

One Association-One Contract

NEWS FROM THE NUFA PRESIDENT FEBRUARY 2017

In the last round of CASBU bargaining, NUFA and the Administration agreed to begin a discussion about merging the Full-Time Academic Staff (FAS) and the Contract Academic Staff (CAS) bargaining units. The potential benefits of this are many, especially considering the *de facto* reality that FASBU and CASBU currently operate as a singular unit in almost every way. We share common administrative, finance, grievance and collective bargaining structures. The only distinction is that we bargain twice, resulting in two separate contracts. The reasons for the division into separate bargaining units are historical, not practical. In fact, the division of academic staff into separate bargaining units has come to appear artificial given how closely the two bargaining units work together. A merger of the two contracts into one will go a long way towards eliminating that artificial division, and put our Association in a strategic position to protect people and programs from the changes that are coming to our sector in the near future.

All faculty share the same concerns – whether it is about something concrete like working conditions or a more abstract concept like academic freedom – and require the same protections. The best proof of this is that many clauses in both contracts have been harmonized over the last three rounds of bargaining. Collective agreements are living documents – they change and adapt with the times and the interests of Members. Bargaining one collective agreement will streamline that process and allow NUFA to speak with one voice. It will avoid duplication or contradictions between the two contracts, and ultimately give all Members a stronger position at the bargaining table.

NUFA has the opportunity to join progressive Faculty Associations like those at Windsor and the University of Western Ontario who work actively on behalf of Contract Academic Staff Members and who have cultivated a culture of advocacy for good academic work. Faculty Associations are the only voice in the sector advocating respect for academic work as a key to protecting universities as spaces of independent thought, learning, and generation of new knowledge. This work can best be accomplished by including all of our Members.

While there may be a handful of instances in which the interests of Members in the two current bargaining units are at odds, having two collective agreements only fosters the sense of different interests. One bargaining unit would help to ensure that we think and work collectively to make fairer working conditions for all and recognize those points where we need extra attention. Talks to discuss the merger with the Employer are slated to begin in May 2017.

Susan Srigley
NUFA President
