

2021 OCUFA Service Award

Citation for Jeff Tennant

The logo for OCUFA, consisting of the letters 'OCUFA' in a bold, blue, sans-serif font.

Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations
Union des associations des professeurs des universités de l'Ontario



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Read by Rahul Sapra, OCUFA President

The Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations is honoured to present University of Western Ontario Faculty Association member Jeff Tennant with a 2021 OCUFA Service Award. The OCUFA Service Award recognizes those remarkable individuals whose work has strengthened OCUFA and advanced the interests of professors and academic librarians across Ontario.

Jeff Tennant's steady leadership and vision have been instrumental in shaping collective bargaining at faculty associations across the province and improving working conditions for members. Jeff has repeatedly shown his commitment to building a stronger labour movement through his contributions to OCUFA. As Vice-Chair and then Chair of OCUFA's Collective Bargaining Committee between 2015 and 2020, Jeff quickly established a rapport with committee members, offering insightful guidance in response to their concerns. On the committee's weekly bargaining calls, he excelled at facilitating conversations amongst chief negotiators as they discussed their most pressing challenges.

Jeff was an integral member of the OCUFA Working Group on Student Questionnaires on Courses and Teaching. Formed in 2016, the working group was struck to examine increasing reports of the misuse of SQCT results and the harassment of faculty through anonymous comments. Jeff took on the issue as part of his own faculty association's bargaining in 2018 and his experiences helped guide the working group towards the release of its final and highly influential report in 2019. The report found that SQCT results are skewed by factors outside faculty control and that they facilitate harassment, compromise educational quality, and are not appropriate for determining promotions, tenure, or provincial funding allocations.

Through his work, Jeff has been a tireless advocate for all Ontario faculty association members, including precariously employed faculty and librarians. He is a deep believer in the notion of "nothing about us without us" and has worked hard to engage with underrepresented and racialized groups, including Indigenous faculty members at Western. By collaborating with his Indigenous colleagues, he negotiated language outside of the collective agreement that established a working group on Indigenous scholarship. This group was tasked with recommending model collective bargaining language to recognize the merit of Indigenous teaching, scholarship, and service. The group's report and recommendations were accepted by both Western and UWOFA.

As Chief Negotiator for the University of Western Faculty Association, Jeff helped guide the faculty association into a new era of collective bargaining in 2014. He acted as a vital bridge between the bargaining team and faculty association executive and worked closely and collaboratively with successive UWOFA presidents to improve negotiation policies and strategies. This experience has all been brought to the fore in his roles at OCUFA, where he has been able to share his knowledge of negotiations and collective organizing.



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Jeff has also played a key part in rejecting the privatization of education at Western by pushing back against the university's proposal to partner with Navitas. The faculty association's win has provided a beacon for other faculty associations across Canada, showing that such agreements are not inevitable and can be defeated.

A positive and supportive "eternal optimist," Jeff is always ready to offer an encouraging word in English, French, or Spanish. For his thoughtful contributions, his selfless commitment, his strong leadership, and his tireless advocacy, we are honoured to recognize Jeff Tennant with a 2021 OCUFA Service Award.