

## **UVICFA OPENING STATEMENT FOR COLLECTIVE BARGAINING WITH UVIC APRIL 10, 2025**

The UVic Faculty Association proudly represents all faculty and librarians at the University of Victoria. Our Members are willing to give a great deal of themselves to our students, to their research and scholarly activity and to the academic mission of the University. Their work is crucial to UVic’s ability to flourish and excel. FA negotiators are dedicated to representing the best interests of our members as we work in a good way to renew the Collective Agreement. The current Agreement is set to expire on June 30, but due to complexities and delays beyond our control in the provincial sector, bargaining will likely extend beyond this date. The negotiation process is intricate and should not be rushed. Therefore, FA negotiators are committed to remaining at the bargaining table until we achieve a Collective Agreement that serves the best interests of our members. Failing to do so would be a disservice to them.

While our members are committed to working to ensure that UVic attains its full potential, members are reaching the limits of what they can give. We have consulted both widely and deeply with FA members before this round of bargaining – through visiting all units on campus, a range of broader meetings and by conducting a number of detailed member surveys. We have heard loud and clear that workplace pressures are rising to critical levels. This must be addressed in meaningful ways in this round of collective bargaining.

UVic remains one of the top ranked comprehensive universities in Canada. But like all universities and colleges, UVic is currently facing major challenges. Funding is declining with the reduced federal permits for international students and no willingness from provincial governments to address the resulting shortfall in post-secondary budgets.

We recognize that this is affecting the ability of the University to properly resource its programs and program supports. While the post-secondary sector across Canada faces similar pressures, UVic’s administration has increasingly

shifted the burden of addressing these problems onto its faculty and librarians. VPAC's policy and operational decisions are decreasing member autonomy, increasing workload and reducing available supports. Our member consultations demonstrate that the Administration's approach is forcing many members to prioritize their programs and students over their health and well-being; this approach also undermines members' capacity to deliver high quality education. Our surveys demonstrate clearly that increased class size and pressure to reduce the cost of student accommodations by shifting pedagogical approaches have lowered the quality of education many Members are able to offer. These pressures also reduce the time Members can devote to their research and scholarly activity. As a result, UVic risks diminishing both its reputation and its ability to recruit and retain top talent.

UVic faculty and librarian salaries are more competitive than they once were, but more recently hired Members still struggle with the extremely high cost of living in Victoria, and some of our more senior members lose CPI in their mid to late 50s, very much limiting their life-time earnings.

While UVic has made some progress in addressing the concerns of Indigenous members in the last round of bargaining, the University still has work to do in providing appropriate supports for Indigenous members, in order to fulfil its goals of Indigenization, decolonization and reconciliation. BPoC faculty find that much less has been done to address the very real barriers they continue to face at UVic, such as racist attitudes expressed in various university contexts, including CES, lack of inclusion and underrepresentation in university leadership.

Although UVic has signed the Scarborough Charter, there is still a great deal to be done institutionally to fulfil its mission, and in the meantime, UVic has a difficult time retaining Black faculty. None of the urgent requests made by Black faculty of the senior administration have been addressed in the eight months since they have been raised. We hope that concrete progress on these matters can be made in this round of bargaining.

**FA members enter our professions out of a deep commitment to scholarship, teaching, and service.** However, their ability to fulfill this mission is increasingly constrained by administrative policies that prioritize cost-cutting and micro-management over academic excellence.

The FA Negotiating Team is working with a bargaining mandate that is based in the will of the Membership, derived from a highly democratic and transparently consultative process, a mandate that was ratified with over 95 percent support.

Our Negotiating Team is committed to bargaining for an agreement that not only addresses our members' concerns but also strengthens UVic as a whole — ensuring that faculty and librarians can continue to provide the world-class education, research, and professional expertise on which students and communities rely.

**The FA Negotiating Team will be focusing on these issues outlined within four interconnected strands:**

### **The first is to address the growing crisis in workload**

As one of the teaching stream members on the negotiating team has noted:

Teaching is not what it was even five years ago, with increasing expectations being placed on Members to learn new technologies, new pedagogical approaches (such as UDL), while supports are being cut and the number of students per class continues to increase. This is not sustainable.

The Negotiating Team is committed to bargaining for sustainable and equitable workload language that ensures that Members will no longer risk damaging their health and their personal lives as they strive to maintain quality in their teaching and professional practice, keep up with growing service demands, and try to retain adequate time for research, scholarly and professional activities. We will therefore be putting forward new language to:

- Develop effective mechanisms to address excessive teaching workload.
- Ensure that instructors are provided robust and stable centralized supports in fulfilling responsibilities for students.
- Ensure that faculty have adequate University support to maintain their research programs, scholarly endeavours and creative activity.
- Build mechanisms to ameliorate negative impacts of the Chair's workload on their research and scholarly activity.

**We will also be putting forward proposals to help UVic live up to its commitments to respect the rights of one another. We will be proposing language that:**

- Ensures that the University lives up to its commitments under the Scarborough Charter and more broadly supports the rights of all BPoC members to full inclusion.
- Ensure that the University fulfills its commitments and responsibilities to support the sovereignties and autonomy of Indigenous members.
- Develop fair, equitable and transparent evaluation processes.
- Develop effective methods of challenging barriers to inclusion, to ensure that all of our members feel safe and included in their units and the University as a whole.
- We will also seek to improve disciplinary and EQHR processes, including by addressing systemic biases and provide enhanced support for BPoC and Indigenous members in these processes.

**In this bargaining round we will be putting forward language that strengthens academic freedom, collegial governance and autonomy in our working lives**

- We will present language to help ensure that we retain, affirm and strengthen member rights to transparency and collegial governance in decision-making within their units and within larger university structures.
- We will present proposals that address our Members' fatigue with excessive oversight of our work and re-establish a sense of professional autonomy.
- As part of our contribution to removing silos that block communication at UVic, we will put forward proposals that will eliminate barriers to member representation and communication between the Faculty Association and University leaders to support a more collaborative and productive relationship.
- We will present proposals to fully recognize the importance of instructor pedagogical judgment in teaching and
- Strengthen members' intellectual property rights over their teaching materials.

**Our final strand involves proposals that seek fair compensation and improved, more competitive benefits**

- We will present proposals to establish processes for the transparent review of salaries to ensure equity and find other ways to support UVic's ongoing efforts towards fairness in compensation and representation.
- As part of seeking fair compensation. -- we propose to increase the number of years of CPI eligibility for associate and full professors and librarians, and increase CPI amounts to protect against inflationary pressures.



- We will present language to improve extended health benefits in targeted areas supported by members and
- Improve member access to on-campus childcare, which remains a major concern for our members
- We will also seek to secure commitments from the University in improving member access to healthcare practitioners.

***We are committed in this round of bargaining to using our collective power through bargaining to reset the relationship between UVic's administration and faculty and librarians in a positive direction for all. We look forward to making major progress for our members and for the University as a whole.***