



PRESIDENT’S REPORT

BARGAINING UPDATE

At the Provincial Demand Setting meeting held on March 22 & 23, all the delegates from across the province got together to complete a process to finalize and prioritize all of the Locals’ demands. This session was quite energizing, as well as rewarding, in that there were so many new delegates who are now stepping up with new ideas and renewed enthusiasm hoping to make a positive contribution as we move forward.

As the process unfolded, it became quite evident that our College’s demands and priorities were pretty well in line with the rest of the system. On that basis, our demands have all been woven into the final package that will be used at the bargaining table. As you well know, our College has been at the forefront in advocating for our partial load faculty in an effort to improve language in the Collective Agreement to give them better protection and appropriate recognition for their contribution to the College and their students. Suffice to say, our Local’s demands for partial loads were all

adopted with a great deal of enthusiasm by the provincial delegates. For more details, see Paul Miskin’s article (Pg 4).

The Negotiation Team is now charged to put all of the agreed to demands into enforceable language, either through existing articles, or by creating new articles in the Collective Agreement and have this document ready for their first face to face meeting which will be hopefully in early July.

There will be regular updates on the progress as it unfolds and your participation throughout this process is indeed essential in making it successful. If you have any questions about negotiations, or any other matter, please visit the opseu website at: www.opseu.org or our local website at: www.opseu556.org , or call us at ext 2200.

As always, I hope that the winter semester has not been too taxing on you and hopefully the Spring semester will be a bit more relaxed.

Cheers

Tom Tomassi

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POINT OF VIEW

By RM Kennedy (Centennial College Faculty)

Why academic freedom matters

As a faculty member, have you ever been told that you must evaluate your students using multiple choice exams instead of essays? Have you witnessed a Chair, who has no academic expertise in your field, override the grade you assigned to a student? Have you been directed to put your course materials online or turn them over to your department only to see your material outsourced to private educational suppliers, or handed over to a team of under-paid contract teachers? Have you been forced to use textbooks or teach to course outlines that in your professional opinion were flawed? Have you watched hiring committees, consisting primarily of non-academic bureaucrats, deciding who should be hired into the next rare full-time faculty

position? And, perhaps worst of all, have you ever been afraid to raise your concerns about all these urgent issues for fear of losing your job or being disciplined?

What all these concerns have in common is the question of academic freedom.

At Local 558's recent General Meeting on February 18 this complex web of interrelated problems rose to the surface as one of the key issues for faculty in our next round of bargaining. What is becoming clear at Centennial, and across the province, is that management is systemically eroding the quality of college education by taking academic decisions out of the hands of faculty.

History of an idea

In universities, academic freedom has long been regarded as the corner stone of post-secondary education. Indeed, most, if not all, Canadian and international universities only recognize degrees as valid if they are granted by an institution where the faculty have academic freedom (something which puts college students at risk when they want to transfer or pursue higher education). This cherished principle, which dates back centuries, was enshrined in modern Canadian universities in the early 1900s through a system of governance known as

bicameralism. In this bicameral structure, there are two bodies that make decisions in the university: an appointed Board of Governors, which is ultimately responsible for ensuring public interest and sound financial management, and a Senate, made up primarily of faculty, which is responsible for academic decision-making. These two bodies must work together to ensure good governance.

This structure is essential to safeguard the freedom of teachers and scholars to engage in critical inquiry without the undue influence of business,

government, or the reigning ideologies of the day. As the Association of Universities and Colleges in Canada (AUCC) notes in their statement on the subject, “Academic freedom does not exist for its own sake, but rather for important social purposes.” Academic freedom protects the risky work of critical thinking and is thus the engine of intellectual, social and economic innovation.

Of course, this doesn’t mean that with academic freedom ‘anything goes.’ Hence, the strong emphasis in the university on systems of peer review: for scholarship, for publishing, for selecting department Chairs and program directors, for faculty hiring, for granting tenure, for reviewing curricula, for ethics protocols. This system of collegial governance and peer review ensures accountability and academic integrity.

What it means for us

Academic freedom may seem like an abstract concept, but every day on the frontlines, college faculty feel the impact that its absence has on our professional lives. Chairs and Deans, and even senior managers, regularly make thoughtless educational decisions for the sole purpose of saving money. Our work, expertise, and judgment are frequently devalued. Crucial program decisions are made without consultation. Our intellectual property, the fruits of years of learning and experimentation, is taken from us so that more of our work can be outsourced to low paid, unsupported teachers. Our workloads balloon as we try to offer our students a passionate and critical education all the while being ordered to give them multiple choice exams in overcrowded classrooms. And we live in fear of being disciplined for speaking out about these issues.

Management will say that colleges are not universities, and while there are important distinctions, we know college faculty need academic freedom for the same reasons that university faculty do: to ensure academic integrity, to promote innovation and to educate critical citizens and future leaders.

As we enter into the next round of negotiations, we need to leverage the collective bargaining process to insist that faculty have a more meaningful say in academic matters. Concepts like intellectual property, academic governance and control over teaching and learning modalities need to become part of our lexicon of demands.

These don’t necessarily have to be expensive items for management, but they are demands that might reverse the decline in quality of a college system that is otherwise bleeding out.

Enthusiastic CAAT Academic Final Demand-setting Conference.

By Paul Miskin

As the semester winds down along with this interminable winter we've been experiencing, I am sure most everyone is looking ahead to brighter and warmer days and a bit of breathing room between semesters.

It felt to me like an early Spring as energized delegates from 24 community colleges met on March 22nd and 23rd at the Sheraton Hotel for an exciting and highly productive province-wide final demand-setting conference, in preparation for contract bargaining this coming June.

Our Local (556) sent four voting delegates and one alternate to the meeting. (Tom Tomassi, Ed Larocque, Kathryn Payne, myself and Taras Gula (Alternate)). I think it is safe to say that all of us were very impressed by the high level of commitment and positivity throughout the two days.

One of the top priorities for our Local team was to continue to press for better contract language for partial-load faculty around issues of job security, seniority rights, compensation and benefits.

It was encouraging to see that demands regarding improvements to working

conditions for partial-load faculty received wide approval, several passing unanimously. Your issues are being heard loudly and clearly!

All in all, there were about 60 demands passed over the two days, dealing with a broad range of issues from job security, academic freedom, and improvements for partial-load faculty, to labour relations, compensation, workload, and online teaching.

Delegates then were asked by the negotiating team to analyse the demands and prioritize what we saw as the ten most important. Issues surrounding partial-load faculty are definitely part of that list.

We have a strong team dedicated to making positive gains in this upcoming round of negotiations. Please support your Local team, and our Provincial team in any way that you can. Together, we can hopefully improve working conditions for all, and help strengthen quality education for college students across Ontario.

The bargaining team will be sending out its own news update shortly.

OPSEU 556 Members!

We want to hear from *you!* What topics would *you* like to read about in an upcoming issue of VOLO?

Send us an email at: opseu556@gmail.com and let us know what interests *YOU!*

What is DivEx?

By JP Hornick

In a bargaining year, such as this one, understanding the structure of how the union works is crucial to understanding what's happening in negotiations. Your union, OPSEU, is broken into a number of divisions according to the type of work that members do. All college faculty—professors, librarians, counselors, and instructors—are part of the Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology-Academic (CAAT-A) division. This includes all 24 of the Ontario public community colleges.

The business of CAAT-A is conducted by an elected body of 5 representatives, called the Divisional Executive, or DivEx. These representatives are elected once every two years at the divisional meeting by delegates from each of the community colleges. At the divisional meeting, delegates are tasked with the following responsibilities:

- Promoting quality public education
- Monitoring and enforcing the collective agreement
- Lobbying organizations and governments on issues pertaining to post-secondary education
- Developing and recommending policy to the OPSEU Executive Board
- Liaising with student, education, and labour organizations

Most of these responsibilities are taken on by the DivEx between divisional meetings. The DivEx meets monthly to make sure that CAAT-A, as well as its committees and locals, are meeting those responsibilities. The DivEx also meets bi-monthly with College Council, the employer's provincial counterpart, at the Employer Employee Relations committee (EERC) to engage in

discussions about issues that arise in the system during the life of the collective agreement. The DivEx also

- Consults with locals to seek or give advice and direction
- Facilitates communication between locals
- Organizes—together with OPSEU staff—the pre-bargaining conference and final demand-setting meetings
- Reviews draft local agreements and provides recommendations to the OPSEU president
- Oversees the work of all divisional committees (for example, the Health and Safety Co-ordinating Committee and the Joint Grievance Scheduling Committee)

The DivEx also engages in province-wide mobilizing efforts, such as the upcoming report on the state of college education in Ontario, set to be launched in Toronto on April 24 (see the poster in this issue of VOLO). Mark your calendars and be sure to attend this exciting event!

Local 556 is proud to say that our member—and your Chief Steward—JP Hornick is the current chair of the Divisional Executive.

For more information on the DivEx, or any of the related committees, please visit: http://www.opseu.org/caat/caat_ac/divex.htm

Keep an eye out for the next issue of VOLO when we give you an update on bargaining!

WORKLOAD AND BALANCE AND YOU – by Jill Edmondson

Does something in your SWF seem a little off? Are you unsure about the calculations or the evaluation factors in your workload? The Workload Monitoring Group (WGM) can help.

Remember that ALL the work you do at the College should be reflected on your SWF. If it is not, then you run the risk of being overwhelmed, overloaded and overworked, and this is not in the best interests of you or your students.

The Workload Monitoring Group consists of eight (8) members, four appointed by the College and four by the Union Local. A quorum at CWMG meetings is 4, 6, or 8 members, with equal representation from both the College and the Union Local.

The WGM reviews workload assignments and works to resolve issues or disputes. If you are uncertain whether your workload is fair and/or within the limits set out in sections 11.02 A4 and/or 11.02 A 6(a) of our Collective Agreement, just give us a call or drop us a line and we will walk you through it. Alternatively, you can check the box on your SWF marked “proposed workload referred to College Workload Monitoring Group” and we will look into it for you.

Remember; what is best for your students is unequivocally tied to a fair and equitable workload.

TEACHERS AND THEIR DAMN HOLIDAYS! (Maybe people are asking the wrong questions) – By Jill Edmondson

Whenever strike talks loom or while contract negotiations are in full swing, educators are often seen as greedy whiners by Jane Q. Public. Folks who do not work in schools – whether primary or post-secondary or anything in between – are quick to point out the number of paid vacation days and holidays that educators have each year. This quickly turns into criticism: Why should teachers complain? How come educators have so much vacation?

Jane Q. Public is asking the wrong question. Instead of griping about educators and the length of their time off, it might be more productive and more enlightening for Jane Q. Public to instead begin asking questions such as: Why don't I get more annual leave? How come I only get two weeks?

North Americans in general get less time off per year than do the workers of other developed nations. In New Zealand and Belgium, employees get 30 days off per year (stat holidays and vacation days),

Austrians get 35 days to play and Germany is a close second with 34 paid days off per year. Paid holidays and vacation days taper off a bit in the United Kingdom and Denmark, with 28 and 25 respectively, but they're still ahead of Canada where stat holidays and vacation days come in at around 19, depending on the province and of course, vacation days often increase with length of service. Maybe. (Of course, all of this relates to permanent, full time jobs, rather than contract gigs or part time employment, but that's another column.)

Many studies indicate that countries with a greater number of days off are still in fact quite productive, with GDPs and overall productivity on par with (or better than) their North American counterparts.

So, next time people snipe at you for all the holidays you get, perhaps the best way to respond is by turning the question back on them. ***Ask them why they don't get a few more days off each year!***

The Green Corner

Fix It - Don't Throw It Out

It seems we live in an age when it's faster, cheaper and easier to simply discard and replace an item than it is to repair it. Think of the last time a small appliance – like a toaster or a coffee maker – stopped working. You probably tossed it out and picked up a new one that same day. The new appliance probably wasn't very expensive, so it was no big deal.

But think of all the things that end up in the garbage and that don't need to be there – at least not yet. Consider how many blow dryers and blenders are piled one atop the other in the nearest dump, and consider how unnecessary all that waste is.

Those were the thoughts behind the founding of an organization called the **Repair Cafe**. The first **Repair Cafe** opened its doors in Amsterdam in October 2009. It was such a success that the brains behind it, Martine Postma, eventually set up the **Repair Cafe** non-profit foundation, and nowadays, **Repair Cafes** can be found all over the world, from Antibes to Zurich.

The Repair Cafe, which is staffed by volunteers, and it doesn't just focus on household items like broken lamps and chairs with wobbly legs. They also take on clothing and jewellery. Beaded necklace just snapped? No problem. Torn jeans? Bring 'em on.

At one Repair Cafe event in Toronto last summer, 42 items – ranging from computers to shawls - were brought in to be fixed. All of them were repaired, thus diverting those 42 things from landfills, at least for now.

The fix-it day events run about once a month. The next one will be held on May 10th at 791 St. Clair West. More details can be found at: <http://repaircafetoronto.ca/events/> Repairs are free, but a small cash donation would surely be appreciated.

LOCAL 556 BURSARY/SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS

Again, this is the time of the year where, on your behalf, the Local awards five \$1,000.00 Bursaries/Scholarships to students demonstrating financial need. Three are targeted for aboriginal students and two are for all other full time students. This year's recipients are:

- Tara Milton – Assaulted Women's and Children's Counsellor/Advocate Program
- Lance Black – Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure Program
- Jolene Stahn – Special Events Planning Program
- Damiana Palmieri – Transition to PS Education – Community Worker Program (Fall 2014)
- Eda Jasmine Zepeda – Early Childhood Education Program

Which Way Forward? The Future of Higher Education in Ontario

Launch of the OPSEU Report on Education in Ontario Colleges, and discussion of threats to Ontario's post-secondary system. Topics include:

**rising student tuitions and student debt
online courses
academic freedom
the increase in part-time academic work
government under-funding
privatization**

Moderator:

JP Hornick Professor of Labour Studies, George Brown College, Chair of the Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology - Academic divisional executive

Panelists:

Kevin MacKay

Professor of Social Sciences, Mohawk College

Erika Shaker

Education Policy Analyst, Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives

Alastair Woods

President, Canadian Federation of Students-Ontario

Graeme Stewart Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations

April 24th

Civic Ballroom The Sheraton Centre 123 Queen St. W.

6pm to 7pm

opening reception with complimentary food and beverage public input on the direction of post-secondary in Ontario

7pm to 8:30 pm

panel presentations and moderated Q and A

Together,

we can

make a difference.

COLLEGE FACULTY opseu.org

