

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Hi all and a belated welcome to the 2013/2014 Academic Year! It seems to me that this year has all the pre-requisites to make it both exciting and challenging.

Let me take a moment to explain why this year brings about excitement. First of all, this is a negotiation year, and it so happens that both support and faculty are negotiating within the same time-frame. If we play our cards right, it will give both bargaining groups more leverage. What is more exciting to me is seeing grass roots democracy at work, where everyone must - and hopefully will - get involved in the bargaining process that will ultimately produce a fair and timely settlement. The Local will endeavor to be a catalyst for all to participate in this process and we encourage each one of you to express your views. Appropriate, constructive feedback is extremely important for us at the Local, and indeed to the bargaining team, to move issues forward on our behalf.

I remain optimistic that this round of bargaining rights the wrongs that we have experienced over the past five years. As a brief review for our newest members: The past two contracts were imposed: The 2007 CA was imposed by the Colleges and the 2009 CA was imposed by the Provincial Government. Over the last two rounds of bargaining, we have lost considerable ground and I believe that this is the right time to reaffirm our principles and values as professional educators in the post-secondary system.

I am confident that this is the right time for the Colleges to recognize the importance of "Academic Freedom", or to put it simply: guaranteed control over our curriculum, evaluation and intellectual property. As a faculty and expert in my field, I should have the right to develop content, deliver and set up the appropriate evaluation.

Continued on next page...

A COORDINATOR BY ANY OTHER NAME

The Collective Agreement clearly defines the jobs of our members - Professors, Instructors, Counsellors and Librarians. Colleges cannot invent nor introduce new positions or new job titles into the existing agreement except through bargaining.

Previous attempts to create job titles, such as Nursing Clinical Facilitators were designed to devalue the work done by faculty. Currently, we have an epidemic of "Course (or Program) Leads".

These position/titles do not exist within our Collective Agreement, but some areas of

the college (and some other colleges across the province) use – or want to use - these designations. *Why?*

The "Course Lead" designation doesn't have guidelines to govern workload or a pay scale associated with the role. There are no specific responsibilities in such a role, nor are there any details regarding how much time would have to be allocated to a person who takes on the role of "Course Lead".

It is in the best interests of the students, the college, and faculty members, to have clear expectations of roles and responsibilities. That way, we all benefit.

President's Message continued.

It could also mean that if you take it upon yourself to prepare a new course, its content and evaluation methodologies, then that work belongs to you. Some of you, I am sure, have experienced what I have experienced: created a course, taught it for a short period of time, only to have it taken away and given to possibly a part time faculty member. Having academic freedom enshrined in our Collective Agreement, not just college policy, will recognize our work/professional expertise and prevent the College from doing just that.

We also need to look forward to the fact that technology, whether we like it or not, is going to play a bigger part as a teaching tool in our profession and as such, we as faculty, need to have some control over what the College does with it. Given the present language in the Collective Agreement, none of these rights presently exist, unless you explicitly develop courses/content on your own time and you apply copyright to it. Although this is a

simplistic approach to my idea of academic freedom, if we could achieve just that in this round of bargaining, it will definitely break the mold that has constrained us since the creation of the Colleges. In my book, it would be a monumental achievement.

To give some context for the current conditions at George Brown, the accompanying graphs (on Page 3) demonstrate the erosion of our bargaining unit that has taken place over recent years.

I have not forgotten about the challenges of bargaining that I mentioned at the beginning and I will address that topic in my next article. If you want to discuss these issues with me, please give me a call at ext 2200, or even better, get your colleagues together and I would be delighted to meet with you and talk about this next round of bargaining.

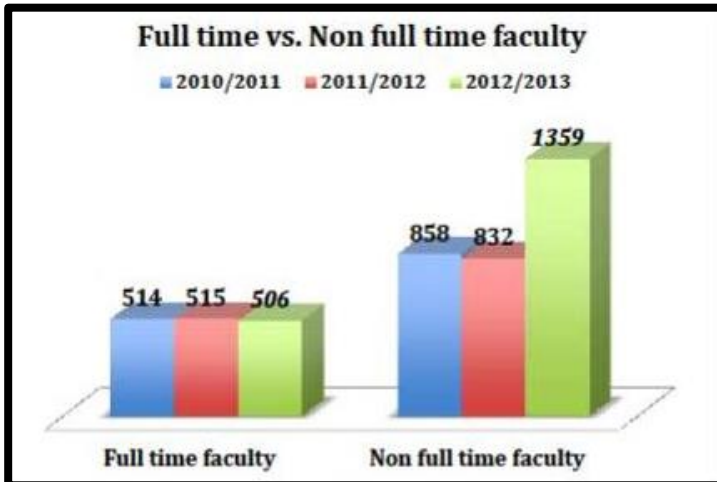
HAVE A GREAT ACADEMIC YEAR!

SWF TIP! Just because you **volunteer** to do something at the college, that does not mean the work itself is voluntary. You might raise your hand and say, "Yes, I'd like to be on College Council," or you may offer to participate in PAC's curriculum review, or perhaps you'll attend the next orientation event or student information session. All of those things are great, and faculty and students – the college overall – benefits from having dedicated, involved team players. **But** – Taking part in activities like these should be reflected on your SWF. Let's say, for example you participate in the ABC Committee. The committee meets once a month for two hours. In that case, your SWF should have 30 minutes per week allocated to that committee. It may not seem like much – a meeting here, a half hour there, an evening now and then – but over the course of a semester, those additional things can add up. Your time is valuable, sure, but more than that: If you take on too much, other things – like time for lesson prep or working with students – may suffer.

NEW UNION OFFICE AT ST. JAMES CAMPUS

We are pleased to announce that we now have a Faculty Union Office at St. James Campus – 200 King Street – Room #166B. Visit our website at www.opseu556.org for office hours. Or call ext. 2200 to set up a time to meet with a steward.

By the numbers: Quality Education at GBC?

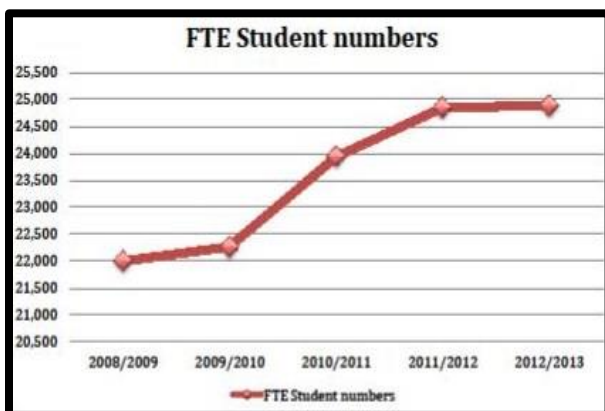
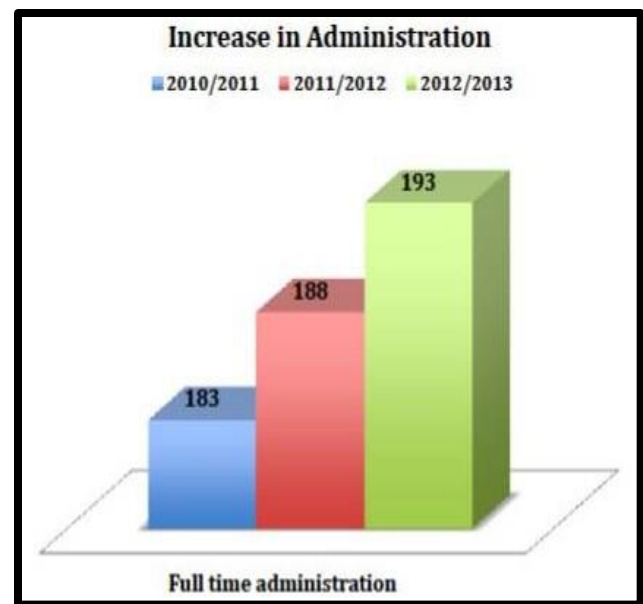


Non-full-time faculty now makes up 73% of the faculty here at George Brown College, an increase of nearly 10% in only 3 years.

Full-time faculty numbers decreased from 2011/2012 to 2012/2013.

In contrast, administration (management) at the college grew by nearly 6% during the same period. In 2012-2013, there were 35 part-time administrators.

Last year, 85% of managers were full-time.



Over the last 5 years, we have seen more than a 10% increase in full-time equivalent student numbers.

**All above numbers taken from George Brown College Annual Reports.*

ALWAYS LEAVE THEM WANTING MORE

Isn't that what they say in showbiz? Give the audience a reason to buy another ticket to next week's performance. Don't give them everything you've got all at once, or they'll have no reason to see you again. *It's kind of the same thing in teaching...*

The move towards online learning has prompted many colleges to ask faculty members to hand over lecture notes, assignments, quizzes, PowerPoint slides, and other materials. Sharing is good, **yes**. Having course continuity is also good, **yes indeed**. But handing over all your notes, tests and lesson plans just gives colleges a reason **not** to hire more full time faculty...

Imagine this (in a worst case scenario): Professor A teaches a popular course, one that is also taught by some part-timers, Professor B and Professor C. Professor A (who is a seasoned veteran of the course and of teaching) shares all of his terrific notes, tests, etc. with his department. Professors B and C have been at the college a while and they're at the top of the pay band.

Then, Professor A retires at the end of the year. Instead of replacing him, the college hires Professor D and Professor E as contract faculty members. Professors B and C were becoming too expensive, so their contracts don't get renewed. And, since the college now has all the materials from the recently retired Professor A, the college is confident that the quality of the course and the student experience in it will not suffer in the immediate future.

How about another scenario... The college gets all the notes, assignments and so on for a course that will be delivered online. All of the assessments for the course are objective (multiple choice, true or false, and so on). Why would the College hire a full time faculty to do this work?

Being a team player and sharing ideas and info are indeed important and an integral part of our work, but it is also worth considering what way the college may use your materials down the road. ***This is why academic freedom is so important in the next round of bargaining.***

**Did
you
know?**

OPSEU represents about 15,000 academic and support staff working for Ontario's Community Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology (CAAT). The union negotiates a province-wide agreement with the Council of Regents, representing the management of the colleges. OPSEU members working for colleges belong to the CAAT Academic Division or the CAAT Support Division.

What Have You Done For Me Lately?

Occasionally, the mention of a labour union will elicit a negative remark, such as “unions aren’t necessary nowadays.” Other times, the mention may prompt a bitter question, along the lines of “what have unions done for me?” *The answer is: A LOT.*

The world of work has changed a great deal over the years, but we cannot forget how that happened, or what catalysts sparked the changes that continue to pay residual benefits to the workers of today.

In a nutshell: It is because workers united years ago that, among other things, we now have: The ever shrinking “**middle class**” as a bridge between the haves and have not. Below is a short list of the many things that have been achieved through negotiations:

OVERTIME, SICK LEAVE, PENSIONS, WEEKENDS, PAID VACATION, GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES, FAIRNESS IN PROMOTIONS, STATUTORY HOLIDAYS

The aforementioned workplace provisions and/or employment laws and practices seem normal to us today, and it’s difficult to imagine NOT having these rights. However, it took a lot of work and a lot of fight to get these.

For instance, the Labour Movement can take credit for leveling the field when it

came to women in the working world in days of yore. For example, only about sixty years ago, there were still restrictions on married women being employed in civil service jobs, such as the Post Office. And, it was only in 1980 (!) that a rule (dating back to the 1950s), in which women fishers were prevented from collecting unemployment insurance benefits if they worked with their husbands, was overturned.

Another point to consider is health and safety. Regulations in these areas – which benefit all employees – also owe a nod of thanks to labour movements. It was only in 1972 (*some of our readers may not have even been born then!*) that Saskatchewan passed the **Occupational Safety Act**, the first such legislation in Canada and the United States. The Saskatchewan legislation set the stage for three tenets of workplace safety that have been adopted far and wide today, such as:

- The right to know about hazards and dangers in the workplace.
- The right to participate in health and safety issues through a workplace committee.
- The right to refuse unsafe work.

The labour movement has brought about a number of changes that benefit all workers, in a wide range of industries. ***Imagine what it would be like today if no one had taken a stand all those years ago...***

Green Machines

Four Seasons of Being Green Outside

Think of the types of seasonal chores you do around the outside of your house: mowing the lawn during the spring and summer, shoveling or plowing snow during the winter, and blowing or removing leaves during the autumn.

The greenest ways to do any of the above would be the good old' fashioned manual ways... plus a bit of effort, strength and endurance, and of course, some elbow grease. But people always want to find a better, faster, easier way to get things done... Of course, there are machines that can do all of the above, but **gas-powered** lawn mowers, leaf blowers and snow removers are not terribly eco-friendly, and oftentimes, they're pretty noisy. Some interesting alternatives are in the works, though...

LEAF BLOWERS: An inventor in California has created a lithium-based, battery-operated leaf blower whose power lasts about four times longer than blowers using regular batteries. But that's not the best part... The machine – which is used by a landscaping company called **Green Station** – is delightfully quiet! The loudest it gets is about 60 decibels (for comparison, normal conversation is usually somewhere around 60 dB, while a power-drill measures in at around 95 dB, and sandblasting is around 115 dB).



SNOW BLOWERS: In another example of necessity (or maybe frustration?) being the mother of invention, Dan Baker, an eco-friendly tinkerer in Nova Scotia, created a machine he soon christened the *Snowpig*. Baker fashioned the *Snowpig* from an old golf-cart and some ATV tires, adding a snow-blower attachment from a local hardware store. The resulting 25 hp machine (powered by an electric motor) is quieter than traditional snow-blowers, and cleared 10 cm of snow from a 135 meter roadway in about half an hour... using only six kilowatts of power.



LAWN MOWERS: It seems a bit odd that solar-powered lawn mowers aren't the norm, but perhaps that will change sooner than later. It's certainly a logical proposition, and it would of course be eco-friendly. Solar-powered lawn mowers do exist (you can even get programmable, robotic versions) but they'll set you back between \$2000 and \$4000. Until, they come down in price, an affordable, green alternative might just be to get a goat or a couple of rabbits...



Check out the Local's website for information,
bargaining news, forms and much more!
<http://www.opseu556.org/>