

# 2018 OCUFA Lorimer Award

Citation for Dr. Steven Bednarski



Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations  
Union des Associations des Professeurs des Universités de l'Ontario



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*Read by Gyllian Phillips, OCUFA President*

The Lorimer Award was established in honour of Doug and Joyce Lorimer, who were instrumental in advancing faculty association collective bargaining in Ontario. This award recognizes outstanding contributions to improving the conditions of employment of university faculty through bargaining.

As a faculty member in the department of history at St. Jerome's University, Steven Bednarski has taught thousands of students the importance of research and analytical thinking. Perhaps more impressively, since certification of the St. Jerome's University Academic Staff Association in 2009, Steven has worked tirelessly to improve the working conditions of faculty at St. Jerome's University, through both collective bargaining and his work on the association's executive as president and past president. He has accomplished all this while maintaining an extensive administrative workload, winning multiple research grants, getting promoted to associate and then full professorship, and having a baby!

Over the past ten years, Steven has played a pivotal role as a negotiator or chief negotiator in four rounds of bargaining undertaken by the academic staff association. With a remarkable ability to cultivate collaborative and disciplined bargaining teams, Steven has fostered a sense of community, both on the team and within the broader association membership. His capacity for research, sharp intellect, meticulous record keeping, and generosity is well known among his colleagues.

At times, his approach has been unconventional. During the first round of full-time faculty bargaining, he formed a negotiating team largely made up of members who had been apprehensive about certification. Yet, this strategic understanding of the membership and their concerns served to increase support for the association and unify the community, leading to a groundbreaking first collective agreement.

Steven has demonstrated a deep commitment to solidarity. During his tenure as the president of the academic staff association, Steven convincingly argued that it would be in the best interests of all faculty – full-time or contract – to work collectively within one association, each unit supporting the other. This approach culminated in the certification of contract academic staff in 2013 and the negotiation of their first collective agreement.

His vision of solidarity and strategic thinking was again on full display when, in the most recent round of bargaining, Steven proposed that full-time and contract faculty work together to ensure one unit would not benefit at the cost of the other. With this vision, he was able to achieve support from the full-time unit to give up some of their rights, including the right of first refusal over some courses, to benefit their more precariously employed



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colleagues. He also created pathways to permanent employment for three long-employed contract faculty members.

The gains made under Steven's leadership have been inspirational. Small faculty associations elsewhere in Ontario and beyond have looked to the collective agreements where Steven has been a key author as a model for their own. Steven's generosity in mentoring colleagues is also known among other faculty associations who often turn to him during difficult times to draw on his deep knowledge.

Steven's approach to his work is perhaps encapsulated best in what he said to a colleague who was considering joining the bargaining team at another faculty association and had turned to him for advice, "it is an intense but ultimately rewarding job to serve your colleagues".

For the countless hours he has spent serving his colleagues and improving the working conditions of his fellow faculty, for his mentoring and advising faculty associations across Canada, for his fight for fairness and equity, and for the exceptional contributions he has made to collective bargaining, not just at St. Jerome's but at many other faculty associations, I am truly honoured to present Steven Bednarski with the 2018 Lorimer Award.