



Communicator

Acadia University Faculty Association Newsletter

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AUFa

**Contingent Labour
Childcare
15th Collective Agreement**

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The AUFA President Communicates

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As Fair Employment Week comes to a close, I would like to take this opportunity to speak about the issue of precarious labour in higher education and what it means for us here at Acadia.

Last month, the Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT) released a report on the current experiences of contract academic staff in Canada. *Out of the Shadows: Experiences of Contract Academic Staff* paints a pretty bleak picture “of highly qualified and committed academics who are underpaid, overworked, and under-resourced, and who feel excluded in the Canadian post-secondary institutions where they try to provide an excellent education to students under dismal working conditions.”¹

AUFA has worked hard over the years to improve things for our contract academic staff (CAS), but much of the experience of CAS around the country is as true at Acadia as elsewhere. The majority of contract academic staff want to have secure, permanent employment and are negatively affected by job insecurity. Part-time work is particularly precarious and part-time faculty do not have the full benefit of professional development and research opportunities, involvement in shared governance and the social life of the university, and their contributions to the university are rarely fully recognized or remunerated.

The proportion of contract academics has been increasing steadily in Canada year over year. The number of contract staff has nearly doubled since 1999, while the number of tenure-track or continuing faculty has increased by only 14%. Today, nearly 1/3 of all teaching faculty in the country are contract academics.² The situation in the United States is much worse. Contract staff in the U.S. now account for 73% of all teaching faculty.³ Looking at the situation south of the border, we can be proud of how faculty associations across this country have successfully kept this move towards precarious employment at bay, but we are still moving in that direction little-by-little, year-by-year. If we do not continue to fight this every time we negotiate, we could find ourselves in a similar situation very quickly.



¹ [Out of the Shadows: Experiences of Contract Academic Staff](#)

² [By the Numbers: Contract Academic Staff in Canada](#)

³ [Data Snapshot: Contingent Faculty in US Higher Ed](#)

“In Canada, from 1972-2016, spending on academic salaries increased 166%. During that same period, spending on administration increased 228% and spending on infrastructure increased by 366%.”

This push by university administrations to reduce the number of tenure-track faculty in favour of contract academic staff is made under the guise of austerity and the stated need for greater flexibility. While it is certainly true that most provincial governments have been underfunding post-secondary education for years, much of the money that has been saved by hiring contract staff has been spent instead on facilities and administration. In Canada, from 1972-2016, spending on academic salaries increased 166%. During that same period, spending on administration increased 228% and spending on infrastructure increased by 366%

The real advantages to administration are greater managerial control over faculty, and greater control of the governance of the university as a whole with the reduction in shared governance and loss of academic freedom. Even with strong language in the collective agreement, there can be no true academic freedom without secure employment. This can have a real chilling effect on institutional teaching, learning, and research when 30% or more of classes are being taught by faculty with no security.

There are further negative effects on students and faculty as well. It is very difficult for part-time faculty, who are often forced to work multiple jobs to make ends meet, to give the same amount of time to students outside of the classroom. Getting recommendations for jobs or advanced degrees is increasingly difficult for students as an increasingly large number of the faculty they might turn to may not be there from year to year. As faculty, we are all feeling the pinch of fewer and fewer people to serve on committees, advise students, and set curriculum. Added to that is the increased amount of time necessary to sit on hiring committees for all of the contract academic staff. All of this serves to devalue the profession as a whole and the inequitable pay structure has a negative effect on salary and working conditions for everyone.

- Anthony Pash, President, AUFA

Precarious Employment at Acadia

Cynthia Bruce, School of Education

Current trends in academic hiring have created an increasingly dismal job market for new PhD graduates in Canada and beyond. The reality for many of us is that we cobble together a job that looks—in workload only—like full-time employment. We seek out and accept numerous per-course contracts, often in multiple institutions, so we can support ourselves financially and begin to build an academic profile that will be competitive in this difficult landscape. Unpaid service to the institution becomes our new “normal” because it is situated by administrators as a way of supporting a sense of belonging; and we know that rejecting those offers to participate in the life of an academic unit might be read as disinterest or lack of collegial engagement and support.

This untenable set of circumstances is compounded by the need to begin and sustain a research program. Doing so is an absolute necessity if we want to be seriously considered for an academic post in our disciplines. Unfortunately, we have limited access to research funds to support meaningful inquiry and to disseminate findings beyond the campus community.

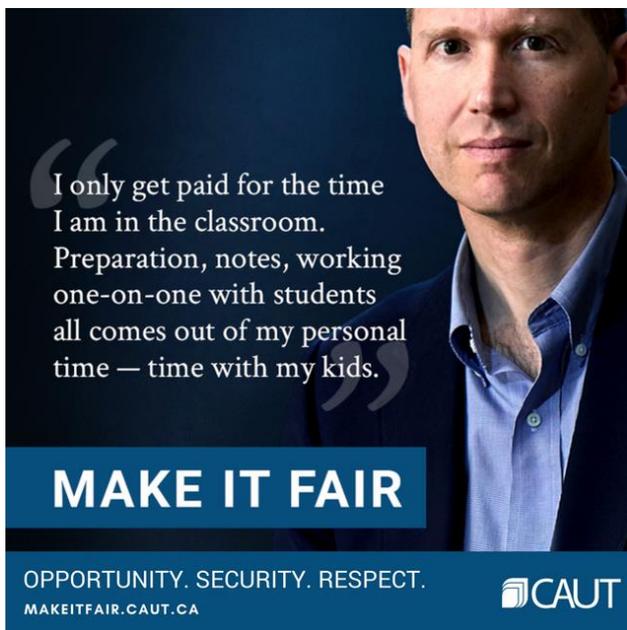
Acadia has, to its credit, made gains for contract faculty. One recent initiative, the creation of a teaching affiliate category, has meant that part-time instructors will no longer have to live in a state of network disconnectedness between contracts. Finally, they will have year-round email and library access along with institutional affiliation that can support research funding application requirements. The new obligation for academic units to include part-time faculty on websites will provide long over-due visibility, and the possibility of converting to full-time instructor generates a sense of hope in the face of university hiring freezes and administrative attempts to reduce or eliminate full-time faculty complement.

Precarious income, unpredictable course assignments, unpaid service, and a real struggle to engage in scholarly activity is an exceedingly difficult reality. Yet for me, these circumstances have never constituted the greatest source of frustration with respect to my place in my academic unit and in the university more broadly. I can state unequivocally that it is not service to the university that generates a sense of belonging. I pursued doctoral study because I care deeply about my activist discipline and about how it can contribute to equity and diversity on campus. I work every day to support inclusive public education through my research and teaching in disability studies, but part-time status has often diminished my capacity to contribute to strong programming in my department. Overreliance on contingent faculty can generate significant fragmenting in disciplines that should really be attending to program coherence. Within this fragmented

environment, our part-time perspectives on program philosophy risk being under-valued or silenced because we do not hold full-time or tenure stream appointments and are therefore not eligible to engage in those important conversations.

I am, of course, completely supportive of initiatives that aim to make part-time faculty feel a sense of belonging. However, the best way to accomplish this is to ensure full-time academic employment is available and advertised. My colleagues in the School of Education have always been welcoming and supportive, but their collegiality cannot replace the meaning we derive from stable employment with a well-compensated and reasonable workload. Part-time faculty care deeply about quality in higher education, but we need access to full-time jobs that will allow us to contribute to the kind of program integrity we are all committed to delivering.

“Precarious income, unpredictable course assignments, unpaid service, and a real struggle to engage in scholarly activity is an exceedingly difficult reality.”



“I only get paid for the time I am in the classroom. Preparation, notes, working one-on-one with students all comes out of my personal time — time with my kids.”

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A Perspective on Precarity

Trevor Avery, Department of Biology

Precarious employment is a problem for those within its grasp. It increases the semester-to-semester workload, diminishes the available contact time and oversight necessary for student mentorship, and reduces time available for conducting research and building a competitive CV in one's research area which is necessary to secure a tenure-track position.

My first 4 years at Acadia were spent as an Assistant Professor in 9-month CLTs. The first year was rather hectic with preparations for new courses and labs. I covered at least one new course each semester, usually more. The next years only improved because the workload and path were known. Several courses were in areas related to my expertise, yet none were directly in my specialization. Some of my courses were much more removed and required much more preparatory work.

Following this stint, I was hired as an Instructor with more lab-related duties and this led to full-time employment in this stream after my 6th year. Instructor was the only available position that would allow me to remain at Acadia. Having a full-time job was great and I appreciated the work that many did to secure it. However, it wasn't without some repercussions. The Tri-Council granting system does not accommodate Instructors well. So, my academic standing immediately was changed and put my research aspirations in jeopardy. This position change was at the discretion of the administration, or a combination of that and through interpretations and changing policies in collective bargaining agreements. This scenario may be familiar to others in precarious positions.

Over the course of those first five years, the main obstacles I faced were 3 months each year without income, and, of course, uncertainty. It was with great difficulty that I managed to conduct research, supervise students, and produce research that was useful to increase my competitiveness and build my CV. The advice I received (and it was good advice) was to "better my case" for "the next Professorial position." But therein lies the rub. If I only did "my job" then "improvement" was next to impossible. Others likely share this hurdle. Doubly, the heavy workload borne by precariously employed faculty buoys a department's position thereby diminishing its possibility of securing tenure-track positions because the work is getting done. The measure of a successful department should not be just about meeting workload.

Nonetheless, there is incredible support within departments for those in precarious positions wanting to improve their academic standing. However, the academic system has no meaningful mechanism to retain them, i.e. a retention path to tenure-track positions, despite the recognition of the excellent work done by those in precarious positions. The need for departmental workload to be completed has to be a priority, but the added benefits of faculty obligated to Acadia (e.g. student mentorship, research possibilities, expertise teaching, institutional service, etc.) should not be traded for this goal. Precarious employees are, from an administrative standpoint, a fixed factor (e.g. economically, for course delivery), but they are not a fix to the overarching needs of any institution. An institution that reaps the rewards of its tenured faculty mentoring, supporting and improving those in precarious positions is not visionary. Let's build the path.

Childcare on Campus

Anthony Pash

Children are society's most important resource and are the joint responsibility of both men and women. Since women still take much of the responsibility for daily supervision of children, a comprehensive day care centre is necessary for working mothers. This is especially important to single parent families, of which there are many associated with the University. The Committee maintains that institutions as well as families should share in providing for the well-being of children. Although the Student's Union has been generous in supporting the Wolfville Children's Centre, the University has refused to assume any responsibility for this essential service.

From the "Report on the Status of Women at Acadia University"
The Committee on the Status of Women, Acadia University, February 1978

It has been more than forty years since the publication of the first "Report on the Status of Women at Acadia University" and I am deeply saddened to say that nothing has changed. The powers-that-be still refuse to take any responsibility for the provision or support of quality, affordable childcare for students, faculty, and staff at Acadia University.

In the intervening years, the need for on-campus childcare has only increased, as has evidence of the value of such a service. Numerous studies show that on-campus childcare centres have a positive impact on the recruitment and retention of students, faculty, and staff. Such centres also improve productivity, job satisfaction, quality of life, institutional loyalty, equity, academic success, and work-life balance. Childcare on campus helps everyone, but it is also clearly an equity issue. Despite an increase in the role of men in child-rearing over the past 40 years, women still spend nearly twice the time in this role as men and are more likely to be raising a child alone. While childcare is not solely a women's issue, women continue to bear a heavier burden than men. As a result, lack of on-campus childcare can have a direct negative effect on the careers of female academics. Tenure-track fathers are nearly 40% more likely to achieve tenure than tenure-track mothers, leading many women to leave academia altogether or find themselves jumping from one contingent position to another. Affordable, high-quality, on-site childcare is the most effective means of helping working mothers succeed in their careers.⁴

The positive effects of access to campus childcare are equally powerful for students. Student parents account for 11-16% of post-secondary students in Canada today, and many of these are women raising children alone.⁵ In the United States, that number is closer to 25%.⁶ These student parents are much more likely to be women (particularly women of colour) and are twice as likely as their peers to be living in poverty. Student parents are

⁴ [The Critical Importance of Childcare on all UW Campuses](#)

⁵ [A Profile of Undergraduate Student Parents in Canada](#)

⁶ [4.8 Million College Students are Raising Children](#)

“Childcare on campus helps everyone, but it is also clearly an equity issue. Despite an increase in the role of men in child-rearing over the past 40 years, women still spend nearly twice the time in this role as men and are more likely to be raising a child alone. While childcare is not solely a women’s issue, women continue to bear a heavier burden than men.”

also more likely to be first-generation university students. Far too many of these students drop out before graduating due to financial strain and difficulty maintaining school-life-work balance. Affordable, quality, on-site childcare is the single greatest service an institution can provide to ensure the success of these students. This has been shown to be a major factor in the retention of Indigenous students in Canada.

Despite the University’s ostensible interest in the recruitment and retention of quality students, faculty, and staff, and despite Acadia’s stated commitment to equity, diversity, inclusion, and indigenization, the Board has consistently fought all attempts to support childcare on campus. Minimal support was offered to the Acadia Child Development Centre, which started operating on campus in 1985, but was forced through the actions of the Acadia administration to close its doors in the fall of 1994, leaving Acadia parents with no on-site childcare. Since that time, AUFA has been fighting for childcare through the collective bargaining process with no success.

This year, I am reaching out to students, faculty, staff, and community members who feel that it is time for Acadia to stop fighting against the creation of this essential service on campus and start looking for a way to make it a reality. We know that it is possible because Acadia is the only institution of higher learning in the province without on-campus childcare. We are one of only three institutions in the nation without childcare. There are many examples we can follow to make this a reality. We just need the will to make it happen.



If you would like to get involved or simply to stay informed about the fight for childcare at Acadia, please email jane.longley@acadiau.ca and we will add you to our communication list.

We also encourage you to attend a [panel discussion](#) on

November 8th, 6:00-8:30 PM in BAC 142.

See “Student Parent Advocacy at Acadia” on [Facebook](#) for more information.

Modest Gains in the 15th Collective Agreement

Erin Patterson, AUFA Chief Negotiator

After two years of hard work by the Executive, the Survey Committee, the Proposals Committee, the Negotiating Team, and the various job action committees (my sincere thanks to you all!), AUFA reached a 15th Collective Agreement with the Board of Governors. The following is a summary of some of the key improvements in our new contract.

We were able to make some very modest restorations to the salary grid and to complement. The mean salary increase is 1.6% per year, distributed across the grid in such a way that our salary structure comes closer to (but does not yet reach) regional averages. We also negotiated two additional steps at the top of the Instructor II rank. The other financial gains are small increases to the Health Spending Account (Article 26.60) and the Travel and Professional Allowance Fund (25.40). Our full complement language is still in abeyance, but by the end of the four-year contract we will have restored 10 of the 30 unfilled tenure-stream professor positions and one of the two unfilled continuing librarian/archivist positions, leaving us with 162 and 9 respectively.

Over the last 18 years, AUFA has paid particular attention to part-time faculty and worked hard to improve conditions for them. Our attention is warranted: part-time faculty now make up about two fifths of our bargaining unit and teach a significant percentage of the courses offered at Acadia, yet they are the most marginalized, vulnerable, and poorly paid of our members. In this collective agreement, we negotiated better leaves for jury/witness duty and new parents (11.16 (b), (c)), a more appropriate number of “deemed hours” for Employment Insurance (11.17 (d)), gym passes (11.17(e)), and a group RRSP in lieu of a pension. We also created a new designation of “Teaching Affiliate” (11.21) which carries rights intended to make part-time faculty less marginalized within their Academic Units and the University. We also disentangled language specifically for part-time faculty (11) from language regarding per-course hiring (58), and we revised the procedures for per-course hiring to make them less onerous for Academic Units while still recognizing expertise and respecting precedence.

With this collective agreement, Acadia takes a significant step towards promoting equity and diversity on campus. New data collection (3.51) and faculty training (3.66(a)) requirements are in place, along with revised hiring procedures intended to promote equity while still preserving confidentiality and emphasizing qualifications above all (10, 43, 50, 58).

Finally, after nearly 10 years of efforts on the part of AUFA and resistance on the part of the administration, we have a collective agreement that includes the Art Gallery Curator with appropriate language (59).

This too-brief summary focuses on gains, but we also had to make some concessions (for example, we lost the pension committee and the child care committee) and we were unable to make all of the improvements that the membership had asked us to get.

Despite the fact that the 15th CA includes more gains than losses, we cannot be complacent. Today’s gains (and yesterday’s too) can be lost tomorrow, and our conversations with colleagues across the country indicate a national trend: administration proposals are becoming more aggressively regressive as employers seek significant rollbacks and concessions. Without enough volunteers willing to take on the work of the Association, our ability to maintain the rights, working conditions, and remuneration we’ve fought for 40-plus years will be seriously weakened.

Dates to Remember

Upcoming AUFA Meetings

Tuesday, November 20, 4:30

Thursday, January 17, 2019, 11:30

Tuesday, February 26, 2019, 4:30

Thursday, March 14, 2019, 11:30

Tuesday, April 16, 2019, 12:00–2:00

Editorial Policy

Connecting the Membership

The AUFA Communicator is a newsletter of the Acadia University Faculty Association (AUFA) and is intended to keep its members and the Acadia community up to date and informed. The AUFA Communicator is published twice during the academic year and serves the following purposes:

- to provide a means for the free exchange of ideas, views, information, and issues relevant to AUFA and the Acadia community;
- to provide feedback and information useful for AUFA to maintain its effective operation in fulfilling the objectives of AUFA and its membership;
- to provide documentary records of matters pertaining to AUFA;
- to serve all the functions of a newsletter

The Communicator Committee, under the direction of the AUFA Executive, takes responsibility for the contents of the AUFA Communicator. Opinions expressed in authored articles are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the opinions of the Communicator Committee. We encourage your contributions (letters, articles, article summaries, and other pertinent information). Anonymous material will not be considered for publication; however, under special circumstances, the AUFA Communicator may agree to withhold the author's name. The Communicator Committee retains the right to edit and/or reject contributed material.

The Communicator Committee is Michael Corbett, Stephen Henderson, Jessica Slights, and Britanie Wentzell.

Special thanks to all our contributors and to the inimitable Jane Longley.