

STRIKING NEWS TODAY

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College talks break down - union calls for binding arbitration

The OPSEU college faculty bargaining team is calling on management to agree to binding arbitration after contract talks broke down today.

“Three days of talks since the strike began have produced no progress that would lead to a settlement,” team chair Ted Montgomery told a packed news conference in Toronto Wednesday afternoon. “It is now abundantly clear to us that no negotiated settlement is possible with the current management bargaining team in place.

“We have been clear and concise about what we need to have in order to improve education quality, but management won’t address quality issues,” Montgomery said. “For faculty, no settlement is possible that does not address quality.”

Any further delays in settling the strike will mean

students seriously risk losing their semester, Montgomery said.

“There is not the faintest hope that the colleges’ ‘Semester Completion Strategies’ will actually save the semester,” Montgomery said. “Without faculty to deliver courses, assign tests, and evaluate students, any credits students might receive would not be worth the paper they are printed on.”

When asked about the strategies, Rick Miner, president of Seneca College and chief spokesperson for all 24 college presidents, told the *National Post* last week that “what we’re really trying to do here is buy time.”

“The colleges have bought enough time at our students’ expense,” said Montgomery. “Now it’s time for a resolution, and it’s time to improve education quality.”

Librarians & Information Literacy ~ a Vital Part of Student Success

Students have to rely on more than textbooks to master their subjects when it comes to learning in today’s world. Information literacy is a critical skill for school and career success: students have to determine what information they need and then be able to locate, understand, evaluate, and use that information effectively.

Librarians spend much of their time finding and evaluating online content sources. They review information databases, periodicals, indexes, and other content repositories that are accessible online. They teach students how to be Internet-savvy, and to critically assess sources. They help faculty gather and develop curriculum-specific information resources and tools for both in-class and online courses.

More critical to literacy is that librarians and faculty get adequate time to sit down together to determine students’ information needs, and develop the teaching materials and methods that

best integrate into a given course. Information literacy improves students’ thinking skills and develops when librarians and faculty can give students individual feedback and guidance on the information they are using.

Sadly, the current faculty workload allows no time for this type of collaboration — which means that students cannot fully benefit from the vast amount of high-quality content available for their studies. Worse, large class sizes and crammed course curricula leave little class time for students to gain basic hands-on experience to develop their information literacy.

Students have a right and a need to acquire necessary information skills before graduation. Information literacy is a fundamental principal of higher education and the key to life-long learning. It is also the key to success in the workplace. That’s why librarians and all faculty are striking for quality education.

E-mail us your photos & stories: union@opseu560.org

Engagement and Retention Only Possible With Faculty

One of college management's top challenges is to stem the appalling student attrition rate. But how is it possible to engage and retain students without providing for adequate faculty involvement?

Students who succeed do so when they make a connection with their college. Real connections come with relationships, a person-to-person bond that allows a meeting of the minds. This is what happens when students connect with faculty.

When you think about your life, and the people who have had the greatest impact on you, a teacher is usually among them. For some, it was a teacher who first treated them as an adult. Or who validated their abilities and knowledge when they needed a boost to their self-esteem. Or who gave them a credo on which to build a great life.

Teachers can positively influence students about to go wrong, and keep them on the right track. Teachers can open the world of knowledge to students and show them that

any challenge can be surmounted if they know how to tackle it. Teaching is a vocation we undertake because we believe in the social value of our contributions as educators.

College faculty are some of the best teachers a student will ever encounter. Many of them have advanced academic qualifications and/or significant real-life work experience. They understand the needs of the college student population. Many of them have been employers or consultants and know how to prepare students for the job search and the workplace.

Denying students time with faculty is just plain wrong. It defeats any engagement and retention initiative that the colleges try to implement. Only with active faculty involvement can a college succeed in attracting, retaining, educating, and graduating students who are prepared to take their place in our economy and society. Quality education means adequate faculty time with students.



Bird's-eye view of the March 23 Rally for Quality Education



Remembering Josef Stavroff on the picket line



Stop gutting the college system!