall. "We are on strike to address recruitment and retention issues, which will ensure continued research and education that benefits all Manitobans."

UMFA represents over 1,200 professors, instructors and librarians at the University of Manitoba.