

April 5, 2022

Dear Dr. Peter Scott and members of AU's Executive Team,

As you are likely aware, collective bargaining between AU and AUFA has not been going well.

We fully respect that you are maintaining distance from the process to allow AU's bargaining team to represent the employer's interests at the table. However, the current context does suggest that some direction from the Executive Team may be necessary to bring this extended conflict to a mutually satisfactory conclusion.

Specifically, there are significant contextual factors that are important to highlight.

AUFA members want a fair deal

AUFA members recently rejected a mediator's proposed settlement by 77%, with 91% of members voting. This sends a strong and clear message that the concessions AU has been seeking in this round of bargaining are simply not acceptable.

No one is looking forward to a strike or lockout that could entail significant disruptions for learners. But AUFA members have also demonstrated that they are not willing to accept significant concessions that would erode working conditions, collegiality, and student experiences over time. Despite previous framing of AUFA as the aggressive party in this dispute, AUFA members are fully aware that our true position is that of defending valued protections and benefits from an unnecessarily aggressive employer.

Not all our members agree on every issue—that is the nature of a democratic organization—but our ongoing engagement efforts have revealed some clear themes that provide important context for determining what a fair deal might look like in this context.

We want to be excited about the future of AU

Our members have told us they believe deeply in the mission of this university. The strongest consensus that has emerged from our consultations is that we care about students and about learning. We want to be excited about our work. We want to be innovative, creative, and rigorous. But we feel blocked by a combination of factors and forces.

The most common concern is that our members feel overwhelmed by work and stripped of agency. Professional members affected by reorganization and major change initiatives feel they are denied the chance to do their best work. Academic members worry about the erosion of collegial governance while pressure increases a sense of precarity, especially for those newer to AU. Our members tell us key decisions are made in ways that shut out our expertise, experience, and enthusiasm.

We don't oppose change and transformation, but it matters how that change happens. We don't want to feel bullied, belittled, or ignored. We want you to listen to our feedback—*really listen*—and meaningfully include us in decision-making processes.

AUFA members are realizing that the process of collective bargaining offers a rare chance to assert our own agency. We don't have to passively accept negative changes to our working conditions. Instead, we

can demand the respect we deserve. We have heard from many members who suggest that they don't want to strike but they will if necessary.

It's about more than the language on the table

We all know this round of bargaining doesn't exist in isolation. Our collective agreement has a long history and context and is intertwined with other aspects of our work environment.

There are a wide range of management decisions that influence how we feel about what's going on at the bargaining table. There are many examples of this, so we'll only name a few.

- The IT Optimization project was a really negative experience for most of our affected members, many of whom continue to feel devalued and stripped of agency.
- Top-down decisions affecting members in the Faculty of Health Disciplines, in particular, have combined with the pressures of educating front-line workers throughout the pandemic to create significant stress and erode morale.
- Many members have experienced the Near-Virtual initiative as stressful and contradictory.
- Many members have expressed concern about the lack of consultation and transparency during the implementation of the Integrated Learning Environment.
- We routinely field calls from members looking for clarification and support with navigating AU's own processes, including significant concerns about a lack of support from HR with basic employment needs and an unnecessarily adversarial approach to labour relations.
- Members continue to feel anxious about AU's threat to de-designate them from the union.

These experiences illustrate why we see a clear signal in our surveys that our members have extremely low levels of trust in AU's leadership. Trust was already low when we started the surveys during Dr. Neil Fassina's tenure, and it has only dropped since. In November 2021, only 15% of members surveyed said they agreed with the statement, "I trust the executive team of the university," while 58% said they did not. AUFA members are not alone in this. Many AUPE and CUPE members have shared similar frustrations.

This low level of trust affects how we interpret communications from AU. Many members describe feeling insulted or outraged when reading AU's communications, even on topics unrelated to bargaining, and have described it as incomplete, misleading, or disingenuous.

To be clear, this is not a reflection of the way our members who facilitate AU communications do their work. Rather, this reflects frustration and even exasperation with the lack of meaningful, transparent, and timely communication shared by AU's top leaders.

It's important for you to understand that our members have learned over the years to be suspicious or skeptical of the information and spin offered by AU's leadership. What this means is that platitudes and vague promises won't win our trust back. We need concrete and tangible actions.

You have the power to change course

The AUFA executive and volunteers will keep listening to AUFA members. In the past few weeks, we have heard that many members feel distracted and demoralized, and that most would very much

appreciate an end to this lengthy battle. But our members are also focused on safeguarding and advancing valued protections and benefits.

It is clear that the university is the body with the power to change course. You have the opportunity to set a new tone that foregrounds respect for the workers of this university. You have the chance to open a new chapter of improved labour relations and increased collegiality. Give us all—our members, our colleagues, and our students—the chance to look to the future of AU with renewed optimism and energy.

We ask that you send a strong signal that you are ready to acknowledge, respect, and value the work we do. It's time for you to demonstrate that you're prepared to empower us to do our best work in service of our shared mission to remove barriers and increase equality of educational opportunity for adult learners worldwide.

Respectfully,

AUFA Members

Adien Dubbelboer	Daisy Ramos	Dr. Evelyne Gagnon
Alexa DeGagne	Dale Spencer	Dr. Faria Sana
Angela Specht	Darka Pavlovic	Dr. Jane Arscott
Anita Girvan	David Powell	Dr. Jason Foster
Anneleise Van Dyke	Dawn Mercer Riselli	Dr. Lisa Micheelsen
April J Steele	Dawne Tripodi	Dr. Meaghan Peuramaki-Brown, Associate Professor, FHSS
Audrey Krawec	Dayle Hyde	
Becky Jonasson	Degan Richards	Dr. Nathaniel Ostashewski
Bill Geng	Doug Neuman	Dr. Paul Huebener
Bob Barnettson	Douglas MacLeod	Dr. Paul Kellogg
Catherine Butts	Dr Paul Jerry	Dr. Shandip Saha
Cheryl Deren	Dr Rhiannon Bury	Dr. Solomon
Chris Hubick	Dr. Adam Magico	Eric Strikwerda
Chris Manuel	Dr. Alyson House	Eric Wang
Chris Pederson	Dr. Barbara Wilson-Keates	Faria Sana
Conrad Holmberg	Dr. Connie Blomgren	Florene Ypma
Corina Dransutavicius	Dr. Connie Covey	Gail Leicht
Cynthia Kloeble	Dr. Derek Briton	Gerry Annand

Gwen R. Rempel

Heather Babiak

Heather Buzila

Hongxin Yan

Ian Grivois

Ian Schofield

Ingo Schmidt

Jagwinder Kaur

James Greenwood-Lee

James Haubrich

Janet Thompson

Janice Thomas

Jenny Gerbrandt

Joanna Nemeth

Jocelyn Grira

Jocelyn Smith

Jodi Dunsire

Jody McGarry-Liddell

Joel McCaffery

Jolene Armstrong

Jonathan Leggo

Jorden Habib

Joshua Anyangah

Karys Van de Pitte

Kate Nunn

Kathy Killoh

Kathy Lux

Katie MacDonald

Laura Newberry

Lawton Shaw

Lois Shaw

Lorna Brown

Lorna Stefanick

Mark A. McCutcheon,
Professor of Literary Studies

Mark Crawford

Mark Morpurgo

Martin Connors, Ph.D.,
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Maureen Hutchison

Meaghan Peuramaki-Brown

Meenal Shrivastava

Michael Lithgow

Michael Mauws

Mike Sosteric

Mike Voaklander

Miran Nevesinjac

Nicole Yaremko

Nikki Pawlitschek

Nina Paulovicova

Paula Slobogean

Rachel Conroy

Rhiannon Rutherford

Richard Marsden

Rick Roder

Roland Gubics

Roland Treu

Ryan Grasby

Sami Houry

Serena Henderson

Shamsher Mann

Sharon Riley

Shauna Bryce

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Spencer Scott Young

Stacy Swanson

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Susan Licht

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Tamara Jackson

Tara Woloschuk

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