

Press release

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Source: Fédération nationale des enseignantes et des enseignants du Québec (FNEEQ-CSN)

University lecturers hold international conference in Gatineau: Cheap labour shouldn't be a university's "business model"

Gatineau, Thursday, August 8, 2024 - Some 100 attendees from Mexico, the United States, Canada and Québec are converging on Gatineau for the [COCAL XV](#) conference of the Coalition of Contingent Academic Labor. Over the course of three days, activists will discuss the many attacks university lecturers face as contingent teaching staff, how to fight job insecurity and how to mobilize effectively.

"Half of all undergraduate courses are taught by lecturers: they are the backbone of North American universities," says Christine Gauthier, Vice-President of the Fédération nationale des enseignantes et des enseignants du Québec (FNEEQ-CSN) responsible for universities. "But university administrations are applying a 'business model' that deliberately locks these key members of their teaching staff into a precarious position, renders their contribution to the university invisible and keeps many in a state of distress."

This pernicious trend, directly linked to the commodification of knowledge, undermines lecturers' working conditions, academic freedom, research opportunities and community service. The multi-pronged attacks on contract teaching staff will be examined at COCAL.

"To combat systemic insecurity, we need solidarity among all who suffer from it, whether they teach in French, Spanish or English," says Marie-Josée Bourget, President of the Syndicat des chargées et chargés de cours de l'Université du Québec en Outaouais (SCCC-UQO-CSN). "This fight transcends languages and cultures. So we're very enthusiastic about bringing attendees together at Université du Québec en Outaouais to draft a manifesto that will take us into the future."

Towards a continental day of mobilization

The conference will feature panel discussions, presentations on university systems and their impact on casualization, personal testimonials, and workshops and talks on topics including:

- The commodification of education in the context of AI
- Abuses of power by government and administration in higher education
- The detrimental effect on mental health and sense of purpose
- Lack of recognition and support

"To reverse this trend, we need to identify the best solutions for strengthening the place of precarious teachers in the academy and act collectively," says Glynnis Lieb, a contract instructor at the Athabasca University in Alberta and President of COCAL International. "Our action is our most powerful tool for bringing about the changes needed to support free, egalitarian and pluralistic education."

At the conclusion of COCAL XV, activists will lay the groundwork for a Continental Day of Mobilization on a date to be determined.

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About

Coalition of Contingent Academic Labor (COCAL)

Founded in 1996, COCAL now includes more than 40 organizations of contingent college and university teachers in Mexico, the United States, Canada and Québec. At its conferences, activist organizations discuss actions and the demands of contingent faculty in higher education.

Fédération nationale des enseignantes et des enseignants du Québec (FNEEQ–CSN)

The FNEEQ–CSN, founded in 1969, represents 80% of Québec university lecturers (11,000 members) and nearly 85% of CEGEP professors. It is the most representative union organization in higher education in Québec, with a total of some 37,000 members at 45 CEGEPS, 47 private institutions and 12 universities. The FNEEQ is one of the eight federations affiliated with the Confédération des syndicats nationaux (CSN).

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