

June 11, 2025

CUEFA Opening Remarks

The creation of CUEFA's revised draft of the Collective Agreement

The drafted revision of this CA is made in the mutual interests of the CUEFA members, students of CUE, and the institution as a whole. Our draft's principal philosophy is this: our students directly benefit from a faculty and support staff who are healthy, valued, supported, and engaged, enabling them to continue achieving teaching and research excellence. Challenging issues facing CUE and the rest of the sector, such as declining international student enrollment and the related shortcomings of the provincial government in addressing this lost revenue, also informed the development of this draft. The revised CA aims to foster a supportive environment that balances the needs of CUEFA members (and, by extension, the students) with current institutional realities.

CUEFA's revised draft presented today follows an evidence-based approach. It is informed by data collected via several surveys carried out by both CUEFA and CUE's own administration over a span of several years, which allowed the collection of extensive input from the wider CUEFA membership and consultation with a broad range of relevant information, and wider reflection by the CUEFA bargaining team on the workplace culture at CUE and how that compares to the rest of the university sector.

In particular, the process that led to the revised CA involved four elements:

1. Consultation with CUEFA members, particularly through a survey distributed to CUEFA members in Fall 2023
 - In the Fall 2023 semester, the CUEFA executive developed and conducted a survey for its members, allowing them to respond anonymously and confidentially. The response rate was 85%, with 71 out of 83 eligible members responding to the survey. The response rate among the three then-eligible members of the library constituted 100%. Considering this high response rate, the results of this survey are highly representative of faculty members' and ASO's perceptions with regard to their employment. The survey included a mix of quantitative and qualitative questions, helping to gain an understanding of the general trends and nuanced responses and explanations.
 - The survey's responses highlighted four areas of urgent concern among faculty: faculty involvement in University Governance; Faculty-Sessional Ratios; Salary and Compensation; and Job Security/the Advancement in Rank Process.
 - Over 80% of respondents said they were "somewhat" or "extremely dissatisfied" with the practice of collegial governance at CUE

- 78% of respondents said they were “somewhat” or “extremely dissatisfied” with the current faculty Sessional ratio at CUE
 - 71% of respondents said they were “somewhat” or “extremely dissatisfied” with the salary and compensation they received
 - About 50% of respondents said they were “somewhat” or “extremely dissatisfied” with their sense of job security and trust in the advancement in rank process.
 - This is a remarkably low percentage given the nature of academic appointments are typically much more secure than in other sectors. These comments also speak to a weak workplace culture at CUE.
 - A small sample of what respondents said on this issue include the following:
 - While many respondents commented on their enjoyment of teaching and their strong relationships with colleagues and immediate superiors, these same respondents were also quick to add that they were concerned about administrative interference in class sizes, and the lack of consultation by administration on a host of administration decisions
2. Analysis of an employer-administered survey (hereafter “Flex Survey”) about workplace satisfaction conducted in Spring 2023 and Spring 2024.
- This survey was distributed to all full-time CUE employees, but the discussion below is based on results relating to the two largest academic units at CUE: the Faculty of Science and the Faculty of Arts.
 - The results of this Flex Survey echoed many of the same patterns reflected in the CUEFA-administered survey.
 - i. Common areas of satisfaction:
 1. Teaching and research
 2. Relationship with immediate supervisor (department chairs and/or deans)
 3. Relationship with immediate colleagues
 - ii. Common areas of dissatisfaction
 1. CUE’s retention of qualified staff (i.e. CUE’s challenges in retaining qualified faculty)
 2. Faculty complement (CUE’s challenges to mitigate the understaffing of academic departments)

3. Pay (inability to provide compensation that aligns with comparable universities)
 4. Trust in university administration to address faculty concerns (i.e. there are extremely low levels of trust in the willingness/ability of CUE administration to address concerns in meaningful ways)
 5. Sense of being “valued” by administration (i.e. faculty do not feel valued by administration)
- The results of the 2023 and 2024 flex-surveys demonstrated similar concerns, suggesting a systemic nature to the shortcomings noted by CUE employees.
3. Study of patterns of labour relations and employment conditions across the university sector, which included a review of the compensation and other data from comparable institutions. From this, we noted the following issues:
 - CUEFA members are amongst the most poorly compensated academic faculty and staff members in Canada and Alberta.
 - As of 2022-23, CUEFA members were on average paid 36% less than faculty and ASOs at comparable institutions
 - CUEFA members rank 83/87 institutions in Canada in terms of compensation (CAUT member reporting)
 - These extremely low compensation levels are jeopardizing faculty’s job satisfaction and making it significantly harder to attract and retain faculty at CUE.
 - Erosion of Collegial Governance at CUE
 - We find that CUE is following a wider trend in Canada to decrease in the ability of Faculty to engage in meaningful discussion with the Administration and Board
 - However, the concern is particularly acute at CUE for three reasons:
 - In contrast to other post-secondary institutions in Canada, there is no collective representation of the Faculty Association for Faculty on the Board
 - The lack of involvement of the Faculty in decision-making processes and the development of any university policies is especially striking at CUE. The faculty notes that consultations on policies are often brief, superficial, and performative rather than substantive. Recent examples of this include the Institutional Academic Plan (2023) and the Institutional Research Plan (2024). In both cases these processes were led by outside consultants with faculty only consulted after the initial planning. This process stands in marked contrast to how other institutions (such as the University of Victoria) go about developing their institutional plans and policies. At the U of Victoria, for example, both of these processes are led by committees with substantial faculty representation and carried out through long-term, careful, and meaningful consultation with faculty, librarians, and other Academic Staff.
 - Faculty are hesitant to speak out and criticize academic policies designed by administration for fear of retribution by the

administration. This sense of anxiety within the faculty is somewhat unique to CUE and disruptive to a healthy and engaging culture of collegial governance.

4. Reflection on actions and plans of CUE administration for growth of Concordia

- We note CUE's intention to raise the profile of CUE regionally, nationally, and internationally. While CUEFA highly supports this idea and believes that growth is possible, it considers that to maximize the capacity of the university to achieve this goal, priority needs to be placed on improving support for faculty, ASOs, and the core academic functions of the university.
 - Thus, this CA aims to lead CUE towards a better capacity to support and carry out these ambitious plans

- We note, too, that despite concerns expressed by administration about decline in International Student enrollment, the University is in a financially sound position.
 - The university has run surpluses of between 15-32% (14.77-32.58% - avg of 22.39%) of total budget/expenditures for the last 5 years
 - Moreover, with the Board's approval, the university administration has chosen to use this surplus in ways other than supporting the core academic affairs of the university. These spending choices include the following items:
 - Expanding the costs (including salaries) of managing and administering the university
 - At CUE over the last 4 years, management and administration costs have increased by approximately 1.72M
 - In 2024 these costs equate to 19.26% of CUE's operational budget
 - This is significantly higher than what comparable university's spent on management in 2024. For example:
 - U of Alberta spent 7.74% of total budget on management
 - King's - 6.53%
 - St. Mary's - 10.78%
 - MacEwan - 12.59%
 - Spending on building out the physical infrastructure of the university
 - Aside from the new academic building (completed), CUEFA is aware that CUE has purchased at least four properties to build new student residences.
 - CUEFA has evidence that suggests the cost of

purchasing these lots is more than \$1.2Million.

- Building the new student residence (which CUEFA supports in general) will add further costs.
- The ongoing costs of property tax and upkeep of the McGrath Mansion remain a cost borne by the university, even though the purpose of the mansion for core academic programming remains unclear
- Legal fees
 - Used in managing grievances and Labour Board matters against CUEFA members
 - Used in prematurely ending employment contracts with various staff and faculty members
 - Used to deal with a large-scale set of lawsuits against the university related to failures in the continuation of the PsyD program
 - Used to deal with the lawsuit related to the New Academic Building against Chandos
 - Use to manage the bargaining of the new Collective Agreement
- Consultant fees
 - CUEFA knows that consultants have been brought in to CUE for a number of issues that could well have been dealt with internally. These include:
 - The Academic Plan
 - The Research Plan
 - The Governance Review
- Spending on fundraising and marketing events that have limited financial benefits to the operation of the university.
- CUEFA believes that although some of these spending choices may well be justified and some may be well intentioned, spending choices should be reassessed so that emphasis is placed on spending on the core operations of the university through attracting, retaining, and supporting qualified and well-supported academic staff and faculty, and investing in resources that directly support teaching and research activities at the university. The revisions to the CA presented by CUEFA makes the case that spending choices should be directed to core academic functions of the university.

Overview of Content of CUEFA's Revised Draft of the Collective Agreement

Based on the above considerations, we are presenting a revised CA that aims to address the problems of dissatisfaction with job security, sessional-faculty ratios, collegial governance, and compensation, concerns raised through the various surveys. In drafting these changes, CUEFA hopes to work with the CUE Board of Governors to craft a new CA that ensures the working conditions of CUEFA members align with national and provincial patterns and makes CUE a healthy and successful workplace able to help the university attain its goals of growth and excelling as a student-oriented postsecondary institution. Our drafted revisions comprise three levels of changes as follows:

- Articles with no proposed changes: Articles 6, 22, 29, and 31
- Articles with minor and/or housekeeping changes.
 - These are changes that CUEFA identifies as needed to improve the clarity of certain articles and to enhance equity in the workplace. Some of these changes also address problems identified by the Joint Committee since the previous CA was implemented. Some of these changes suggest a new language (such as moving from the language of “permanent appointment” to “tenure”). However, because we don't feel these changes alter the original spirit and intent of the CA as written, we have classified these changes as less-than-substantive.
- Articles with substantive changes
 - These changes address key concerns raised by CUEFA members in the surveys mentioned above and/or are made in response to management behaviour at CUE over the last three years. These changes are also informed by best practices at comparable universities in Alberta and Canada. We believe that these changes will improve the working conditions and environment at the university, bringing CUE more in line with the comparable university sector.
 - These substantial changes are related to five main issues, and affect a number of Articles. These five issues are:
 - Job Security
 - Collegial Governance
 - Respect for CUEFA and its agents
 - Faculty Complement
 - Compensation

The remainder of this presentation focuses on these five issues and the changes within the CA that they entail. Each of these issues and the relevant Article changes will now be presented

1. The revised CA proposes changes aimed at improving the job security for CUEFA members, especially in relation to the way discipline is handled by CUE administration.
 - a. Article 2: Academic Freedom
 - i. Academic freedom is under attack across the globe due to geopolitical instability. This drafted revision aims to strengthen the academic freedom of CUEFA members in their teaching, research and in extramural

contexts. We hope to make CUE an example of strength in those areas to our colleagues across the country.

- ii. To that end, this article enhances the protection of Academic Freedom for all CUEFA members, including in extramural contexts.

b. Article 11: Advancement in Rank

- i. In recent years, the process for advancement to Associate Professor has been disrupted by interference in the Advancement in Rank process by university administration. This has led to significant anxiety among CUEFA faculty members regarding their job security.
- ii. The changes proposed in Article 11 revise the relationship between the Advancement in Rank Committee and the University President to ensure the values and practices of fair and transparent collegial governance are protected and job security is enhanced.

c. Article 13: Discipline

- i. In recent years, the disciplining of CUEFA members under Articles 13 (Faculty) and 38 (ASOs) has resulted in significant problems for the university administration and for CUEFA members, including a number of grievances. It has also created high levels of anxiety among CUEFA members about their job security and their treatment by university administration.
- ii. To that end, the drafted revision of Article 13 seeks to improve the discipline process and thus the job security of CUEFA members, thereby improving the overall work conditions at CUE. In total, five broad changes to this Article are proposed:
 1. Placing ASOs and Faculty members under a single Discipline Article (13)
 2. Removing instances of discipline for unacceptable performance from this Article (placing this within the Annual Evaluation articles - 10 and 37)
 3. Placing concrete timelines into Article 13 to ensure discipline is dealt with in a fair timeframe
 4. Clarifying the organization of the Article to ensure procedures are more clearly delineated
 5. Adds wording to ensure discipline is carried out in a fair and reasonable manner

d. Article 24: Reduction in Force Through Financial Exigency or Program Redundancy

- i. With messages from administration to CUEFA members about the uncertain university landscape and concerns expressed by administration about enrollment, CUEFA remains concerned about how financial and programming decisions made by university administration will affect its

members and their job security. It also wants to ensure that any policies enacted under this Article are made in a fair and reasonable manner and based on sound financial evidence.

- ii. To that end, this article emphasizes that in making decisions that affect program delivery and faculty appointments, the university administration must recognize that teaching and research are the university's top priorities. The article also asserts that the university administration shall provide CUEFA detailed financial information about the university (beyond regularly available information) on an annual basis.

e. Article 25: Grievance

- i. As with Article 13 revisions, the revisions here aim at ensuring a more transparent and fair process and one in which senior administrators are more intimately involved in the grievance process.
- ii. To that end, the revision ensures that CUEFA members involved in a grievance are not discriminated against because of their involvement in said grievance. Other changes clarify procedure and ensure that the VPA and President play a leading role in the grievance process.

2. The revised CA proposes changes aimed at strengthening the practice of collegial governance at CUE and the related importance of valuing knowledge and expertise of CUEFA members in the operation of the University.

a. Article 3: Agreement, Review and Amendment

- i. In the past, CUEFA has found the Joint Committee to lack sufficient tools to deal effectively with the problems that have arisen in the workplace. A stronger Joint Committee will foster better communication and an effective working relationship and maintain a spirit of cooperation and respect between CUEFA and the administration.
- ii. To improve the role of the Joint Committee, we are proposing clarification of the membership of the committee to ensure equal representation from CUEFA and administration and to have equal ability with notice to bring in consultants and resource persons as necessary.

b. Article 5: Employer Rights and Responsibilities

- i. Collegial governance at CUE is weak. This article is designed to address this weakness. While we acknowledge that there are many decisions that must be made in the administration of CUE, CUEFA has drafted some changes to Employer Rights (including a name change) that reflect those responsibilities to the tenets of fair, reasonable and transparent actions as well as academic freedom and collegial governance.
- ii. To that end we have drafted revised language and new parts to Article 5 which discuss the exercising of management rights "in a fair, reasonable, equitable and non-arbitrary manner consistent with the provisions of this

- Agreement,” and for “meaningful consultations” in the drafting of relevant policy. These revisions also note the importance of bicameral governance and the open and collegial practice of collegial governance at CUE.
- iii. We have also asserted that specific portions of the PSLA related to collegial governance be included in the CA. The PSLA has some very clear language on collegial governance that will enhance the operation of collegial governance at CUE.
- c. Article 8 - Faculty Members’ Rights, Responsibilities and Work Assignment
 - i. There have been significant issues with workload assignment related to teaching assignments particularly in relation to student supervision of independent studies, chair responsibilities and the role of program coordinators. The processes around reduction in teaching were unclear.
 - ii. The revisions to this article clarify faculty work assignments including ensuring department chairs and program coordinator have a meaningful role in the governance of the academic affairs of their departments/programs.
 - d. Article 9 - Ranks and Categories of Appointments and Continuing Appointments for Faculty Members
 - i. The dual process of probationary periods and advancement to Associate level created an overly complicated system with significant duplication and time for Faculty members and administration. The language in the current CA is out of step with other institutions.
 - ii. To that end, revisions in Article 9 have streamlined the annual review process by suggesting review happen on a two-year (biennial) cycle. It also ensures that the faculty-led Advancement in Rank plays a more meaningful role in the transition of faculty members to full-time appointments.
 - e. Articles 33-35 & 37-41 - ASOs
 - i. The work of ASOs (Academic Librarians, Lab Instructors and Placement Coordinators) is crucial to the operation of the university and fundamental in supporting student experience and research. As full members of CUEFA, ASOs are entitled to the same respect and employment conditions as faculty. The roles and responsibilities of ASOs are not clearly defined in the current CA and discrepancies in vacation, medical leave and annual performance review lead to inequity between ASO and Faculty treatment. Articles related to ASOs require significant updating to reflect the workload, qualifications and annual performance reviews and procedures. These articles were revised in consultation with ASOs.
 - ii. Article 33 - this article clarifies the workload of ASOs including the provision to teach lectures or courses, participate in service to the university and community, conduct research and eligibility to apply for

- internal research grants.
 - iii. Articles 34 and 35 bring ASO vacation and medical leave provisions in line with those of faculty.
 - iv. Article 37 - New language in this article provides clarity around procedure in cases where performance has been deemed unsatisfactory and are in line with Faculty procedures (Article 10). The new procedures offer a defined and transparent process. The article includes annual review of job descriptions with any changes to be approved by the Faculty Association and affected ASOs.
 - v. Article 38 has been removed and ASOs and Faculty members are under a single Discipline Article (13).
 - vi. Articles 39, 40 and 41 provide much needed detail and clarification to the scope of work, qualifications and advancement for Librarians, Field placement coordinators and lab instructors.
3. The revised CA proposes changes aimed to improve respect for CUEFA and its agents as shown by the university administration
- a. The ability of CUEFA to properly conduct its work to build a stronger university environment at CUE can be more effectively supported by making a few adjustments to the status quo.
 - b. To that end, the following changes are proposed
 - i. Article 4: We have improved language on the remittance of union dues by the university. We are also requesting that the Employer provide the Association with a printing account on the same terms as are offered to all faculty members and that the cost of all Association printing will be borne by the Association.
 - ii. Article 7: We are adding a meeting with a CUEFA representative as part of the interview process for new Faculty positions
 - iii. Article 27: We are asking for an increase in release for the Association as a single release per term is not adequate for the amount of work a number of members must do over the course of the term. We are also looking to change the minimum notice to the VPA for course release to two months notice.
4. The revised CA also proposes a new article to address the CUE's overdependence on contract sessional labour in the running of core university programs.
- a. Given student concerns communicated through CUSC survey, and in light of concerns from CUEFA members about the over-reliance on sessional instructors in some programs, we propose a new article to improve the faculty complement at CUE.
 - b. Article 28 (new article) outlines a rationale for how an improved faculty complement would be established over a multi-year timeframe

5. The revised CA also proposes fair monetary compensation which takes into account comparisons across the sector and the current financial conditions
 - a. The compensation at CUE lags behind the compensation of our colleagues at other Alberta and Canadian institutions. We currently rank below the 10th percentile for post-secondary academic salaries in Canada. Our current average salaries fall well below 2003 Canadian salaries and we have not kept up with the inflationary pressures in Alberta. The Consumer Price Index in Alberta is significantly higher than the Canadian average and that is not reflected in our salaries. We are not competitive in our offers and as a result we are losing numerous potential faculty hires and are not retaining many of our young and promising academics.
 - b. Article 16: outlines revised compensation details for faculty
 - c. Article 36: outlines revised compensation details for ASOs

Conclusion

In this round of bargaining CUEFA is committed to redefining the relationship between CUE's administration and faculty and ASOs in a positive direction for all. We seek to achieve this in the spirit of supporting collegial governance and entrenching fair, reasonable and transparent practices. We look forward to making progress for our members, our students and for the University as a whole.