

Improving Job Security: A Crucial Issue

Improving job security is one of the three targeted priorities in the sectoral negotiation demands made by teachers affiliated with FNEEQ-CSN. These demands seek principally to improve the working conditions of those who experience this insecurity on a daily basis and also to improve access to tenure (permanence). For this special edition of Info-Négo, the editorial team focused its energy on presenting lack of job security as it is lived daily by almost one-half of cegep teachers.

The Situation Across the Cegep System

Cegep teachers know very well that the “generous” job security of public sector employees is more myth than reality. According to the latest data available from the *Système d'information sur le personnel des organismes collégiaux (SPOC)*, of the 17 163 teachers across the cegep system in 2007-2008, 8477 did not have tenure (nonpermanent), of which 6098 were in the regular day sector and 2379 were in Continuing Education. In that year, almost one out of every two teachers did not have tenure.

Lack of Job Security on a Daily Basis

To undertake a career in college teaching is not a trivial decision. Once in a post, teachers must respond to the many demands of the profession. And it's not enough



to simply master the discipline of instruction. From the first course on, new teachers must establish the basis of a pedagogical relationship that supports the success of their students: creating a classroom

climate conducive to learning, organizing and presenting materials in a clear and coherent manner, sparking the interest of students, developing appropriate evaluations, providing relevant and significant feedback, etc. The first years of cegep teaching are already sufficiently demanding without having to add irritants to working conditions, although there are many.

In order to allow teachers without job security to express themselves on their everyday situation, we offered to them the opportunity to publish their own personal stories that shed light on certain aspects of their working conditions that deserve our attention.

To find out more about our negotiations:
<http://www.csn.qc.ca/web/secteurpublic/negofneeq>
<http://secteurpublic.info>

Calculating Workloads Over the Years

I have been in the system for 13 years teaching Humanities and Philosophy at the same cegep. I have the ignoble status of "Professor, nonpermanent, part-time." It feels so good, this "status"! More than once over these 13 years I've been overloaded in the Fall semester with a weak promise of maybe reaching the famous 80 units for the year. It's the hope we all have when we have no job security, right? And then I find myself in the winter semester at 79.19 units: 44.99 in the Fall and 34.2 in the Winter. I hit 0.99 of a full load, but I was paid for 0.93. The first time this happened to me, it was a terrible shock, and my naivete was partly responsible. In 1997, the difference between 0.99 and 0.93 equalled the cost of a visit to my family, who lived outside Québec. In 2009, with more education and twelve years more experience added to my salary, I'm still there, still without tenure, still not knowing from one semester to the next if I will have a full-time load for the year. How good it is, this "status"!

Joanie Lugtig
Humanities
St. Lawrence Campus
Champlain Regional College

Young and No Job Security

This story is not strictly personal. It reflects the experience of dozens, even hundreds of others without job security across the cegep system. My goal is not to treat those without job security as victims, and certainly not to divide teachers into different subgroups, but to make better known the problems encountered in gaining entry to the cegep system. I have been teaching for three and one-half years. Since I began

teaching at the cegep level, I have had to run back and forth between three cegeps (Lionel-Groulx, Saint-Laurent, and André-Laurendeau), teach in two different disciplines and prepare 13 different courses. Semester after semester it's the same: insecurity and instability. Where will I be working? In fact, will I be working? Often one obtains partial workloads. These must be accepted without delay if one doesn't want to lose one's priority. Other cegeps then offer different workloads. This situation of double employment is often unavoidable, sometimes for financial reasons, but particularly in order to achieve the strategic objective of maintaining a hiring priority. What's more, as seniority is only accumulated at one cegep, if we change cegeps between the fall and winter semesters, the different administrations do not take into account the CI (individual workload) of the previous semester. As a result, the annual workload becomes heavy, even overwhelming.

Obviously, there have always been those without job security in the system. They must deal with the structural and contextual situation. However, assigning posts must be simplified in order to retain the best teachers in the profession. Quebec trains high-quality teachers, who are passionate about their field and have knowledge to share. We must avoid having them abandon ship to head for other horizons.

Jean-François Plano
Anthropology
Cégep de Saint-Laurent

Salary Insurance

During the summer 2008 vacation period, I was camping north of Tadoussac when I seriously injured my left foot sliding into a rocky crevasse. I was transported to Chicoutimi for surgery. As I would be unable to work for several months, I contacted the Human Resources department at Vanier College as well as the coordinator of the Biology department to advise them of my absence.

The response from Human Resources was a shock: I was told that the College would not pay me salary insurance and suggested that I file for employment insurance benefits. As the accident occurred between two contracts, the College refused to assign me the teaching workload that had been offered to me for the Fall semester and the salary insurance benefits that would have gone with it.

The Vanier College Teachers Association (VCTA) offered me moral and legal support in order to establish my right to salary insurance benefits from Vanier (and to accumulate seniority during my convalescence). After filing a grievance and further negotiations, the College finally agreed to pay my salary insurance benefits (which I received retroactively) and to recognize my seniority accumulated during my recovery. All nonpermanent teachers must have the right to salary insurance whether or not an event takes place during the academic year or between two contracts.

Estelle Lamothe
Biology
Vanier College



The Race for Seniority

When several teachers have the same or similar seniority, which teacher should come first? Hiring priorities are defined in the collective agreement, you say? Seniority first, and where it is equal, it is experience that breaks the tie. This is true, but how to calculate seniority varies from one college to the next, which has serious repercussions on new teachers (and their mental health...) as well as on departments. At our college, this results in a race for seniority: the faster one accumulates seniority, the higher one is placed on the hiring priority list. For two teachers hired at the same time

for a full semester load, or even for a full year contract, the one with the most experience is obliged to accept additional work simply in order to maintain her or his rank (in other words, to prevent the next teacher on the list from taking on this work and jumping ahead). In addition, there is the problem of how a teacher may acquire seniority in Continuing Education so that well before the end of the year, a full year of seniority is attained. At our college, a teacher who completes their workload with Continuing Education courses may accumulate seniority more rapidly and jump ahead! Seriously! Imagine the impact of this on the work environment.

Of course, we can file grievances, but it would be more useful to fix this in the collective agreement. It is not a race! For hiring priorities, the seniority recognized at a given date must not be allowed to be passed by part-time contracts.

Lack of job security is already difficult enough to live with without adding to it the necessity to overload and the stress of a race between colleagues.

Chantal Biron
Business Administration
Cégep du Vieux Montréal

A Long March to Tenure

After finishing my studies in 1982, I obtained some teaching contracts in primary and secondary teaching up until 1988 before I had the chance to teach at the cegep level. At first, I had only part-time workloads while filling two different roles on campus: as a teacher and as a student animator. Over the years, my teaching workloads increased and I accumulated seniority. I even dared hope to acquire tenure, when in 1993, things turned sour. You must remember the cegep reforms. Of course, that's when we were told that Physical Education was teaching fly-fishing. It provided a good laugh for many. But for me, it was a mortal blow, as it was for many other nonpermanent teachers (over one-quarter of the total in Physical Education). From one day to the next, I learned that my job had been eliminated and that I would be on employment insurance the next year. In 1995, I was reduced to substitute teaching in primary and secondary schools, and working nights at a fitness centre. In 1997 I was informed by the Human Resources department that I had lost all of my seniority and my employment link to the college, as two years had passed without a teaching contract. Once again, I was shocked. I had to begin again at zero.

Fortunately, in January 1998 I was hired to replace a teacher who had been injured. Makes one feel like a vulture, doesn't it? Since that time, year after year, I obtained teaching loads and I finally gained tenure in 2004, 22 years after I finished my studies. I had the letter informing me of this laminated. It hangs today in my office.

Denis Audet
Physical Education
Cégep de l'Abitibi-Témiscamingue

With Regard to Discipline 360...

In Fall 1990 I started teaching at the St. Lawrence Campus of Champlain Regional College in Québec City. I have been full-time since the Fall 1997 semester, combining courses in Geography, Methodology (mostly Quantitative Methods), and, at times, Tourism as well as department coordination.

With over 18 years of experience and more than 15 years of seniority, the last twelve years full-time, I often ask myself why won't my employer finally recognize Methodology courses in the creation of posts? This would allow me, among other things, to take supplemental life insurance in the Fall semester and give me a contract equivalent to my permanent colleagues in the public service. The collective agreement has not been readjusted since the introduction of Methodology courses in the 1990s; for the sake of equity for new and future generations of teachers, it's time to do so.

Frédéric Martin
Geography and
Methodology
Champlain Regional
College – St. Lawrence



I finally obtained tenure, but I'm planning to retire next year...

Our Job Security Demands

We certainly admit that in entering any profession, there is a period of professional and financial instability. But this could be shortened for a large number of teachers and the negative effects could be alleviated, if our employers would just accept to recognize that *with better teaching conditions, everybody wins!*

Pay part-time teachers with a workload split over two semesters on the basis of an annual individual workload (CI).

We want all part-time teachers to be fully remunerated for the work that they carry out. In order to prevent some colleges from only partially paying overloads (or not at all), we think that it is necessary to amend the collective agreement in order to ensure that an overload in one semester may be combined with the workload of another semester.

Ensure that illness, or disability, does not constitute a reason for refusing to respect a hiring priority.

Despite a grievance decision that concluded that untenured teachers have the right to receive salary insurance benefits when ill or disabled, these persons often have to struggle very hard to have this right recognized. The employer claims that the teacher's illness or disability gives them the power to not renew their contract. We believe that a clarification to the collective agreement is needed to resolve this situation.

Resolve the problems related to the calculation of seniority, in particular related to jumping ahead of other teachers during the semester.

In order to limit jumping hiring priorities during the academic year, which pushes new teachers to overload themselves in order to maintain their hiring priority, we believe that the collective agreement needs to be clarified.

Gaining tenure on signing a full-time contract after six years of seniority or five consecutive years full-time.

In 2007-2008, 600 teachers without job security had been employed at their college for over six years. In order to allow them to acquire tenure more quickly, it seems normal to us that a full-time contract should lead to tenure once a teacher has acquired six years of seniority, or after five consecutive years of full-time work.

Clarify the collective agreement so that all allocation for multidiscipline courses results in the opening of posts and full-time contracts in a discipline defined in the agreement other than 360.

In all regions of Québec, many teachers are condemned to a lack of job security, because many colleges refuse to recognize that multidisciplinary courses may be used to open posts. We believe that there is no justification for such differential treatment.

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