

MAFA

NEWSLETTER

Mount Allison Faculty Association
Room G2, Centennial Hall Tel: 364-2289 Fax: 364-2288
E-mail:mafa@mta.ca
Web Site: www.mafa.ca

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PRESIDENT'S REPORT

A new MAFA executive took office on May 1st and has been meeting regularly throughout the summer. I would like to thank both returning executive members and new members who have joined the executive for the first time for their willingness to serve. I would also like to thank MAFA's Professional Officer, Geoff Martin, for his invaluable contributions to our association. During my seventeen years at Mount Allison, I have had many occasions to witness the crucially important role that MAFA plays on our campus, and I consider it a privilege to serve alongside this group of dedicated colleagues who are working to help sustain and improve academic staff working conditions and student learning conditions.

One of our first orders of business as a new executive was to consider options for new legal representation. In late April, we learned that the lawyer who had been providing legal services to MAFA for many years would be leaving his firm to take on a new position. The executive quickly decided to strike a sub-committee to conduct a review of our legal services. In addition to consulting with CAUT (Canadian Association of University Teachers), FNBFA (Federation of New Brunswick Faculty Associations) and faculty associations in the region, the sub-committee interviewed two possible choices for legal representation from two different law firms chosen from a longer list of possibilities. Following the sub-committee's recommendation, the MAFA executive decided to retain Brenda Comeau of Pink Larkin as MAFA's legal counsel. Brenda Comeau

specializes in labour law and serves as legal counsel for our colleagues at FAUST, AUNBT and FNBFA and is thus very familiar with issues faced by the academic sector in New Brunswick.

In May, members of the executive led an information session for probationary members who will be applying for tenure in the near future. The session covered procedures laid out in the FT collective agreement and aimed to give members an idea of what to expect and how to prepare for the tenure application process. Anyone who was not able to attend the session and would like to know what they missed is encouraged to contact MAFA.

Also in May, I attended the FNBFA Annual General Meeting in Bathurst and in June the CAUT Forum for New Presidents in Ottawa. MAFA contributes to and benefits greatly from each of these organizations. FNBFA represents the interests of academic staff in New Brunswick and works actively to improve the quality of the higher education system in the province. CAUT represents faculty associations across the country and provides a range of resources and services, including assistance with collective bargaining, grievances and arbitrations. CAUT also holds events in Ottawa (see Steve Law's report on CAUT Council below) and offers on-site workshops such as the Member Mobilization Workshop that we hope to offer in Sackville later this year.

We are now into the second year of our current collective agreements and the next round of collective bargaining is less than two years away. By some measures, relations between MAFA and

the employer appeared to have improved compared to a few years ago. For example, the number of active grievances at this time in 2014 was in the double digits. Until just a few days ago, there was one active grievance – a sign, perhaps, that the employer was attempting to better respect the terms of our negotiated agreements. However, during the last week of August, MAFA learned that the employer's proposal to engage a private company to manage online student surveys was, in fact, not a proposal but a completed agreement. MAFA learned this not through communication from the employer or at the August 24 meeting of the Joint Liaison committee where this matter was discussed, but through an announcement on the eXplorance website. The announcement is dated August 1, 2017. As members will know from MAFA's call for input last month, no proposal to hire a private firm or to require the use of online student survey forms was made by the employer when agreement was reached on changes to student survey use at the bargaining table last year. MAFA is in the process of responding to these employer actions and will be communicating with members again on this matter in the near future.

Problems persist in other areas as well. The diminishing number of tenured and tenure-stream faculty and librarians and the impact this has on student learning conditions and on the ongoing casualization of academic labour remains a pressing concern. Academic staff complement at Mount Allison hit an eleven-year low at this time in 2015, and MAFA is keeping a close eye on this year's numbers. As we know, the trend across the country, as elsewhere, is for university administrators to increasingly rely on lower-cost contingent faculty appointments. There is a price to be paid for these perceived efficiencies. When universities begin to move away from a largely tenured and tenure-stream faculty and librarian complement to one that increasingly relies on a precarious academic workforce, academic freedom and collegial processes can suffer. This has implications for the entire academic community and for the role academic staff and universities play in our society.

MAFA has, over multiple rounds of collective bargaining, achieved important gains for part-time members. However, as a member of the last two

MAFA negotiating teams, I observed little interest on the part of the employer to fully address the inequities that exist between FT and PT member working conditions. In my current role as MAFA President, and as we look ahead to the next round of bargaining, I will be committed to advancing MAFA's ongoing work to improve the working conditions of part-time members. I know that many of you share this same objective. With the strong support of our membership, fair and equitable working conditions for our part-time members is an achievable goal. Mount Allison University celebrates its commitment to leadership and high-quality education and can, if together we demand it, claim its place as the first university in Canada to offer working conditions for part-time academic staff that are on par with those of full-time staff. I encourage you to contact me and others on the MAFA executive to discuss these issues further, and to share with us your ideas and suggestions. I also invite you all to attend the Fair Employment Week event to be held on Friday, October 27th. Please see below for more details about this important event.

Finally, as we begin a new academic year, all members are invited to attend the New Members Party at the University Club on Friday, September 22nd at 4:30. This annual event is an occasion to welcome our new colleagues and I look forward to seeing you all there.

Jeff Lilburn
President

JOINT LIAISON REPORT

Since the new executive began meeting in May, there have been two Joint Liaison meetings on June 8, 2017 and July 20, 2017. Present at both meetings were Katherine DeVere-Pettigrew, Leah Garnett, Diana Hamilton, Geoff Martin (recording secretary), and Jeff Ollerhead.

We have discussed the following topics:

- The timely meeting of Collective Agreement Committees
- Sabbatical replacements

- The implementation of student surveys as mandated by the collective agreement and the Senate
- Mutually agreed upon changes to the collective agreement
- Senate representation of programs, in light of employer commitment to make joint appointments into programs
- Questions regarding joint appointments and how they affect letters of appointment, department composition, and tenure and promotion review
- Implementation of the new Career Development Process
- Regulations regarding Connect listings
- The challenge of benefits for long-service Part-time faculty
- The new role of the Purdy Crawford Professor in Teaching and Learning
- Questions about The Maple League and the impact of shared teaching
- Ongoing concerns regarding correspondence courses
- Possible re-implementation of the Salary as Research Grant process

Respectfully,
Leah Garnett

CAUT COUNCIL REPORT, 4-7 May 2017

At the 82nd Council of CAUT there was careful consideration of issues relevant to the academic community: academic freedom, copyright, casualization, marginalized groups, and support for research and for post-secondary education.

The opening address reflected on the deeply-worrying changes to the environment for scholarly inquiry in the United States. Next, Homa Hoodfar, who recently spent several months detained and repeatedly interrogated in Iran for conducting her research there, talked about her experiences and the need for a transnational understanding of academic

freedom. She related how she came to think of her cell as her office where she could compose her thoughts for later presentation. Dr. Hoodfar was given a standing ovation by the assembled CAUT delegates on her arrival at the podium and another at the conclusion of her speech.



On a related note, it has been 20 years since the UNESCO declaration on academic freedom in the Recommendation Concerning the Status of Higher Education Teaching Personnel. The Recommendation was crafted with the input and assistance of CAUT. The 5th of October will be World Teachers' Day. CAUT is considering how to mark the 20th anniversary of the UNESCO Declaration in conjunction with the next Council meeting in November.

Not all the threats to academic activity occur outside Canada. Council heard about issues of attempts to silence academics and failures in the protection of academic freedom at Dalhousie, Calgary, Laurentian, Lethbridge, Ottawa, McGill, Carleton, and Niagara College. One example was a case of suspension without pay that the university president claimed was a non-disciplinary suspension and therefore not grievable. The suspension occurred without due process. The case is on-going.

The spread of “Respectful Workplace Policies” is creating problems at universities. A speaker at a roundtable on this topic noted that while courteousness is a good thing so is debate. It was observed that although the apparent motivation of the adoption of a Respectful Workplace Policy (RWP) is to deal with discrimination or harassment, the groups seeking to impose “workplace civility” are groups with power: administrators are creating respectful workplace policies designed to require us to “be nice to others”, especially to the administrators. There are already rules, laws, and regulations to deal with discrimination and harassment. These can be improved but not through RWPs which generally serve to silence marginalized groups rather than empower them. The motivation behind the introduction of RWPs is often to ‘protect the brand’, to ensure donors are not upset, rather than to raise the level of discourse.

The view of the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) regarding civility policies is that: “The controlling principle is that a faculty member’s expression of opinion as a citizen cannot constitute grounds for dismissal unless it clearly demonstrates the faculty member’s unfitness to serve.” There have been cases of discipline for violating RWPs. In Britain, some faculty members were disciplined for shifting their chairs in an aggressive way at a meeting. Also in the UK, there was a case of a faculty member whose raised eyebrows resulted in dismissal. At a university in Atlantic Canada a faculty member was told that continued gesticulation could provoke a disciplinary letter. Panelists noted that when academics engage in debate they don’t have to be nice; they have to be logical. An RWP suppresses dissent by casting it as incivility and serves to entrench deference to power.

One of the speakers on this topic observed that the production and policing of “respect” is an invitation to self-censor, that when we speak we should expect rebuttal but never fear reprisal, and that academics are members of the curious collegium with rights based on collegial governance and tenacious collective bargaining.

Another speaker encouraged us to read the defense of academic freedom written in 1955 by Fritz Machlup, who fled Nazi Germany in 1933 and later became the President of AAUP in 1964. This speaker also noted that a 1994 statement from the AAUP asserts that academic freedom is threatened if the collegial governance model is broken. He suggested that academics need to come to see defending the academic mission as part of our day jobs. As PSE teachers we are not cable newscasters with their idea of balance. We do not need to be neutral. It is fine to talk to students about class difference and the politics of resentment and OK to challenge people’s pre-conceived notions. He stressed the importance of education to democracy.



The Board at Carleton has claimed that there is academic freedom for faculty members for research and for teaching but not for service. At the heart of this case is the right of a faculty member on the Board to participate and to communicate freely. A proposal to consider censure of Carleton’s Board was postponed to November.

The Chair of the Advisory Panel for the Review of Federal Support for Fundamental Science, David Naylor, presented the highlights of the panel’s conclusions. From the viewpoint of an academic audience, the report largely consists of stating the

obvious but it is necessary that these things be said clearly to a wider audience. Dr. Naylor called for efforts from individual scholars in the academic community, as well as from university administrations, to echo and strengthen the call for support for research in the Panel's report.

<https://www.caaut.ca/bulletin/2017/06/interview-david-naylor>

The CAUT has issued "A Guide to Understanding University Finances" which can be found on their website.

<https://www.caaut.ca/>

Stephen Law
MAFA Treasurer

GRIEVANCE REPORT

As your new grievance officer, I am pleased to report that there is only one active grievance, #2017-1. This individual grievance was filed on April 28 and surrounds potential violations of various articles of the FT Agreement. At the member's request, the Employer has agreed to stop the clock on this grievance until December 1st, 2017.

Many thanks also go out to our outgoing grievance officer, Fiona Black, for her tireless work over the last year in addressing various issues.

Mario Levesque
Grievance Officer

MAFA HONOURS RETIREES AND STUDENTS THIS PAST APRIL

At its Retiring Members' Party in April MAFA honoured Robert Rosebrugh and Marilyn Walker, both of whom are retiring this year.

The George J. De Benedetti Book Award was granted to Willa McCaffrey-Noviss, and the Executive also decided to award a Certificate of Recognition to Anna Mairs and Joshua Johnson for the 2017-18 year.

COMING EVENTS, 2017-18

Friday 22 September 4:30pm University Club, New Members' Party

October 23-27, Fair Employment Week

Friday 27 October, 4 pm University Club, Contract Academic Staff Research and Creative Activity Fair

Friday 8 December 12 noon (Room: AVDX G12), MAFA General Membership Meeting

Friday 8 December 4:30pm, University Club, MAFA End of term social event

2018

Friday 13 April 12 noon (Room: AVDX G12), MAFA Annual General Meeting and Election of Executive for 2018-2019

Friday 13 April 4:30pm University Club, Retiring Members' Party

MAFA 2017-2018 EXECUTIVE

Jeff Lilburn, President (Library)

Leah Garnett, Vice-President (Fine Arts)

Andrew Irwin, Past President (Mathematics and Computer Science)

Stephen Law, Treasurer (Economics)

Diana Hamilton, Collective Bargaining (Biology)

Mario Levesque, Grievance Officer (Politics and International Relations)

Lori Ann Roness, Membership (Sociology/MASSIE)

Toni Roberts, Part-time Officer (Sociology)