



Photos courtesy Dr. Ted Binnema



Message from the President: What's Old Is New Again

Jacqueline Holler

Professor, History Department

President, UNBC-FA

Dear Members of the UNBC Faculty Association,

As we embark on a new year, some of you may be experiencing a bit of “déjà vu all over again,” in the immortal words often attributed to Yogi Berra, when you see my name on the masthead. After almost seven years *out* of the President’s chair, I am back *in* it, at least for the first half of 2023. Brian Menounos is taking a richly served sabbatical, and so I’ve moved up from the VP role for the time being. I wish Brian a productive and restful sabbatical away from the fray.

While I love serving the Association, this is a great opportunity to remind everyone of the importance of FA renewal. With many new faces on campus over the past few years, and with FA elections later this spring, please consider nominating yourself or a colleague for a position on the FA Executive, whether you are a new member or a seasoned one.

Aside from the beautiful winter photos, most of them taken by our very own Ted Binnema, this newsletter highlights an important article by Past President Stephen Rader on the thorny issue of Custody and Control of teaching materials. Your teaching materials are your own and cannot be accessed (or shared) by the Employer. Please review Stephen's article for more information on this issue and why it's so important to the academic job—and watch for future instalments on the principle of Custody and Control as it relates to the other domains of academic work, research and service.

Those of you who have joined UNBC recently might not be aware that our FA unionized only nine short years ago, in 2014. What difference has it made? All the difference in the world. Fiona MacPhail presents an economist's perspective on the importance of unions in her article in this edition. Fiona articulates and presents evidence for the role of unions in promoting not only better lives for unionized workers as individuals, but also social equality and a healthier society.

Chief Negotiator Ted Binnema introduces something that comes to mind every two weeks on payday: our salary grid. Long in the making and hard won, our new compensation scheme has been central to advancing not only UNBC's competitiveness relative to comparators, but also greater fairness, equity, and transparency in compensation. Ted introduces the grid in this issue.

As Ted indicates in the closing of his article, we are moving forward to bargaining a new Collective Agreement, with our current CA set to expire on 30 June 2023. Ted introduces the FA and Employer bargaining teams and urges everyone to pay attention to negotiations. We are only as strong as our membership—and fortunately, we at UNBC have been able to rely on the strength and resolve of a committed membership, upon which rest all that we have been able to achieve over the past decade. Please do stay tuned.

Many of you participated in our bargaining survey, which is allowing us to commence crafting a bargaining plan for this round. The next step is the focus groups set for this week. Please join us to ensure your voice and your priorities are heard!

All the best for the remainder of winter, and see you at the AGM in March!

Mark Your Calendars:

Spring General Meeting

Friday, 23 March 2023

11:30 am – 1:00 pm

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



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Recap on Custody and Control of Records: Teaching Materials

Stephen Rader

Professor, Chemistry Program

Past-President, UNBC-FA

Who owns Economics 101? The university owns the course title, but the title, "Economics 101," is only a name on an empty shell. It is the content that transforms the title into a course – into something meaningful.

That content – the course outlines, lecture notes, overheads, assignments and the like – is the creation of the faculty member who teaches the course. Most collective agreements and university handbooks protect the creators of the course content by giving them ownership over their creations.

This right of ownership of course content is one of the cornerstones of academic freedom and quality in post-secondary education. In contrast to most other employees, whether in a factory or an office, academic staff control the substance of their work by owning the course material they create. This assures that students' learning is guided by faculty and not by administrators, government officials, or other functionaries.

The Internet Challenge

Today, faculty control of course material is increasingly under threat from those who see Internet-based learning as an opportunity to make profits and impose extraordinary labour market flexibility on academic staff.

In the classroom environment, course content consists of an amorphous collection of notes, ideas and one-time performances of lectures – a difficult thing to commodify. In contrast, the content of an online course is software code on a hard drive or server. It can literally be placed in a box.

The inherent nature of an online course therefore allows its development and delivery to be compartmentalized and contracted out to a range of temporary employees. An employer can hire one person to produce an online course, another to supervise its delivery to students, and still another to revise and update the course as needed.

Alternatively, an employer can purchase online course content from existing full- or part-time academic staff. Once the staff have signed away their rights over the material, the course becomes the property of the employer who can hire temporary staff to deliver and revise it, without the involvement of the person who created it. Then administrators control the course, not the creator.

This bureaucratic control over course content threatens the integrity and quality of education. It also allows administrators to undermine the jobs of faculty and their role as the intellectual leaders of the university. Internet technology creates the potential to separate the creator of course content from the deliverer, to take apart (in administrative language "unbundle") the faculty member's job and assign different parts to separate members of a casualized academic labour force.

We are already seeing online education that divides the faculty member's job into the separate pieces of course creator, deliverer, tutor, and grader. The compartmentalization and casualization of university teaching undermine quality and renders obsolete the existence of a secure, professional faculty, with its accompanying guarantees of academic freedom and intellectual integrity.

University administrators, private sector entrepreneurs and government officials are quite open in saying that "online" education must be exploited for its alleged economic potential. At a number of universities, administrators are making enquiries about academic staff ownership rights in online courses and proposing new "intellectual property policy" proposals that claim a share of control in such courses.

Perhaps most worrisome is the accepted practice at some institutions of academic staff members voluntarily signing away their ownership rights over online course content.

Custody and Control of Teaching Materials in the Real World

The issue of control of teaching materials played out in dramatic fashion at UBC in 2014-2015. UBC's Board of Governors surreptitiously passed Policy 81, in the face of unanimous opposition by UBC faculty, which allowed the university administration to repurpose faculty members' teaching materials for use in for-profit activities without permission or revenue-sharing with the materials' creators. Thanks to a vigorous campaign by UBC's Faculty Association, and the threat of censure by the Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT), UBC's Board of Governors eventually passed an amendment to Policy 81 clarifying that any teaching materials would only be used in for-profit activities with the express permission of the faculty who created the material.

Status of Teaching Materials at UNBC

Thanks to the strong language of our Collective Agreement (Article 39: Intellectual Property, Section 6: Teaching Materials), we have clarity at UNBC that lecture notes and slides, as well as other teaching materials including



web-based courses, are the property of the faculty member who created them. Notably, work specifically assigned by our employer, such as course outlines and final exams, is owned by the university. Also, any materials that have been shared publicly may be used royalty-free by other faculty members for instructional or research purposes.

Watch for future articles on the custody and control of records related to research and service.

**Portions of this article appeared previously in the CAUT Bulletin. Reproduced with permission.*



Why Do Unions Matter?

Fiona MacPhail

Professor, Department of Economics

The standard of living for most people in Canada depends upon their participation in and earnings generated from the labour market. Unions have effectively improved earnings and working conditions for workers and contributed to greater social and economic equality. Since the 1980s, the forces of technological change, globalization and neoliberal legislation and policy change have made the struggles of unions even more important.

Unions improve the lives of their members. In Canada, unions have increased the average wage of their members, relative to non-unionized workers (taking account of differences in working hours, education, and industrial sector). Unions have also improved working conditions of members in terms of predictability of work schedules, fairness, safety, and benefits such as pensions and extended health and dental plans. Through strong collective bargaining and members' willingness to take strike action, unions in general have achieved valuable gains for their members. Indeed, faculty members at UNBC have benefitted from our Faculty Union struggles.

Union efforts also have positive impacts for non-unionized workers. The "union premium" has created a positive spillover effect for non-unionized workers. Particularly when the economy is expanding and labour demand is increasing, employers in non-unionized workplaces raise wages and improve working conditions to attract and retain workers or reduce a unionization "threat". Union activism has furthermore been critical in achieving changes in legislation and employment standards that benefit all workers. Union research and education campaigns have contributed to increases in provincial minimum wages, as well as enhanced health and safety standards, protections for injured workers, and employment standards relating to overtime and statutory holidays.

Union activities contribute to a more equal income distribution across society. Within unionized workplaces, increased wages of workers potentially reduce the income gap between management and workers, and



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diminished gender and race-based wage discrimination reduces income gaps between groups of workers. Spillover effects and effective union campaigns to increase wages of non-unionized workers, particularly those of low-wage workers, also reduce overall income inequality. Indeed, empirical research indicates that the unionization rate is an important determinant of overall income inequality in Canada, even after accounting for minimum wages and economic conditions.

Technological change, globalization, and neoliberal economic policy choices have enabled employers to move wage workers out of long-term, stable employment contracts and into precarious and temporary contracts, and to contract-out work to independent contractors, self-employed workers, and gig workers (including the academic precariat) with gig work being made increasingly feasible by digital platforms. These forces and labour market shifts are linked to a decline in the share of total income generated by the economy going to workers in terms of earnings and a concomitant increase in the share going to corporations in the form of profit. That is, workers now receive a smaller slice of the overall pie generated by the economy compared to the pre-1980s. Simultaneously, income has become markedly more unequally distributed among households, and this is after decades of a stable distribution of income prior to 1980. This increased income inequality is associated with substantial gains in income share accruing to the top 1 percent of earners (mostly senior executives in banking and finance) and the hollowing out of income shares to the middle-income groups.

With rising income inequality and increasing precarious labour, the work of unions is more important than ever to promote better working lives and greater social and economic equality. Unions have proven to be an important institution for workers striving to protect and advance their own interests and to promote broader equality. And that's why it remains important to be actively engaged in union activities.



A Message from the Chief Negotiator

Ted Binnema
Professor, Department of History
Chief Negotiator, UNBC-FA

The Salary Grid at UNBC

Faculty members who are new at UNBC may not know that the salary grid that prevails at UNBC now was introduced only in 2019, and may not appreciate that the grid was the product of more than a decade of UNBC-FA member solidarity. Until 2019, Faculty-member salaries were based on a system of salary floors and ceilings at each rank, and annual increments. That meant that when General Wage Increases (GWIs) were applied each year they were applied to individual salaries, not to the salary system. The Employer refused to consider any



changes to the annual “Career Development Increments” which remained stalled at \$1,111 per year until 2019 (average annual increments at our comparator universities were much higher and typically increase each year with GWIs). As a result, each year salaries at UNBC fell farther behind the salaries among our comparator institutions across the country. The salary system was also opaque, and more subject to inequities and anomalies than a grid system.

It took three rounds of negotiations, a highly successful unionization drive, and two strikes, but the members of the UNBC-FA finally achieved the salary grid at the beginning of the current Collective Agreement. That means that, in the future, GWIs will be applied to a salary grid (including the increments), not to individual salaries. I hope that all of us who are the veterans of two strikes and three interest arbitrations feel some satisfaction knowing that our more junior colleagues will always benefit from a more transparent, fair, and equitable salary system than we have endured. I ponder with some admiration some of our stalwart members who resolutely supported our strike efforts knowing that, because they intended to retire imminently, they themselves would not actually enjoy the benefits of the new salary system.

I mentioned in an earlier message that it is crucial that the members of the UNBC FA understand the importance of maintaining the integrity of this salary grid. A salary grid is not the silver bullet to complete salary equity. Many subtle and not-so-subtle factors can cause salary inequities and anomalies to creep into the actual salaries of faculty members. Still, salary grids are widely understood to be important components of equitable pay systems. Moreover, the salary grid we now have makes it more likely that our salaries, including the annual increments, will keep pace with salary increases in the university sector generally. I urge you to defend the salary grid at UNBC as long as you are employed here.

Merit (Performance Pay Increments)

I might mention another introduction to our salary system: the Performance Pay Increments (PPIs). You can learn more about these increments at the end of Article 48 and in Article 74B.2.1 of the Faculty Agreement, but I want to point out that these increments allow your salary to rise above the salary ceiling for any rank, and are retained after promotion. Should you be awarded PPIs, you should be mindful of that fact.

We are now preparing for a new round of negotiations. The bargaining team hopes to see as many of you as possible at one or more of the focus groups we have organized for the week of 23 January. These will be very important events for the team to identify your priorities. Our success in the past rounds of negotiations was possible because the team was confident that it was going to the negotiating table with a mandate from our members, not one developed in isolation.



The Employer's Bargaining Team

You may have noticed on the Employer's *Labour Relations* at UNBC home page (<https://www2.unbc.ca/labour-relations>) that your Employer has opted in this round for an outside lawyer to act as their Chief Negotiator. The UNBC-FA bargaining team is optimistic that this round of negotiations will be undertaken by both parties in an honest effort to achieve a prompt and fair renewal of our Collective Agreement; however, your attentiveness to the negotiations will be important to ensuring that the Employer's bargaining team respects your legitimate concerns.

In solidarity,

Ted Binnema (Chief Negotiator)
and the bargaining team:

Jacqueline Holler
Dezene Huber
Matt Reid
Donna Sindaco



Photo courtesy of Ted Binnema

Don't forget to sign up for the member focus group sessions (in-person or zoom):



Wednesday, January 25, 9:00 am – 10:00 am: **Chairs**

Wednesday, January 25, 11:00 am – 12:00 noon: **Tenured Faculty**

Thursday, January 26, 11:00 am – 12:00 noon: **Regional Members**

Thursday, January 26, 1:00 pm – 2:00 pm: **Senior Lab Instructors**

Thursday, January 26, 3:00 pm – 4:00 pm: **Librarians**

Friday, January 27, 9:00 am – 10:00 am: **Senior Instructors**

Friday, January 27, 11:00 am – 12:00 noon: **Tenure-Track Faculty**

Friday, January 27, 1:00 pm – 2:00 pm: **Term Faculty and Sessional Members**

Friday, January 27, 3:00 pm – 4:00 pm: **Members Contemplating Retirement**



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Hirsch im Winter © byrdyak fotolia.com

Did you know about the Faculty Association Lounge? We've Undergone a Facelift

The Faculty Association Lounge (FAL) is a dedicated space on campus that is allocated for use by all Members and we've recently upgraded this space. The FAL can be found in the SE corner of the second floor of the cafeteria and entrance to the FAL requires an active employee ID card.

- *Members may use the FAL at any time on a drop-in basis. Members may also bring non-members (e.g., graduate students) into the FAL as long as such use does not interfere with the enjoyment of other users. The Faculty Association also permits Adjunct Faculty and Post-doctoral Fellows access to the FAL.*
- *Members, Adjunct Faculty and Post-doctoral Fellows may book the FAL for all university-related ("professional") purposes appropriate to the space and in compliance with university policies, including catering policies, and with legal requirements governing the serving of alcohol.*

If you have any questions about the FAL or if you are interested in booking the FAL, please contact Christa Florell, Professional Services Officer (christa.florell@unbc.ca) to obtain and submit a request form for approval of an event.

UNBC FA Executive Committee

<i>President:</i>	Jacqueline Holler
<i>Vice President:</i>	Paul Siakaluk
<i>Past President:</i>	Stephen Rader
<i>Secretary:</i>	Amy Klepetar
<i>Treasurer:</i>	Catherine Whalen
<i>Members at-large:</i>	
<i>Faculty rep</i>	Alia Hamieh
<i>Faculty rep</i>	Emmanuel Chilanga
<i>Faculty rep</i>	Paul Sanborn
<i>Librarian rep</i>	Kim Stathers
<i>SLI rep</i>	Daniel Erasmus
<i>SI rep</i>	Jason Lacharite
<i>Term rep</i>	Brian Schaan
<i>Regional rep</i>	Amy Klepetar
<i>Ex-officio Members:</i>	
<i>Grievance Officer:</i>	Catherine Nolin
<i>Executive Director:</i>	Donna Sindaco



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

Please feel free to contact us by email or
phone, or stop by our office.

Donna Sindaco, Executive Director
donna.sindaco@unbc.ca, 250-960-5816

Christa Florell, Professional Services Officer
christa.florell@unbc.ca, 250-960-5313

visit our website: www.unbcfa.ca

*“Winter,
a lingering season,
is a time to gather golden moments,
embark upon a sentimental journey,
and enjoy every idle hour.”*

John Boswell



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The **FA Events Committee** is hosting a monthly afternoon tea during the Winter semester as an opportunity for Members to connect. Our next afternoon tea will be:

Tuesday, February 14th
3:30 pm, Faculty Association Lounge (Upper Cafeteria)

Come out and enjoy tea, coffee and treats (but please bring your own mug 😊)
Everyone is welcome and we hope to see you on the 14th

The Events Committee would also welcome any suggestions you might have for other activities. Please feel free to reach out to anyone on the Events Committee:

Stephen Rader
Theresa Adesanya
Emmanuel Chilanga
Rylan Graham
Siraj Ul Islam