

Regarding Educational Leaves and Collective Bargaining

Sent to DFA via Email Thursday, January 7, 2021

Dear Members of the Bargaining Team,

We would like to send a short comment on recent developments in union negotiations, specifically the Board's indication that they are not prepared to accept the recommendations from the Conciliation Board regarding educational leave for instructors.

Consistent with our letter to the DFA and the former provost (Teri Balser) in January 2020 we would like to reiterate that instructors feel strongly about this issue, and that the university's stance on educational leaves is fundamentally unfair to instructors, given existing provisions for sabbatical leave for members of the professoriate. This is a fundamental equity issue that is also apparent to the Conciliation Board.

Many limited term instructors have transitioned onto continuing term positions after distinguishing themselves with excellent service. This has meant they may go as much as 16+ years without access to an educational leave. After years without access to educational leaves while on limited term contracts, being denied access to educational leaves even after obtaining the rank of Senior Instructor has a compounding effect on members' ability to effectively apply for University Teaching Fellow. More recently, hired Instructors have been brought aboard on probationary track appointment and will have access to education leaves at six years of service. These disparities of opportunity within the instructor rank, between instructor rank and tenure stream appointments, along with years of job insecurity on a limited term has a profoundly demoralizing effect.

In a post-COVID global marketplace where we are now competing with online education around the world, we need true excellence in education if we are to attract and maintain students. With the landscape of education changing so rapidly, we need educational specialists to innovate new and effective methods of teaching. In the same way that sabbaticals enhance the research output of our university, educational leaves will enhance the quality of education at our institution. Given the large course-loads of most instructors, without dedicated time to improve and revise the curriculum, instructors are likely to simply maintain the status quo in the classroom. To truly improve and reimagine what education can be, and how we can situate ourselves as a major innovator in education, this requires dedicated time with reduced teaching loads through regular educational leaves.

In sum, we continue to feel strongly about this issue and will fight for equal rights both for the health and well-being of our instructors and to ensure that Dalhousie maintains its reputation for high quality education.

P.S. We have sent this only to the DFA for the time being, because we do not want to interfere with negotiations. But if you feel that sending a copy of this letter to anyone on the Board would be of benefit, we would be happy to do so. Could probably get more signatories on a longer time frame.

Sincerely,

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