

Responding to student questions and concerns

Faculty naturally feel anxiety about the academic welfare of their students in a strike situation. This information, in question/answer format, is intended to be of assistance.

Q: What happened to students in the previous strikes in 1984 and 1989?

A: No student lost their school year because of the work stoppages. Certainly students were inconvenienced, and some did not support the faculty. However, most seemed to understand that the issues being raised and fought for by the faculty had to do with the quality of education.

Q: What do the major student organizations or councils think?

A: Many Locals have been in communication with their student governments. We are in contact with the provincial body, the College Student Alliance, to keep them informed.

Their website is www.collegestrike.com

Q: What can I tell my students?

A: Faculty working conditions are students' learning conditions. Faculty are bargaining to limit excessive class size; to ensure that there are sufficient numbers of full-time teachers accessible to students; to ensure that evaluation methods are selected by teachers with students learning needs in mind; to ensure that those teachers have sufficient time to meet their students educational needs.

Q: What if they ask why we are going on strike? Why not keep bargaining?

A: Faculty have extended every effort to reach a settlement, but management has still not responded to the systems quality of education issues – issues identified by Rae and acknowledged by the McGuinty Government. The faculty have come to the point where a strike may be the only option to convince management to negotiate a fair, reasonable, and responsible collective agreement. A strike can be the tool to bring about settlement

Q: Are the faculty salary demands reasonable?

A: Faculty salary demands are in line with current high school teacher settlements.

College President salary increases have averaged over 20.6 percent in the last two years of reports 2003/04

Q: What if they ask why a settlement could not be reached without a strike?

A: Faculty and management have been in negotiations for over a year. While the faculty have modified their proposals to a considerable degree, management still insists on concessions and take-aways from the collective agreement in workload and refuses to address the systemic issues set apart. Some of those take-aways would have a negative impact on quality. The faculty have been clear in saying to management that they would not compromise quality.

Q: How will the students complete their school year?

A: Nobody knows for sure. The management of each college bears the responsibility for deciding how the operation will resume following a strike. Likely the term will be extended. Note again, that in the two previous faculty strikes, no student lost their year due to the work stoppages.

Q: In a strike, do classes, field placements, and clinicals, etc., continue?

A: An attempt to continue classes 'as normal' would be futile without the full time teachers. Nevertheless, the ultimate decision will be made by each college.

Q: What if students ask if they can talk to their teachers during a strike?

A: Certainly – but not about classes or curriculum. Teachers are forbidden by law from working at the College during a strike, and the College is forbidden by law from paying teachers during a strike. This restriction also applies to electronic communication including but not limited to e-mail or chat rooms.

Q: What if students ask if they should just stay away or quit school?

A: If a strike does occur and settlement is not reached, the provincial government will have to act quickly to prevent loss of the school year. The College Relations Commission monitors this issue. Students should not withdraw from their programs or quit school.

Many of the issues faculty have been bargaining for have a direct impact on quality education. Students deserve and need the best education faculty can provide. Faculty are taking a stand for quality.