

MAFA NEWSLETTER

Mount Allison Faculty Association
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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

The MAFA executive has been working on multiple fronts in the last few weeks alongside the Team in developing MAFA's positions in negotiations and in navigating the workplace with the Employer on behalf of our members. Periodically, at the table and in the workplace, we stumble into the Employer's claim to be concerned with excellence above all. In setting bounds on the Employer's proposals and initiatives, are faculty associations setting bounds on excellence? Are we undermining the contest through which alone we can prove ourselves? These are important questions.

Academic work is built around a contest – what the ancient Greeks referred to as the *agon* – in which we demonstrate as well as develop our capacities by competing with our peers, those others who are nearest to us in rank and ability and who alone are capable of knowing and judging what we are and how well we are doing. This contest overflows temporal as well as spatial boundaries because the peers against whom we measure ourselves do not necessarily inhabit the same place or time: we measure ourselves by the example of those in our fields who have come before as well as the judgement of those who will come after. We gain a heady freedom from this expanded horizon, as well as a humbling sense of proportion.

University administrators often presume themselves the judges of this contest, setting the scene, summoning the contestants into the ring, and then, after viewing the performances from the sidelines, deciding the winners and the losers, and awarding the prizes. We need to be wary of this presumption. Transplanted into the thinner soil of the employer-employee relationship, the scholarly *agon* becomes parochial, subject to local influence networks and the local standards of doing well that these networks generate. Local standards are far more limited in their spatial and temporal frame of reference, and far more conservative in their reach. Am I being encouraged to convey the full bounty of my field to my students if my value as a teacher is measured by the statistical results of anonymous student questionnaires completed by these particular students in this particular course? Am I being encouraged to take risks in framing my questions and to follow my questions where ever they lead if my value as a researcher is measured by the number of publications or grant applications or commercial contracts that I receive in this particular year? In working to gratify local authorities we lose the heady freedom – as well as the humbling sense of proportion – that we enjoy as scholars whose abilities and aspirations have been shaped by the contest that we entered when we began our university careers.

Since the earliest days of the university, scholars have had to contend with local grandees and local benefactors who would like to gain greater control over scholarly activity in exchange for the benefits that they offer – money, status, dinner party invitations. Since the earliest days of the university, scholars have banded together in solidarity to protect the integrity and autonomy of our enterprise by supporting and defending the intellectual prerogatives of our colleagues against the predations of external authorities. Our willingness to come to each

others' aid and defense is based on the respect and confidence that we have for each other as highly trained practitioners of our craft. The confidence that we have in each other's training is especially critical when our colleagues are not necessarily our immediate peers, as is often the case in a small university community in which, invariably, each scholar is a single example of their kind.

In the contemporary university, faculty associations have an important role to play in fostering and supporting the solidarity that scholars have traditionally offered to each other. Our collective agreements set out the limits of employer power and the limits of employer discretion; they limit the extent to which our attention, our energies, and our desires must be bound up with local dispositions and local authorities. In an academic workplace governed by a collective agreement, our daily work not only becomes more bearable, it becomes more possible. The less prominence that we give to local grandees and local benefactors in our daily lives, the greater our ability to participate in the contest on which the scholarly enterprise is based.

The question is not whether we will participate in contests of excellence. The question is which contests, and whose standards of excellence. That is what we will have to decide.

Loralea Michaelis
President

STRIKE PREPAREDNESS COMMITTEE

One of the responsibilities of the MAFA Executive in each round of collective bargaining is to ensure that the association is ready in the event of a strike. The first step in this direction is the creation and staffing of a "Strike Preparedness Committee." Terms on the Committee end when a new Collective Agreement is signed. Many thanks to all who have agreed to serve.

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| Michael Fox (Chair) | Mario Levesque |
| Jane Dryden | Lori Ann Roness |
| Andrew Nurse | Bob Roseburgh |
| Renata Schellenberg | |

MAFA REPRESENTATIVES MEET WITH ATLANTIC COUNTERPARTS

MAFA sent two representatives, Juan Carlos Martínez and Lorelea Michaelis, to the Annual Meeting of the Atlantic Canada Council of Faculty Associations (ACCFA) on June 14th. The meeting was held at Mount Saint Vincent University in Halifax and every association in the region – except for UNB, Moncton and StFX – sent at least one representative and in most cases more than one. Jim Turk, executive director of CAUT, and Wayne Peters, President of CAUT, were also in attendance.

The meeting was focussed on the general issue of Employer-Union relations. Because a number of associations are just about to begin or have recently concluded negotiating their collective agreements, experiences with collective bargaining were especially prominent in discussions. Much attention was given to the general common trends of Employers' increased use of lawyers as chief negotiators; increased Employer aggressiveness during negotiations, particularly in the use of the media; as well as the more frequent appearance at the table of destructive "roll back" proposals such as post-tenure review, teaching only positions, and the use of increased teaching loads as a punishment for perceived under performance in research. Administrative bloat and building construction booms were also highlighted as common experiences on university campuses in the region.



Even though our discussions were held in the shadow of these sobering developments the overall mood of the meeting was inspired and inspiring: faculty associations in the region have mustered formidable organizational and political skills and robust senses of humour in the face of these challenges. As things get worse on the Employer side, the better we become at being unions.

**DEPARTING MASU PRESIDENT AWARDED
GEORGE J. DE BENEDETTI BOOK PRIZE**

Congratulations to Pat Joyce, the 2012-13 winner of the George J. De Benedetti Book Prize. The prize is awarded to the student who, following George's example, is engaged in social activism, advocacy work, and student, university-wide, and /or broader community issues.

Pat Joyce was the President of the Mount Allison Student Union for the period 2011-13.

**MORRILL AND MORRILL REPORT ON THE
UNIVERSITY'S FINANCES**

Confusion in thinking about the University's budget may arise when one puts side-by-side the indicators of robust financial health and the pronouncements from the Employer that support for the academic mission is in peril. Upon further reflection, both of these conditions can exist at the same time; both can be true, because continued support for the academic side of the university is a choice.

This past spring, the MAFA Executive commissioned two accountants, Cameron Morrill and Janet Morrill, both associate professors at the University of Manitoba, to conduct an analysis of the financial statements of the University found on the University website:

http://www.mta.ca/administration/financial/univ_do_cs.html

Here is their conclusion:

**March 16, 2013
Mount Allison University: Report on Finances
Morrill & Morrill**

Summary: We analyzed the published annual financial statements of Mount Allison University over the period 2006 – 2012 with a view to assessing the ability of Mount Allison to direct more resources to the academic side of operations, such as increasing the complement of tenure-stream faculty members and librarians and/or providing increased salary and benefits to its academic staff. In particular, we tried to identify reliable sources of unrestricted funds that could be channeled into academic operations without putting the university's financial position at risk. Our key results are as follows:

1. After a significant dip in 2008, Mount Allison's stock of non-externally-restricted cash and investments has increased steadily over the past three fiscal years and stands at more than \$11.5 million as at the end of the 2011-2012 fiscal year. The increase over the last two years has averaged \$4 million per year. This level of "cash in the bank" is equivalent to almost 50% of total academic department expenses in 2011-2012.
2. This increase in cash and investments has been accompanied by consistent general operating fund surpluses in the range of \$1.5 to \$2 million per year over the last four years; and annual ancillary fund (bookstore, conference services, etc.) surpluses that have increased to \$3.8 million in 2011-2012. The total unrestricted surplus generated by these two funds in 2011 – 2012 amounted to just less than 25% of total academic department expenses in that year.
3. The surpluses identified in point 2 above have largely been (1) internally restricted by the Mount Allison administration, which means that the funds are still unexpended but have been earmarked or set aside for some future purpose or purposes that are, for the most part, unidentified in the financial statements; or (2) transferred to, and invested in, Capital Assets (e. g., acquisition and/or renovations of land, buildings and equipment).

The Morrill and Morrill report will be discussed at an upcoming member meeting. In the meantime, members interested in reading the complete report

are welcome to visit the MAFA office.

REPORT FROM THE JOINT LIAISON COMMITTEE

Article 6 of the Collective Agreement allows for representatives of MAFA and representatives of the Employer to meet on a regular basis to review and hopefully resolve any matters of concern – beyond any issues that are currently being resolved under a grievance or arbitration procedure.

The MAFA Executive is committed to the ideals of this committee arrangement as a way of fostering good communications and an effective working relationship with the Employer, as well as a respectful and cooperative approach to the overall employment relationship here at Mount Allison. This year's Committee includes Mohammad Ahmady and Michael Fox as the MAFA representatives and Karen Grant and Ron Sutherland as the Employer representatives. Geoff Martin, MAFA Professional Officer, acts as a resource and recording secretary for the group. The committee has agreed to meet once every month and MAFA representatives have been open and engaged in the spring and summer period, including a recent request for an additional meeting concerning the Provost's request of Heads to file an Annual Departmental Report.

The Committee has also discussed a range of concerns, including the CRC process and recent administrative changes, appointments procedures, tenure and promotion communication issues and procedures, as well as the nature of the relationship between the parties and agreement on more timely and information-rich communications. While this committee has no power to bind either party, we hope that Members will feel free to highlight any issues or questions they might have on the terms and conditions of employment to the MAFA executive so that we might raise these concerns and possibly resolve them as quickly as possible.

MAFA COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP UPDATES

The following MAFA Committees have been staffed with new members. Terms are normally held for two years.

COMMUNICATIONS

Renata Schellenberg (Chair) (term ends 2014)
Jerry Ropson (term ends 2014)
David Mawhinney (term ends 2015)
Lori Ann Roness (term ends 2015)

GRIEVANCE COMMITTEE

Mark Fedyk (Chair) (term ends 2014)
Jennifer Tomes (term ends 2015)
Erin Steuter (term ends 2015)
Mario Levesque (term ends 2015)

MAFA 2013-2014 EXECUTIVE

Loralea Michaelis, President
Michael Fox, Vice-President
Zoe Finkel, Past President
Mohammed Ahmady, Collective Bargaining
Mark Fedyk, Grievance Officer
Lori Ann Roness, Part-time/Unit 2
Robert Rosebrugh, Treasurer
Renata Schellenberg, Membership

Helen Pridmore, Chief Negotiator