

Bullying—Part 2

Follow-up to Psychological Harassment—
Workplace Bullying—Part 1

Dealing With It

by K. Kaszuba

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Bullying – According to the Workplace Bullying and Trauma Institute, workplace bullying is “repeated, health-harming mistreatment, verbal abuse, or conduct which is threatening, humiliating, intimidating, or sabotage that interferes with work, or some combination of the three.”

Mobbing – Though the English word mob denotes a crowd, often in a destructive or hostile mood, German, Polish and several other European languages have adopted mobbing as a loanword to describe all forms of bullying, including that by single persons.

In the book *MOBBING: Emotional Abuse in the American Workplace*, the authors claim that *mobbing is typically found in work environments that have poorly organized production and/or working methods and incapable or inattentive management and that mobbing victims are usually “exceptional individuals who demonstrated intelligence, competence, creativity, integrity, accomplishment and dedication”*

Indirect Aggression – Bullying attempts to dominate, control, humiliate or marginalize a person without direct physical threat. In the *Journal of Psychiatry & Psychology* (Vol.1, Issue 1, 2007) Dettinger and Hart of Temple University studied indirect aggression in the workplace.

They found two types of indirect aggression that were used by the people in the study: rational-appearing aggression and social manipulation. Results showed that men were more likely than women to express aggression through rational-appearing methods, exhibiting behaviors such as “being criticized” and “one’s sense of judgment being questioned” (Bjorkqvist, Osterman, & Lagerspetz, 1994, p. 30). Women were more likely to express some examples of social manipulation, such as “spreading of false rumors” and “not being spoken to” (Bjorkqvist, Osterman, & Lagerspetz, p. 30).

It should be noted that “spreading of false rumors” is a defamation civil tort legally

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actionable under The Libel and Slander Act of Ontario, and when done respecting work issues, the plaintiff/target does *not* have to prove damage to collect monetary damages from the bully (time limit is two years from the date plaintiff learns of the slander/libel).

Dealing with Psychological Harassment/Bullying in the Workplace

In the first article on Workplace Bullying (*see VoLo Volume 2, Number 1*), there were examples of bullying behaviour and a case description of bullying at work (Katherine the Great).

If you are targeted by a bully at work, what should you do?

1. Call it by its rightful name: abuse, bullying. Recognition that you are being bullied is powerful. Know that you are under attack and that you will need to be your own best advocate. *Adult bullies tend to be insecure people with poor social skills and little empathy. They turn this insecurity outwards, finding satisfaction in their ability to attack and diminish the capable people around them. A workplace bully subjects the target to unjustified criticism and trivial fault-finding. In addition, he or she humiliates the target, especially in front of others, and ignores, overrules, isolates and excludes the target. Regardless of specific tactics, the intimidation is driven by the bully's need to control others.**

2. Confront the abuser directly and tell the bully to stop if possible. The one personal characteristic commonly found in profiles of targets is non-confrontational personal style. It is not necessary to be angry or aggressive when telling someone to cease abusive behaviour. George Brown College Policies recognize a written memo to the abusive person as a sufficient way to describe the vexatious behaviour, say that it is unwanted, and direct that it must stop. Bullies prefer non-confrontational targets; sour the milk by confronting the bully and,

hopefully, the abuser will no longer see you as a tasty snack.

Do not try to ascertain why the person is abusive or make excuses for the abuse. The best use of your energy is not psychoanalyzing the situation; use your energy to extinguish the abuse.

Follow College Policy and inform your supervisor (or HR) in writing if the bullying is repeated. Do not expect immediate correction of the problem at this point. The ultimate purpose in adhering to the Policies is documentation of employer responses (or lack of response) to your predicament for legal redress.

3. Keep a log of incidents: With psychological harassment, individual incidents may seem minor, but it is the repetition of behavior and its cumulative effect that causes damage to health.

4. Care for your health: See your doctor or hospital out-patient clinic to address stress physically and keep records of these visits. Tell the doctor that you are being harassed/bullied at work so the doctor can keep legal records of health changes in case of legal proceedings. Targets of psychological harassment undergo physical changes due to living under unnecessary stress. Keep records and receipts of transportation to medical visits, medication, and any other expenses incurred as a result of being harassed. You may claim reimbursement for all expenses if a grievance process is used to end the abuse. If your doctor advises to take sick days or use vacation days to maintain your health due to the toxicity of your work environment, keep records of these. The corrective procedure for severe psychological trauma caused by bullying is now in excess of \$5000 and not covered by OHIP in Canada.

5. Do not remain isolated in the situation. Contact the EAP, a counsellor, and/or your Union. Targets need validation and support through the stress of harassment.

6. Document, document, document. Various studies have shown that bullying often lasts two years on a specific target. During that time the victim (and their family) suffers both emotionally and financially trying to cope with the situation. It has happened in the past at GBC that a victim of bullying has recouped all financial expenses incurred as a result of receipted documentation during the ordeal.

Remember, no one incites abuse. Bullying exists because the bully has a problem, not the target. You are not responsible for fixing someone else's dented bumper when they drunk-drive their car into your front porch. The bully (and employers who enable them) should pay for the damage to your psychological porch when they cause harm or when managers allow bullying to cause damage by failing to take action. The more they pay, the more you are helping the bully realize they have a problem.

When a Workplace is Psychologically Damaging—Who is Legally Liable?

In Canadian Healthcare Manager (www.chmonline.ca, Nov. 2004) Crystal Stewart, an employment lawyer with Cavalluzzo Hayes in Toronto, states that *employers* (both the institution *and* the individual manager) will be held legally liable for stress-related illnesses caused by a toxic work environment unless they can demonstrate that due diligence was exercised to adjust the situation or mitigate its effects on a victimized employee. Workers compensation law may also apply if sufficient connection to a poisoned work environment can be documented as causing stress-related illness.

Sad facts about workplaces where bullying is not curtailed by management are that abusers are often 'serial bullies' who will seek a new target *within two weeks* of the last victim's escape; and in these workplaces, everyone tends to become either a bully or

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Bullying *cont'd from page 2*

a target over time. Those who attempt to 'remain neutral' by doing nothing are actually helping the bully to abuse the target and frequently become a future target.

Working people are entitled to be treated with respect and dignity in the workplace.

Constructive dismissal (worker is no longer employed in the job she/he was hired for) occurs when an employer makes a unilateral change to a term or condition of an employment contract without providing notice of the change. Bullying can breach a fundamental implied term of any employment relationship that: ***the employer will treat the employee with civility, decency, respect, and dignity.*** There is a legal trend to establish a duty on the

employer to treat employees "reasonably" in all aspects of the labor process. Employers have a general duty under section 25(2)(h) of the Ontario Occupational Health and Safety Act to: *"take every precaution reasonable in the circumstances for the protection of a worker"*.

Support adding an Article to the next Academic Employees Collective Agreement against psychological harassment/bullying in the workplace. This will enable your Union to address the issue through a dedicated Article in Grievance process. ▼

*Canada Safety Council <http://safety-council.org/info/OSH/bullies.html>

“***Let your heart feel for the affliction and distress of everyone, and let your hand give in proportion to your purse.***”

George Washington

George Brown College's

17th Annual **LABOUR FAIR**

Monday, March 9 to Friday, March 13, 2009

THIS YEAR'S THEME:

**Small Victories,
Big Gains:
Unions in Hard Times**

Once again, George Brown College's full-time and part-time teachers at all campuses are invited to request union speakers into their classes during the week long Labour Fair. The special events and Labour Fair speakers give students a chance to find out more about the occupations for which they're training.

Please visit the School of Labour's website: www.georgebrown.ca/schooloflabour for the form to request speakers, or contact Maureen Hynes at x 2549, or email mhynes@georgebrown.ca. All requests must be in by Jan 10, 2009.

Small Victories, Big Gains? Despite some very tough times, this year the labour movement has had a lot of gains – unionizing a Walmarts, getting agricultural workers & part-time college workers the right to join a union. We'll celebrate these gains and explore how they have improved everyone's working lives!

Evaluating Classrooms

by Tom Malcomson

Some time over the past decade a new phrase crept into the vocabulary of George Brown faculty, staff and managers: "Smart Room". Smart Rooms contain one or more of the following: computers (CPU, keyboard, monitor and projection system), DVD/video tape players, audio CD/tape player, and document camera. A screen is present to receive the projected image. In the case of long and narrow rooms, two screens are present so people seated in either half of the room can see projected material clearly. The technology was to assist the professor in delivering educational material in different mediums (mainly visual with pre-recorded audio tracts where applicable). The new system replaced the need for professors wheeling overhead machines, VCRs, DVD players and TV monitors into the class when they were needed. The document cameras took the place of the overhead projector which required acetates and pens to convey information.

As new construction occurred and rooms were renovated, Smart Rooms grew in numbers and the Dumb Rooms declined. If you teach in a Dumb Room and want to bring in different media to add to the lecture/class discussion of a particular topic, it involves dragging overheads, DVD/video televisions on a cart, tape recorders (do we actually have any of these left) into class every week. Definitely labour intensive and stressful. Just finding and arranging for the availability of the 'old' technology can be difficult. On the point of availability of technology the Smart Rooms were to be magnificently superior over the Dumb Rooms. But this is not the complete picture.

When the Smart Rooms were established, either built anew or renovated, decisions were made that have impacted the teaching in those rooms. First, some

rooms do not have all the technology, for example room 426A, (A building St James), does not have a document camera. To show overheads the professor needs to bring in an overhead projector. This, however, will not work in 426A. First, the room is so long that there are two screens, so the professor would have to have two overhead projectors and two acetates, or move one across the room to show the other half of the class. To move an overhead projector from one side of the room to the other would require taking it out of the room via one door and bringing it into the room, on the other side of the fixed consul desk, via the other door. Second, and this will make it pointless to have an overhead projector, the space between the fixed rows of seats and the screens is not large enough to allow the projection of an image on the screen that can be seen by those beyond the third row. In room 340E (A building St James) there are cables on the floor next to the professor's desk to connect a laptop to the projection system. DVD/tape and CD/audio tape equipment is in a cabinet by the door. There is no document camera.

With this wide range in variation of what technology is in the Smart Rooms I recommend creating a graded hierarchy of Smart Rooms. A 'D' Smart Room would have one of the various elements named above. A 'C' Smart Room would have two elements. A 'B' Smart Room would have three and of course an 'A' Smart Room all the elements. An 'E' Smart Room would be a Dumb Room and have no new technology.¹ We could add a *minus* (i.e. a 'B-' Smart Room) if some of the equipment wasn't working. An '*Incomplete*' could be assigned if none of the equipment was working. A *plus* could indicate that all equipment was present and working. To

prevent this possibly confusing system of labeling it would be best to have everything in all the Smart Rooms.

The placement of the computer technology and the controls for the supporting technology causes significant impact on the teaching process. In some rooms the control consul is in the center, at the front, of the classroom. Screens drop behind the professor or off to either or both sides. Sometimes the screens cover the only writing surface in the room, so that publically recording student remarks, on visually presented information, cannot be done. In rooms such as 426A and 340E the old style professor's desk (not a computer table) that has been retro-fitted for the new technology is so close to the front wall that sitting and operating the system and then standing up to interact with students or point to something on the screen is difficult, cumbersome and possibly dangerous (it is easy to trip over the loose tangles of wires laying on the floor under the desks). So the professor becomes trapped at the desk. Computer screens sitting on some desks block a part of the professor's field of view so that looking at students in the 'blind' spot requires that the professor pop up like a jack-in-the-box to connect with students and to see if there are any questions.

In some of the newer rooms, the custom-created control consul desk is off to the side of the room, out of the way, it seems. Examples of this arrangement are rooms in the recently built Financial Services and Business Building (in behind the newly renovated Hospitality Building on Adelaide). Some of these rooms are big, with amphitheatre-like fixed seating, creating a sense of openness. There are

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two screens in the larger versions of these rooms. To move through computer based material, to change slides on the document camera, to show video clips etc. the professor sits out of view. The students could have a purely electronic experience. [I can't help but recall the voice telling Dorothy, "Ignore the man behind the curtain."] In order to connect with the students, to engage the students in a personal dialogue on the material under examination, the professor has to leave the desk and move into the center of the room, then run back and shift the material on the screen, run back to the center, continue with the dialogue/lecture/question session, and back and forth.

What all this leads me to believe is that the people who designed or crafted the Smart Rooms were not professors. They wanted to put new technology into a room and they simply made that interjection. They did not ask: How would the technology be used? How would it fit into ways that people teach, or really learn? How could it facilitate interaction rather than isolation

and negation of the dynamics that occur between student and professor in the classroom? I wonder if anyone has actually collected data on how the rooms and the technology are being used.

It has been awhile since these rooms were outfitted and I have tried to give the rooms a chance. I have taken time to see how I could fit into them. I find that the rooms frustrate me because what I'd like to do, I can't. Don't get me wrong, I use the technology where it fits with what and how I teach. For example all my lecture material is in Word documents that I scroll through (I do not use Power Point for text) and add to and even record student comments on as the class proceeds. I show images in every class to give students a chance to see some of the people, places, occurrences and theory applications I talk about. Yet, the Smart Rooms are failing in my estimation for they are not "Smart" enough, in part because they are not all at the same level of technology. More importantly, I want more innovation from the technology, none of which is really superior in function to any of the

older technology we use to (and some still do) push into class. I want to show images on one screen and text on another. This cannot be done now, as the system is sequential (one piece of technology at a time), and does not hold the capacity to work two projectors with separate information feeds. I want to operate the system from anywhere in the room that I want to teach from (including in among the students, where I sometimes find myself teaching). And I want a classroom (with the technology) that I can move around in easily, shift desks if needs be and still work the technology. The current "Smart Rooms" are simply not smart enough. ▼

¹ As I toured the St James Campus (i.e. 4th floor in the A building) I realized the technology free rooms were smaller than most of the Smart Rooms and also had very flexible seating systems, which facilitated the professors' choice to move students into small group discussion, or full class circles. These potentially pedagogically critical arrangements would be grossly encumbered by control stations and fixed seating. These Dumb Rooms seemed to me to be very clever in that way!

Kudos for the Vocal Local – Volume 1



Jennifer Stellings, 3rd VP of local 556 and co-editor of *the Vocal Local*, accepts the *Rookie of the Year* award on behalf of all who worked on the first volume of *the Vocal Local*.

Every year, OPSEU local newsletters look forward to the OPSEU Editors' Weekend. This event is an annual conference and educational for OPSEU local newsletter editors. From noon Friday to noon Sunday, there are workshops (which deal with all aspects of union newsletter creation) as well as speakers. This great "Weekend" also provides the opportunity for those involved in working on a newsletter to meet and exchange ideas with other local newsletter editors. The Editors' Weekend also includes an awards dinner to recognize the wonderful work of the past year. The awards are offered in three categories, according to the size of the local.

The most recent OPSEU Editors' Weekend took place October 24-26, 2008 at the Delta Chelsea Hotel in downtown Toronto. This event included the 2008 Newsletter and Website Awards. *The Vocal Local* (in Category C – locals with 501 or more members) won *Rookie of the Year* award. The *Rookie of the Year* category is open only to a new publication, or one which has been revived after a break of at least two years. *VoLo* also received Honorable Mention for Best Design. Thank you to all the excellent contributors who made these awards possible. ▼

Vermicomposting

HOW TO TRAIN LIVE WORMS

JP Hornick



About a year ago, I convinced my partner to adopt a few hundred new pets: a box full of worms. Red wigglers, to be precise. Unlike dogs, I argued, they need very little care: no walking, no hair, and they eat your garbage (okay, so the last bit is exactly like dogs, but with worms there's a good reason).

Keeping worms is our way of composting in a small space and reducing our environmental footprint. We live in a downtown multi-unit co-op that is not yet part of the City of Toronto's green bin program. We also produce a lot of compostable materials that we don't want to just toss in the regular garbage, but we have nowhere to put a traditional compost bin. Vermicomposting, or composting with worms, provided us with the best possible solution.

The benefits of vermicomposting are many: it's easy, takes up very little space, and results in amazing soil for plants. Best of all, it doesn't smell. Our vermicomposter lives outside in temperate weather, and under our sink next to the garbage bin after the first frost warning. It's a recycled Rubbermaid container, about 24" deep and wide and 12" high. We drilled some holes in the sides and bottom to let

air circulate (even worms need to breathe), then lined the bottom with screen to keep them from accidentally falling through. We also keep the bin elevated a few inches on a tray to improve air flow and catch any fluid; we just add the fluid to our watering can for houseplants—it's better than any commercial fertilizer. Next, we shredded up some old newspaper, moistened it to the dampness of a well-wrung sponge, and added that as bedding. Voila!—an instant worm condo ready for its new inhabitants.

All we needed now was worms. For two people, a pound or so of red wigglers will do, 3 lbs. for 4 or more. We got ours from Grassroots on the Danforth, but you can also raid a friend's backyard bin to harvest your own. After adding our new pals to the bin, we started throwing in our coarsely chopped compostable matter and covering it with a layer of the shredded newspaper. The worms love it and eat it up—bedding and all. We love it—every three months or so we have a bin full of rich soil (worm castings). Our plants love it—I swear they seem greener. A word of caution—don't compost meat, dairy products, or animal waste—worms do have some

standards, and these foods result in bad smells and creepy new tenants in your bin.

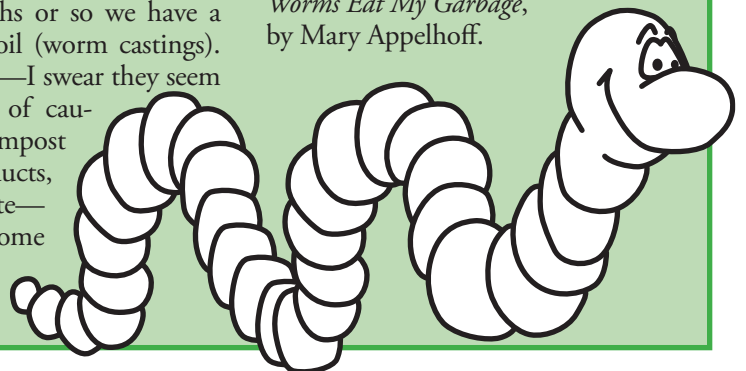
One final benefit—worms make a great gift (though they are devilishly difficult to wrap). Well-fed worms reproduce asexually and quickly, so we were able to expand our wriggly empire—passing our extras on to friends to start their own worm farms. Truly the holiday gift that keeps on giving.

Want to try it yourself? Check out these links on vermicomposting:

City of Toronto page on vermicomposting:
<http://www.toronto.ca/compost/with-worm.htm>

An incomplete list of vermicomposting suppliers in Ontario (you can also try Grassroots natural products store in Toronto):
<http://flash.lakeheadu.ca/~tbvn/suppliers.htm>

Definitive book on the subject:
Worms Eat My Garbage,
 by Mary Appelhoff.



Things Are Still Amiss in the Picture

by Ed Ksenych

Many thanks to those who took the time to respond to the article “Something’s Amiss in this Picture” that was published in our last newsletter. For those that avoided the article, it was about the disparity between how we’re marketing GBC (both to others and ourselves) and some of what’s actually going on here regarding education. Specifically, I was inquiring into why we were distributing a Reputation Standards Guide, which is basically a manual on branding, to all college staff when some of our classrooms, where we actually do the work on which our reputation is based, are without even rudimentary educational equipment.

I received three sets of responses. First my article included a question about the cost of publishing such large quantities of the manual. And Karen Thomson, our VP Marketing and Communication, did respond with a very detailed explanation of the cost. Karen wrote:

“The cost of the manual was \$20,000 for 2,000 copies or \$10.00 per manual. We distributed 800 manuals at the breakfast so the total cost calculates at \$8,000 for that staff

distribution. Costs for printing are a little more complex than that, however. I’m sure you are aware that there are significant savings in printing costs with increased volume, so the per unit cost of the manuals would have been about 50% more if we didn’t print the material for staff. This means we would have had to spend \$15,000 for 1,000 units. By adding \$5,000 to the budget for staff distribution, we were able to distribute to staff at a real incremental cost of \$6.25 per book.”

I do appreciate Karen’s very informative response, but I still don’t understand the point of spending an *extra* \$5000 to distribute a guide on branding to all the staff at the college even though it meant the cost per unit dropped from \$15 to \$10, let alone why we did it when some classrooms remain bereft of basic resources. Besides the matter of fiscal prudence, I don’t see how such a distribution relates to our Academic Strategy.

A second set of responses concerned other examples of peculiar spending by our college as it refurbishes and redesigns itself in order to generate an image to attach its

reputation to. The first example concerns the Assessment Centre on the second floor of 200 King St. East. As with the logo, it’s visually very attractive. The Centre includes a vast glassed-in entrance area, and a spacious glassed-in corridor to get to the Test Centre. I’m not using the terms ‘vast’ and ‘spacious’ dramatically. The entrance area covers about 400 sq. ft., and the 55 foot long glassed-in corridor (that runs right along side another corridor) covers about another 400 sq. ft. Meanwhile down the hall are newly renovated classrooms that have difficulty holding the numbers being crammed into them. For instance, 260E (about 950 sq. ft.) and 230E (about 1,000 sq. ft.) are set up for classes of 40, but classes of 50 are regularly assigned to these spaces. Moreover two floors up, departments, like the School of Liberal Arts and Sciences, which provides up to one fifth of the curriculum of every program on the campus, is asked to make do with an office area akin to an iron lung. Things continue to be amiss in this picture.

A second example concerns the newly redesigned, or perhaps more accurately, redecorated, Community Services Boardroom (487F) in 200 King Street East. Again very pretty. But it was quite clean, pleasant and functional before, though not nearly as dramatically modernistic. How much did redecorating this room cost? And exactly why was it decorated? Are the decisions that emerge out of this boardroom any better now that it’s been redesigned?

A third ongoing example concerns the monies being used to refurbish new office areas, such as those on the second floor at 200 King St. East. I recall visiting the HUB last spring while they were dismantling two designer desk units as part of relocating the

General Membership Demand Setting Meeting

Tuesday December 16th

4 pm – 6 pm

**St. James Campus – 200 King St. East
Room 315A**

*To be followed by a social get together
at Betty’s – 240 King Street East*

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student advising services to the second floor, and commenting on how expensive the desk units appeared to be. I'm currently in the process of checking their cost. But where are they now? I didn't see them on a recent tour of the new facilities.

The cost of the two units is rumored to be in the thousands of dollars (though I still need to verify this). But whether this kind of money is being spent on inanimate, functional objects for this office area or some other office space (I've been told of some seemingly exorbitant expenses in the Schools of Art & Design and Hospitality), how are such expenditures being justified when our college only pays skilled, knowledgeable, sentient beings teaching partial-load courses between \$75 to \$130 an hour – or \$3,150 to \$5,460 a course – and con ed faculty between \$30 and \$55 an hour -- or \$1,260 and \$2,310 a course (in both cases preparatory and evaluation time are generally unpaid). Again, things continue to be amiss in this picture.

My aim in raising these examples is not to embarrass our managers. In the context of the whole college, I consider my managers my colleagues deserving of the same support they regularly provide to me, insofar as they are conducting themselves reasonably and in line with the overall aims, values and principles of the college. But what exactly are these?

Over the past decade I've witnessed those aims, values and principles being articulated more and more in terms of a commercialized and rationalized rendering of education that's become operationalized in terms of "outcomes based education" (OBE). But if we're going to be governed in terms of such commercial values and managed through OBE, then, not only faculty and support staff, but also managers are subject to this decision (unless this is a tyranny in which those in power are exempt from the very laws they institute).

If so, then managers need to explain how what they're doing connects to their publicly-stated managerial outcomes? And how those managerial outcomes connect to the educational outcomes of the programs they supervise as well as the educational outcomes of the college as a whole?

Given this, I'm very interested in seeing how monies spent on all this eye-catching redesigning and refurbishing become justified in relation to the expenditures on educating per se. And I'm also keenly interested in how such financial decisions relate to our college's Academic Strategy.

Oh by the way, there was a third set of responses to the earlier article concerning my claim that *"I don't think we are our visual identity. I think we're so much more."* What did I mean? A fair question that I'll address in the next edition of *the Vocal Local*. ▼



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.

Letters to the Editor

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.



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The Vocal Local is a publication of the George Brown College Faculty Union, OPSEU Local 556. It is intended to provide information and stimulate discussion among its members. We invite your participation and welcome your contributions. We reserve the right to edit for length and clarity.

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

