



News & Views

Bulletin #4

VOTE FOR YOUR FUTURE – SAY “YES” TO UGFA

The University of Guelph Faculty Association (UGFA) has advanced the interests of Guelph faculty and librarians for 52 years. On April 6th the UGFA Council voted to start a card-signing drive, with a view to certification under the Ontario Labour Relations Act. We took this step because we recognized the need for more effective tools with which to represent our members in negotiations with the University Administration. In changing our status to that of a certified union, we would be adopting the same status as the great majority of university faculty associations in Ontario and Canada.

An application to the Ontario Labour Relations Board for a certification vote requires that more than 40% of the proposed bargaining group sign cards. Our campaign was very successful. In a very short time, it was apparent from the numbers of cards signed that UGFA had a strong mandate to apply for a certification vote. Although a card-signing campaign can last as long as one year, our job was done in only one month!

On May 9th, we filed a Certification Application. The normal procedures of the Labour Relations Board are that a secret ballot vote is held five working days after the certification application is filed. Thus, voting day is likely to be Tuesday May 16th, 2006. Please mark down this date.

We have proposed a bargaining unit to the LRB. They will ultimately decide who is in our unit. We would encourage all faculty in tenured, tenure-stream and contractually-limited appointments, professional librarians, and staff veterinarians in the Veterinary Teaching Hospital and Animal Health Laboratory to cast ballots. If we missed you in the canvas, we apologize – we had a lot of calls to make! All members of the proposed bargaining unit have the right to vote, regardless of whether you signed a card. UGFA asks for your continuing participation and support.

The ballot question in the vote to be conducted by the Labour Relations Board is whether you wish to have UGFA represent you as your bargaining agent. A strong “yes” vote will say that UGFA can effectively represent you as an equal partner in a continuing collegial relationship with the Administration. Please vote to support your Association.

Ed Carter, UGFA President, for the UGFA Organizing Committee

HOW THE VOTING WORKS

<http://www.olrb.gov.on.ca/english/infob/infbul03.htm>

In certification applications, the Ontario Labour Relations Board arranges to conduct a vote at the workplace, with the date of the vote usually being five working days after the application is filed. The Board does not conduct advance polls or allow voting by proxy, and mail-in ballots are only allowed in very unusual circumstances.

SIDE-BAR: A very carefully scripted letter, recently sent out to faculty over the names of the deans and other administrators, states that the Administration wants “mail-in ballots for those faculty members who are off campus on the day of the vote”, and will ask UGFA to agree to this. While this is presented as an attempt to be generous and fair, it would actually be contrary to the Labour Relations Act, Bulletin #3, which states **“The Board does not conduct advance polls or allow voting by proxy. Only in very unusual circumstances is mailin (sic) balloting allowed. The Board does not use mailin (sic) balloting to accommodate employees who are absent from the workplace on the day of the vote because of illness, vacation, or any other reason”**.

UGFA has proposed that polling stations be located in the MacKinnon Building, at OVC Lifetime Learning Centre, and at Vineland and Ridgetown. The final locations and hours of operation are to be determined by the LRB, and will be posted by the University. (We will also have the information on the UGFA website (www.uoguelph.ca/~facassoc)). Every member of the bargaining unit is allowed to vote by secret ballot, conducted by an Official of the Labour Board. The University Administration and UGFA will never know how you vote. It is totally confidential because that’s the law.

The ballot used by the Labour Board is a generic form, with the name of the University of Guelph Faculty Association and the employer, University of Guelph, posted in the polling booth. Below is a sample of what the ballot will look like. Simply mark an “X” here:

**IN YOUR EMPLOYMENT
RELATIONS WITH YOUR
EMPLOYER DO YOU WISH
TO BE REPRESENTED BY
THE APPLICANT UNION?**

**YES/
OUI**



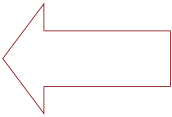
**DANS VOS RELATIONS DE
TRVAIL AVEC VOTRE
EMPLOYEUR DESIRE VOUS
ETRE REPRESENTE PAR LE
REQUERANT SYDICAT?**

**NO/
NON**



VOTE "YES"
FOR UGFA

If you require assistance or if you have any questions, please contact the UGFA office at x52126 or 52547



UGFA PRESIDENT'S RESPONSE TO THE PROVOST'S SECOND LETTER:

You recently received from Dr. Mancuso, the Provost and Vice-President (Academic), a second letter discussing the UGFA certification drive. I want to comment on some of the substantive issues raised in that letter.

Contract Faculty: Dr. Mancuso says: “... *the conversion of long term contractually limited faculty members to regular full-time status were close to resolution, and have now been put on hold at UGFA's request...*”. In fact, UGFA has been trying to improve the situation for contract faculty for many years. We agree in principle on a few issues but many details are unresolved. It will take several months at least, under any system, to iron out the details on language and to obtain approval from the membership and administration for all the changes.

We agreed that long-term contractually-limited faculty appointments of 6 years or more should be converted to regular appointments, subject to the terms and conditions of existing faculty policy and based on recommendations from the T&P committees. Some faculty members have been here for many years and still have reduced benefits because of their contract status. We want to change this. The process of holding a certification vote does not prevent the administration from implementing changes to redress the continuing unfair treatment of these faculty members.

Salary Structure: Before we negotiate any change to the salary structure, we want to have very strong consensus and support from the faculty and librarians. At the last Long Term Salary and Benefits meeting, (at which the Provost was in attendance), the Faculty Association proposed raising the grid to a level that would bring the base in line with the current starting salaries, with faculty being moved to the new grid over a period of time to be negotiated. UGFA distributed an editorial evaluating the effects of different ways of structuring merit-based salary systems, but UGFA has not, in its discussions with the Administration, proposed any changes to the current TAPSI system, and UGFA supports the principle of rewarding meritorious performance. The provost's insinuation that UGFA opposes any merit component in salary is false.

"Fifth Place": Conspicuously absent from both of the Provost's letters to faculty has been any discussion of the fact that the average age-adjusted salary at the University of Guelph has slipped substantially from “at least fifth place” in the Ontario system. Our merit step increases are a percentage of base, and that base was originally designed to be the starting salary of a new Ph.D. That is clearly not the case now, and our step increases are lower than they should be. Although the university administration assures us that they will “endeavour to maintain us in fifth place, it does not commit to a specific date for this to occur. They have also not offered any compensation for their failure to honour this commitment over the last few years.

Collegiality: UGFA relies on the dictionary definition of collegiality, an “equal sharing of power”. It is frustrating to read, over and over, the suggestion that a union structure – like that of most other Ontario universities – is somehow “uncollegial”. At present, we simply do not have an equal say on terms and conditions of employment. We have an antiquated, almost feudal procedure, in which we must politely petition the Administration and then wait patiently for their consideration of our request. In fact, in raising issues, we have been told by various administrators that we “do not represent faculty” – that is, that we do not really speak for you. In order for the University of Guelph Faculty Association to act effectively on your behalf, we need you to send a very clear and strong message that we do indeed represent you! We ask you to make every effort to come to a polling

station on **Tuesday May 16th**, and **send a powerful message to the University Administration:**

YES! UGFA REPRESENTS ME!