Pandemic Organizing and Bargaining Lessons in Higher Education

Panelists

Larry Savage, Chair, Department of Labour Studies, Brock University
Lauren Byers, United Faculty of Florida, Organizing Specialist, Service Unit Director
Barry Miller, Senior Policy Advisor on Labour Relations, York University (Moderator)
Pandemic Bargaining: Obstacles and Opportunities

Professor Larry Savage

@Prof_Savage
Guiding questions

1. How did academic staff associations respond to the challenge of pandemic bargaining?

2. How can we apply strategic and tactical lessons from this period to future rounds of collective bargaining?
A challenging time for bargaining
COVID-19 and bargaining dynamics

Employers
• Some used pandemic as cover for:
  – rolling over the contract
  – pushing $ concessions
  – eroding collegial governance
  – push barç

Academic Staff Associations
• Responses vary:
  – contracts rolled over
  – pivot to non-$ issues
  – carry on as usual
  – experiments with new strategies
Physically distanced, but virtually engaged
The benefits of unity and solidarity

Don’t panic,

ORGANIZE!
Strategizing for success

Source: Fairley and Balkwill, Campaign Planning Handbook
Where do we go from here?

• Zoom bargaining
• Pandemic strikes
How to Win a Union During the Pandemic and Beyond
A Case Study on Virtual Organizing
UFF-SPC Organizing Timeline

- **July 2020**
  - New Contracts
  - Pay reduction clause
  - Faculty petition
  - Organizing begins

- **August 2020**
  - Zoom Meetings
  - OC meets weekly via Zoom
  - Calls and assessments
  - Zoom information sessions

- **Sept. 2020**
  - Card Collection
  - Card collection begins
  - Weekly virtual meetings

- **Oct. – Nov. 2020**
  - Cards, Calls, & Emails
  - Card collection continues
  - Weekly virtual meetings
  - Email newsletters

- **Dec. 2020**
  - Petition for Election
  - Request for voluntary recognition
  - Faculty file petition for election
Manoli Gerakios prepares to collect authorization cards.

In-person card collection at public locations yielded about 100 cards over 3 days.
UFF-SPC Organizing Timeline

Jan. 2021

**Challenges to the Unit**
- College petitions to limit bargaining unit
- BOT rejects adjunct contract
- Contract Workshops begin

Feb.-May 2021

**Unit Hearings Complete**
- Unit size pending decision.
- Contract Workshops
- Administration threatens layoffs

June - July 2021

**3% Raise**
- First pay increase in 6 years – 3%
- College appeals unit decision
- Assessments

August 2021

**Election Begins**
- Election begins Aug. 31st by mail-in ballot
- Confirm receipt of ballots

Sept. 2021

**Election Win**
- On Sept. 30th, SPC faculty vote 193-56 in favor of unionization
Counting the Ballots: 193 YES – 56 NO

"THE INTENT IS CLEAR."