

February 2021

Conestoga College Faculty

OPSEU Local 237

UNION MATTERS

February 2021

General Membership Meeting: Wednesday, February 24, 5 p.m.

Zoom link will be sent to members on February 24.

2021 Contract Negotiations: Where do we go from here?

In 2017, during the last round of contract negotiations, our union stood strong, together, and made great progress in the areas of academic freedom and seniority rights for contract faculty. That collective agreement expires on September 30, 2021.

The recent move to online delivery--necessitated by the pandemic--has given management an opportunity to push forward their plans to increase the number of fully online asynchronous courses, which can result in increases in class size and loss of faculty control of their materials. Faculty are being directed to record their classes and post them online--but copyright and ownership of the materials and images remains in question. Why hire new faculty when you can just replay an old video that was posted on eConestoga 2 years ago by a faculty who is now retired?

The *General Membership Meeting (GMM)*, to be held Wednesday, February 24, 5-8 p.m. will be an opportunity for your voice to be heard. What is happening in your class? Are you getting the supports you need? Are students learning what they need to learn? Do you have concerns about ownership of your materials and images? Are contract faculty being treated fairly? Management will see 2021 as an opportunity to take back some of the gains we made from the last round of negotiations. We cannot let that happen. Our work environment may have changed, but our commitment to quality education has not.

Make your voice count. Register to attend the meeting (only union members can vote). Participate in the surveys. Talk with your colleagues. Be there. Be aware. And remember--we are stronger together!

Check your email for a registration form and information about access to the Zoom link for the GMM. If you have questions, contact letterbox237@gmail.com .

What's Happening at Conestoga?

Here are some trends the Local has noted since January:

-Faculty are "expected" to record classes as per the College's Jan. 11th Winter 2021 Faculty Update email. Yet, the College has also confirmed that faculty are "not obligated" to do so. Please contact the Local if you have been directed to record classes.

-Classroom Observations are, according to HR, meant for "coaching" purposes. Therefore, if faculty are interested in being Observed by a Teaching and Learning consultant, they could proactively contact their Chair to request an Observation during a time that is mutually convenient for both them and the consultant. If a Chair has scheduled an Observation, PT faculty should request compensation for the work completed for at least the debriefing session. Currently, there is no compensation being paid for this work.

-Curriculum Guidance hours on a SWF are not meant for onboarding new employees or for completing clerical work. Curriculum guidance includes the maintenance and updating of curriculum materials. Please contact our WMG team (Contact Local 237 www.local237.ca.) if you have questions or concerns about these assigned hours.

-Before FT faculty engage in some non-teaching period activities, they should review Article 11.08, p. 23 of the CA. Activities are initiated by the teacher and by the College - not exclusively by the College. And, activities are undertaken by mutual consent. So, if your Chair asks, requires, directs you to convert a remote, synchronous course to asynchronous delivery during a non-teaching period, it is a violation of Article 11.08 if you did not initiate nor want this activity.

Thoughts from a Partial Load Professor *By Maryam Elshafei*

I am a partial load professor – like over 60% of faculty here at Conestoga. I can dwell and moan about the agony of being a precarious worker, but most of you already know the pains of not knowing if you'll be able to pay your bills. And no, I will not share my financial woes since I want to maintain my (and other contract faculty's) fragile façade of dignity.

Instead, let's look at how our students are affected by our unhealthy and unsustainable dependency on contract faculty. In 1999, before contract faculty were as prolific, an American study was done on the impact of adjunct faculty teaching in community colleges. The researchers found that students taught by full-time faculty during their first semester of study were generally more successful than students who were taught by contract faculty (Burgess & Samuels, 1999). I teach mostly first year students, so essentially the paper implied that my students have a lower chance of success because I am on a short-term contract. To add insult to injury, I have since read a number of papers that point out how my employment status negatively affects student success.

In one of our Teaching & Learning workshops, 'Wellness Practices for Teachers & Learners', presenters cited a study by Yoon (2002) that found the stress experienced by teachers affects learners, and vice versa. As a partial-load faculty member, I am always stressed because I am always worried about job security. So, am I unwittingly affecting the mental and emotional states of my students? Now that I know this, I am even more stressed. I went into teaching to empower students, not to break them.

According to Shaker & Shaban (2018), up to 10% of contract faculty have more than one 'gig' to help make ends meet. I am one of those people. That means I can be spread pretty thin at

times. How can we reasonably expect someone who juggles multiple jobs to do any of them with assumed dedication that teaching requires. We are teachers! Teaching requires reflection, reading, preparation, attention, feedback, mentoring, and guiding students.

Some contract faculty try to do it all. We overzealously respond to students, post videos, and answer questions, hold their hands through assessments, and try to please each one. I want to make sure my students appraise my teaching and dedication well in hope that it lands me another contract in the following term. I stay up and answer emails past midnight; prepare materials and resources and hold one-to-one tutorials with each student. This is especially true during the second half of the semester when I desperately look for ways to get my students to pass the course. I am not even sure if I am helping or damaging my students when I do that. Who am I kidding? This kind of overcompensating would burn out the most resilient teacher. Plus, doing more does not put more bread on the table.

What we are creating are students who are hungry for attention, who are unchallenged, and who have seen the impact of instability. This is not a formula for making leaders who will better our society.

I hate being a part of a broken system, but I believe in the power of change. Change starts with an idea, a spark, a call, a conversation, an action, a movement - join me. Together, we can fix this.

Maryam Elshaife is a partial load professor at Conestoga College and a member of the Partial Load-Bargaining Advisory Committee.

Congratulations to our Holiday Raffle Winners:

1. Dan Van Holst - \$100 gift card
2. Brad Kueneman - \$75 gift card
3. Adam Jarosz - \$50 gift card

Local 237 Website update and redesign

Watch for our updated website design, launching in Spring 2021. www.local237.ca

#SWFforPL

The SWF or Standard Workload Formula is a document Full Time faculty use to negotiate their workloads. It is designed to capture all of the work we do as faculty.

Contract Faculty do not have a SWF. Instead, they are paid only for TCH (teaching contact hours).

This allows the Colleges to require Contract Faculty to volunteer their time in necessary activities like:

- preparing for classes (especially before the start of the semester)
- providing effective feedback on assessments
- assisting students outside of class time

Fight for fairness in higher ed

Current Contracts **VS** Teaching with a SWF

Preparation Factors

"My contract doesn't cover any extra preparation work for a new course or to adapt things for online learning, but I'm still expected to do all this unpaid work with no guarantee I'll be asked to teach that course again."



Full time faculty are assigned work according to how much preparation a course will need. For example, they are given more time for preparation when they teach a new course, or a course that has undergone a significant change.

Evaluation Factors

"I know it's best practice to use things like case studies or short-answer questions for evaluation, but since there's no extra pay for marking time, sometimes using less effective methods like multiple choice is my only feasible option."



Full time faculty workloads take evaluation methods into account. For example, there is a different factor used to calculate workloads when the course requires essay evaluation.

Class Sizes

"I get paid the same whether I have 20 students or 200 - how am I suppose to give 200 students meaningful and effective support and feedback on assessments? There just isn't time!"



These evaluation and preparation factors are multiplied by the number of students in the classes of Full Time faculty. This helps to keep class sizes down. **There is no cap on the number of students Contract Faculty can be assigned,** and no incentive for the Colleges to maintain smaller classes.

Complementary Hours

"Because we aren't paid for extra things beyond course delivery, I'm not always able to make as much time as I'd like to support students outside of class time or to participate in departmental/faculty meetings or trainings."



SWFs ensure Full Time faculty are compensated for:

- departmental meetings
- curriculum development
- professional development
- skills acquisition
- time required to meet with students
- administrative tasks like fulfilling accommodations requests

It's time to provide SWFs for all faculty.

Let's make sure the working conditions of PL Faculty are