Working for a living around the ivory tower

WORK AND EMPLOYMENT AT THE UNIVERSITY OF REGINA AND FEDERATED COLLEGES

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
WHAT IS A LIVING WAGE?

“[A] yearly wage sufficient to maintain the worker in the highest state of industrial efficiency and to afford him adequate leisure to discharge the duties of citizenship.”

Professor J.E.C. Monro, cited in The Economic Journal (1894)

“No worker and by implication their family should receive a wage that is insufficient to live on… or be required to work so many hours that he or she is effectively denied a personal or civil life.”

Harry Arthurs, Fairness at Work (2006)

"Families who work for low wages face impossible choices. In many cases it means that the adults in the family are working long hours, often at two or three jobs, just to pay for basic necessities. They have little time to spend with their family, much less to help their children with school work or to participate in community activities."

Iglika Ivanova and Seth Klein, Working for a Living Wage (2015)

Total expenses = Employment income + government transfers – income and payroll taxes

Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives living wage methodology
Work & employment in Saskatchewan

A "living wage" in Regina is $16.46 an hour, equivalent to an annual income of approximately $58,000 for a family of four.

23% of workers in Regina earn less than a living wage.

Part-time and temporary forms of employment in Saskatchewan are on the rise while the number of full-time jobs has declined.

Real wage growth in recent years has slowed after a period of meaningful wage increases.

The median hourly rate of pay for off-campus employment amongst the U of R community is $15 per hour.

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THE COST OF LIVING

26,000
The number of people who accessed a food bank in Saskatchewan, an increase of over 50% since 2008.

$14,085
The average debt load amongst students at the time of graduation.

Child care
One of the largest monthly expenses for students and U of R employees.

27.8%
Percentage of U of R employees who are unable to save any money at the end of the month.

$1,100
Average monthly rent for a two-bedroom apartment in Regina.
“We’re not allowed to have overtime anymore, we haven’t for several months, but our position just requires it because sometimes we have very busy peak times and you just don’t get the work done in the work day, so I stay sometimes longer than I should just to get stuff done. Because it has to be done…”

Federated college employee, non-unionized support staff

“They give good benefits, there’s a lot of good things that go on in the university itself, and benefits that they give you, but as far as environment … it’s pretty laid back but it’s become more businesslike. I’ve seen it change over 10 years and it’s almost too businesslike. But that is what it is, it’s very bureaucratic…”

Federated college, non-APT support worker

“Fourteen hours per week paid time plus planning, phone calls, emails, assignment review/marketing, necessary learning for the instructor = 16 hours unpaid time as well. Then there are meetings randomly called. It’s very difficult to have another job.”

Sessional practica coach

“Well my boss comes in and says when is the last time you cleaned the hallways. I said you’ve got to make a choice. I have 13 staff but today I’ve got 3. Do you want to sit on the scrubber? Make a choice. […] But that’s where we are right now. We’re cut down so tight with budgets.”

Facilities Management worker
WORK & EMPLOYMENT AT THE U OF R

Base hourly rates of compensation for applied scientific, facilities, operational, security, trade services, and food service staff across the U of R range from $12.58 to $42.76.

The median annual income for U of R employees who participated in the survey ranges between $56,000 and $65,999.

At the University of Regina, the number of sessional lecturers has grown by 12% since 2011.

58.2% of U of R employees reported that their immediate working conditions were "very good" or "excellent". 63.4% ranked pay and benefits as "good" to "very good".

68% of U of R employee survey participants report to be in households earning above Regina's average annual income of $93,670.

Personal pre-tax annual income

Fear of job loss due to budget cuts and subcontracting

Examples of unpaid overtime and a poor work-life balance at the U of R were routinely cited in survey and interview responses.

Over half of the U of R employees surveyed are fearful of losing their job due to budget cuts or subcontracting.

Around 20% of U of R employees report to be in households earning less than Regina's living wage.

Approximately 60% of academic workers are employed in non-permanent contacts.
“I still haven’t found that part time job again and definitely money is a stress. So I’m not sleeping at night or I’m not eating so that I don’t do as good on my projects or my assignments. So not knowing whether you have a job or not liking your job definitely affects how you do in university for sure.”

Student, self-employed

“It’s always trying to find the time to get the work done. I find that the studying, 3 hours for every hour of class work that you do is so hard to get done when you’re trying to maintain jobs. I’m basically running my own business and considering learning business it’s really frustrating that I can’t exactly apply what I’m learning to my job”

Student, parent, holds five casual jobs, volunteer

“Was obligated to do unpaid practicum for 4 months, working full-time and forcing me to work everyday of the week in order to pay for expenses. I found this quite unreasonable and highly stressful.”

Student, employed part-time in food services & accommodations and education

“It’s fucking expensive to be a student, especially if you live in dorms on campus. Seriously, it’s more convenient, but it’s also cheaper to rent off campus and commute.”

Student, employed part-time at the U of R
45% of students finance their education through some form of repayable debt.

A majority of students at the University of Regina (59%) report working for wages and to being employed about 20 hours per week.

Around a quarter of working students are employed full-time.

Over half of students recognize that employment has a negative impact on their education.

Domestic tuition at the U of R, including fees, averages $6,357 per year. International students, meanwhile, pay on average $10,312.

Sources of student finances

- Family (19.21%)
- Student loans (19.31%)
- Employment income (25.55%)
- Scholarship or award (18.59%)
- Education savings account (11.11%)
- Employer Benefits (1.56%)
- Band Funding (0.73%)
- Foreign government (0.73%)
- Other (3.22%)

Earnings by industry

Whole sale & retail, food services, education, and public administration constitute the leading industries of employment for U of R students.

The median gratuity for workers who earn tips is $50 per shift.

24.6% of non-Business students are in households that fall below the annual household living wage, compared to only 10.8% of Business students.
TOWARDS A LIVING WAGE UNIVERSITY

When successful, living wage movements are defined by their capacity to generate alliances of workers and community members aimed at improving overall conditions of employment. This extends beyond basic rates of pay and benefits to include broader understandings of dignity and economic justice in the workplace and throughout an economy. Indeed, the success of living wage campaigns hinges on the capacity of these projects to generate solidarity across communities and occupations.

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Student-community-labour alliances

Labour organizations representing the various occupations on campus should form a contingent workers caucus to identify the challenges facing this growing classification of academic, administrative, and operational support worker. It is no longer enough to deal these issues in isolation at the bargaining table. Any contingent worker initiative must also recognize that different solutions for different types of occupations must be found. Students, and their respective unions, and local labour organizations have the potential to find common ground on campus.

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What does a living wage university look like?

A “living wage university” means advancing changes internally through existing decision-making bodies, collective agreements, and student organizations. A meaningful living wage policy would necessarily include the employees directly employed by the universities, as well as those who work for the various food service companies, teaching and research assistants, student employees, and subcontracted service providers. This means increasing hourly rates of pay to match local living wage calculations.

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