

Planning for a Bright Future

It's summer time: we're figuring out our research, our living arrangements, course work, and how to somehow be able to afford it all and not be hungry or swimming in debt. I assure you, that by even reading this newsletter, you are engaging in research for how to make these challenges into viable solutions. Your Union not only cares about dollars and cents, which require the same kind of research and presentation skills that University trains us for, but we also care about the bottom line. What makes our working conditions challenging and adds stress to our lives are not always straightforward.

Non-monetary issues? Why care?

When the Union bargains, we tend to break up challenges into two categories: monetary and non-monetary. Think about your academic lives. Professors who assist with our research, write our reference letters, and lobby on our behalf, are also the same people who often supervise us as teachers.

In a perfect world, supervisors never ask you to work extra hours you are not paid for, or disagree with you, or even harass you. You certainly would not be asked to be penalized for going to conferences in your sector, that your job and students benefit from directly. Discriminating against parents or people needing support? Not in a perfect world.

But for the world that needs innovation and new ideas, this world we *do* live in, there are barriers that the employer is more than happy to suggest either do not exist or are not important.

Here are the facts about non-monetary issues:

Academic Harm: We're proposing language that would recognize it as a form of harassment when a TA is prevented from exercising his/her rights under the Collective Agreement through the threat of academic harm. That is, this would recognize as harassment the situation where you're prevented from, say, filing a grievance because you have reason to be afraid that your academic record will suffer if you do so.

Extending Rehiring Preference: Currently, PhD students only have yearly rehiring preference for four years and Masters students for two; this does not reflect the reality of how long it takes to complete a degree at UBC. This is a non-monetary issue because it affects who is employed, not the budgets that decide wages. Pretty important though!

Leaves of Absence: Compassionate leaves must expand to be more inclusive. **Academic Conference leaves** should exist to allow a short paid period that do not penalize our members for being smart and being more knowledgeable in their field. **Comps leave** would provide time for PhD's to avoid undermining their academic (and employment) futures while writing comps exams.

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