

Two visions for a system in crisis

Which college system do you want?

In early August, after college management refused to deal with any of the core issues raised by faculty, our bargaining team called for a strike vote in September. That vote has been scheduled for September 14, and will give faculty the opportunity to vote “YES” and send a clear message to management that we are committed to building the better college system that students deserve, and that Ontario needs.

Over the past two months of negotiations, it has become clear that faculty and management have two very different visions for Ontario colleges. While faculty are committed to building a better college system, management has shown their lack of concern for the growing issues facing public colleges.

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Management displayed their true colours when they tabled a so-called “settlement offer” in early August that would have locked us into the same contract terms that are failing us right now.

It's worse than we thought

Before starting negotiations, we were concerned by data that showed that 70 per cent of the teaching done in the system was done by contract faculty. However, new data obtained by the team during negotiations this week shows that the situation is even worse than we had thought.

Currently, more than 80 per cent of the teaching at Ontario colleges is being done by precarious contract faculty who are given little or no time to prepare for courses and have no job security beyond the end of the semester. This rapid growth shows a clear attempt by the colleges to move further in the direction of balancing their budgets on the backs of under-paid precarious workers. And yet in the face of this appalling move, management continues to claim the system is fine.

What's even more shocking, the lowest-paid category of workers is nearly 80 per cent female. Is this the kind of example that the colleges responsible for preparing students for the workplace should be setting?

In this offer, they wanted to:

- Continue with the Article 2 moratorium that has cost us full-time positions at colleges across the province, while allowing the continued growth of precarious, under-paid contract positions.
- Continue to increase the number of precarious, under-paid contract faculty who are given little or no prep time, are paid a fraction of full-time wages, and have no idea whether their positions will be there in a matter of months.
- Continue to deny faculty a say in how academic decisions are made, and deny us the academic freedom needed to protect the academic integrity of our programs.
- Continue to withhold intellectual property rights, so they can keep selling our courses and programs to private colleges and corporate publishers for short-term gains.
- Continue with wage losses in real terms by offering wage increases that don't keep pace with the cost of living.

On top of this, their offer would have introduced a "revenue neutral" clause. This was designed to make faculty, not the colleges, fund the employer's legal obligation to provide equal pay for equal work to contract faculty under the new Bill 148, the Fair Workplaces, Better Jobs Act.

This would mean that if the legislation required an increase in pay for partial-load faculty, any additional costs would have to be offset by cuts elsewhere. For example, if the colleges tried to do this by eliminating full-time positions, this could mean over 1,400 full-time faculty losing their jobs, in direct conflict with the intent of the legislation.

In short, their offer would not only fail to fix the major problems identified by faculty; it would make these problems far worse.

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Our team consulted with local presidents and the Bargaining Advisory Committee (BAC) and heard clearly that this offer wasn't acceptable, and that the team needed to continue to put forward our better plan to improve Ontario colleges.

We returned to the table this week and gave management a counter offer which includes concrete plans to strengthen the college system and ensure that it continues to provide the education that Ontario students need.

Our plan would:

- Address fairness by providing equal pay for equal work for all faculty, improving job security for partial-load faculty, and building a path to full-time jobs through an increased number of full-time positions.
- Improve decision-making through collegial governance and academic freedom, ensuring that academic decisions are made by faculty with the expertise to make them.
- Provide stronger workload protections for all faculty, whether full-time or contract.
- Ensure that faculty have intellectual property rights over materials and courses they create.
- Ensure a reasonable workload for librarians and counsellors, so they can support student success.

Negotiations Bulletin

Brought to you by the CAAT-A
Bargaining Team



- Make sure faculty have the time and resources to properly support students in online and hybrid/blended courses.

Despite the potential our offer had to improve the college system, management dismissed all of the points we raised and came back with an offer identical to the one we had just rejected, except that they backed off of their attempts to introduce the “revenue neutral” clause around Bill 148. Despite this, they have proposed no method to address the fact that, using their own figures, the colleges have been underpaying partial-load faculty by \$123 million each year.

As well, they have told us clearly that they believe the system is fine as is, and they have no interest in discussing important issues like workload or equity. They even refused to discuss our cost-neutral items, like academic freedom and collegial governance, updating the class definition of a counsellor to reflect their current role requirements, or ensuring all members are covered by the workload protections in Article 11.

On September 14, we have a clear choice: our better plan for improving the college system for both students and faculty, or their plan to slash our collective agreement and eliminate the language that is needed to protect the quality of education at Ontario colleges.

By voting yes, you will be telling management that their plan for a weaker college system isn't good enough, and that it's time to get serious about building the better college system we all need.

On September 14, vote yes. Together, we can make this better plan a reality.

In solidarity,

JP Hornick

Chair, College faculty bargaining team

Your union has your back

Your division faces an important fight this round to protect the quality of education at colleges, and improve the treatment of contract faculty.

Our entire province relies on the strength of the college system, because colleges are key to the continued economic and social growth of the province. That means we're all counting on faculty to provide college students with the education they need to succeed in tomorrow's economy.

While your team is continuing to bargain for a negotiated settlement, I want you to know that they are facing that challenge with the strength of the entire union at their back.

Your team knows that, if needed, they have access to a strike fund of more than \$72 million. That means your team can stand strong and fight for the deal you deserve, knowing that, if it comes to that point, that strike fund is there to support you.

My commitment to you is that when your team sits at the table, they aren't alone. There are more than 130,000 members of OPSEU across Ontario. And the management bargaining team knows that if they want to pick a fight with the 12,000 members of the College Academic division, they had better be ready to deal with all 130,000 of us.

In solidarity,

Warren (Smokey) Thomas

President, Ontario Public Service
Employees Union

Proposing changes to address faculty workload pressures

Most of the proposals in our plan described in this issue have been laid out in detail in previous bulletins, but there was some new language on workload that was included this week for the first time.

During the first week of negotiations we proposed language to address the workload of librarians and counsellors by creating a workload formula for these groups. This week, we tabled additional proposals to address faculty workload and eliminate volunteerism by ensuring that all work during teaching periods is captured on the SWF. These proposals will also update the workload formula to more accurately reflect the work being done by faculty given the changing teaching environment.

To address workload and volunteerism, we are proposing changes to ensure consistency across colleges in how faculty work is recorded when it comes to non-traditional work, such as attendance at promotional events, participation in committees, or mentorship of other faculty. We are seeking to make improvements to support the ability of faculty to make contributions that will benefit their college, while preventing overwork and burnout of engaged faculty.

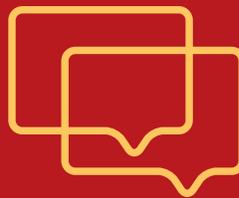
When it comes to updating the workload formula to reflect the impact of the changing teaching environment, we are proposing changes to recognize the different preparation requirements for online and hybrid/blended courses, the increased time required to assist students by email, and the additional time needed to properly support the increasing number of students requiring accommodations. These changes will provide faculty with the ability to both strengthen access to learning and support the success of our increasingly diverse student population.

To contact your CAAT-A bargaining team, please write to: bargaining2017@gmail.com

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Warren (Smokey) Thomas, President
Ontario Public Service Employees Union

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JP Hornick, Chair, College Faculty Bargaining Team*