

April 4, 2016

**OFFICE OF THE  
VICE-PRESIDENT  
ACADEMIC &  
PROVOST**

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Dear Colleagues,

Over the course of the last four weeks, the University and the CUPE 3903 have been in negotiations to resolve a grievance regarding tuition offset funding for international graduate student Teaching Assistants and Graduate Assistants. The grievance arose over a disagreement in the interpretation of negotiated changes in a tuition offset “Letter of Intent” in the 2014-17 collective agreements and specifically centred on the possible sources of funding that could be used to make up the tuition offset funding. According to the University’s interpretation of the tuition offset Letter of Intent sources of funding could include merit based awards and scholarships, negotiated increases in Graduate Financial Assistance in the collective agreements, and researcher funding in the form of Research Assistantships. CUPE 3903 disagreed with this interpretation.

The University believes that it appropriately interpreted and administered the tuition offset Letter of Intent negotiated in the 2014-17 Unit 1 and Unit 3 collective agreements. However, it initiated a process aimed at resolving the grievance in the context of its exploration of a new graduate student funding model begun after the conclusion of negotiations. The proposed new funding model aims to provide greater transparency and simplicity in graduate student funding and commits to provide a level of funding that covers tuition fees (including any increases in tuition fees above the 2012 rates) for domestic and international graduate students in other than professional graduate programs. In this circumstance, the University approached the resolution of the tuition offset grievance as an opportunity to work constructively with CUPE 3903 to achieve an outcome that much better aligns with the proposed new funding model. The settlement reached by the parties, confirmed at a Special Membership Meeting of CUPE 3903 today, centres on a revised tuition offset Letter of Intent by which tuition offset funding consists of additional dedicated funding that will be treated like Graduate Financial Assistance (i.e., will be posted to student accounts and will not require work in exchange for the additional funding).

As an outcome of the settlement, international graduate students who have been employed in Units 1 and 3 and have paid the higher tuition fees over the 2012 tuition rates will receive additional tuition offset amounts. In accordance with the terms of the settlement, the additional tuition offset amounts for 2014-15, applicable to international graduate students who entered their programs in 2013 and 2014 and paid the higher rates, will be paid within 60 days and the additional tuition offset amounts for 2015-16 will be provided as part of the final tuition offset payments in the summer term.



The University will be meeting with CUPE 3903 shortly to discuss its plan to proceed with the proposed new funding model. Additional information about the new funding model will be forthcoming. What is most important for all of our colleagues to understand and share about the new funding model is that it is premised on principles of advancing academic excellence, student success and transparency in graduate funding.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rhonda L. Lenton". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "R" and "L".

Rhonda L. Lenton  
Vice-President Academic & Provost