

Ben Harder, VP for Grievances

## Representational Work: Mutual Support

The Union has long had a model of member support that depended on paid staff and grievance stewards. Back at the turn of the century, before fair share, we had about .5 FTE paid staff per campus, and significant numbers of the staff were part time Lecturers or ex-Lecturers. Between 2003 and 2017, we increased our staff from about 4.5 FTE total to about 7.5 FTE total. During that time, we have had indifferent member support; some librarian units had no grievance support at all, and some lecturer units had only very spotty member participation, even when we were paying them course releases. We cannot blame the problem on poor compensation for local stewards.

Because of our excellent campus representatives, this hasn't been as problematic as it might have been. But now, we are in the process of going back to roughly .5 FTE paid staff per campus. And this change comes after we have negotiated better contracts, begun enforcing those contracts, and seen our Lecturer numbers increase, at least in terms of total FTE.

We need to defend ourselves, mutually.

We need to change our culture in some subtle but profound ways. First, we need to spread information to our members about our contracts and their rights. At the same time, we need to ease the feelings of helplessness, shame, and fear that our members experience both in defending themselves and in supporting each other. Then, we need to develop our member participation in representation matters, by developing representational committees and empowering site reps.

### Distributing Information to members

- We need to get the word out that we exist.
- We need to advertise our contracts.
- We need to provide FAQ information online.
- We need to use site reps to distribute information.
- We need "know your contract" and "know your rights" meetings.

### Destigmatizing self-advocacy and mutual support

- We aren't focused on "grievances," we focused on problem-solving, troubleshooting, and advising.

- Many members are afraid of formal processes, especially grievances, and we need to help them over that fear.
- Many members are ashamed that they need help, or unwilling to challenge authority, or unable to do so effectively, and we can coach them to be more effective advocates.
- Many members believe that setbacks and losses are failures and deal-breakers, and we need to convince them that it's a long game.
- Once we help them with their concerns, problems, and grievances, we need to draw them in to become part of the network of mutual support.

#### Developing representational committees

- Rather than finding one person who will take total responsibility and do all the work, we need to find several people willing to spend time helping each other.
- We need one or two "point people" in each unit on each campus for clear communication with the UC.
- We could use several people on each campus who are willing to listen to member complaints, give initial advice, and check to see whether there is a formal grievance. (People like to call this process "intake.")
- We could use several people on each campus who are willing to do research—to establish the facts of the case with interviews of the grievant and study of UC policies, our contract, and things such as course schedules, etc.
- We could use two or three people on each campus who are comfortable doing formal advocacy, such as being part of (and ideally running) grievance meetings, labor-management meetings, and negotiations.
- We can find these people through those we help, through the site reps, and through informational meetings.

#### Using the site reps

- Site reps, as they sign people up, should also hand out information (I'm sure they are already)
- Site reps, as they check in on people they've signed up, should ask about members' working experiences (office space and contracts for Lecturers; statements of duties and supervisors' behavior for Librarians)
- Site reps, as they maintain a presence in the department(s), should be able to answer questions, pass the questions they cannot answer to someone who might be able to do so, and determine that there might be a problem that should be addressed by a grievance or other more systematic process.