TO: Western University Graduate Teaching Assistants
FROM: Janice Deakin, Provost and Vice-President (Academic)
RE: Upcoming vote on Western’s last contract offer

April 6, 2018

Dear Graduate Teaching Assistant:

Western University and your bargaining agent, Public Service Alliance of Canada, Local 610, have for several months been working towards a new Collective Agreement for Graduate Teaching Assistants.

During the 12 bargaining sessions, the University and your Union made considerable progress and reached agreement on many key points where we had differed. We value the work of GTAs and the important contributions you make to the quality of undergraduate education at Western. That is why throughout the bargaining process we have sought an agreement that is reasonable for you, with monetary and non-monetary improvements.

Western presented its last offer to your Union on March 27, and we believe our last offer is reasonable and responsible.

We are pleased you will have an opportunity to review the offer with your union and to vote on it.

We understand you are scheduled to vote on the University’s last offer on April 11 and 12, 2018. We believe it is important that you fully understand the University’s last offer in order to make an informed decision, and that you attend the vote.

You can view the full offer as a PDF here, http://uwo.ca/contractnegotiations/gta/GTA-lastoffer.pdf, and other communications on the negotiations website at www.uwo.ca/contractnegotiations. Some highlights of the offer worth noting:

- Hourly wage increases of 2% (retroactive to September, 2017) and then 1.5% and 1.5% more annually for a cumulative total increase of 5.1% by September 2019. This would bring your hourly rate, by September 2019, to $45.83/hour, among the highest rates earned by Ontario GTAs. Further, these increases would not be clawed back from any other funding you would receive from the university;
- A one-time lump-sum payment of $200 for every Western GTA upon ratification;
- Annual contributions toward Members’ health care plan: $160 per Member in the first year and $190 in each year after that;
- Western will also contribute $300,000 during the contract ($125,000 this year and $175,000 by January 2019) toward a fund, to be disbursed by the union, to help GTAs facing financial need.
- All hours worked beyond those described in a GTA’s Duties Specification Agreement will be paid at an overtime rate of 1.5 times the GTA’s usual hourly rate.
- If no graduate students from within a department are available to fill an open TA position, the position can be offered to a PhD student who is beyond their eligible employment period. If no such student is available, that position can be offered to a Master’s student who is beyond their eligibility or any student (within or beyond eligible period) from another department.
- 10 paid hours of sick leave (double the previous amount) per term. Any sick leave not used may be carried over to the next working term to a maximum of 15 hours.
- No work will be required during the December closure period (nor on 10 statutory holidays, as per the previous agreement)
- Intellectual property created by a GTA during employment at Western shall be owned by the GTA Member.
- Employees who have completed at least one GTAship will be asked for their input into preferences for future course assignments.

It is the University’s understanding that a strike vote has already been held in favour of a strike. This means that if you reject the University’s last offer, you and the Union would be on strike. The University would like to avoid a strike if possible and focus instead on academic issues and your work as a GTA.

Western has no desire to lock out employees. However, if a strike proceeds, Western will need to implement contingency plans with respect to the services that you provide as GTAs within our University environment. We remind you that if a strike were to take place, you would have the right to continue with your GTA work and the University would look at contingency plans to ensure you have the ability to exercise this right. We will follow up with details about this process at a later date.

We urge you to read our full offer at http://uwo.ca/contractnegotiations/gta/GTA-lastoffer.pdf before you vote. And we urge you to vote.

Sincerely,

Janice Deakin, PhD
Provost and Vice-President (Academic)