

RA Unionization

At the end of Summer 2019, rank-and-file TSSU activists began a well planned organizing drive to get RAs at SFU to sign membership cards to join TSSU. The campaign was initially kept secret until November 2019 when there was enough momentum that the organizing team was confident they could get majority support for the Union.

Pressure from the campaign, the labour movement, local politicians and more forced SFU's hand, and on November 15, 2019 SFU and TSSU signed a Memorandum of Agreement of Voluntary Recognition ("Agreement") recognizing TSSU as the bargaining agent for research assistants (RAs) and grant employees. At that time over 924 currently working RAs had signed membership cards out of approximately 1300-1500 working at the time.

Who's Included?

Explicitly included as part of the Agreement are Research Assistants and grant employees (RAs) who are paid as scholarship or stipend, undergraduate research award employees and work-study employees, University Research Assistants, and other similar workers. Postdoctoral fellows and University Research Associates are explicitly excluded.

SFU Delays Bargaining ...

In the 30 months since the Agreement was signed, SFU has failed to keep to the timeline and fulfill their terms of the Agreement. Through their actions and inactions over these 30 months, SFU Administration has proven they are not committed to living up to their word.

we signed an agreement?



What is Collective Bargaining?

Collective bargaining is one of the ways that we improve our working conditions! A Collective Agreement (CA) is a single contract that limits the rights of management and guarantees pay and other compensation for workers in the union. Bargaining is an expression of collective power that gives employees power in the workplace who individually would be limited. Practically, bargaining involves two parties proposing to change the Collective Agreement, and using their relative power to pressure the other side to agree, or find other mutually agreeable proposals. This agreement is legally enforced through the grievance procedure, labour law, and the courts, but the power to enforce our contract ultimately comes from our members.

What we're fighting for:

Now that we're at the bargaining table here's the key priorities identified by RAs for the first Collective Agreement:

- **include all RAs** by maintaining a broad definition that covers all types of research work at the University, so that all RAs gain the rights and benefits of unionization.
- **bring transparency** by ensuring every RA and grant employee gets an outline of: their job expectations, pay rate, hours of work, etc. Also ensure jobs where there's meant to be a competition are posted centrally online
- **protect against key inequities** our members experience such as bullying and harassment, intellectual property theft. To have a mechanism for long-service RAs to earn priority for future appointments.
- **value research workers by building a fair wage and benefit floor** to ensure that every RA has a living wage and access to a base level of benefits, including employer paid MSP (international student health fee), and protections of the employment standards act, WorksafeBC, paid training and orientation, etc.
- **Extend existing TSSU Collective Agreement rights to RAs.** This includes human rights and harassment protections, health and safety protections, grievance procedures, the childcare fund, intellectual property protections, tuition deferment, and more.

JOIN US: May 19th at Harbour Centre for the Workers United Rally and stand alongside the TSSU and CWJ!
We are all demanding SFU to improve their labour relations, and bargain a fair first contract for RAs!

RA Unionization Timeline:

2014	Grad students bring the idea of unionizing RAs up to TSSU
2018	RAs plan a union campaign.
Aug 2018	Card signing starts for 1st campaign
Sept 2018	The campaign gets ~200 signed cards in 6 weeks, not fast enough.
Oct 2018	First campaign is paused and the Research is Work! motto is born
Jan 2019	TSSU membership discusses hiring a dedicated organizer.
June 2019	Our staff organizers build a team of grassroots organizers from the previous campaign
Sept 2019	Card signing begins in secret. The organizing team grows to 75 people.
Oct 2019 (end)	We go public with over 500 cards signed and 150 organizers.
Nov 2019	With over 900 cards, SFU offers to voluntarily recognize us. We win!
Jan - June 2020	Over 1000 RAs fill our surveys indicating their wants and needs
June 2020	SFU finally starts giving us lists of RAs after being ordered by a mediator. TSSU members elect a contract committee to bargain
Oct 2020	TSSU gives formal notice to start bargaining!
March 2021	After another mediation SFU finally agrees to begin bargaining!
May-Oct 2021	But SFU Admin delays and cancels bargaining dates.

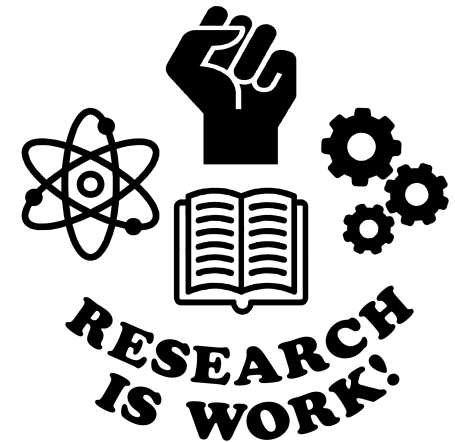
Nov 2021	SFU proposes an offer with no health benefits and \$17 minimum wage with no increases. Over 900 community members send emails to the SFU President demanding a fair offer for RAs.
Dec 2021	TSSU and SFU bring a mediator to bargaining. SFU refuses to discuss bargaining and tries to negotiate to exclude a large group of RAs from TSSU
January 2022	TSSU files for an arbitrator to make a ruling on SFU's failure to follow the 2019 agreement by excluding RAs in Science and Applied Science. The arbitration is scheduled for July & August 2022.
March 2022	SFU and TSSU discuss and agree to resume RA negotiations using a special "without prejudice" process.
April 4th, 2022	More than 70 TSSU members and allies rally during the Senate Meeting at SFU to demand that University admin bargain a fair first contract for RAs.
April - May 2022	SFU and TSSU negotiate under the new process. Negotiations continue.
May 19th, 2022	Join the SFU Workers United Rally! to demand SFU treat their employees fairly!

How to get involved!

1. Come by AQ 5129 on Burnaby Campus to get a supporters package to help spread the word!
2. Help us organize and join our actions! Get in touch with Maria and Felix :) (TSSU Organizers): organizer@tssu.ca
3. Get in touch with Amal and Naima (TSSU Chief Stewards) for questions about RA Bargaining and the Collective Agreement: chief_steward@tssu.ca
4. Visit the TSSU Bargaining Website for updates on bargaining: <https://bargaining.tssu.ca/>

The University Works Because We Do!

RAs unionized with Collective Power!



With Collective Power, we can win the rights they deserve!