



MRFA Winter 2024 PD Series. Bargaining for Collective Rights – A Collective Responsibility *Compensation and Benefits*

The following are detailed notes from a session held on March 4, 2024 informing MRFA members of the bargaining landscape for compensation in PSE, the grounds for a significant salary increase for MRU faculty to catch up with inflation, and the other monetary benefits in the CA which should be increased as most have either seen no increases or marginal increases since 2008.

For more detailed information you may view the [recording](#) and the [slide deck](#) from the session.

Questions and/or comments can be directed to negotiations@mrfa.net.

Anupam Das, Associate Professor in Economics, Justice and Policy Studies Current Vice-Chair of the Bargaining Team

Article 13 – Salary Schedule, Grid Steps and Administration

- The difference in the MRU grid steps is approximately 3.3%. This increase has nothing to do with inflation. This increase from step to step is because of performance and due to the experience that faculty gain in their time with MRU.
- Regarding Long Service Increments for Full-time faculty (unfortunately, Contract faculty are not eligible for these) – when there were increases in salary grids these increases are also applied to LSIs

Salary Comparisons (Assistant Professors in Alberta)

The table below lists the average salaries for Assistant Professors in Alberta and it provides an overall idea of where we stand

• Institution	• 2018-19	• 2019-20	• 2020-21	• 2021-22	• 2022-23
• Alberta	• \$110,350	• \$110,950	• \$111,700	• \$114,625	• \$116,025
• Calgary	• \$106,825	• \$110,050	• \$111,950	• \$114,375	• \$104,975
• Lethbridge	• \$97,275	• \$102,800	• \$102,100	• \$103,650	• \$101,775
• MacEwan	• \$102,700	• \$100,375	• \$96,975	• \$96,900	• \$96,600
• Mount Royal	• \$98,450	• \$97,525	• \$98,400	• \$96,825	• \$95,500

- In looking at this chart we see that from 2018-2023 faculty salaries at MRU are number 4/5 out of 5 universities.
- Comments on the differences in salary:

- One possible argument that could be used against salary increases at MRU is that we have lower salaries than the big Universities because they are bigger Universities. However, UofL is substantially higher than MRU and it is similar in size to MRU . Also, it is more expensive to live in Calgary than it is to live in Lethbridge
- MRU should be somewhere closer to on par with UofC faculty – when we think of purchasing power and roles and responsibilities of faculty.
- We are close to MacEwan – but they are on average higher than MRU also, when you factor in the CPI which is higher in Calgary, we lag further behind GMU faculty.

Salary Growth vs. Inflation

• Year	• Salary growth	• Inflation
• Jul 2018 – Jun 2019	• 0%	• 2.03%
• Jul 2019 – Jun 2020	• 0%	• 1.27%
• Jul 2020 – Jun 2021	• 0%	• 1.47%
• Jul 2021 – Jun 2022	• 0%	• 5.89%
• Jul 2022 – Mar 2023	• 0%	• 6.24%
• April 2023 – Nov 2023	• 1.25%	• 3.59%
• Dec 2023	• 1.5%	• 4.00%

- Looking just at the 2018-2019 - we lost our real income by 2.03% (the same applies for the subsequent years where that was 0% salary increases)
- We got the first increase in Salary in April 2023 and this was a very hard struggle in negotiations to even get this increase, but in real terms we still lost real income which is the difference between these two numbers.
- In 2024 we anticipated a gain sharing increase to salaries but are not sure if we hit the targeted GDP growth that would have meant we would get a 0.5% salary increase. Regardless of if we get this increase or not, we will still be losing money in real terms. (this is the same agreement that other PSIs got in Alberta)

Loss of Real Income

Rank	Jul 2018	Nov 2023	Loss of real income
Assistant Prof (Step 7)	\$89,603	\$90,723	\$14,999.72
Associate Prof (Step 7)	\$105,394	\$106,711	\$17,643.55
Associate Prof (Step 14)	\$132,288	\$133,492	\$22,594.83
Full Prof (Step 10)	\$141,162	\$142,927	\$24,161.23

Cupe.ca/cpi-calculator

- You can enter your salary from a few years ago and your salary today you can see how much salary you lost over a period of time.
 - Simulations provide the graph above (used step 7 as an example as it is near the middle of the grids)
 - *note – in using this calculator, do not use the new grid step you are at after annual increments as those are merit based and not related to CPI/Inflation. You need to compare step 7 in 2018 to step 7 in 2023 (for instance).
- Since 2018, someone at step 7 of the Assistant Professor Grid would have lost real income of nearly 15,000\$, and someone at step 10 of the full prof grid would have lost 24,000\$
- This loss of real income is the same for faculty in other PSIs and other public service employees.
- All public services employees are at the bargaining table in Alberta right now
 - Public Services – Employee wage openers:
 - UNA has asked for a 25% salary increase in year 1
 - AUPE is starting their proposal at 13% in year 1 and 10% in year 2 with an additional COLA
 - Alberta Federation of Labour (AFL) President, Gill McGowan, has indicated that the government should take workers' interests seriously in this round of bargaining – Unions have had strong reactions from within their memberships due to the loss of income

SHARE YOUR STORY
 TO SUPPORT YOUR NEGOTIATING TEAM







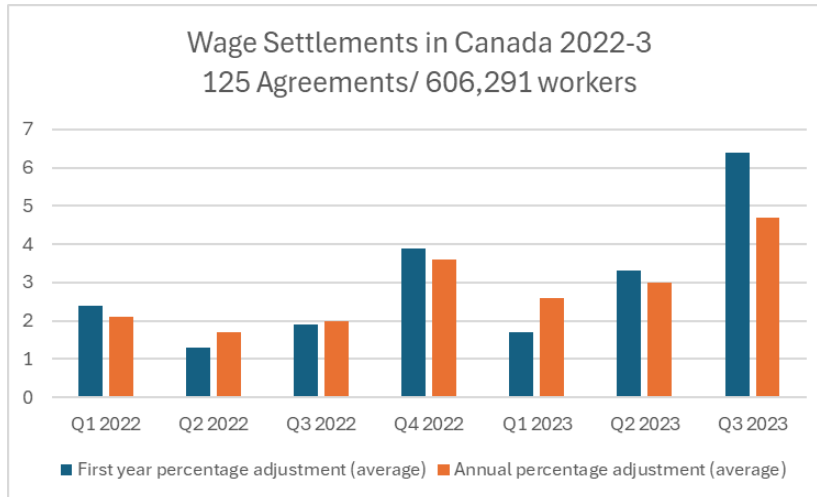
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 by 03/16/2024

To this end, the MRFA wants to create audio files to share your personal stories – how you are impacted because of this inflation. We need to create a compelling argument to try to bargain effectively with the Boards team.

[Share your story here.](https://bit.ly/432eR1T)

**Kirk Niergarth, Associate Professor in Humanities – History
Former Vice-President Negotiations 2021 - 2023**

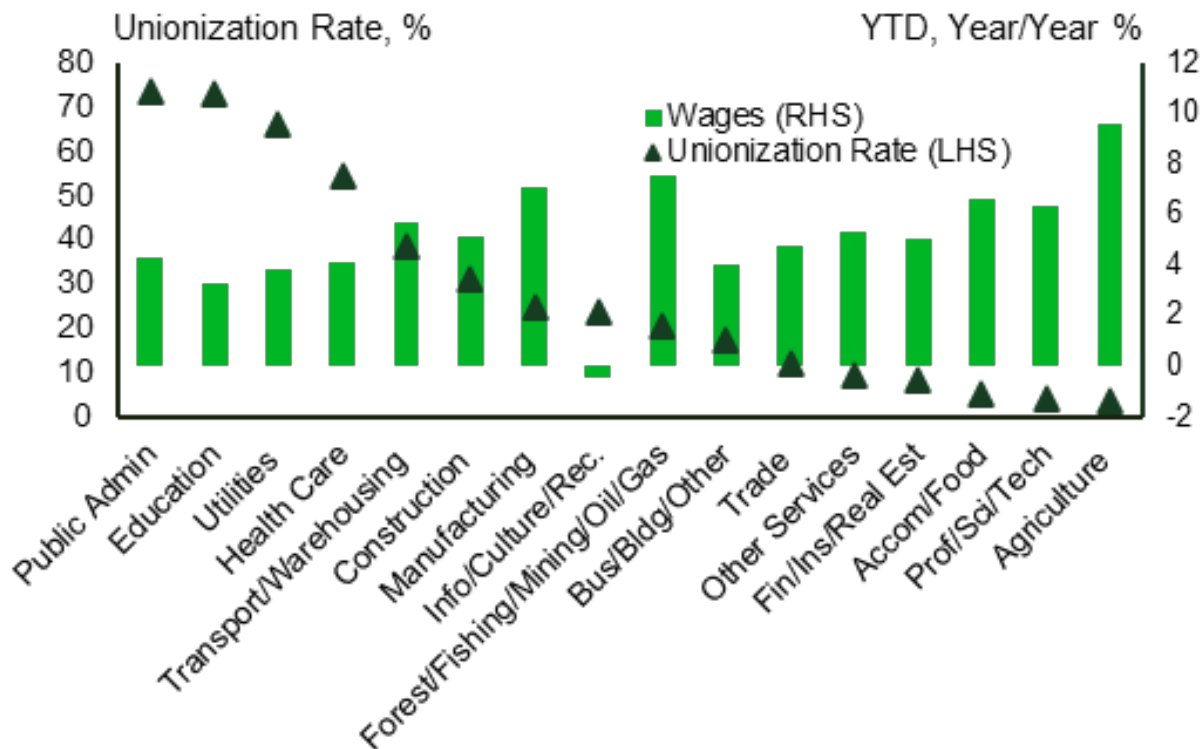
Wage Settlements in Canada



- The blue columns are higher as there are efforts to recoup losses from prior years. The average in the first year is 6% and then 4% in subsequent years
- In 2023 the average in the private sector is 5.4 and 4.4 in the public sector. These increases are not universal across the economy.

Wage growth versus Union Status:

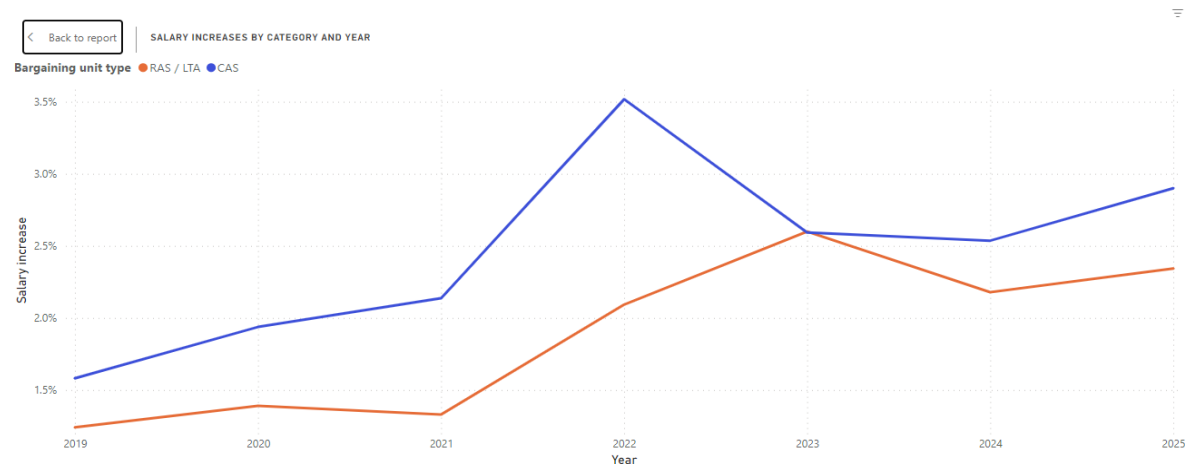
Chart 1: Wage Growth by Union Status



Source: Statistics Canada, TD Economics.

- It is not necessarily in unionized sectors where the biggest increases are seen (i.e. the highest increases are in agriculture and in forestry and in oil/mining)
- In highly unionized environments there is an average of 4% wage increases per year.
- After adjusting for the contracts with the big first year adjustments – the average wage increases sees an on average 4.2% increase year over year. This is the highest rate of increase since the early 1990s. Between then and now there has been lower increases which corresponded with lower rates of inflation.
- However, when you look at the PSE sector, the average rate of salary increases is significantly lower (the orange line is FT/LT appointments and the blue line is Contract Academic Staff).

Negotiated salary increases (2019 to present)



- There was an increase in 2023 but it was closer to 2.5%
- The largest raise was for CAS in 2022 of 3.5%
- For FT it is closer to 2.2%
 - If you look at the 5 year average this is 1.75% for FT/TLA and it is 2.42 for CAS.
 - Even this is misleading as this also includes agreements recently signed which cover the years 2022 – 2023 for PSIs in BC which has sectoral bargaining and they had significant raises which were retroactive at an average of 3.5% per year – this pulled the national average upward.)
 - **The average salary increase for AB PSE workers is an average of 0.5% per year.**
- Why is AB so far below the national average?
 - The contracts we are negotiating were done at a time when the duration and extent of the inflationary spike were not well known.
 - **It is the significant government intervention in public sector bargaining that is bringing down the salary increases for academic staff at PSIs in Alberta.**
 - **The Parkland institute produced a report “[A Thumb on the Scale](#)” details the impact of the secret and imposed mandates the government is giving to administrations in the public sector.**
 - This is something we will have to deal with again in this round

Guy Obrecht, Senior Lecturer in General Education Current Negotiations Officer, 2023 – 2025

Pro-rata – Definition and Interests

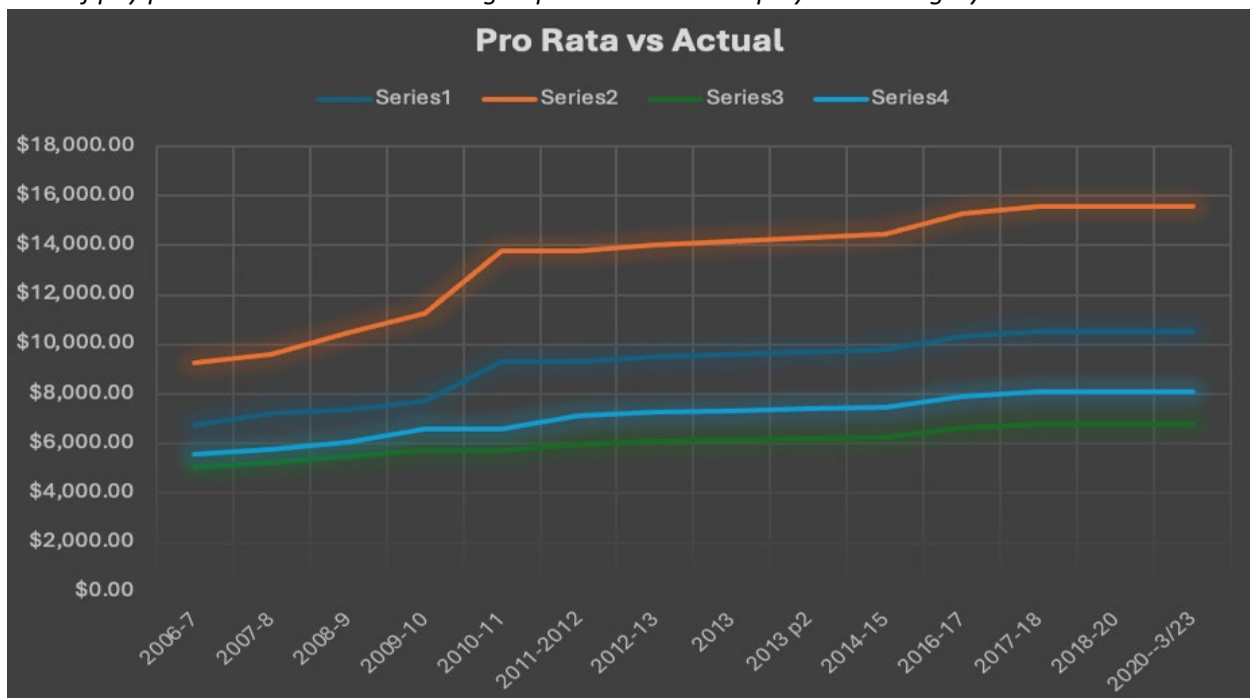
“The pro rata model defines and compensates part-time work as a percentage of full-time work. This is the best way to restore the essential integrity of scholarly work as including both the pursuit of new knowledge and its dissemination through teaching, publication, professional practice, and other creative endeavours.” ([CAUT](#))

- The pro-rata model is the idea of equal pay for equal pay. The idea here is that it would limit the University’s use of contract academic staff to make up for budgetary constraints. The goal is to have more permanent academic staff who are properly remunerated for their work.
- The pro-rata model requires that contract faculty be compensated by way of a percentage / ratio of the rate of pay for FT academic staff.
- The problem of precarious employment is a national problem, and it is worse in the US.

How to determine the pro-rata rate?

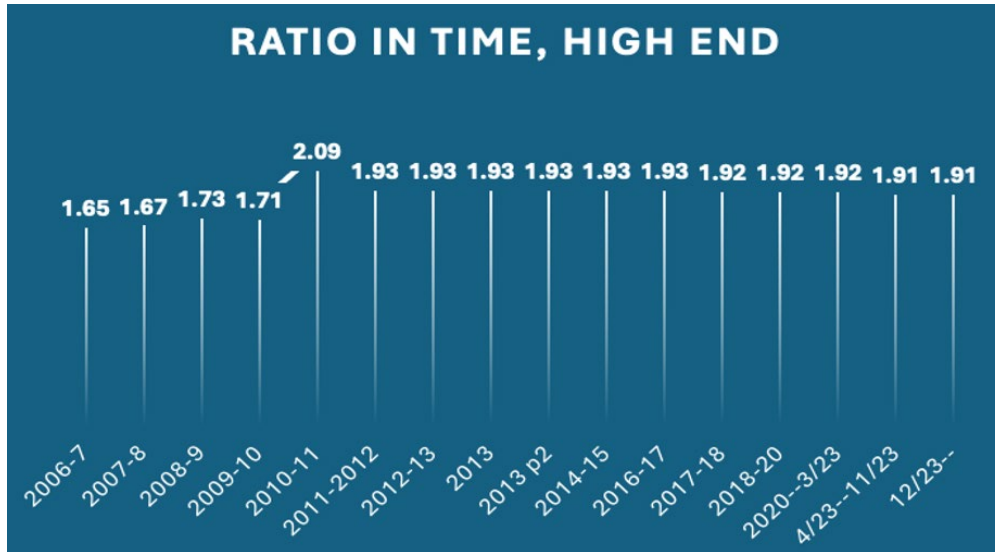
1. Take 20% of a TS position = Service
2. Take 80% of a TS position = Teaching (divided by number of courses to get to 48SICH equivalent)
3. What a single 48SICH course is worth = what the pay rate should be for contract faculty.

Rate of pay per 48SICH course based on grid placement and Employment Category



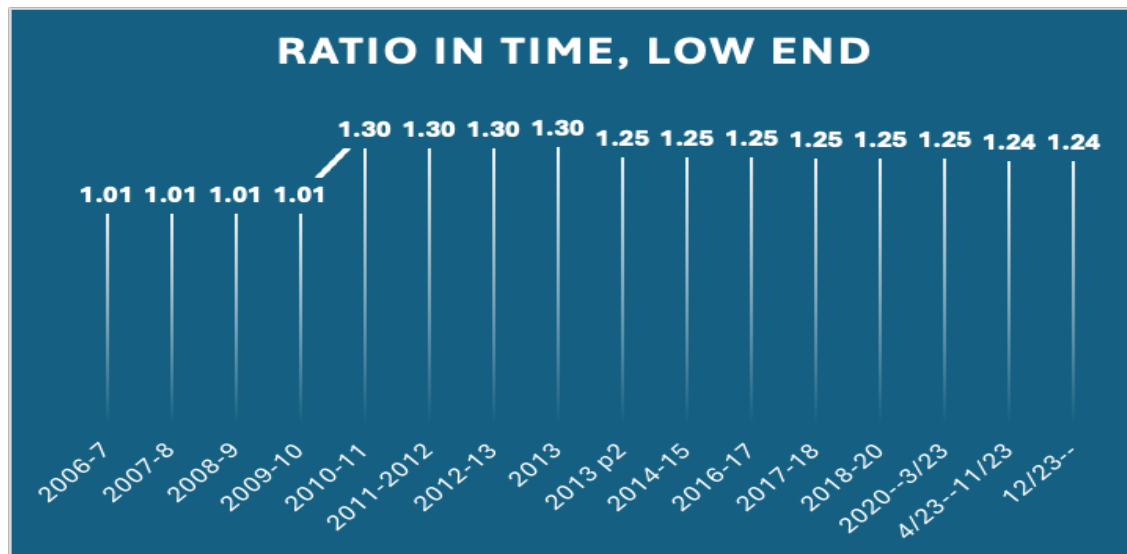
- Series 1 - dark blue line - Step 7 of an Associate prof grid
- Series 2 – red line - top of the Professor grid
- Series 3 – the green line - average actual rate of pay for contract faculty
- Series 4 – the light blue line - top of the contract grid - is the and is the.

- You can see a large shift in 2010 (with the transition to a University and the tenure and introduction of rank) where there was a significant increase for FT faculty and not for contract faculty and this has continued for the years that followed.
- This devalues the work that contract faculty do



Above: This shows that there was a time when (at the highest point of the grids) we paid more than double for Full professors teaching a course over a contract faculty member.

Below: this shows the difference in rate of pay per course in comparing the average actual contract rate of pay and the Associate Professor step 7. Currently FT faculty get paid 24% more per course taught than contract faculty. There should be equal pay for equal work.



Notes on Charts: In 2006 the greatest disparity was only 1.65; we were closer to parity before transitioning to a University; and there was parity at the lowest end of the salary scales

Benefits - See Faculty Benefits Summary [here](#).

List A (14.9.1.3):	500 (up from 150 in 2008, 405 in 2014)
Coordination (14.9.1.4): Reassigned time for Counsellors,	700 (same as 2010)
Ed Dev. And Librarians (14.9.1.5):	44.4 (same as 2010)
Contract service honorarium (14.15):	20 (same since 2016 up from 10 in 2010)
Scholarships for Dependents (16.7.1-2):	60 (same as 2010)
FDC (18.1):	350 (315 in 2008)
Employee credit course reimbursements (18.2)	64 (same since 2010)
Contract PD (18.6)	0 (unspent amounts [max 45], 1000/a guaranteed of Fixed Terms)
FT individual PD (18.7)	1.5/PC (1.1 in 2010)

- List A is currently 500k distributed per capita to faculties (this is up from 150k in 2008 and from 405k in 2014) – this funds reassigned time for research and scholarly endeavours.
- 700k for coordination funding – this has stayed the same since 2010 and the MRFA does not receive reports on how this is used. The university has grown since 2010 but this fund has remained the same
- Reassigned time for Counsellors, Librarians, and Educational Developers: this is 44k and this has not increased either since 2010. The Association does not get substantive reports on how this is used
- The Contract Service Honourarium is 20,000 and it has been the same since 2008. (same amount despite the fact that service work has likely increased)
- Scholarships for Dependents – 60k this is the same since 2010 but tuition has gone up since then and so has the faculty complement
- FDC funds 350k distributed to faculties and applied for quarterly to support research and scholarship (this is up from 315k in 2008)
- Tuition refunds 64k (has not increased since 2010)
- Contract PD Funds (first come first served and based on unused funds from prior years up to a maximum of 45k per year)
- Individual PD for FT faculty 1.5k per capita (this was 1.1k per capita in 2010)

Faculty Benefits Program

- Some benefit eligibility is dependent on your employment category; check in with MRU Benefits (benefits@mtroyal.ca) for benefit eligibility and information.
- You may be eligible for extended health and other benefits as a contract faculty employee (T+C apply).
- Full time faculty appointments are benefits eligible.
- For those eligible, some benefits are required and some are optional.

- Our dental and extended health benefits carrier is Sunlife.
- Benefits available to all 'ee/faculty category:
- Employee (&) Family Assistance Program (EFAP). Current EFAP provider to MRU is [Inkblot Therapy](#).
- Services through Inkblot include:
 - Individual and family counselling
 - nutritional/health coaching
 - Life transition coaching
 - Legal consultations
 - Financial consultations
 - Note that access to the list above is not “shared” - so you can use benefits in each of these categories (even if you max out one, you can use the others). These also reset.
- All faculty have access to MRU Recreation (some classes are additionally fee based).
- All faculty are eligible for Group Auto & Home Insurance Programs at a discounted rate from TD Insurance.
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- Faculty Benefits Summary - link to page

Discussion Period

What would it take to get HCSAs for contract faculty?

- Contract faculty get a health spending account if they qualify for benefits. The contract faculty qualification requirements for benefits is outlined in article 16.8

What are the comparative salary levels between all AB Institutions by faculty and by schools?

- This data is not publicly available based on Faculties and Schools.
- Market modifiers are used to bring people into the university and these areas do change over time based on what is happening in the broader economy

Regarding 14.9.1.5 – the information from the university on this fund that exists for reassigned time – ADC has never seen this money and the Educational Developers have never received any reassigned time from this fund. Also, nobody in ADC has ever received list A until next year for the first time.

It is really good to see more openness in public sector bargaining – to see that UNA is asking for 26% and that AUPE is making their information public as well. There is a shift in the amount of information we have access to. In the last round it was a secret that the government was guiding negotiations etc. How do we expect that this openness will affect our negotiations in this round?

- We are very attuned to what is going on in the province as we are coming up with our monetary proposals.
- At the end of the “Thumb on the Scales” Report – the Authors have suggestions about what unions can do:
 - There is the legal option – this would be challenging for us to engage in directly. The biggest unions which would have the best resources to mount a supreme court challenge is the Nurses and the AUPE

- The Government has moved to sectoral bargaining for the entire public sector and unions need to do the same thing – we need to operate as a sector and work with common cause and support. The AUPE and UNA are doing the same thing and disclosing their information publicly; so, the PSE sector could consider doing the same thing.
- Regarding the provincial sectoral bargaining – our membership in CAFA has been very valuable and we continue to work with TUCFA and AASUA (UofC and UofA FAs) – we need to approach bargaining as a collective.
- The MRFA’s Communications efforts will be ramped up this year and there will be bargaining updates after each meeting with the Board’s team. We are planning to communicate more openly with our members and this higher level of engagement is important.

Are the non-benefits benefits prioritized in any way in this round of bargaining? It would be really good to increase the money available for coordination and reassigned time.

- The 700k that has not increased for over a decade is likely being supplemented in other ways.
- Increasing this fund should also be an interest of the employer.

It was suggested that in the “Share Your Story” Initiative that members may be reticent to share their stories verbally with the awareness that they may be identifiable in the audio recording

- Written comments are welcome as well if Members would prefer not to provide a recording.