

# Let's tear down the myths



Since the 1960s, our university system has achieved irrefutable progress and success, but the dangers it is facing today are equally difficult to refute. Once the foundation blocks of social advancement, our universities have now become big businesses run by administrators who care more about marketing their institution than they do about the creation and transmission of knowledge. The contractualization of university teachers is just another example of this corporate-minded decision-making, a culture of “governance” in which the ends justify the means, whatever the cost. In the face of this descent into commoditization, what can we—the thousands of higher education teachers and full partners in the university community—do about it? It is not only our job conditions, but our very workplace that is at stake.

The FNEEQ was given the mandate by the May 2012 congress to organize a forum on the role of course lecturers and tutors in Quebec universities. This forum will give us the opportunity to discuss such issues as professional autonomy, academic freedom, job stabilization, research and creation, the growing place of new technologies and distance education, as well as the importance of academic and institutional integration. It was also be a chance for us to continue our conversation on the need to secure recognition for the 15,000 some course lecturers who contribute, day in and day out, to the quality of university education across the province.

Yes, recognition will be back on the agenda because even though some of our unions are celebrating their 30th, and in some cases their 35th anniversary this year, the role of course lecturers is still all too often misunderstood. Some of that is of our own doing, in that the work we do intersects with that of tenured professors, making any distinction difficult. Indeed, more and more course lecturers are teaching at the graduate levels, engaging in research and creation, publishing, giving conferences, serving as experts in their field in the media and in society, and so on. Practically speaking, the only real difference between contract teachers and tenured professors is their employment status.

So this forum will be about gaining recognition, of course, but it will also be about expressing who we are—loudly, clearly, and in full view of the entire university community, the public, our school administrators, politicians and all other higher education stakeholders. We want to wear our status as contingent workers with pride because the contractualization of teachers in higher education is, in fact, the new norm. We will denounce the job precarity of university contract teachers, but we will also champion the fact that these teachers deliver the majority of undergraduate courses in Quebec and that the undeniable contribution they make to the creation and transmission of knowledge is worthy of a discussion space equal to the role they play in our universities. The Forum on University Contract Teachers will be held November 20 to 22, 2014, at Hôtel des Gouverneurs, Place Dupuis, in Montréal.

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### ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS

The FNEEQ Environment Committee has joined Forces with the Forum Organizing Committee to promote the holding of a sustainable event.