

MAFA NEWSLETTER

Mount Allison Faculty Association

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Since the new MAFA executive took office on May 1st we have been occupied with the daily work of the association to ensure that the provisions of our two collective agreements remain in force and that the commitment to the principles of fairness, equity and reasonableness that lives in their pages is upheld. The collective agreement is the anchor of our association. It is much more than a catalogue of bloodless technicalities. In its rule governed processes we find a record of the lives of those who have come before us at Mount Allison as well as those at other universities across the country with whom we have shared language. We find their hopes and aspirations for common practices, for equity in hiring and fairness in workload, as well as their anxieties and catastrophes, infringements of academic freedom, exploitation, discrimination, and harassment. We honour these experiences along with the struggles and sacrifices to which they gave rise when we urge that our collective agreements be followed.

This summer we begin another round of collective bargaining, during which our collective agreements will be refined and renewed in light of our most recent lived experiences. Chief negotiator Helen Pridmore and her team have been hard at work for some time already in preparing the proposals that they will take to the negotiating table, and a well-attended meeting of the bargaining unit was held on May 30th. The MAFA executive has been working hard to get the association ready for the exciting challenges of negotiating in the year ahead.

In late May I attended the Canadian Association of University Teachers' (CAUT) New President's Workshop in Ottawa and absorbed valuable advice and recommendations on best practices for associations and their executives in areas such as governance, communications, and collective bargaining. One afternoon of the three day workshop was devoted to navigating media relations. Much hilarity ensued in the simulation exercise in which a number of volunteer presidents were terrorized in a mock interview about their association's response to a federal government proposal (purely hypothetical, of course!) to raise the productivity of university faculty by abolishing the tenure system.

The MAFA executive will be making a concerted effort to support the negotiating team in the year ahead by keeping the lines of communications with our members open and clear and by ensuring that the concerns of our membership are fairly represented in the media. In late May we issued a press release on the university budget which was picked up by the *Times Transcript* in Moncton as well as the *Sackville Tribune* in which we raised concerns about the priorities of those who make decisions to spend conspicuously on buildings while the core academic mission of the university suffers. We have no quarrel with the construction of buildings; even lavish monuments and controversial architectural experiments have their place. We do however take exception to the chilling discourse of austerity with which the academic mission of the university is framed as these building

projects are undertaken, a discourse of “no resources” and “no alternative” that effectively places decisions about academic resources well beyond the reach of the public that scrutinizes, debates, and deliberates. This is a public composed of many constituencies, interests, and ideas; it encompasses faculty, students, administrators and staff at Mount Allison as well as those in the community of Sackville and the community of universities across the country and beyond.

MAFA has an important role to play in the recovery and revival of this public. The issues and challenges that we face in our work as teachers and researchers are linked with issues and challenges which are of concern to the wider community. Our press release in the May 22nd issue of the *Tribune*, for example, inspired a letter the following week from a member of the community who has been active in the debate over the destruction of the Memorial Library. Although MAFA has not taken a position in this debate, we should all be heartened to see that the actions of the University administration are being carefully scrutinized now more than ever before by the wider community (including alumni) as a result of its mishandling of the situation. Members of the community are capable of seeing the connections between issues of concern to them – in this case, accountability in decision making about public goods – and issues of concern to us. We call upon our members to help us with the work of continuing to make these connections visible. Show us where they can be found. This is our governing truth: the university is a public good with which we all have been entrusted. It will take some courage to do this, to create and to occupy a wider public in which not everybody agrees and in which not everybody is an intimate friend, but, this is what defines us.

MAFA’S NEGOTIATION TEAM BEGINS PROCESS AND IS READY TO GO

This spring MAFA appointed our Negotiation Team, consisting of Helen Pridmore (Music) as our Chief Negotiator, as well as Nauman Farooqi (Commerce), Diana Hamilton (Biology), Monique LeBlanc (Psychology—part-time), Jeff Lilburn (Library), and Juan Carlos Martínez (Modern Languages and Literatures). Geoff Martin serves as a staff resource.

MAFA gave the Employer notice to negotiate on May 7th, 2013, and the two teams met to discuss logistics on May 28th. The Employer’s team is led by labour lawyer Brian Johnston, Q.C. of Halifax, and includes Rob Inglis (Controller), Ron Sutherland (Director of Human Resources) and Hans vanderLeest (Dean of Arts).

It was agreed that both sides will hand over their non-monetary proposals on June 21st, and intensive bargaining will begin on July 4th.

MAFA’s two collective agreements expire on June 30, 2013.

Members of the MAFA bargaining units will receive updates as the negotiations unfold, and a number of members’ meetings will be held.

MORE QUESTIONS THAN ANSWERS ARISE OVER THE UNIVERSITY BUDGET

On May 9th, University President Robert Campbell delivered a presentation to a joint Senate-Faculty Council meeting, in an effort to sell Mount Allison faculty and librarians on the spending priorities in next year’s budget (“Reflections on MTA’s Budget, 2013-2014,” power-point files from the presentation sent to academic staff, 9 May 2013).

And it requires a selling job. The administration admits that it will contribute \$10 million of operating money to

the new Purdy Crawford Centre over six years rather than ten (which means more money per year than originally planned). Despite all the money that has been poured into Cranewood over the last 30 years—some older members will remember the \$70,000 driveway job in the 1990s—the Board is selling that building and diverting at least \$1.3 million from the operating budget toward restoring Black House as the new presidential residence. In deciding to hire a lawyer to negotiate with us, the Board has committed to diverting even more from the operating budget; based on the recent experience of other universities in the region where lawyers have been used as chief negotiators, the cost will run into six figures.

The stagnation in resources for the academic side will be widely felt. Many sabbaticals will not be replaced this year, even by part-timers. While Departments are being asked to plan for sabbatical and other leaves by reducing the scope of their programs, the administration “plans” by delaying its authorization of the few available replacement positions until late in the academic year, when hiring is more complicated and more uncertain. Expectations of tenure-track hiring in departments such as Commerce, English, Math and Computer Science, and Music are not being met, and hopes for a fourth person in the remaining three-person departments of Anthropology, Classics, and Religious Studies are dissipating as well.



The Employer’s budget presentation is gloomy about the support for post-secondary education across the country but there is a notable silence about the robust financial condition of Mount Allison. The University has no accumulated operating or capital debt, an endowment of over \$100 million, and an operating budget per student among the highest in Canada. Even in an environment of low revenue growth, Mount Allison’s operating revenues amount to a lot of money. Employees in the defined-benefit pension plan voted to waive solvency special payments, and the pension risk in the defined contribution pension plan is borne by employees, so Mount Allison does not face the pension challenges of many other institutions. The University has moved its contingency funds off the budget sheet but somewhere in Centennial Hall sits a banking account book with a balance of approximately \$1 million to cover off expenses if student enrolment were to fall short of budgetary expectations. Unlike some of its sister institutions in our region, Mount Allison consistently takes in more revenue each year than it spends.

The Employer’s position turns on the claim that resources allocated for the academic mission of the university have not fallen in the last ten years. Not only does this beg the question of whether or not the resources of ten years ago were sufficient, it fails to address the ways in which longstanding gaps in academic programs are being filled: an increased reliance on part time and limited term contracts and heroic overworking on the part of the entire faculty.

Taking the data from the powerpoint slides at face value, we note that from the start of the current President’s administration in 2006-2007 the following changes can be seen.

Year	TT Faculty	CAS	FTE Acad Staff	Students (S)	S / TT Fac	S / FTE	% CAS
2006-07	131	20.5	151.5	2043.6	15.6	13.5	14%
2012-13	134	33	167	2505.8	18.7	15	20%
Change	2%	61%	10%	23%	20%	11%	46%
2006 to 2012	TT Faculty	CAS	FTE Acad Staff	Students (S)	S / TT Fac	S / FTE	% CAS
TT = tenured and tenure track			CAS = contract academic staff		S = Students		

Source: Campbell, Robert (2013) Table "At Mount Allison: Faculty: Student Ratios, 2003-2013" drawn from *Reflections on MTA's Budget, 2013-2014 Presentation to Faculty Council & Senate May 9, 2013, p. 8.*

Since 2006, there has been a twenty-three percent increase in students and a two percent increase in tenured and tenure-track faculty resulting in a twenty percent increase in the ratio of students to tenure track faculty. The ratio of students to instructors (tenure track or contract academic staff) has increased by eleven per cent. The ranks of contract academic staff have grown more than 60% in the last six years; the percentage of FTE Academic Staff who are CAS increased from 14% to 20%. One could expect CAS to be about 15% since 1/7th of complement would be on sabbatical leave each year on average but the additional CAS beyond that level have been hired instead of building the complement of tenure-track faculty to match the increase in students.

We have not misapprehended our experience. There is insufficient renewal and replacement: we can see that our colleagues are too few and those few, when we do get a chance to see them, are over-burdened with teaching and service obligations while doggedly pursuing their research. We admire our colleagues' commitment to the excellent teaching environment that we have worked so hard to create and we wonder why any administrator would want to declare our programs "in danger, on a knife's edge" when the university does not appear to be in any financial trouble. Finally, we are concerned and growing more worried when the Employer suggests that funding for the academic side of the university is "in peril." We need to ask why. What is more important to a university than teaching and research?

MAFA HONOURED THREE RETIREES AT RETIRING MEMBERS' PARTY

MAFA honoured three long-serving members of the academic staff at its MAFA's Retiring Members' Party in April at the University Club.

Ron Beattie and Cathy Baker, both of Mathematics and Computer Science, received gifts and applause at the event. Carrie MacMillan of English is also retiring and was unable to attend. She also received a gift and congratulations.

MAFA 2013-2014 EXECUTIVE

- Loralea Michaelis - President (Politics and International Relations)**
- Michael Fox - Vice-President (Geography and Environment)**
- Stephen Law - Past President (Economics)**
- Mohammed Ahmady - Collective Bargaining (Physics)**
- Mark Fedyk - Grievance Officer (Philosophy)**
- Lori Ann Roness - Part-time/Unit 2 (Geography and Environment/MASSIE)**
- Robert Rosebrugh - Treasurer (Math and CS)**
- Renata Schellenberg - Membership (Modern Languages and Literatures)**

Helen Pridmore - Chief Negotiator (Music)