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UVic Faculty Association launches unionization drive

UVic Faculty Association vice-president pushes for certification

Hana Ryu / October 24, 2013

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Dr. Jason M.C. Price—Brandon Everell (Photo)

The University of Victoria's Faculty Association launched a union certification drive at an Oct. 7 general meeting in an attempt to pursue increased collegiality between the Faculty Association and the university's administration. Although UVic has been trying to unionize since 1988, there remained some issues in finalizing the matter.

"The relationship between the university and the faculty only covers the basic employment laws, and the faculty association lacks right to hold fair negotiations and bargaining. [UVic is] one of the very lowest paid universities in Canada," said Dr. Jason M.C. Price, UVic's Faculty Association vice-president and certification committee chair.

"One of the main concerns is strike. There seems to be a misunderstanding; just because we certify, it doesn't mean we have to go on strike, and it also doesn't mean we have to obey strike lines. [We are] the same people, same job, but potentially having more rights," Price said. "There are a lot of ideological fears [of unionization], but the reality is different. The reality is that we actually increase the collegiality because it clarifies the relationships that give definite process to things. It allows non-monetary issues to be grieved, like the nagging issues between the faculty and administration." Price holds that those nagging issues need to be clarified for both the faculty association and administration to bargain fairly.

Price emphasizes that working conditions of the professors have direct influence on quality of education for students. According to Price, faculty unionization would benefit students because happier professors mean happier students. "You know what it's like to have a professor who is so busy that they don't have time to have office hours when they need to. There is so much that we share with our students," he said.

According to Price, over 80 per cent of faculties are unionized. He said that it is only unusual in research universities such as UNBC, Royal Roads, Simon Fraser, and UVic.

"Even among the professors, there are a lot of misunderstandings of what it means to be unionized, and people are really surprised when they find out that this is actually an exception that we are not unionized," said Price.

UVic Faculty Association is currently going through a card-signing process with help from volunteers. Once a sufficient number of cards are signed, the executive will submit the signed cards with an application to be certified by the B.C. Labour Board. After the application is certified, the Labour Relations Board administers a vote for the entire membership at UVic. In order for it to be certified successfully, it needs to pass by rule of majority—50 per cent plus one.

"I think getting unionized is a huge step for both professors and students. I think it will have a huge impact on the quality of education that we are able to offer, especially in these times of cuts," Price said. "University made four per cent cuts last year in terms of service providers for students and professors. They claim that those cuts are based on the government's demanded cuts, but the actual cuts by the government are 0.12 per cent, so less than one per cent. Yet the university cut four."

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- OCT 31 Thu** 7:30 pm A Tom Fowler Halloween @ Solstice Cafe
10:00 pm Pendulum (DJ set) @ Club 9one9
- NOV 1 Fri** 7:30 pm The Basement Panoramas @ Open Space Gallery
- NOV 6 Wed** 6:00 pm UVic School of Environmental Studies Alumni Reception @ University Club, Fire Place Lounge

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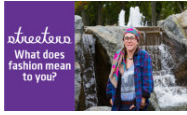
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Price feels that this time, the unionization will turn out to be positive. "What we find is that the certification for unionization of faculty can increase [not decrease] participation and co-operation between students and faculty," he said.

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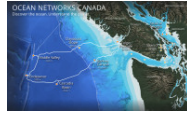
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