

Acadia University faculty on strike

By Lucas Timmons
The Athenaeum (Acadia
University)

WOLFVILLE (CUP) -- Acadia University faculty are on strike. Talks between the Acadia University Faculty Association and the Acadia Board of Governors broke down Oct. 14, despite a full day of last ditch negotiations.

No further talks are scheduled. "We gave the board an offer with even more flexibility than our previous offer," said Andrew Biro, spokesperson for the faculty association.

He felt that the Boards last offer was not significantly different from previous offers.

A sign hanging outside the AUFA headquarters reads:

"Talks have broken down, the administration has left us with no other choice but to take job action.

We are prepared to resume negotiations at any time that the board is prepared to make significant movement on our proposals."

Professors and librarians are walking the picket lines in shifts and garnering support from traffic passing in front of the university.

It is the second faculty strike in Acadia's history. The first was in 2004.

Students missed 13 days of classes during the 2004 strike but did not lose credit for the semester.

Scott Roberts, a spokesman for Acadia University was disappointed that an agreement could not be met.

"The compensation offer made in June at (the AUFA's) request has not changed. It was made based on a projection of 3,000 students with 500 of those paying international fees," said Roberts.

"(Acadia has) slightly over 2,900 students and less than 500 international students this year. Tuition is coming in below our projection but the offer still stands."

Roberts also indicated that recent job cuts in the administrative sector have been a direct effort to reduce costs.

"(We are) reducing administrative costs because we cannot reduce faculty costs," Roberts said.

Acadia Student Union (ASU) President Kyle Steele has indicated that, for the time being, the ASU will remain neutral.

"If it's anything like the last strike we may see a decline in enrollment and the image of the university might suffer from this," said Steele. "Acadia is ranked quite highly in Canada, and as a good university should, it will rebound back."

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Acadia President Gail Dinter-Gottlieb is currently in China on a recruiting mission. Several students feel that she should have stayed in Wolfville.

"I do think that her time would have been better spent here on campus, although advanced technology will allow her to communicate with her negotiating team

throughout the strike," said Steele.

Points of contention in the collective agreement include the compensation structure, equity, benefits and faculty complement.

Academic buildings will remain open for student use but faculty will not be allowed on campus. All varsity athletics events will continue as scheduled.



Faculty members at Acadia University walk together. No further talks have been scheduled yet. CUP photo.