

## President's Welcome

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### HELLO ALL AND WELCOME BACK —or should I say Happy New Year.

This is my 32nd New Year at GBC, and it feels as exciting now as it did 31 years ago. It is just incredible after an hiatus of a couple of months to look at the sidewalks around the College—at Casa Loma, at St. James and, to some extent, at Ryerson—and see them full of mostly young people wanting to learn what we have to offer. We certainly do have a lot to offer.

This has been a relatively long and drawn out summer and quite wet. Because of the amount of precipitation, we had some real difficulty down at the Union

office, as we had flooding at an average of twice a week. The place got so bad, that even our furniture started to grow mould, so there was a fair amount of commotion going on. This included cutting out the bottom portion of drywall on our walls to remove the mould that was caused by the humidity. The College did offer a temporary space, but we would have had to share that space with the support staff local, as their office was in the same condition as ours. Unfortunately, I had to decline the offer in order to keep our local operation private for our members. However, the mould has now been removed and therefore does not jeopardize our health. The office is still in a bit of a mess, but we will eventually have it straightened out.

I would hope that by now, you have worked out all of the kinks for start up and you are well into your deliver of curricula. I sincerely hope that you are enjoying your students as much as I am enjoying mine. If you have any difficulties with respect to your assignment, scheduling, student numbers, etc., and require help in resolving any issues, we would like to hear from you.

I have been elected to the Divisional Executive of CAAT Academic. This is a provincial committee and we are pres-

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ently working on addressing pre-bargaining issues. Yes, it is almost time again to select a new Bargaining Team, since our Collective Agreement will expire August 31, 2009. We will, of course, set up a General Membership meeting to deal with Demand Setting here at the College. Hopefully you will be able to attend, with demands at hand, to be incorporated and moved forward on your behalf. ▼

# Psychological Harassment~ Workplace Bullying

by Kay Kaszuba

*Once upon a time, Kathryn the Great (fictitious name of course) had been a popular, successful professor at George Brown for more than ten years when she began to experience physical and emotional stress symptoms that confused her and caused her to seek help from the EAP (Employee Assistance Program) and the Union before taking sick leave.*

This is her story:

“I thought it was ‘me’ somehow, but I couldn’t figure out why this was happening after working well at the college for all these years. The stress just seemed to creep up on me over time. I found out that a couple of years ago a newer co-worker started to make nit-picky comments about my hand-outs to the other teachers on our team. Then, about a year ago another teacher on the team stopped talking to me altogether, even though I shared common activities with this colleague. I thought this was odd, but maybe I was just imagining things. Then about three months ago my Chair asked me, “Are you doing your job?” during our SWF discussion—right out of the blue! I always have good ratings on my student surveys and no complaints about me at all. I asked around my department and it seems that there have been false rumors spread about me for the last while; it seems my boss believes them too. I’ve always tried to get along with all the staff, but it’s stressful when you can’t really ‘get

at’ what’s going on about yourself. After that SWF discussion I began to feel more and more anxious and my blood pressure was going up so I called the EAP to try to sort this all out; I was getting stressed enough to consider sick-time because, at my age I have hypertension that can’t be played with. My EAP rep advised me that I should go to the Union because it may be that bullying and mobbing is going on in my workplace and I should get help.”

This report is typical of targets of psychological harassment (bullying and mobbing) in the workplace. The Canada Safety Council states:

Schoolyard bullying—the torment of one child by another—is often compared to workplace bullying. Both types represent a grab for control by an insecure, inadequate person, an exercise of power through the humiliation of the target.

A 1999 International Labor Organization (ILO) report on workplace violence emphasized that physical and emotional violence is one of the most serious problems facing the workplace in the new millennium. The ILO definition of workplace violence includes bullying: “any incident in which a person is abused, threatened or assaulted in circumstances relating to their work. These behaviors would originate from customers, co-workers at any level of the organization. This definition would include all forms of harassment, bullying,

intimidation, physical threats/assaults, robbery and other intrusive behaviors.”

Bullying (general harassment) is far more prevalent than other destructive behaviors covered by legislation, such as sexual harassment and racial discrimination.

A Canadian survey on workplace violence found that physical violence is often reported from outside sources, such as customers, students and patients. Psychological violence is more often reported from within the organization. A US study estimates 1 in 5 American workers has experienced destructive bullying in the past year.

## Perpetrators and Targets

Over 80 per cent of bullies are bosses, some are co-workers and a minority bully higher-ups. A bully is equally likely to be a man or a woman.

The common stereotype of a bullied person is someone who is weak, an oddball or a loner. On the contrary, the target chosen by an adult bully will very often be a capable, dedicated staff member, well liked by co-workers. Bullies are most likely to pick on people with an ability to cooperate and a non-confrontative interpersonal style. The bully considers their capability a threat, and determines to cut them down.

**Bullying** *cont'd page 3*

**Bullying** *cont'd from page 2*

The Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety gives examples of some forms of bullying (mobbing is harassment by more than one individual) as:

- spreading rumour, gossip, or innuendo that is not true
- excluding or isolating someone socially
- intimidating a person
- assigning unreasonable duties or workload (in a way that creates unnecessary pressure)
- underwork—creating a feeling of uselessness
- yelling or using profanity
- criticizing a person persistently or constantly
- belittling a person's opinions

- unwarranted (or undeserved) punishment
- blocking applications for training, leave or promotion
- tampering with a person's personal belongings or work equipment.

Kathryn the Great clearly fit the profile of a typical target and the harassment behaviours sit plainly on the bullying list. Kathryn the Great was a victim of workplace mobbing as well as harassment by her supervisor (intimidating questioning without cause).

*Kathryn the Great wasn't imagining things—she was being bullied.*

#### **Laws Against Bullying**

The first anti-bullying law in North America came into effect on June 1,

2004. Quebec has amended its Labour Standards Act to deal with psychological harassment in the workplace.

The new Quebec law defines psychological harassment as: “any vexatious behaviour in the form of repeated and hostile or unwanted conduct, verbal comments, actions or gestures that affect an employee's dignity or psychological or physical integrity and that results in a harmful work environment for the employee.”

The new Support Staff Collective Agreement also contains an anti-bullying Article for the first time. **Stay tuned.** ▼

*Excerpts taken from: Canada Safety Council  
<http://www.safety-council.org/info/OSH/bullies.html#target>*

# Performance Review

*by Tom Tomassi*

The Local has received numerous phone calls from faculty across the College asking questions regarding the Performance Review for faculty on which the College has embarked. You all know the Local's views on this issue. We have made it clear from the onset that we don't believe that this process, in its present form, has any significant benefits for us, as faculty. Partly because, every time we walk into a classroom and deliver curricula, we are under the scrutiny of every single student attending, with respect to how we perform. Should we not deliver to the standard or expectation of students, our administrator will know that through student complaints. With the current Performance Review, we do not know what criteria are being used to assess us. Also, the present tool being used only evaluates our classroom teaching and does not take into account aspects of our teaching which are beyond our control—facilities, class size and the fact that we do not have

academic freedom. We believe that the resources and energy that is being put into this could be placed elsewhere to increase our ability to be more efficient in our delivery of curricula. This would benefit the students more directly than the path that has been chosen by the College.

As you know, the College ran a pilot project on Performance Review and the feedback that I got from the participants that took the time to speak to me, was that it was a waste of time, except for the personal portfolio. The College administration obviously has a different view and perhaps different feedback.

As we understand it, this implementation is still voluntary and administration is asking for volunteers to implement the program. The question you need to ask yourself is this: “What would I gain by going through the Performance Review versus what could I stand to lose should the result of this performance review be negative?” We want to remind you of

Article 14.03 A 2(a) (in the Collective Agreement) which states:

*“Annual increments to the control point are based on experience at the rate of one step for each completed year on-the-job experience. Above the control point, but not beyond the maximum, one step will be granted where performance in the past year was satisfactory”.*

What does that mean to you? It means that if your performance is found to be unsatisfactory, your step increase could be withheld from you. (Should this in fact happen, then I would suggest that you file a grievance against the College).

In conclusion, if this process is voluntary, you need not participate, unless you want to. If you feel you are being forced, coerced or pressured into participation, please call our office at ext 2200 for advice on how best to protect yourself. ▼

**For more about Performance Review see Ask the Chief Steward on page 5**

# Arbitration Award—Dismissal PROFESSOR AT CONFEDERATION COLLEGE

by Ed Larocque

Until now, when a college Professor was accused of significant misconduct, the Colleges' response was to follow a set policy of progressive discipline. If the employee's behaviour improved, then termination of employment was averted. Arbitration award #673201 dated June 6, 2008 has now changed that.

The grievor was a full-time welding professor at Confederation Collage with 18 years seniority and an unblemished record.

Listed below is the timeline of events which took place between March 28th, 2006 (when student complaints first came forward) and April 20th, 2006 (when grievor was terminated).

## Timeline of Events

### March 28, 2006 – April 20, 2006

**Mar. 28 – Apr. 5:** Dean talks to students after complaints come forward about the teachers teaching abilities, use of foul language, lack of course outlines, the showing of sexually suggestive emails and intimidation.

**Apr. 3:** Dean meets with Professor to discuss student complaints. The Professor challenged the students' views and complaints.

**Apr. 4:** Dean learns that the Professor told the class they should have brought their complaints directly to him.

**Apr. 5:** Dean visits the Professor's class and observes that tests have not been handed back to students and there appears to be unclear marking criteria.

### Apr. 20:

- Dean hears that the Professor made a threat to students, informing them that if they do not withdraw their complaints, he may sue them.

- Dean reports his findings to Human Resources.

- Professor meets with Director of Human Resources to discuss issues and is handed a Letter of Termination.

## Interesting Evidence

- During the investigation, the employer took back their computer that the Professor had been using and presented emails and downloaded internet data as evidence against him at the arbitration.

- College presented the Professor's behaviour as being in violation of College Policies and cited several examples such as:

- Personal use of college emails and computer equipment
- A student's right to complain
- A student's right to have a course outline
- Code of conduct
- Human rights
- Lack of remorse

- Some students gave evidence at the hearing that the professor was a good teacher others gave evidence that his teaching was incompetent.

- Union representation not called in until April 20th, the date of termination.

## Arbitrator's Comments

"Teachers hold a special position of trust. The grievor indicated an inappropriate personal association and involvement with his students."

## My Comments

- In this case, the employer convinced the arbitrator that the Professor's teaching performance and actions were unsatisfactory and therefore allowed them to bypass their own policy on Progressive Discipline.

- Ensure that you are familiar with all George Brown College's Policies and Procedures relating to your employment. The policies can be viewed by going to GBC's website via INSITE. Ensure that you govern yourself accordingly.

- Do not use College computers, server or email for anything other than teaching related activities.

- The grievance process presented a significant amount of evidence relating to the professor's performance. Consider creating and maintaining a DAY BOOK similar to ones used by high school teachers. It can be used to record things like:

- class attendance
- outcomes covered
- start time, finish time and length of breaks
- were you delayed getting into class because of previous class
- condition of room at start and finish of your class
- handouts given that class
- homework assigned
- notice given of upcoming tests and assignment due dates
- when tests returned
- malfunctioning equipment and how reported
- classroom too hot/cold/outside noise/materials not ready etc.
- classroom interruptions: fire alarm/filling out surveys/late students etc.

*And, of course—exhibit professional behaviour at all times. ▼*

## Update: Post Strike Return-to-Work Grievances

by Ted Montgomery

Remarkably there is still nothing really to report. I have been in regular contact with our counsel, David Wright, and both he and I have been talking with the union nominee to the Board of Arbitration to get updates. The Board is still considering the evidence put before them so far, and as I understand it may possibly be requesting some further evidence with respect to interpretation of some of the settlement language. I will be keeping in touch with David and will let you know as soon as there is anything substantive to report. ▼

# ASK THE CHIEF STEWARD

**Question?** My chairperson wants me to take part in the faculty Performance Review. Should I volunteer?

*Cautiously Curious*

**Answer!** First and foremost, under the proposed faculty Performance Review process, it is highly improbable that faculty would receive a fair evaluation based solely on their abilities as Professors. Secondly, even if a fair evaluation *was* possible there is virtually no benefit to Professors—and many possible downsides.

*Let's consider the issue of a fair evaluation.*

The collective agreement defines the roles of the Professor in the class definition on page 147. We are charged with providing academic leadership and developing an effective learning environment for students. It breaks these tasks down into four areas, designing/revising and updating courses, teaching the assigned courses, academic leadership, and finally a short list of other tasks ancillary to the role of Professor. The caveat in the definition lies with the opening statement that we do so “*under the direction of the senior academic officer of the College*”. The Colleges have continuously refused to negotiate any language regarding academic freedom for faculty. Colleges are unwilling to relinquish academic control to Faculty. Except in some situations where successful grievances have been filed, the College has decided on the working conditions under which we teach—often to the detriment of the faculty-student relationship and the teaching-learning process.

Fair evaluation and the independence of the evaluator also go hand in hand. A supervisor who makes all the decisions regarding class size, scheduling, facilities, course content, evaluation methodology, amount of out-of-class student assistance, availability of and support for technol-

ogy, etc. lacks the impartiality to attribute teaching success or failure solely to the Faculty. In addition fair evaluation of teacher performance requires the evaluator to be at least as competent and as knowledgeable as the faculty they are evaluating—both in technical content and in teaching methodology. Fair evaluation and the competence of the evaluator go hand in hand.

If and when the Colleges negotiate language on Academic Freedom that gives Faculty control over the conditions under which they teach, and, when management is drawn from the ranks of professional educators, then there may be a basis for discussing some form of ongoing faculty evaluation.

The Union's experiences with the College's process of evaluating Faculty has been less than positive. Faculty have received very negative evaluations even in situations where the College has scheduled less than the prescribed number of hours for a course, where many (and in at least one case the majority of) students did not meet the entry requirements and where Faculty were specifically directed not to use available technology such as web CT. The College has sought input from their law firm on the content of individual teaching evaluation. They have received advice to downplay positive evaluation and to concentrate on the negative aspects. We expect the College to act with academic integrity and to make their evaluations fairly and independently. It is extremely disappointing to learn that that independence just might be absent.

*Are there benefits and what are the downsides to Faculty Evaluation?*

Becoming a full-time Professor requires that the candidate pass two full years of probation in which all aspects of job performance are scrutinized. Only then, when the College is satisfied with the candidate are they offered a full-time position. From the first class until the issuance of final grades we are subject to scrutiny by our students. If there

are no legitimate student complaints, then there is no basis for conducting an evaluation of a Professor's performance. If the purpose of Performance Review were truly and solely to assist Faculty to become better teachers, then the process would be restricted to having Faculty, as professional educators, engage in review on a collegial peer-to-peer basis.

Faculty who are deemed by their supervisor to perform below expectations can be the subject of disciplinary action that could result in reduced pay, including a long term impact on pensions, suspension with or without pay, forced training and ultimately loss of employment.

The decision to take part in the proposed Performance Review depends on how you answer the following questions:

- Is the process fair?
- Are the evaluators competent to render an accurate assessment?
- Are the evaluators independent?
- Is the evaluation of your performance truly reflective of your abilities and not “edited” by individuals who were not present?
- Is the purpose of the process academic excellence or one of control?
- Finally is it worth the risk?

If you do decide to participate in the Performance Review process, contact your Union steward to determine what steps to take in advance to protect yourself and, as much as possible, to insure that you are evaluated fairly. ▼

We want you to

**ASK the Chief Steward**



Questions can be submitted to the VoLo Editor at [opseu556@gmail.com](mailto:opseu556@gmail.com). The Vocal Local will endeavour to answer all your questions here, space permitting.

# Something's Amiss in this Picture

by Ed Ksenych

Sorry to start off the new semester on the same note as the one I ended on last semester, but the topic just won't go away – our College's trendy love affair with expensive branding. Of course, on one level it's not supposed to go away. One purpose of branding is to create an unforgettable identity for everyone and everything associated with the brand, especially for the customers. And our Marketing and Communications Department have devoted a lot of time, energy, and money to do just that. But something feels amiss.

For many, the new semester began with the President's Breakfast, an important initiative of our College president. At the breakfast the attendees received their very own copy of the Reputation Standards Guide: an illustrated set of commandments about what thou shalt and shalt not do with the college's logo. Basically, thou shalt not take the G\*C logo in vain.

But for me the semester began by showing up to teach in room 260E and later 230E of the A building at St. James. I checked out the rooms the week before through locked doors, noting the projectors hanging from the ceilings. But appearances can be deceiving. When I arrived to teach I found the wires from the projectors hanging out of the walls attached to, well, nothing. I planned to show a DVD. So I had to haul down a TV—akin to one of the monoliths featured in *Space Odyssey 2001*—from the third floor. Then I needed an overhead projector. I had to go up and roll that down as well. Then in the middle of class I wanted to write down notes from the class discussion about the overhead I was using. Couldn't. When the screen is down it virtually covers the white board. Mind you, the rooms do look very nice.

They just happen to be seriously flawed with regard to accommodating various ways of teaching effectively, because, it seems, the designers assume there is only one way—disseminating information via power point.

It looks like there just isn't enough money for basic day-to-day equipment and flexible facilities in our classrooms. Why not? I've asked about the actual cost of the branding and its ancillary expenses, like the Reputation Standards Guide, but I haven't received any response. It appears to be a lot.

I'm sure there's an official explanation involving monies allocated to different envelopes, expansion strategies involving out-of-the-box thinking to push the envelope and create synergetic partnerships resulting in win-win outcomes for absolutely everyone. But from the standpoint of someone trying to actually teach students, rather than reputably appear before them in accordance with our visual identity, there's something amiss in this picture.

Why should every member of the College have an expensive hardcopy of a designer book on the dos and don'ts of using the College logo? Couldn't management simply have provided us with a colourful, imaginatively written one page memo informing us to go to a website address with information on the appropriate use the logo? Is this expensive document even necessary at all? Not really.

Do people teaching in classrooms need teaching equipment at hand as they're trying to teach large classes of students in college-mandated, three-hour blocks? Really, yes.

So why are we spending so much time, effort, and money on things we don't really

need, and not spending them on what we actually do need in order to be reputable, rather than appear reputable? Because the College is pursuing an idea that's over two thousand years old: what and who you are is how you appear. Or as the Sophists of ancient Greece put it: "appearance is reality". The Sophists weren't foolish people. They were quite successful living their lives according to this principle. Up to a point... the point when the appearance that their reputation was based upon collapsed because there really wasn't enough going on behind it to support the appearance their identity was based upon. And when it collapsed, it collapsed big time! Or as Jean Baudrillard would warn, rather dramatically, two thousand years later, to those who organized their lives around their message: "Welcome to the desert of the real."

In a world replete with marketers and 'professional communicators', Baudrillard's retort is important for our College to consider. A life organized around the superficial is, according to the claims of both the sophists and those who resisted them, superficial. The difference between the two is that the sophists contended the superficial is what's real, and those who resisted contended that the superficial is just that—superficial, and it should be treated as such. Of course, it's quite possible to live your life, and even be teaching others to live their lives, in the former way. It's sort of like believing in the stories you tell and forgetting they're only stories, even if they're good ones—a problem that has seriously afflicted our American neighbours to the south, and is expanding north, east, west, and further south.

*Amis cont'd page 7*

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Mind you, there is an immediate financial payback for me by having our College increasingly organized and presented in this mind-boggling way. I cancelled my gym membership because of the workout I get from lugging equipment around to the smart rooms on the second floor. And I get to do it amid a choir of College logos that beautifully sing forth in unison that G\*C does exist as visually presented. But then I and my students arrive at rooms 260E and 230E, where those of us who do actually appear are very hurried, disorganized and frustrated by the disparity between the supposed and the real, and not very swirly and colourful at all.

Frankly, I don't think we are our visual identity. I think we're so much more. And for all its expensive inventiveness, our Marketing and Communications Department hasn't really begun to tap into it. ▼



“*Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about the things that matter.*  
Martin Luther King

THE GREEN CORNER

THE GREEN

WASTE NOT



WASTE REDUCTION WEEK IN CANADA OCT 19 - 25

*Waste Reduction Week in Canada should be a perfect opportunity to start assessing our garbage output. We can all do our part (however small) to start reducing the amount we send to landfill.*

Here are a few things we can do in and around our homes:

**Composting**

If you have a yard, you can get a compost bin and start composting. You can compost household matter such as coffee grounds and filters, dryer and vacuum cleaner lint, eggshells, fruits and vegetables, nut shells, tea bags, etc. You'll be amazed—your 'green' garbage weekly output will be drastically reduced. You can also add yard trimmings and leaves to the pile.

Adding your 'home-grown' compost to your garden will enrich the soil. You'll find that your garden will reward you for it—it'll be lushier than ever. It is not a complicated or difficult process, but you might want to get more information before you start composting. There are a number of excellent websites (just google 'composting') which can give you lots of info to help you get started, as well as details about what can and cannot be composted.

**Bags & Packaging**

Use reusable cloth or nylon bags for shopping. Most major stores are now selling bags at a reasonable cost. Con-

sider sewing or purchasing decorative cloth bags for gifting.

Buy items that have less packaging. If you have to buy a product that is 'over-packaged', you might want to take off the excess and leave it at the store. That sends a message—an entire community in Germany did just that, with the result that merchants successfully lobbied manufacturers to reduce packing material.

**Donations**

Donate items you no longer need or want to charitable organizations. We all know where we can donate clothing. However, it is incredible what resources are available in Toronto to recycle other household items—furniture, computers, bicycles, old lawn mowers, sewing machines, art supplies, musical instruments, etc.

For details and locations go to <http://www.toronto.ca/reuseit/index.htm>



# OPSEU Local 556 Telephone List

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We welcome and encourage submissions from Local 556 members to *The Vocal Local*. There are many ways you can contribute:

**The Academic Column** – a regular feature which focusses on educational issues.

**The Green Corner** – a regular feature which focusses on ideas, tips and information that are positive for the environment.

**Ask the Chief Steward** – send in questions to be answered by the Chief Steward.

**Other Articles** – any articles with an educational or union concern. If you would like to contribute, please contact the VoLo editor at [opseu556@gmail.com](mailto:opseu556@gmail.com).



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Send your comments, articles, letters to the editor, praise, etc. to:  
VoLo Editor at [opseu556@gmail.com](mailto:opseu556@gmail.com)

