

## Kristine Smitka

### Vision Statement

I am running for the position of Vice President alongside Gordon Swaters (for President), Randa Kachkar (for Treasurer), and Terra Garneau (for Equity Officer) because we strongly believe the AASUA is at a critical juncture. Since 2017 our union has been in the process of adapting to its new-found right to strike—and now all of us are in a position to benefit from an engaged membership who have lived the experience of a tumultuous and arduous collective bargaining process.

The primary function of the AASUA is to uphold the collective agreement that governs our employment and work—through the bargaining process—to make advancements for our members. This is easier said than done, because our union is made-up of an impressive diversity of scholars, educators, clinicians, librarians, professional administrators, lab workers, sports coaches, etc. Our union has two great assets: a) the range of knowledge held within its membership and b) the fact that we are the largest academic union in the country, with 3,901 members. In this mass we have great strength, but we need to work as a collective.

However, far too many of our members don't even realize that they are in union, let alone what the union can do for them. This is an issue I would like to address to build our collective strength. My vision is to have every new employee greeted by a union steward. I would like to see member-engagement initiatives, like constituency-specific "Get to Know your Contract" lunch-and-learns, so that our members can be better informed about how the collective agreement governs their employment. Most importantly, I want to build on the groundswell of volunteerism that we saw in the months before entering formal mediation, as our members started to talk about the potential of a strike.

For the last two years I have sat on AASUA's Executive as the ATS Director. I also Chaired the Communications Team of the Job Action Committee that was responsible for the FAQs and primers that helped acculturate both academic staff and students to what a strike would entail. I am standing for the position of Vice-President as a commitment to build on what the AASUA's current Officers and Executive have started: pragmatic leadership positioned not only to defend the important research culture of our institution, but also to make necessary advances in job security and employment equity. This will take successive rounds of bargaining, and therefore, this is a long-term vision.

A vote for each of the members of our slate is a vote to build on the learning experience of the recent round of bargaining. We have the advantage of having collaborated on AASUA's Executive over the last two years, which gives us the necessary experience to defend our members' desire to work at an institution that treats its academic staff with respect and dignity.

Vote for experience, hard work, and inclusivity.

## Biography

I am an Associate Lecturer and the First-Year Coordinator in the Department of English and Film Studies. In the 2020-2021 academic year, 5,705 undergraduate students were registered across 139 sections of first-year English, because these writing-intensive classes are a prerequisite for most undergraduate students. As first-year coordinator, my role is to assist the sixty-six different instructors who teach these sections, as well as handle all informal grade appeals stemming from these sections. I have served on ATSEC (the ATS equivalent of FEC), Arts Faculty Council, and numerous departmental committees. I am an active board member of [The Canadian Literature Centre/Centre de littérature canadienne](#), an author [published by The University of Alberta Press](#), and an invested educator, who in addition to writing-intensive classes, teaches classes on [Colonization and Canadian Literature](#) and [the History of the Book](#).

### Experience on AASUA's Executive (2020-ongoing) and Council (2018-2020)

1. **Acting Vice President, AASUA** (Jan. 2022-ongoing): when AASUA's elected VP, Tim Mills, moved into the role of Acting President—following Ricardo Acuña's resignation—I moved into the role of acting Vice President and became co-chair of the Governance Committee.
2. **Director, Academic Teaching Staff (ATS)** (July 2020-ongoing): as Director of this 904-member constituency group, I engaged in regular communication with members regarding the bargaining and mediation process, hosted constituency assemblies, and assisted members in understanding the labour relations resources to which they are entitled. All seven constituency directors also hold a seat on AASUA's Executive.
3. **Chair of Communications, Job Action Committee** (July 2021-ongoing): as Chair, I coordinated the production of the [Finance and Benefits Primer](#), the [FAQ for students](#), the [FAQ for graduate-student workers](#), the suggestions for [how to talk with students](#), the hand-out for students explaining why there was [labour unrest at UofA](#), a campaign to [register members' off-campus contact information](#) and [a petition](#) calling on Bill Flanagan to stand up for our university in the face of provincial budget cuts. None of this work would have been possible without the eight members of the Job Action Committee's Communication Team. As Chair, I have also had the privilege of collaborating with Union NASA colleagues on the [info picket](#) on Nov., 2021, as well as being an invited speaker at GSA and Student Union events.
4. **Member, UAT Labour Committee** (Sept. 2021-ongoing)
5. **Member, CAUT's Contract Academic Staff Committee** (Aug. 2019-ongoing)
6. **Chair, AASUA's Advocacy Committee** (July 2020-June 2021)
7. **Chair, (Grievance) Appeals Committee** (Aug. 2021-Dec 2021)
8. **Councillor, AASUA** (July 2018- June 2020)