

OCUFA

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

2022-2023 OCUFA Grievance/Arbitration Award

Citation for Natasha Udell

**Read by:
Jesmen Mendoza, Chair, OCUFA Grievance Committee**

The Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations is honoured to present the 2022-2023 Grievance/Arbitration Award of Distinction to Natasha Udell, Legal Counsel at the Association of Professors of the University of Ottawa – Association des professeurs de l'Université d'Ottawa. The University of Ottawa is located on unceded Algonquin territory.

One recommender wrote: “Natasha has been a change-maker for both our Association and in the province of Ontario.” In the 13 years that Natasha has been working at the faculty association, she has made significant improvements to the grievance process. She introduced alternative dispute resolution principles into grievance processes at the University of Ottawa, which were recently codified into the collective agreement. This change has improved the working relationships between the university and the faculty. One recommender wrote that this change “helped to transform the culture at the University of Ottawa.”

Natasha’s management of arbitration and mediation processes has been recognized by members of the association as fair, supportive, and intelligent. She was instrumental in introducing pioneering new language on harassment into the faculty association collective agreement, and successfully led the process to update collective agreement language regarding equity and inclusion. One letter of support reads: “Her commitment to advocate for the members’ individual rights and her ability to link individual grievances to broader political issues demonstrates her dedication to building better faculty associations.”

Natasha has also driven several legal victories for her faculty association. She won a judicial review against the University of Ottawa’s 2015 decision to pay additional compensation to two administrative officers during a restraint period, and successfully won financial compensation for Replacement Professors, who are temporary professors that are hired on short-term contracts to ‘replace’ regular APUO members while they are serving the Central Administration. In all her work, Natasha is strategic and innovative.

A letter of support reads: “She is excellent at ‘thinking outside of the box’: she is very conscious of the fact that while the law or a collective agreement may say one thing, it may be better strategically to do another, especially as a means to signal to the Employer that we are serious about an issue.”

Natasha is always working to improve conditions for members and the operations of the faculty association. She created a conflict-of-interest policy and anti-discrimination and anti-harassment policy at APUO, and regularly leads training sessions and workshops on urgent, relevant issues facing faculty in the association.

Beyond her employer, Natasha is a leader in the broader labour and legal communities. She was elected President of the Canadian Organization of Faculty Association Staff (COFAS) in 2022 and is an active member of the Canadian Labour Lawyers Association. She has made presentations to the Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT) Forums for Senior Grievance and presented before Parliament, most recently on the issue of Bill 26. In all these roles, she exudes tenacity, competence, and creativity.

For her commitment to ensuring strong, robust faculty associations now and in the future, and a better future for public universities, OCUFA is pleased to present this award to Natasha Udell.

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.

