Sessionals Teach Almost 50% of Undergrad Courses

This semester, the University employs Sessionals to teach just under half (47%) of its undergraduate courses. Did you know a Sessional Lecturer I makes approximately $35,000 per year, while the starting salary for an Assistant Professor is $83,787 per year for a similar teaching load? In addition to the $50,000 discrepancy in salary, not all Sessionals receive benefits and those that do are only eligible for benefits equivalent to 50% of permanent employees. Moreover, Sessionals are ineligible for parental leave benefits from the University. Perhaps most problematic is that Sessionals must continually re-apply for courses they’ve already taught, having only 4-months security of employment at a time. This means that Sessionals are not able to supervise students, sit on committees, collaborate on research, or receive funding from the University and other funding agencies. Quality of education is better when academic staff are treated fairly and given appropriate levels of compensation, job security, and time to work on teaching and supporting students. These circumstances greatly increase workload for tenured and tenure-track faculty members and limit their ability to work collegially with Sessionals.

As a member of the University community what can you do about this? In the upcoming contract negotiations with the University, please keep the situation of Sessionals in mind. University Management may say that the fiscal situation makes it impossible to accept any salary or benefits increases, but this is simply not true. It is a matter of priorities, not fiscal restraint. It would take a relatively small amount of money to improve the income and benefits received by Sessionals and would go a long way to addressing the inequity they experience. The public opinion expects universities to be model employers in their communities. Now is the time to support more good jobs, not fewer. Let’s insist that the University of Regina recognize the value of the Sessionals who teach almost half of its undergraduate courses.

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