

Labour Relations Report
submitted by Melissa Moroz, Labour Relations Officer
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Annual General Meeting of the Professional Employees Association
University of Victoria Chapter

Member Servicing

The PEA and the University continue to problem solve and settle the majority of issues before they come to grievances or arbitrations. The UVic Chapter of the PEA remains a busy one! Here is a summary of some of the issues that have arisen in the last year.

Layoffs

Approximately 30 members lost their jobs due to budget cuts since the last AGM.

The PEA has limited language with respect to how layoffs occur. Length of service only becomes a factor when layoffs occur within a department for employees at the same salary grade in similar positions doing substantially the same work. The words “seniority” and “bumping” do not appear in the collective agreement. As the labour relations officer, my role is to make sure that the University is following the collective agreement and not violating any laws (e.g., the Human Rights Code).

Two grievances related to improper layoffs were filed and scheduled for arbitration. Both settled with member approval prior to hearing.

All members received severance as per the collective. No members were recalled.

LTD, Return to Work and Accommodation cases

Mental health and injuries as a result of an accident are the most common reasons members are on LTD, in the process of returning to work, or are being accommodated in the workplace. We have many members with active files. My role is to represent the interests of members by working with them, management and the human resources department to ensure legal obligations with respect to duty to accommodate and the Humans Rights Code are fulfilled.

Discipline

There have been cases where PEA members were disciplined up to and including termination of employment.

Terminations during probation

Members who were not deemed suitable by the University during their probationary period were terminated.

Letters of Expectation

The University continues to use letters of expectation to deal with alleged performance issues.

Letters of Agreement re hours of work

We are currently negotiating a letter of agreement for the Aquatics department for on-call and call-out provisions.

Job Evaluation Committee

I co-chair the joint job evaluation committee with the University's recruitment and classification advisor Janice Helmer. We have been meeting regularly to review job evaluation questionnaires submitted by employees and managers. We have evaluated approximately two dozen questionnaires this past year. The larger appeal committee consisting of 6 members (3 from the union, 3 from management) has met about a half dozen times to review appeals of the evaluations determined by the co-chairs. Although this process takes some time and effort for all those involved and the system may not be perfect from everyone's perspective, I believe that it continues to be a fair and gender-neutral way of determining salary grades for the wide range of professional positions of our members at UVic. I strongly encourage you to fill out a questionnaire if your job has substantively changed since its original rating.

Bargaining 2014

The PEA is in preparation mode for bargaining in 2014. A committee of six members will be elected shortly from the membership. A survey will be sent out in the following months to get your input. Do you want more vacation days? Do you want a higher salary? Better benefits?

I predict that this round of bargaining will be especially challenging given the results of the provincial election, government cuts to post-secondary funding and the restructuring of the University. Discussions between the provincial government and other larger unions in the province do not sound good so far. Of note is the alarming trend of reducing coverage for extended health and dental benefits.

I encourage you to think and provide input to your executive and bargaining committees about what you are prepared to do as members. Let me be clear that in addition to facts and arguments at the bargaining table, more will be needed from you in this round if we want to build towards achieving real gains.

Post-Secondary Education Funding

Chronic underfunding to post-secondary education is a significant concern for the PEA. Departments were forced to make budget cuts of 4% for 2013/2014 year. This resulted PEA members, some with over 20 years of service, losing their jobs.

Meanwhile, student tuition fees and debt loads have increased dramatically. Tuition fees have more than doubled over the last dozen years heightening concerns regarding access to education. Research has shown that a prospective student's ability to pay is the greatest barrier to a continued education. The average student is graduating with a debt of \$27,000.

In terms of promoting a strong economy, adequate education funding is needed to ensure that employment demands are addressed. Cuts to post-secondary education do not help with skilled labour shortages. The Province's own BC Labour market outlook shows the province reaching a skills deficit in 2016, which will then worsen. The Presidents of BC's Universities indicated in a January 2013 report that by 2020, 18,8000 job requiring post-secondary education will go unfilled. More university and college graduates are required to offset this looming skills deficit. The PEA will continue to advocate that post-secondary education be a priority for the government. Allocating sufficient resources to education is both financially and socially responsible.

Lastly I wish to thank all of the members who work hard and give up their time in service to the union. It has been a challenging year and your support during these months has been invaluable.

Respectfully submitted,
Melissa Moroz