

“Celebrating A Changing Landscape”



Devil's Club, Berg Lake Trail. Photo: Ted Binnema



Message from the President

Stephen Rader
Professor, Chemistry

Dear Member of the UNBC Faculty Association,

Welcome back to another start of the academic year, and what an interesting one it is! COVID, the provincial election, the US election, on-going arbitration hearings, the transition to five faculties, a new university administration... could anything more be happening?

Let me start by congratulating Dr. Payne on his appointment as Interim President for another two years. I can't tell you what a relief it is to me personally not to be spending all of my emotional energy battling chaos and dysfunction. President Payne's return to a respectful, collegial model of university governance could not be more welcome, and I hope you will join me in congratulating him on the extension of his term, and in helping him to make UNBC ever more successful.

Does that mean everything is perfect between the FA and the administration? Of course not, but at least we have resumed regular President-to-President meetings, regular and productive meetings of the Joint Committee that oversees how the Collective Agreement is respected, and mutually respectful conversations about grievances. Just this past week, we had our first PEC-FA Executive meeting, and we look forward to many more opportunities to build the relationships that we were not invited to have during the last five years.

Your Chief Negotiator, Ted Binnema, sent out the latest bargaining bulletin last week (#32!) sharing the news that the arbitration hearings continue to drag on. Despite the distressing slowness of the process, I remain hopeful that sometime next year we will finally have a contract. Know that we will argue as forcefully as we can that our unambiguously legal compensation proposal is the only one that safeguards gender equity and provides (closer to) market-level salaries for all employee groups in the FA.



Verdant Pass, Jasper National Park.

Photo: Stephen Rader

What about the provincial election? Might the election result have direct impacts on UNBC? This is hard to gauge. Post-secondary education issues rarely fire up voters, and nobody campaigns on slashing spending in the sector. Yet sometimes elected officials do so anyway, as you can see from the university carnage to our east. Politicians do pay attention to voters; however, so I encourage you to contact as many candidates and party leaders as you can to ask them to commit to supporting post-secondary education.

One strong argument for increasing investments in education is that as the world begins to get serious about responding to the climate crisis, new technologies will be needed and new industries will emerge, collectively driving new research opportunities at universities. Business writers are now estimating that the electric vehicle tipping point – the point at which EV sales outpace sales of gas cars – will be reached by 2024. Returns from fossil fuel investments continue to fall, increasing the movement to renewables. These are all areas in which university-trained citizens can contribute. Jurisdictions that invest

in training their young people for the new economy will be at a distinct advantage.

We had a Grievance Officer transition over the summer, so I would like to thank Jacqueline Holler for her tireless efforts during the first half of the year, and her on-going work as the Assistant Grievance Officer (a position we had to create last year to deal with the overwhelming number of Collective Agreement violations of the previous regime). I would also like to welcome back Catherine Nolin as our Grievance Officer, and thank her for her work as Acting Grievance Officer during her sabbatical. Please ask both of them about their research accomplishments - that will make them happy.

And, speaking of research, I encourage you to ask your colleagues about their own research programs. Nearly all of us are doing fun and interesting things, being successful in various ways, but we do far too little to acknowledge and celebrate these collective successes in scholarship.

This newsletter contains an article from your Vice President, Paul Siakaluk, about the transition to the five faculties structure, an article from CAUT about how to advance equity during COVID-19, and an update from your Grievance Officer, Catherine Nolin, on the state of grievances.

Finally, a huge thank you to the people who make your Faculty Association work for you: Executive Director Donna Sindaco, Professional Services Officer Christa Florell, and the members of the Executive Committee and the Bargaining Team.



Message from the Vice-President

Paul Siakaluk
Professor, Psychology

Dear Colleagues,

Let me begin by saying that I hope you have all survived the first few weeks of academic life for the September 2020 semester. I have found it to be very challenging, and I imagine you have too. We greatly appreciate all your efforts to adjust to the COVID-19 way of doing higher education at UNBC. Please be kind to yourselves and each other as we navigate these uncharted waters.

As has been announced by the Interim Provost, the Five Faculty structure will be implemented on April 1, 2021. In some ways, the change from a two College structure to a five Faculty structure may not greatly impact our daily work routines. As a personal example, my teaching duties and research efforts are not likely to be impacted much. I imagine yours might not either (although, of course, there will be exceptions to this general outcome). However, there are likely to be some important changes to our members' workload.



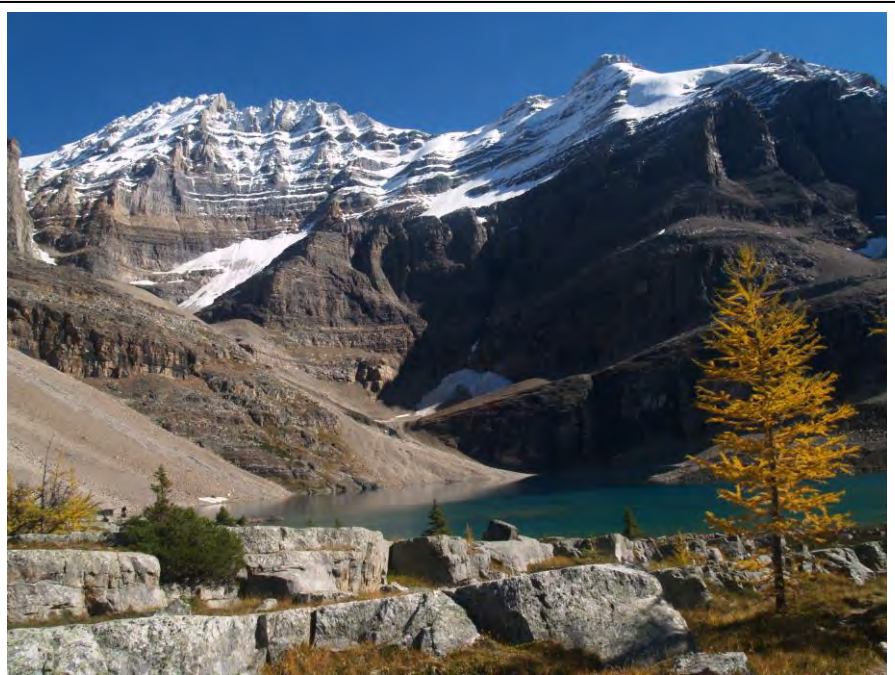
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I will try and frame what I will say here in positive terms: The biggest area of change may be in service opportunities, such as Tenure and Promotion committees, faculty representation on Senate and its subcommittees, attending Faculty Council meetings, et cetera.

In the College structure, there are larger pools of available faculty to select from to fill the above committees. This will be different in the Faculty structure, for obvious reasons. Thus, we anticipate that there will be greater structural pressures on individuals within each Faculty to fill such committees. We are not sure yet how the change to the Faculty structure will impact our members' service workload (e.g., how Faculty representation on Senate will be comprised). But what we can be sure of is that there will be more opportunities for service.

I know that many of you may now be cursing under your breath regarding these changes (if you are still reading this message). I, too, am prone to that reaction. But these opportunities are important to the well-functioning of the university as a whole (e.g., Senate), and for the Faculties and the academic units that comprise them (e.g., Tenure and Promotion committees).

These committees have large impacts on our working conditions. For example, the FA was recently told by administration that there were no faculty who volunteered to serve on the hiring committee for the VP Finance position. This is actually a very important position, an importance that was extremely relevant during our two work stoppages and have greatly affected working conditions.



Lake O'Hara, Yoho National Park. Photo: Ted Binnema

I have been at UNBC now for 16 years. I know, personally and through many interactions with colleagues, that service obligations can have a large impact on a member's workload and personal satisfaction with their work. I encourage academic units to begin discussing how future service opportunities may be addressed at the academic unit level, as well as at the Faculty level. Perhaps proactively discussing the potential challenges will better prepare our members to meet the new challenges that await us when we move into the five Faculty structure.

Mark Your Calendars:

Annual General Meeting

Thursday, 29 October 2020

Noon – 1:30 pm

This meeting will be delivered via Zoom (watch for an upcoming announcement)



10 Actions to Advance Equity During Covid-19

David Robinson

Executive Director

Canadian Association of University Teachers

The COVID-19 pandemic has amplified inequities in the academic workplace. For example:

- Women, racialized and Indigenous academic staff are most vulnerable to course cancellations, job loss, hiring freezes and tenure and promotion delays as they are over-represented among precarious workers and in lower ranks;
- Academic staff with disabilities may struggle more with the rapid transition to remote teaching;
- Gender inequality in caregiving has had a disproportionately negative impact on women's teaching, research and service;
- Mental health problems such as anxiety have increased among academic staff and have a disproportionate impact on those with pre-COVID-19 conditions; and,
- Racialized academic staff, such as those of East Asian descent, may be experiencing heightened levels of racism as a result of the pandemic and as a backlash to the global uprising following the murder of George Floyd in the United States.

Emergency planning and procedures should not undermine the need for our workplaces to be diverse, equitable and inclusive. Ensuring these goals are not put aside during the crisis will result in better emergency responses. It will also make it easier to continue advancing equity as institutions transition out of the crisis.

To help address equity issues on campus exacerbated by COVID-19, CAUT offers the following suggestions to member associations:

1. Create or engage equity committees and communities within your association to identify issues and advise on solutions.

Whereas everyone is affected by the pandemic, not everyone is affected equally. Similarly, pandemic-related policy or practice changes have differential impacts. With the public health emergency limiting face-



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to-face engagement, academic staff associations should find ways to hear from various communities of members. Associations should ensure that membership surveys request members to self-identify. Results should be disaggregated while protecting privacy. Town halls or forums can also be held for members and particular communities of members. Standing or ad hoc committees and/or caucuses of Indigenous and equity-seeking members should guide this work of listening and advising on equity issues.

2. Develop a COVID-19 equity lens.

Associations should develop an equity lens to help ask questions, challenge assumptions and identify potential impacts of policies, programs and initiatives, that take into account the diversity of the membership. Whereas gender-based analysis is perhaps more common, it is important to recognize how the race and intersecting identity factors of individuals and groups influence how people experience policy changes and cost-cutting measures.^[5] It is critical that pandemic and recovery plans are developed with an equity lens. A COVID-19 equity lens will help ensure that equity plans that may have existed before the pandemic are not shelved or stalled but strengthened.

3. Advocate for supports and assist members to secure reasonable accommodations for caregiving responsibilities associated with the pandemic.

Human rights law in Canada prevents discrimination on the basis of family status, and requires that employers provide reasonable accommodation. For example, the *Ontario Human Rights Commission* has issued the following statement on the current situation: An employee who has care-giving responsibilities should be accommodated to the point of undue hardship, which might include staying home. These care-giving responsibilities which relate to the *Code* ground of family status could include situations where another family member is ill or in self-isolation, or where their child's school is closed due to COVID-19.

Supports for those with caregiving responsibilities could include access to or funding for child care, reduced or deferred teaching load, smaller class sizes, additional teaching assistantships, and deferral of tenure and promotion deadlines.

4. Advocate for additional funding and supports for accommodation for members with disabilities.

Members with disabilities and neurodivergent members may need extra assistance with remote teaching. Academic staff associations should seek extra funding and staff supports, such as learning and teaching resources, adaptive technologies, and more teaching assistants.

To put pressure on the administration to accelerate accommodation request approvals, it should be agreed that a member can take partial or full leave with pay while waiting for approval of an accommodation request.

5. Find ways to help de-stigmatize mental health and other disabilities to support academic staff to come forward with the need for accommodation.

Identifying with a disability, particularly with mental health problems or illnesses, is challenging in an employment context. This is especially true for contract academic staff and pre-tenure members because of their precarious status. Although it is illegal to discriminate on the basis of a disability, discrimination can be invisible if it is structural, or go unreported. It is important for academic staff associations to remind members and the administration about the process for seeking accommodation, and to let members know that the association will work to ensure that no discrimination occurs.

6. Press for additional compensation and job security for contract academic staff.

^[5] Johnstone, Rachael and Bessma Momani, *A GBA+ case for understanding the impact of COVID-19, Policy Options, June 9, 2020*. Accessed online: <https://policyoptions.irpp.org/magazines/june-2020/a-gba-case-for-understanding-the-impact-of-covid-19/>.

Research shows that Indigenous and equity-seeking members of the academy are more likely to be working part-time or part-year. Remote teaching requires additional hours of course preparation. It is important to seek remuneration for course development and technology costs for contract academic staff (CAS) and to find ways to enhance job security.

CAS members may have collective agreement rights to continuing employment status between contracts. This provides an enforceable expectation of contract renewal based on renewal history, seniority rights, or the right of first refusal of contracts. An administrative decision not to renew a contract may be challenged and might, depending upon your collective agreement language, be subject to proof of financial distress or exigency. Academic staff associations should try to ensure that any eliminated CAS positions will be returned. Protocols should be in place to ensure that CAS are able to apply to teach the same courses once they become available again.

7. Negotiate or grieve to stop the use of student opinion surveys.

Student opinion surveys have been widely criticized as a poor and biased measurement of teaching effectiveness. CAUT policy is that the results of these surveys should not be used in decisions concerning tenure, renewal, promotion, and merit. The weaknesses in student opinion surveys are even more acute today, as the student experience has been adversely affected by the rapid transition from in-person to remote instruction in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Some universities and colleges recognize this problem, and are not conducting student opinion surveys during the pandemic. Where surveys are proceeding, the results should be provided only to instructors for their personal use. Some associations have negotiated policies where surveys containing discriminatory, harassing, or otherwise inappropriate comments are removed and neither provided to the instructor nor included in any aggregated results.

8. Reconsider tenure and promotion timelines and criteria.

Many academic staff associations have negotiated stop the clock agreements for tenure and promotion. This is critical, as COVID-19 has had an enormous impact on research, teaching and service.

Previous studies on stop the clock policies however have shown that there may be gender differences in terms of the impact of these policies when caregiving is involved. It is therefore important to broaden the discussion of criteria used for tenure and promotion to more adequately recognize factors influencing different career paths in teaching, research, and service.

9. Fight against lay-offs and hiring freezes.

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, some universities and colleges have approached academic staff associations and other campus unions to discuss possible cost-cutting measures. Associations will need to analyze carefully the financial assumptions being made by the administration, while recognizing the situation remains very fluid.

Where bona fide financial difficulties can be demonstrated, associations will need to consider measures that have the most limited impact on members' rights, security of employment and equity goals. For example, most institutions have developed equity, diversity and inclusion plans in light of changes to the Canada Research Chairs program. As well, some associations have negotiated for specific hires of under-represented groups. These plans must not be put on hold, and all efforts must be made to avoid lay-offs and hiring freezes.

10. Press for the employer to collect and share demographic data on the campus community.

The impact of COVID-19 on the working lives of academic staff will differ by many factors, including identities. Demographic data should be collected on the workforce by race, gender, disability, Indigeneity, age, etcetera, to provide insights on who may be most impacted and to assist in making evidence-based



decisions. Academic staff associations can assist in this process by raising awareness among members and encouraging them to self-identify as part of an employment systems review or workforce analysis.

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2705 Queensview Drive, Ottawa, Ontario K2B 8K2*



Floe Lake, Kootenay National Park. Photo: Stephen Rader



Grievance Officer's Report

Catherine Nolin
Professor, Geography

Here is a brief update on the status of grievances, investigations, and ongoing cases of interest – we have 25 open files (that is a lot). Just a reminder that we have a limited number of tools for resolving conflicts with our employer or for addressing violations of the Collective Agreement. We start with informal conversations, now at the recently revived



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Joint Committee that oversees the Collective Agreement, and if we cannot resolve the issue there we proceed to a formal grievance.

A large backlog of grievances awaited Interim President Payne and Interim Provost Dale when they assumed their offices earlier this year and both committed to work collaboratively with the Faculty Association to bring resolution quickly. President Payne is interested in a collaborative approach moving forward and the backlog of cases must be dealt with swiftly. This approach is in everybody's interest particularly because, as grievances move along the path to arbitration, an enormous amount of time, energy, and money is spent by both sides.

Unfortunately, despite what appear to be the best intentions on the part of the President and the Provost, we did not receive settlement letters or any further correspondence based on productive discussions in mid-August. We still had nine cases last week that required urgent attention, either because arbitration hearings are fast approaching or the issues are time-sensitive. We sent the President eleven letters asking for immediate attention to these grievances, and received a quick reply from Dr. Payne indicating that we could expect responses by the end of last week. We received four responses, two of which satisfactorily resolved current grievances. I quote from my correspondence with him on Monday, 28 September 2020:

The UNBCFA submitted a number of letters (11) to you on Friday, 25 September 2020, and we appreciated your email message acknowledging their receipt. Despite our disappointment that there has been little to no response on many of these outstanding grievances since 20 August 2020, we will rely on the strength of your commitment that you will respond to the UNBCFA this week. To this end, please find attached a listing that provides a summary of the UNBCFA's expectations.

We look forward to receiving your letters with settlement offers and proposed resolutions, as discussed in our meetings on August 18th and 20th, in order to bring these cases to a satisfactory conclusion without further delay or the need to seek resolution externally.

This excerpt gives you a sense of the tenor of our conversations, our hope that proposed settlements will indeed be forthcoming, and a glimpse of our fatigue at having to work on these cases for so long.

UNBC FA Executive Committee

July 1, 2019 – June 30, 2020

<i>President:</i>	Stephen Rader
<i>Vice President:</i>	Paul Siakaluk
<i>Past President:</i>	Jacqueline Holler
<i>Secretary:</i>	Monica Mattfeld
<i>Treasurer:</i>	Catherine Whalen
<u>Members at-large:</u>	
<i>Faculty rep</i>	Art Fredeen
<i>Faculty rep</i>	Brian Menounos
<i>Faculty rep</i>	Nathan Andrews
<i>Librarian rep</i>	Trina Fyfe
<i>SLI rep</i>	Jenia Blair
<i>Term rep</i>	Monica Mattfeld
<i>Regional rep</i>	Bruce Bidgood
<u>Ex-officio Members:</u>	
<i>Grievance Officer:</i>	Catherine Nolin
<i>Executive Director:</i>	Donna Sindaco



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*Winter is an etching, spring a watercolor,
summer an oil painting
and autumn a mosaic of them all*

- Stanley Horowitz



Floe Lake, Kootenay National Park. Photo: Stephen Rader



The Faculty Association Offices are
located in
Rooms 3084-3089 Charles J. McCaffray
Hall

The work of the Faculty Association
continues as we are all dealing with the
impact of COVID-19. The FA Staff members
are still available to assist you, but until
further notice we have limited capacity for
face-to-face meetings. Please feel free to
contact us by email or phone and we will do
our best to support you.

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Christa Florell, Professional Services Officer
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visit our website: www.unbcfa.ca



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