

UNBC-FA Newsletter

University of Northern BC Faculty Association

March 2011

Current FA Executive

Acting President:	Lee Keener
Acting Vice-President:	Josée Lavoie
Past President:	Darwyn Coxson
Secretary:	Jennifer Hyndman
Treasurer:	Jalil Safaei
Members-at -Large:	Erik Jensen Gail Curry Ami Hagiwara Chris Jackson
Grievance Officer:	Kerry Reimer
Acting Executive Director:	Gwen Lew
Admin. Assistant:	Helen Sideen

Spring 2011
Annual General Meeting
Date and location: to be announced
12 noon to 1: 30 pm

Lunch will be provided

A Message from the FA President:

Lee Keener

On January 1st I took over as Acting President of the FA from Ken Prkachin, who is now on a well-deserved sabbatical and will continue in this role until June 30th of this year. It is great to be involved again in FA activities after a few years away.

The new Faculty Agreement has now been posted for several weeks. If you haven't yet taken a look at it, I urge you to do so. Of particular concern to some members was the PER process. Fortunately there are almost no changes to the front end of this process. The Negotiating Team put in a great deal of hard work in producing this result, an excellent one in view of the constraints imposed on the compensation component of the bargaining process by the Public Sector Employer's Council (PSEC). Let me again thank Darwyn Coxson, Scott Emmons, Suzanne LeBlanc, Gwen Lew, and David Casperson. As it turns out, even after agreement has been reached, the team's responsibilities are not over, for the process of proofreading is non-trivial.

Gwen in particular read every word in the draft agreement and found numerous minor errors. Also, the JCAA (consisting of Darwyn, Gwen, and myself) has already dealt with a number of issues that have arisen in the interpretation of the new agreement.

Let me introduce three new members of the Executive: Josée Lavoie has accepted appointment as Acting Vice President, Chris Jackson as Member-at-Large for SLIs, and more recently, Ami Hagiwara has accepted appointment as a Member-at-Large for term instructors. All of the Executive positions (except Past-President) will be vacant this summer. We encourage interested Members to stand for election at that time.

The Executive has been examining the UNBCFA Constitution for possible improvement. It is likely that we will eventually put forward changes for consideration by the membership.

Aside from electing a new Executive, the FA will need to begin the process of putting together a negotiating team for the next round of negotiations. This may seem premature, but of course the new agreement has but a two-year term. There are also a number of FA standing committees that need to be filled and other appointments that must be made. So there is an urgent need for enthusiastic and committed individuals to participate in FA affairs. If this description matches you, please contact me or Gwen.

In January I attended the CAUT President's Forum in Ottawa. This forum was extremely valuable to me, especially as an opportunity to meet other FA Presidents from across Canada and to learn about their wide range of concerns. The Executive Director of CAUT, Jim Turk, will be stepping down soon. No news yet on his replacement. I also had an opportunity to speak with Neal Tudiver at CAUT who is the staff member assigned to work with UNBC. He is eager to be of service to us. CAUT makes a large variety of services available to member associations, including bargaining training.

UNBC-FA Constitution

Over the last months the Association Executive has reviewed the clauses in our constitution. We wanted to bring proposed changes to the constitution of the Faculty Association with respect to succession planning. One suggestion is to change the President's term from a two-year term to a three-year term, with one year as President-Elect, one year as President and one year as Past-President. Another suggestion is to stagger the officers terms, President and Secretary in odd years, Vice-President and Treasurer in even years with four (4) of the Member-at-Large positions in each year.

An Ad-hoc committee has been formed to review the current UNBC-FA Constitution and will be putting recommendations forward to the FA Executive for presentation to the membership at the Spring AGM.

If you have a suggestion/recommendation please email gwen@unbc.ca or fac-assoc@unbc.ca.

Executive Elections

The Association Executive is elected for a two-year term. That period will end this June and the Association will be holding elections at the Spring AGM for the new executive. We would urge you to consider letting your name stand for election to the Association Executive. The Association functions best when we have diverse representation from across the institution.

Consider running for the FA Executive in any of the following roles:

President: shall preside at all meetings of the Association and of the Executive. The President is the chief executive officer of the Association and shall supervise the other officers in the execution of their duties and shall issue notices of meeting of the Association and Executive. (receives two (2) course releases per year);

Vice-President: shall carry out the duties of the President during the President's absence.

Secretary: shall keep minutes of all meetings of the Association and Executive.

Treasurer: shall keep the financial records, including books of account, necessary to comply with the Society Act, and render financial statements to the Executive, members and others when required.

Grievance Officer (is not a voting member of the executive, but attends monthly meetings) receives two (2) course releases per year.

Members-at-Large On the Executive there shall be at least:

- Three (3) members holding tenure-track or tenured appointments (faculty representatives);
- One (1) Member holding an appointment as a Term Member (Part-time Instructor, Instructor I, II, III, IV, or other Term appointment);
- One (1) Member holding an appointment as a Senior Laboratory Instructor; and
- One (1) Member holding an appointment as a Librarian.

Call for Volunteers

Please consider putting your name forward to volunteer on a Joint FA/University Committee. These are constitution-based committees responsible for encouraging members to run for upcoming executive positions.

DO YOU KNOW... What CAUT is and what it can do for you?

CAUT, which stands for the Canadian Association of University Teachers, is a national umbrella group representing most Faculty associations across the country. UNBC-FA is a member of CAUT, and we send delegates to the spring and fall CAUT Council meetings each year.

CAUT provides a number of services for FAs across the country, including model clauses for negotiations, policy documents, and a legal staff available for FA consultation.

CAUT also publishes a newspaper called the CAUT Bulletin that comes free to all members. (If you do not get a copy and would like one, contact Gwen Lew and she will arrange it for you).

Because of its national scope, CAUT is able to provide various programs (called Affinity Programs) at special rates. Some of these include a Visa card, home, auto and travel Insurance, life, accident and professional property insurance, mortgages, car rental, and office product deals. For more information on any of these, visit CAUT's website page: <http://www.caut.ca/pages.asp?page=368>

The Independence of Universities

Dr. David Mirhady, CUFA BC, President

Confederation of University Faculty Associations of British Columbia

On January 12th, the University of Arizona, the state's largest public research university, hosted a memorial service for the victims of the Tucson shootings. The University's President led the proceedings; the country's President gave the keynote address. Neither a church, nor government, nor a private business, the university served as a distinct forum for this national event.

That this memorial took place at a university should come as no surprise. The university occupies a unique position in most cultures. It conveys and reinforces existing knowledge and societal norms while also questioning and challenging them. This creative tension makes the university home to many views and beliefs and creates fertile ground for new knowledge and ideas. It's politically neutral ground where rhetorical polemics can either be taken up or, as at the University of Arizona, set aside.

But are universities really independent of government? Public universities in Canada receive substantial funding from government, as do the public and many private universities in the United States. These universities, however, have their own complex governance structures: senates that set academic policy and oversee the academic life of the institutions, and boards of governors, which oversee their administration. While the boards of governors include many government appointees - caretakers of the taxpayers' interests - the senates are entirely populated by the universities' own members: faculty, students, and academic administrators. This model of governance ensures that teaching and research are at arm's length from government, thereby ensuring their independence.

In BC, an impediment to this independence has been the universities' inclusion in the "Government Reporting Entity" (GRE), an arcane area of public policy and accounting that has serious implications for universities.

In the aftermath of budgeting and accounting irregularities that afflicted the provincial government at the turn of the century, in 2003 it decided to include universities in the GRE (along with schools, colleges and health organizations). This accounting decision has made it appear as if all the money a university is holding - even if from a non-governmental funding source - might be used by the government to build a road or fund a hospital bed. It has not given an accurate picture of the reality, and its arcane procedures have hampered

university administrators in trying to ensure the sort of facilities and operational funding that universities need to teach and do research.

The Campbell government recognized the problem. In its 2010 Throne Speech it promised legislation that would enable the universities to remove themselves from the GRE: "we cannot let accounting policy stand in the way of our students' interests or hold our universities back from pursuing their unique areas of excellence in partnership with others."

Now the trick will be to ensure that legislation sets realistic criteria for the independence of the universities' accounting. Their budgets could hardly be more transparent - the budgets are public documents and they receive regular, independent audits - but they need accounting procedures that are appropriate to their own situations as self-governing entities, and not as arms of government.

The importance of universities for the province's economic and cultural well-being now also impels the leadership candidates of both parties to make their positions regarding the GRE known. There are also other questions about post-secondary education that the leadership candidates should answer.

Will the government ensure that per-student funding is protected from the pressures of inflation?

How will government ensure that tuition rates are not an impediment to economically, but otherwise qualified students, particularly students from marginalized groups?

Will a new government fully fund graduate student spaces so that BC's universities can properly train world-class researchers?

Will it create a comprehensive public research plan for the province?

For many years governments of both parties have dictated rates of tuition increases and of faculty salary increases. If universities really are independent entities, shouldn't they have the freedom, and responsibility, as they did in the past, to set tuition rates and negotiate salaries themselves?

British Columbia's future prosperity depends, in part, on freeing universities from both political interference and unnecessary red tape.

FA OFFICE

The FA office is located in the Admin Bldg Rm. 3085. Contact Gwen or Helen at local 5816 or via e-mail at: gwen@unbc.ca or fac-assoc@unbc.ca if you wish to arrange a meeting.