



OCUFA

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

2021-2022 OCUFA Grievance/Arbitration Award

Citation for Sheila McKee-Protopapas



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Read by
Tony Fabiano, OCUFA Grievance Committee Chair

The OCUFA Grievance/Arbitration Award was established in 2018 to recognize that, alongside Collective Bargaining, Grievance and Arbitration work is one of the twin pillars that shape the working conditions of faculty, academic librarians, and other academic professionals. It is in the nature of counselling and representing members that much of the effort undertaken by faculty association members and staff occurs outside of the public eye. This award pays tribute to the exemplary dedication and resourcefulness that Grievance Officers bring to defending collective agreements, advancing the position of the academic professions, and protecting members' rights and dignity.

This year, we honour Sheila McKee-Protopapas for dedicated service as Executive Director and Grievance Coordinator for the Wilfrid Laurier University Faculty Association (WLUFA), located on the traditional "Haldimand tract" territory of the Neutral, Anishnaabe and Haudenosaunee peoples. We also salute her significant contributions to the OCUFA Grievance Committee. As a biologist who taught as a contract faculty member of WLUFA, Sheila also earned a Master's in Industrial Relations and Human Resources during her time at WLUFA. In addition to this award, she received the OCUFA Status of Women Committee Award of Distinction in 2012, and the OCUFA Lorimer Award in 2014 for her contributions through collective bargaining.

Sheila hits all the high points described in the criteria for this award.

Before becoming WLUFA Executive Director and Grievance Coordinator in 2009, Sheila already had extensive experience as a grievance officer, health and safety representative, and Executive Committee member of WLUFA. As Executive Director she gained a reputation for her "encyclopedic" knowledge of the separate collective agreements of two bargaining units, and her ingenuity in applying them. Commentators for her nomination also stressed the imagination and insight about the application of collective agreement



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provisions brought by Sheila to the bargaining table to assess implications of proposals and imagine alternative proposals.

Sheila was dedicated to building a solid core of grievance officers composed of a balance of representatives from both full-time and contract bargaining units. To support diversity, she supported access to training. That generosity extended also to her many contributions to the OCUFA Grievance Officer Orientation workshops.

Sheila's commitment to ensuring fairness for contract faculty members is well known, not just within WLUFAs and Wilfrid Laurier circles, but within and across OCUFA as well. WLUFAs members writing in support of her nomination noted her ability to negotiate the sometimes conflicting priorities between full-time and contract faculty in the exercise of their rights.

Sheila is recognized by her colleagues for her ability to craft solutions to grievances and to navigate situations that do not have a public profile. They cite her ability to navigate sensitive disputes between members as an example. But they also praise her role in the WLUFAs handling of a free speech controversy that attracted wide news coverage, and in the association's dealings with the employer about the problematic features of its COVID-19 strategy.

Sheila has clearly played a significant part in building WLUFAs capacity, its grievance strategies, and its bargaining. Her contributions extend much further. Sheila has been a member of the OCUFA Grievance Committee since its inception, given multiple presentations, participated in numerous panels, and served for several years as its Vice-Chair.

Being an exemplary Grievance Officer is not only about actions and achievements. Sheila also strikes the right chords. Letters of support for her nomination all remark on her comportment and demeanour; her compassion, and sympathetic and active listening with members; her calm and measured navigation of difficult cases within the association and with the employer; and the assured and determined professionalism that has won her respect from her counterparts across the table. These are qualities evident also in her



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participation in the OCUFA Grievance Committee—someone who is always interested and engaged, and generous not only with her time but her sincere and well-considered input to every discussion.

The OCUFA Grievance/Arbitration Award is a fitting tribute to the lasting impression Sheila has made on WLUFA, OCUFA, and beyond.



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The OCUFA Grievance/Arbitration Award was established to recognize the often invisible, yet crucial work of individuals who have done, or continue to do, exceptional work on behalf of the Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations and its members in the area of grievance and arbitration. OCUFA recognizes that both Collective Bargaining and Grievance and Arbitration are the twin pillars that shape the relationship between Faculty Association members and their Employers. It is awarded biennially.