

2021 OCUFA Service Award

Citation for Herb Kunze, Robert Hickey, Paul Young,
and Cynthia Messenger

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 OCUFA Service Award recognizes those remarkable individuals whose work has strengthened OCUFA and advanced the interests of professors and academic librarians across Ontario. This year, the Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations is honoured to present Herb Kunze, Robert Hickey, Paul Young, and Cynthia Messenger with a 2021 OCUFA Service Award for their efforts in creating the University Pension Plan.

July 2021 will see the inception of the UPP, a jointly-sponsored pension plan for the university sector in Ontario. The UPP represents a monumental achievement for those who have worked for years to make it a reality and will provide a stable defined-benefit pension plan option for Ontario university faculty and staff for decades to come.

It is no understatement to say that the UPP would not be a reality without the dedication and hard work of those individuals whose service we recognize today. Herb Kunze of the University of Guelph Faculty Association, Robert Hickey and Paul Young of the Queen's University Faculty Association, and Cynthia Messenger of the University of Toronto Faculty Association were instrumental in pushing the UPP project forward and ultimately bringing it to fruition. The success of the UPP cannot be attributed to any one person or university, but together these four faculty members, along with QUFA Executive Director Leslie Jermyn and OCUFA Vice-President Sue Wurtele, worked tirelessly to create a sector-wide pension plan designed with university faculty and staff in mind.

The UPP's origin dates back to 2014, when OCUFA and a coalition of non-faculty unions engaged in discussions with the Council of Ontario Universities and Ontario government to explore a potential sector-wide pension plan. In the years since, Cynthia, Herb, Paul, and Robert jumped into the plan's development headfirst, learning a *lot* about pensions along the way. Together, they led landmark negotiations that created what the UPP is today—a transparently and jointly governed plan with a membership of over 33,000 and \$10 billion in assets.

The plan's development required the negotiation of more than half a dozen different detailed documents laying out the plan's design, governance, and the process that would allow others to join. Over three years, today's award recipients spoke almost daily, as the project moved forward.

At the same time, they led intensive negotiations at the local level, served on different bargaining and pension committees, and ensured that the stage was set for their own associations to join the UPP upon its inception. This work and a multi-year process of consultation and education of their members culminated in overwhelmingly successful consent votes in February 2019. Throughout this period, members of the group regularly attended OCUFA Board and Collective Bargaining Committee Meetings to provide updates on the plan's development and engaged in conversations with other OCUFA members who were interested to know more about the UPP's design.



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When the UPP was made official in January 2020, Paul, Robert, Cynthia, and Herb all had seats on the plan's Employee Sponsor Committee, which has met over 50 times in the past year. Throughout this period, they have been engaged in all the work of managing an organization with billions of dollars in assets and, having become experts in the field, have spoken at international pension conferences and regularly answer questions from representatives of other faculty associations wanting to learn more about the plan.

The creation of the UPP is a remarkable achievement. The work that made it possible—the endless meetings, intensive bargaining, constant member engagement, attention to detail, and determination—is difficult to fathom. It has been inspiring to watch this group of dedicated faculty toil day after day to build a more secure future for tens of thousands of Ontario faculty. For this important work, we are honoured to recognize Herb Kunze, Robert Hickey, Paul Young, and Cynthia Messenger with a 2021 OCUFA Service Award.