



BC's Union for Professionals

Labour Relations Report

submitted by Sam Montgomery, Labour Relations Officer (LRO)

November 9, 2022

Annual General Meeting of the Professional Employees Association University of Victoria Chapter

UVic Budget Cuts and PEA Response

This has been a hard year for PEA members at the University of Victoria. Shortly after we ratified a collective agreement that 94% of our members approved, the University announced 4% base budget reductions in January. Since then, many PEA positions have been eliminated, including those done through voluntary resignation and involuntary layoff. We continue to uphold our members' rights under the collective agreement and are actively advocating for increases to post-secondary funding to stave off future cuts.

Campus Solidarity and Political Action

Earlier this year, the UVic unions penned a [joint letter](#) to Premier David Eby and Minister Selena Robinson noting the dangers of declining provincial funding for BC Colleges and Universities, which leads to an increased reliance on international student tuition. We then held a solidarity event during Fair Employment Week to highlight the issues for all workers on campus, including workload intensification and decreased morale. We will continue to work together in our shared goal to make the University a better employer.

Joint Job Evaluation Plan Working Group

We have also been hard at work to modernize our Joint Job Evaluation Plan with the University. Even before bargaining finished, we struck a working group to develop a project plan for accomplishing the goals of our recently negotiated Letter of Agreement. The University has since hired a consultant firm to assess the limitations and constraints of our current plan and they have developed a series of recommendations for us to implement over the next year.

Grievances and Collective Agreement Enforcement

We have a high number of outstanding grievances, the majority of which involve allegations of discrimination and harassment. Several of these cases have taken a long time to investigate, given the sensitive nature of the allegations and the complexity of the fact patterns. I am happy to report that we recently had a very favourable finding to



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an outstanding group grievance investigation and the University has since taken steps to make the workplace safer.

Other grievances have had to be advanced to arbitration to get resolution for our members, though hearings can take a long time to happen and our members can sometimes find them to be re-traumatizing experiences. The PEA secured new contract language in the last round of bargaining to identify alternative dispute resolution procedures that will allow us to resolve conflicts through more trauma-informed and culturally sensitive methods. The recent University conflict fluencies approach is a welcome initiative to help us resolve workplace disputes as informally as possible.

PEA Commitment to Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

Both the PEA and the University have a shared commitment to Equity, Diversity and Inclusion and we're proud of the gains we made during the last round of bargaining to make our collective agreement better. From updating our parental leave benefits and using more gender-inclusive language, to including a land acknowledgement and adding provisions for cultural leave days, we had a lot of common ground with the employer.

That said, there are still noteworthy gaps in the treatment of employees across the bargaining unit, including those of our members in term positions and the undervaluation of certain types of work in our Joint Job Evaluation Plan. We are still seeking to address these issues as a Chapter and have struck various affinity groups to better advocate on behalf of all members.

Preparing for Bargaining 2025

We are now mid-way through the bargaining cycle and turning our minds to negotiating the next collective agreement. We need to recruit more local reps across campus and will be electing members to serve on the bargaining committee at the 2024 AGM. We will also need to conduct a bargaining survey to help us prepare our proposals and campaign around them. If you have questions about ways to get more involved as a PEA member on campus, please don't hesitate to reach out.

It has been a privilege to work with the PEA members at UVic. Thank you for your ongoing support and commitment.

In solidarity,

Sam Montgomery