The importance of time

This upcoming year promises to be a busy year for URFA. There will be bargaining. This involves the establishment of committees for two APT units and the UofR Faculty. This work is made possible by URFA’s professional team and a cadre of volunteers. Where possible URFA volunteers are supported through the course relief program we negotiated within the UofR Academic collective agreement. These resources give some people on URFA’s bargaining team teaching relief when engaged in actively bargaining. One large problem is that not all of our volunteer members teach leaving academic librarians and APT members challenged to find time within their busy schedule to bargain, or do other volunteer work.

The tools available to create URFA time are limited. There are nine course relief credits available each year. These may be used to support the Grievance chair, Treasurer, Equity Officer and committee chair, Academic Vice-President and or URFA’s President. Course relief could be used to support the development of a special project. There is some limited flexibility in the use of a relief credit.

Last year URFA allocated two course reliefs to the Faculty of Science reducing my teaching commitment to two courses this academic year. This time was used to support members’ interests on the campus through: committee work, discussion with administration, the production of position papers and the research and analysis of University publicly available documents (for example: Board of Governors’ minutes, including the President’s Report, and the Audited Financial Statements.)

The article, What is the President thinking?, in this newsletter speaks to the health of UofR’s operating budget. I used access to information provisions to learn more about university management plans because not all information in this public institution is publicly available. I represent URFA at labour meetings like Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT), CAUT West Regional and the Saskatchewan Federation of Labor. I also attend specialized meetings on topics of interest to members. These working meetings provide the resources needed to better understand and address issues such as respectful workplace policies and defined benefit pension plans. Finally, course relief allows me to serve as the ‘resident academic’ in the very busy URFA office.

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