

## **Changing Workplaces Review**

Kristin Hoffmann

President, University of Western Ontario Faculty Association

July 8, 2015 11:20 – 11:30

Station Park Hotel, London, Ontario

My name is Kristin Hoffmann and I am the President of the University of Western Ontario Faculty Association, also known as UWOFA. I am a librarian at Western.

Our Association has been unionized since 1998, and was in existence for several decades before then. We represent approximately 1645 faculty, librarians, and archivists at Western. We represent tenure-track and tenured professors, as well as contract faculty.

I want to speak to two recommendations this morning. The first is related to part-time, contract workers, and the second is related to bargaining unit structure.

My FIRST recommendation is that the law ensure that part-time, contract workers do not face less favourable treatment compared to their full-time colleagues.

Contract academic staff at Western teach just over 40% of full-course equivalents, and faculty members with limited-term or limited-duties appointments make up 36% of UWOFA's membership.

Between 2009 and 2013, the number of faculty in tenure-track positions dropped by 38%, and the number of contract faculty grew by 24%. This is a significant change.

I want to share some examples of how my contract faculty colleagues at Western have faced less favourable treatment. These stories are also available on our website, [www.uwofa.ca](http://www.uwofa.ca).

My first story is about Sonia. Sonia has a limited-duties appointment, so she teaches one or more courses, like piecework. She has received numerous teaching awards, which one might think would translate into better treatment and job security, but this is not the case. She never knows from one term to the next how many courses she will be teaching, if any, or which courses she will teach. One term she taught six classes and made the most money she ever had at Western, but the workload was too much to take on a second time. Sonia and many of her contract faculty colleagues live with the constant possibility of losing their jobs. And, counter to public perception that contract faculty are often just dabbling in academic life before moving on to something else, many have been teaching at Western for years, even decades.

My second story is about Peter. After 13 years of teaching year to year with no job security, no benefits, and no pension, he was offered a limited-term contract. He finally had a 5-year contract with slightly higher pay, health coverage, and a pension plan. But Peter still does not have a permanent job, and his contract doesn't include time for paid research, unlike positions for tenured faculty.

And the third story is from Mark, who says that he teaches at the University of the 401. He lives in Waterloo and goes on the road most days to teach at U of T or here in London at Western. He is an exuberant and dedicated teacher who has been piecing together contracts from multiple institutions in order to make ends meet for 12 years.

Sonia, Peter, and Mark are equally qualified as their tenure-track colleagues, the quality of their work is equally high, and the university depends on them for their work. Their stories show that contract faculty routinely face unfair and more exploitative working conditions in areas such as job security, pay, benefits, and workload.

In our association, contract faculty and tenured faculty are in the same bargaining unit. In our faculty negotiations last fall, we made contract faculty a priority, and we were able to negotiate several significant improvements to their working conditions. At the same time, I'm speaking on behalf of them because we want the law to give us a stronger starting point for contract faculty in future negotiations.

So, on behalf of our Association and my contract faculty colleagues, I recommend that the law provide minimum standards for equal pay for work of equal value so that contract faculty, especially those working on a course-by-course basis, can obtain fair compensation. I also recommend that there be minimum standards requiring equal access to benefit programs regardless of a worker's classification.

My SECOND recommendation is that the law allow bargaining unit structure to evolve as our workplaces change. My association has two bargaining units, one with just under 1600 faculty and the other with 48 librarians and archivists. I am one of those 48.

We are clearly a much smaller bargaining unit, and we are a female-dominated group of employees, and we are much more vulnerable workers than our faculty colleagues on campus.

Having two bargaining units means we have two collective agreements to negotiate and manage. Three weeks ago, we started negotiations for a new collective agreement for librarians and archivists. Five members of that bargaining unit – that's 10% – are working on these negotiations and we expect them to last through the fall. Between May and November of 2014, our Association also negotiated a new collective agreement for the faculty bargaining unit. That's

two years in a row that both the Association and the Employer have put significant resources towards bargaining. If we could rationalize our units, we could make bargaining much more effective and efficient, and much less of a drain on the University's administrative resources.

Since the librarians and archivists certified in 2004, the Association has asked the Employer in every round of bargaining to merge the two bargaining units, and they have not agreed. At the same time, we have increasingly been using the same language for the same articles in the two collective agreements – for example, Grievance and Arbitration, Discrimination and Harassment – further demonstrating that combining the two units and the two agreements would be far more effective and efficient.

On behalf of our Association, and my librarian and archivist colleagues, I recommend that the Ontario Labour Relations Board be empowered to merge bargaining units or combine newly certified workers into an existing unit, if requested by the union.

In closing, I would like to emphasize that my recommendations today are on behalf of the most vulnerable members of our Association: contract faculty, and librarians and archivists. Ensuring equal treatment for contract workers, and enabling unions to merge bargaining units, will help to create better and fairer workplaces for all. Thank you.