

# Mobilizing Tips

## Fair Employment Week



## Background

About one third of all academic staff in Canadian post-secondary institutions are now hired on a temporary or part-time basis.<sup>1</sup> The casualization of academic staff mirrors broader trends in the Canadian economy as employers replace permanent, full-time positions with temporary, part-time jobs with less pay and fewer, if any, benefits.<sup>2</sup> More and more academic work is provided on a course-by-course or limited-term basis with often inadequate compensation for only the teaching component of academic life. Thousands of professors are denied the opportunity each year to participate in (and be paid for) all aspects of academic work - research, teaching, and service – and this has serious implications not only for contract academic staff, but for students, their regular academic staff colleagues, and the integrity of post-secondary institutions.

The Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT) advocates for the fair treatment of all academic staff regardless of employment status, including compensation for research and service as part of any teaching appointment on a *pro rata* basis – that is, as a percentage of a regular professor's appointment. Tenure and academic freedom, the ability to do research, teaching and service, the opportunity to participate fully in institutional governance, and fair compensation and good working conditions, are all quintessential so that academic staff can offer the best post-secondary education possible.

<sup>1</sup> See CAUT Almanac 2014-2015, Table 2.10 Labour Force Estimates of University Professors, Vocational Instructors, and All Occupations by Employment Status and Permanency. Available at <http://www.caut.ca/resources/almanac>

<sup>2</sup> The Globe and Mail (2014) "The 15-hour work week: Canada's part-time problem" October 4 <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/report-on-business/the-15-hour-workweek-canadas-part-time-problem/article20926986/#dashboard/follows/>



## About the Campaign

Since 2001<sup>3</sup>, the annual Fair Employment Week campaign raises awareness about the overuse and exploitation of contract academic staff, encouraging workers at universities and colleges, students, and supporters, to organize and participate in these events and to take action.

The general theme of fairness for contract academic staff allows academic staff associations to highlight local issues and hold events, as well as celebrate and profile the contributions of contract academic staff, including librarians, archivists, and postdoctoral scholars at Canadian universities. The "invisible academic" logo symbolizes that the working conditions of these academic

<sup>3</sup> See CAUT Bulletin (2011) "Fair Employment Week chalks up 10 years of advocacy" volume 58: 10 (December) [https://www.cautbulletin.ca/en\\_article.asp?ArticleID=3371](https://www.cautbulletin.ca/en_article.asp?ArticleID=3371)

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workers are often unknown. The campaign brings to light and into the public eye the contribution of these invisible members on campuses.

In previous years, the campaign raised awareness and generated discussion among regular academic staff and student bodies, and has had a positive impact on contract negotiations. It has also helped increase contract academic staff involvement in their associations.

Whether you host an event, circulate a petition, or launch a social media campaign, there are many ways to join the campaign to challenge the casualization of academic labour.

## Past Fair Employment Week Activities

From posters to petitions to peanuts, academic staff associations have used a variety of creative tactics to inform students, colleagues and the public about the contract academics' conditions of work and to support efforts to increase wages and negotiate improvements in job security for contract academic staff. Here are examples of what has been done in the past decade across the country:

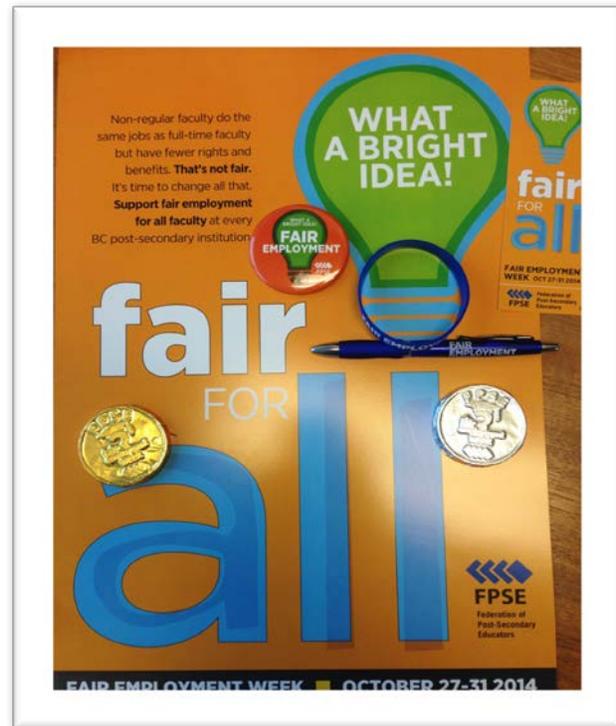
### Vancouver

At the University of British Columbia, the UBC Faculty Association sponsored meetings for Contract Academic Staff across campus in past Fair Employment Weeks. They held a meet and greet at the bus loop, with refreshments, information and a petition calling for improved working conditions for Contract Academic Staff, reaching 1500 students, staff, and faculty, and obtaining over 700 signatures. The Association also circulated "invisible academics" posters across campus. They also installed 20 full-size silhouettes in a highly visible location on campus. They added posters with slogans to the blank silhouettes and sponsored a

luncheon for sessionals and they set up an information display featuring contract academic staff biographies and publications. Association activists handed out peanuts to symbolize their low wages.

### British Columbia

The Federation of Postsecondary Educators of British Columbia provides resources each year to each of their locals with materials to help promote Fair Employment Week - leaflets, fridge magnets, bookmarks, chocolates, pens, and other materials, as well as support staff support for locals who want to develop more extensive materials for the campaign. The 2014 campaign is called "Fair for All: What a bright idea!"



### Calgary

For many years, the University of Calgary Faculty Association (TUCFA) has put a new spin on Fair Employment Week to grab the attention of its members and the campus community. With different promotional items, special editions of its newsletter and engaging slogans the Association attempts to educate everyone on the important work Contract Academic

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Staff do and the issues they regularly face (visit [www.tucfa.com/?page\\_id=131](http://www.tucfa.com/?page_id=131)).

These are some of the campaign themes:

- "University Savers": highlighting how crucial contract academic staff are to the University. Each department (as well as senior administration, the students' unions, student media, campus media, and some external media) received a box filled with large, individually-wrapped lifesavers. On each lifesaver, a sticker provided a statistic or comment about contract academic staff. The box was also decorated with facts about contract academic staff. TUCFA also produced a poster with the "University Saver" theme.
- "Don't Write Off our Sessionals" asking the campus community to not ignore the work situation of the contract academic staff members. A special edition of the Association's newsletter was published which included information on the issues facing these members and highlighted one person's story as a sessional. With the newsletter, pencils marked with the slogan were sent across campus.
- "Sessionals: Paid Peanuts". This campaign highlighted the compensation imbalance for the work performed by contract academic staff. Again a special edition of the Association's newsletter was circulated to the campus community. The newsletter presented data on, not only the number and gender of Contract Academic Staff, but comparative figures on term certain pay across the country. Miniature Snicker bars labeled with slogans and statistics were distributed to all units on campus along with informational posters.
- "Treasure our Sessionals: They Keep us Afloat" focuses on the positive contributions made by contract academic staff every day to keep the University running. The Association's

newsletter was distributed and informational posters circulated across campus. The newsletter provided statistics on U of C Contract Academic Staff but also highlighted international issues related to contract academics. Chocolate coins in "treasure chests" emblazoned with Sessional facts were provided to all units.

- "Stick by our Sessionals" and this time promotional post-it notes with the slogan were paired with the Association's newsletter and sent across campus. Posters depicting a memo board with different contract academic facts were distributed to all units. The newsletter highlighted the provisions in the Collective Agreement for Contract Academic Staff members in addition to updated statistical information.
- "Puzzled by the University's Treatment of Sessionals?" An information pamphlet and a pocket calendar were distributed with the Association's newsletter. Posters were distributed across campus.
- "Unfair treatment of Sessionals and Contract Academic Staff: it's really a mystery... isn't it?" The campaign looked at the unfair treatment of sessionals as a case needing to be cracked – hoping to solve the disappearance of job security. Information was provided in the Association's newsletter. Posters were delivered to all units and wallet-sized magnifying glasses with the Association's information were distributed.

### Winnipeg

The University of Winnipeg Faculty Association held a publicity stunt to draw attention to the working conditions facing contract academics, with the Association photographing a "cram in" into an office assigned to fourteen Contract Academic Staff. Contract Academic Staff and others who have been on contract at some point in their careers, were squeezed into a small contract faculty office to underscore

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the woefully inadequate office space typically provided to contract academics (<http://uwfa.ca/news/blog/fair-employment-week-cas-open-house>).

### Waterloo

The Wilfrid Laurier Faculty Association (WLUFA) launched the 'We Teach Laurier' campaign in 2013 to highlight the low pay and poor working conditions faced by contract academic staff at Wilfrid Laurier University in southwestern Ontario. WLUFA compiled statistics underscoring the contribution that contract faculty make to the university compared to wages and working conditions. For example, the Association compiled statistics showing that at Wilfrid Laurier University, Contract Academic Staff teach 45% of all courses, 51% of students, yet make up only 3.3% of Wilfrid Laurier University's overall budget. They also made good use of these statistics in bargaining to obtain a settlement in 2014.

(<https://advocatewlufa.wordpress.com/2013/10/23/weteachlaurier-highlights-plaint-of-profs-teaching-more-than-half-of-university-students/>).

### London, ON

In anticipation of Fair Employment Week 2014, the University of Western Ontario Faculty Association (UWOFA) launched a multi-part series on the work of contract faculty in the shadows of the Academy at Western University called "Nice Work If You Can Get It!": <https://uwofa.ca/videos/id:1>, which was widely distributed through social media.

In past years, they set up information tables in the student centre with movie screenings next to the table.

Every year, the Association sends out a letter from the President of the Association to all members explaining Fair

Employment Week asking for their support. One year, a contract academic staff activist's "op-ed" piece was published in the Western News. A press release was issued garnering media coverage in the student newspaper, on student and local radio stations.

### Kingston

The Queen's University Faculty Association (QUFA) published a Special Edition of their Voices Newsletter one year that was sent electronically to all QUFA Members. A letter was sent to every Queen's Administrator and Members of Senate with a message that was similar to the QUFA President's column in the newsletter. Each letter was also accompanied by a pocket calendar with the message "Fair Employment for Contract Academic Staff is a Year-round Concern". The Association also tried to send a letter to all members of the Board of Trustees but the Board's Chair declined the request for their addresses or to mail them on the Association's behalf. Local posters, with inspiration from materials from the CAUT Fair Employment Week web site, and CAUT buttons were distributed to QUFA Executive and Council and appeared around campus to raise awareness about Contract Academic Staff issues. The QUFA Council also adopted a motion to endorse Fair Employment Week ([www.qufa.ca/files/pdf/QUFACouncilMotionFairEmploymentWeek.pdf](http://www.qufa.ca/files/pdf/QUFACouncilMotionFairEmploymentWeek.pdf)).

### Fredericton

At Saint Thomas University, the Association participates in a luncheon each year. In 2013, the Association's Part-time Issues Committee had all contract academic staff members introduce themselves to the University president, including the courses they, their areas of research, and the service contributions they make to the university. The Association also created a Powerpoint slideshow with information about contract academic staff and emailed these to all faculty members offering to present to

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students and answer questions. Finally, the Association created a fact sheet outlining inequities for circulation among the campus community.

Other activities Associations have participated in during Fair Employment Week include: social events of all kinds, postcard campaigns, motions at Senate, op-ed pieces in campus and local newspapers, research fairs showcasing Contract Academic Staff's many (mostly unpaid) contributions to the institution, and soliciting testimonials from Faculty Deans and department directors valuing Contract Academic Staff that are then widely distributed.

## Fair Employment Week is a Year-Round Concern

Mobilization is an ongoing process, and requires regular communication and interaction with your members. It also helps to know who your members are, how to contact them, and what issues might be important to them.

There are many challenges to attracting contract academic staff to association meetings, including practical considerations such as heavy teaching schedules, childcare arrangements, and jobs at other institutions. For example, "Road Scholars", who travel between institutions to teach, may only be on campus only once or twice a week. Contract academic staff may also feel a sense of marginalization, fear of reprisal from the institution, and even lack of trust in the Association. Even more than regular academic staff, contract academic staff may need incentives to attend meetings.

Many Associations have created a designated contract academic staff representative on the Executive committee or equivalent, have set up committees to represent the interests of contract academic staff, and ensure there is representation on bargaining committees or bargaining advisory

committees. Securing good language in the collective agreement to receive up-to-date membership information from the institution is particularly crucial for members on temporary or part-time contracts as they do may not have contract from year-to-year or not even from one term to the next. Contract academic staff should also be recruited to serve and participate in a network of departmental stewards. Ensuring compensation for contract academic staff to take on these service activities is key.

Some successful strategies for contract academic staff (CAS) mobilizing:

- ✓ Direct personal contact works best.
- ✓ Ensure you have a good contact list, preferably with home addresses and phone numbers as well as departmental addresses and email.
- ✓ Use multiple methods for contacting your members - do not rely exclusively on email or even departmental mail, as not all CAS have access to these.
- ✓ Lists should be updated each teaching term, as the membership of your unit will change with the teaching schedule.
- ✓ Vary your meeting times. If you normally have meetings in the day, try the evening.
- ✓ Provide childcare (or reimbursement for childcare) or encourage members to bring their children.
- ✓ Hold meetings off campus, in a central location.
- ✓ Hold a series of departmental or division meetings.
- ✓ Add a social event to the meeting.

Building alliances with other unions and student groups on campus and beyond is quintessential to making any campaign, such as Fair Employment Week, a success. Students in particular are natural allies, as they understand that a professor's working conditions are their learning conditions. Graduate students

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looking to a future academic career recognize that their opportunities are dependent on changing current policies, funding priorities, and decisions within the institution.

It can be useful to create a checklist specific targeted at members, other campus groups and allies, as well as the general public. Here are some basic ideas that are easily adaptable and expandable for your institution.

### For Contract Academic Staff

- ✓ Provide orientation sessions with materials or a handbook for every CAS **when they are hired** that summarizes information from the CA or current practice, such as:
  - benefits including funds for Scholarly Activity
  - any information about job security and the possible transition from temporary to permanent positions (conversion language in the collective agreement)
  - the bargaining process including timelines and a flow chart and an invitation to participate in the process
  - their rights for Employment Insurance
  - leaves
- ✓ Send out regular (e.g. monthly) emails to CAS members that follow the rhythm of the academic year
- ✓ Hold social events each academic semester
- ✓ Develop an app or specific place on your association's web site for information (FAQs etc.) about contract academic staff and a link to the CAUT *pro rata* model are posted.
- ✓ Provide information about the CAUT *pro rata* model
- ✓ Prepare bargaining surveys that include questions for CAS, and include CAS in focus groups

### For Regular Academic Staff (RAS) in your Association

- ✓ Prepare information materials (e.g. brochures, FAQs on the academic association web site) that help RAS understand the need for the *pro-rata* model endorsed by CAUT that shows that
  - RAS workload would be more manageable if CAS were compensated and expected to participate in service activities (e.g. curriculum committees etc.)
  - CAS are academics and should be compensated for their scholarly activities so that those activities can inform their teaching
  - how the number of RAS, CAS and students have changed at your academic association
- ✓ Prepare materials for RAS that help them understand the "lived reality" of CAS. Academic unit heads can be encouraged to provide support for CAS who are often hired at the last minute, don't have time to prepare their courses etc. RAS members can advocate for their CAS colleagues in their faculty or department as fully qualified academics rather to counter the myth of CAS as transient or temporary workers.
- ✓ Create slides that all academic staff can display before and after lectures about the changing nature of the academic institution (e.g. with information about uncoupling teaching and research, commercialization, commodification etc.) which will help educate students. This includes
  - percentage of university revenue allocated to CAS
  - number of undergraduate courses taught by CAS
  - compare CAS stipend to the cost per course to demonstrate how where student tuition goes
  - job security issues

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- ✓ Invite RAS to participate in FEW activities- perhaps staff the information table etc.

- ✓ Hold a contest with prizes that allows students to guess who is a contract academic and who is not.

### For Students

- ✓ Create slides that all academic staff could display before and after lectures about CAS issues and/or the changing nature of the academic institutions (e.g. uncoupling teaching and research, commercialization, commodification etc.) to help educate students about these issues. These slides can include statistics and information, such as:
  - percentage of university revenue allocated to CAS
  - number of undergraduate courses taught by CAS
  - compare CAS stipend to the cost per course to show how little is spent on their instruction in light of student tuition and funding
  - job security issues
- ✓ Create pamphlets or postcards with the same information described above and post them around campus or place in lecture halls
- ✓ Create posters/pamphlets that track how student tuition and funding is spent, such as comparing how much is spent on CAS compared to administration...
- ✓ Create a sticker that CAS can attach to everything that they assess that says "this was marked by a CAS who"
  - Has no job security
  - Has to apply for Employment Assistance every summer
  - Use phrases that are creative and hard-hitting and accurate that will resonate with students at your institution, such as "*I am a CAS who has worked here for 16 years. Too bad I can't afford to send my children to school here.*"

### Alumni and Parents

- ✓ Use the same materials described above and focus on the image and reputation of the institution and the obvious inequities of the CAS experience.
- ✓ Focus on rising administrative costs and increased numbers of administrators, which diverts much-needed resources from the classrooms.
- ✓ Help them understand that most employees at the institution get paid to do their work (i.e. bargaining, grievance etc.) on a full-time basis while the academic association relies on volunteers who are doing teaching, research and service?

For more information, visit [www.fairemploymentweek.ca](http://www.fairemploymentweek.ca) or contact CAUT professional officer Robert Johnson at (phone) 613-726-5193 or (email) [johnson@caut.ca](mailto:johnson@caut.ca).