

To my friends at SFU - a message about the strikes

by kevin harding - Thursday, November 01, 2012

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To my APSA, TSSU, and SFUFA friends at SFU: Today, CUPE 3338 is picketing Burnaby Mountain. They're doing so because they've been trying to bargain with SFU for two years, with not much success. They're picketing because they feel they deserve a fair collective agreement, and they see no other way to put pressure on the university.

Please remember that you have a right to not cross picket lines - it's protected in university policy, in your framework agreements, in your contracts. You have a right not to do extra work that the university administration will ask you to do.

You have a right not to do the undergrad advisor's work if you're a faculty member. That undergrad advisor's job is one that directly supports yours; they counsel students just like you do. They deserve fair pay and a fair bargaining situation from the university like you do.

If you're an APSA member, you have a right not to be forced to do your CUPE colleague's work. This means you can refuse to set up computers and projectors if you normally don't do anything like that. Your CUPE colleagues, who do this work normally, happily, and excellently, are arguing with a picket line that they deserve fair treatment.

TSSU members - you know what this is like. You're withholding marks to pressure the university into bargaining; at the same time, please don't cross picket lines just because it's not your union holding the signs.

Faculty members - please don't take up the marking that the TAs aren't doing. Remember when you were a PhD candidate, and were struggling along with your dissertation proposal, two classes, and then had to TA four sections to afford your studies? That's where your TAs are at - the university's proposals haven't recognized changing realities, seem to want to prevent sessionals from any kind of job opportunities, and more. You were there, when you finished your defense and were afraid of how you'd get a job - anywhere - that would help you avoid sessional postings constantly. Your TAs are amazing people, like you are, and they deserve better.

SFU Administrators - I know that the province has you in a position that you're finding it hard to bargain your way out of. You have a pressure in terms of bargaining mandates that won't let you do much, but I know that you have options in how you can do better. Please, try to see how you can cooperatively accomplish your goals without taking it out on your dedicated CUPE staff, your students who are your TAs, and everyone together.