

CUASA COMMUNIQUÉ

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President's Report

by Angelo Mingarelli

With this, the dawn of a new decade one cannot help but wonder what the next decade will look like for our faculty association. Although the proctoring issue has largely come and gone with few problems, much of it due to your association's repeated interventions, we do not expect further action on this item until the 2010-11 academic year when, we are told, the proctoring budget will be nil. Until then matters should proceed as they did in the Fall with additional proctoring resources depending upon a unit's needs.

The current natural disaster in Haiti has prompted your faculty association to pledge a \$5,000 humanitarian contribution towards the rebuilding of the various universities affected in Port-au-Prince along with their libraries. Steering and Council also ratified an agreement whereby various in-kind contributions will be directed to Norwood House in Ottawa, a women's shelter, over the short term with a possible extension based upon need. Please find more information on this in the article below.

You may all have heard that there were 4 (four) tenure denials this winter. Since we do not believe that these were justified they have now been referred to the Senate Tenure Appeals Committee whose decision will be binding on all parties. In addition, the employer has requested that CUASA review the tenure and promotions process going forward. This may ultimately affect the requirements for the granting of tenure and for promotions in the future, the current criteria having been in place for many years. One can only guess how this will affect the face of the university during this and future decades. The committee in this matter is called the JCAA Parity Sub-Committee on Tenure and Promotion and their job will be a difficult one; to find the right path to and to formulate those criteria that will be used for tenure and promotion at Carleton for years to come. The CUASA members on this committee are Brett Stevens, Chair (brett@math.carleton.ca), Melissa Hausman (Melissa_Hausman@carleton.ca), Sonya Lipsett-Rivera (sonya_lipsett-rivera@carleton.ca) and Andrew Brook (andrew_brook@carleton.ca). We urge you to direct any concerns you may have regarding this to the Chair who, incidentally, will be in touch with you shortly. More on this matter below.

There are two (2) vacancies on your bargaining team. As this is a bargaining year (you may recall we have a one year contract that expires April 30) please consider serving if you are interested by contacting Brett Stevens at brett@math.carleton.ca as soon as possible.

We also encourage you to read the information centered on the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)* as per the emails by the employer. In this vein you may wish to look around your offices/building to ensure that automatic door openers, in particular, are installed where there is a perceived need for such. In one of the successes of your faculty association we managed to ensure that the employer would install such door openers in many parts of the Herzberg Building where for many years (in reality, 15 or more) repeated requests for these had met with inaction. Access to classrooms/offices for disabled people is a right and we must tend to it when the need arises.

Recently, a unit in the Faculty of Science has voted in favor of allowing all the Contract Instructors in that unit, as a collective, to cast one vote at any and all departmental meetings irrespective of their nature. Such a manifestation of solidarity may be a first in universities everywhere and it is something for other units to think about...

We have also initiated and will be co-sponsoring a joint GSA-CUASA award for distinguished teaching within the Graduate Student's Association (among their contract instructors at this time) and we are very grateful to Robert Burk (Chemistry) and Joanna Pozzulo (Criminology) for volunteering their time and expertise in the evaluations and selection process. More on this soon and in the next CUASA newsletter.

Finally we are planning some constitutional amendments for the AGM in April so please refer to this newsletter and your Council representatives for more on these upcoming issues.

CUASA Council Elects Members of Tenure & Promotion Sub-Committee

At our January meeting, CUASA Council delegates from each of the academic sub-units elected the CUASA members of the Joint Sub-Committee to review the tenure and promotion provisions of the collective agreement. Seven candidates were willing to put their names forward for four positions. The sub-committee was mandated by our 2009-2010 negotiations.

The four CUASA members on the sub-committee will be joined by Peter Ricketts, Provost/VP Academic, Kim Matheson, VP Research & International, and Deans Rafik Goubran & John Osborne. The sub-committee has until April 30, 2010 to make its report to the Joint Committee to Administer the Collective Agreement (JCAA).

The CUASA members of the sub-committee welcome input for the review from all CUASA members. They are also planning to conduct a survey of CUASA members to guide the review.

CUASA Launches Partnership with Norwood House

CUASA has launched a partnership with Norwood House, www.efryottawa.com/about/norwood.html an Ottawa area shelter for women & children. JF Norwood House is a project of the Elizabeth Fry Society. Under our partnership, CUASA members are encouraged to make in kind donations of household, consumer, and electronic items to support Norwood House. The project was initiated by CUASA President Angelo Mingarelli as part of CUASA's new Community Outreach initiative. "We are part of a larger community, and I thought it important that we contribute to the betterment of our community" Mingarelli said. CUASA members are asked to make in kind donations of items such as house wares, women's clothing, hygiene products, twin/single bed linens, pillows, small appliances (i.e. vacuum, kitchen items), Tupperware/Rubbermaid, flatware (glasses especially), stationary items, office supplies, running/flat shoes, new small-large underwear, socks and bras, electronics, DVD players, CD & VHS players, remote control (universal), and knapsacks/duffle bags. Items can be dropped off at the CUASA office, Room 2004 DT.

For further information on the JF Norwood House project or to make a donation, please contact the CUASA office at 613 520-5607 or cuasa@carleton.ca

On January 29, the CUASA Ad Hoc Committee on Teaching Workload met and finalized its advice to the collective bargaining team in preparation for 2010 negotiations. I want to thank Natasha Artemeva, David Cray, Patrizia Gentile, Shane Hawkins, Kirsten Kozolanko and Ildi Munro for their invaluable contribution to the work of this committee.

Our bargaining team has started to meet and prepare proposals. We are also planning to conduct a survey of members of bargaining priorities, in preparation for the upcoming round of negotiations.

CUASA Addresses Timetabling Concerns

The CUASA representatives on the university's Centralized Timetable Committee (CTC) received a number of scheduling concerns from 2008/2009. Joanna Dean (Department of History) and Rosemary Warskett (Chair, Department of Law) decided to bring these forward at the committee meeting on January 19.

1. The management of am/pm preferences have in the past been entered into the computer as a level 3 priority, on par with level three special timetabling requests, which includes those requests for accommodation of family and personal needs not deemed to be "of a serious nature" but which will cause "considerable difficulties /hardship if not accommodated." At our suggestion am/pm preferences were reduced to a new level 4 priority, so as to place documented family and personal circumstances priority over "preferences."

Members should be aware that they need to submit a special timetabling arrangements request if their needs for am or pm classes reflect childcare and other family circumstances that are more than a "preference."

2. One member has repeatedly been denied the preference for a pm schedule. We were advised that the member can request, through their departmental timetable coordinator, that the situation be examined to determine whether there is something about their schedule (courses taught, etc) that is triggering this pattern. An entire department can make a similar request for analysis of timetabling.

Members who have repeatedly been denied their am/pm preferences should contact CUASA so that we can determine if this is common.

3. One new faculty member asked for the committee to consider giving faculty the right to request blocks of time for research. Queen's University has this right as part of their collective agreement. The committee said that this was outside their mandate, and should be taken to the Provost or Deans. The Dean of FASS, John Osborne, who is on the Committee, reiterated his previous position, which is that faculty have adequate time to conduct research outside of the teaching term.

4. In response to concerns raised at an earlier meeting, the Special Timetabling Arrangements form has been modified to ensure that the personal medical information is not submitted to the committee, as has happened in the past. This information must be provided with the form, but details are to remain with the department timetable coordinator, (commonly the chair of the department).

5. The committee reviewed the table of examples provided with the Special Timetabling Accommodation Form. The example of a "Faculty requesting accommodation to do approved academic related work" (like travel to Toronto for a provincial committee) was at level 3. At CUASA's request this was raised to a category 2/3, with the discretion left to the departmental timetable coordinator.

6. There was a request, from another member of the committee, to have evening classes start at 5:30, but the consensus was that this is too early for many of our part time students with full time jobs. Early evening classes will remain possible only as a special request.

Members are encouraged to communicate timetabling concerns to CUASA so that they can be brought to the committee. In particular, it would be useful to know if many faculty members would like to be able to set aside blocks of time for research.

CUASA extends our appreciation to both Joanna and Rosemary for their participation on the CTC, and for giving voice to the concerns of academic staff.

Report from Harry Crowe Foundation Conference on Accountability and Quality in Higher Education, Toronto, Ontario, January 29-31, 2010

by Susan Jackson

This was a very interesting conference attended by nearly 100 academic folk including teaching/research faculty and librarians with particular research interests in university education issues, university administrators (including one President) and faculty association representatives from across Canada, the UK and the United States (including a video session from Mexico due to incredible Canadian visa requirements for Mexican visitors!)

There was a challenging opening keynote by Dr. Susan Robertson of Bristol University that dealt with some of the large topics of the day to get the ball rolling. Post-session question periods were quite lively and raised even more questions about appropriate response to the push to oversimplify the complex relationships among objectives for university education, research and teaching, and how to evaluate outcomes from these areas.

In light of the sponsorship of the conference by the Harry Crowe Foundation, it was stressed that academic freedom is a core value for democratic societies in preserving the right to speak openly and to be critical if necessary both within and outside the institution. There was considerable diversity of opinion about whether educational outcomes should include social justice and civic development objectives and, if yes, how these can be measured realistically.

The themes below represent issues that were identified in almost every session in some way. The final session was a general discussion of what might be useful steps to take to ensure that these issues of evaluation and measurement do not override core values of university education. Attendees were urged to consider means of making their case available to the public, by lobbying and pressing their institutions to be concerned that core values are reflected in what gets measured.

Gatekeepers and number crunchers

The academy has a long history of policing its members through support for a meritocracy in hiring practices, tenure and promotion reviews, and peer review of research. The corporate view of the university has appeal to some of its members (e.g. Business Schools) who see the enterprise in the context of business practices with enthusiastic support from conservative think tanks like the Fraser Institute. It was observed that the media likes things simple; they prefer charts and numbers rather than a complex explanation.

For evaluation of teaching and research, the general opinion was that appropriate and discipline-sensitive measures would be most desirable, especially in relationship to funding. Funding agencies are driving research agendas and adopting utilitarian targets (ability to produce commercial applications for funded research, for example). In some places, there may be a chilly climate internally toward diverse or developing areas of knowledge where there is a longstanding canon of practice. These elements can influence the way in which evaluation practices develop institutionally. There was concern about adopting a simple/singular regime for evaluation of success that can disadvantage researchers working at the edge of a field where the number of experts may be limited.

There is no longer a trust-based relationship between universities and government which has little faith in self-regulation regimes. Governments are interested in presenting 'the facts' and feel considerable pressure towards accountability for the public purse.

It was agreed that universities as public institutions should be willing to respond but there is a need to ensure that the right things are being counted. Governments can be prodded constructively and incrementally to adjust their measures towards more effective ones. Despite the recent economic downturn polls continue to show strong public support for public universities in Ontario in particular. It was also noted that universities have a growing population of non-academic staff who are shaping evaluation discourse and measurement regimes. This includes a new professional class of workers devoted to the 'education outcomes option' at universities. These programs are interpellated into the academic process: training TAs and faculty to teach and diverse student-based learning assistance programs outside the classroom have become auxiliary programs within the academic process.

“The fallacy of misplaced concreteness” or, the IGOs and the numbers game

The fallacy of misplaced concreteness was used to describe the ranking and counting regimes that are driving the educational numbers game that governments now engage in. Particularly noted were the proliferation of educational indicators by the OECD and World Bank which are largely derived from economic measures: an outgrowth of the drive to include education in the service industries classification. These indicators are usually based on a cost-benefit view of education i.e. cost to provide compared to economic benefits accruing to those who get the education which can be very unequal (basic arts lifetime earnings versus dentistry, for example). Government bureaucrats buy into these types of measures because they are required to feed data into these international databases; therefore, the data needs to be collected. The time spent on data collection is growing at all levels of the university without much visible benefit. Similarly, governments have jumped on the concept of the “knowledge based economy” but there is doubt about what this actually means in the context of university education.

“World class” or bust

The drive to outcomes is pervasive and international and, in a competitive environment, branding has become a major concern for universities both within their own catchment areas and abroad. A wide variety of ranking systems have proliferated, developed by organizations for their own purposes. A note of caution was raised that these can be re-applied for unintended purposes. One example was the use of 'reputation' for financial bond rating of an institution.

Some questions that were discussed: Who gets left behind? What happens to those researchers, university departments and even entire universities who can't meet the research or publication targets? Who decides what is 'excellence' or 'world class' – is it the ranking agencies? Are the ranking measures valid or based on actual values that are supported in the academy? Has there been/is there presently a drive toward increased expectations for career path measures (research, publication, etc.) as a result of this fixation on status.

The creation of off-shore branch campuses was identified as a particular concern not only for cultural adaptability but also for susceptibility to foreign political agendas. There was discussion of a perception that there is a tendency for some senior university administrators to restrain expression of differences of opinion under the rubric of 'loyalty to the institution' to keep public perception of the university's 'brand' high.

There was considerable attention to and description of the UK experience with RAE and REF research funding based on a ranking scheme that has resulted in closing programs. Rating whole departments by research counts of individuals can have a deleterious effect on both research and collegiality. In the United States the push to a voucher system of direct funding to GIs is having a warping effect on funding public education in the US. There are many different counting regimes at play in the US which can have unintended results; one example from California was about being effective in delivery of programs not deemed to have high value with legislators.

The video session from Mexico clearly outlined the manner in which pressure to train academics to a higher level of education and to create a financial reward system for researchers was turning into a class-based exercise.

Notice was made of current legislation in Quebec (Bill 38) which appears to be leaning toward a carrot/stick approach to measuring effective government funding in the broader public sector and is gathering opposition in the universities and colleges.

Final conclusion from the conference: there is no single answer. Everyone needs to proceed with caution and a keen awareness of the measuring imperative

Equity Issues & CUASA

CUASA Council in December agreed to form an equity committee. The decision was taken based on feedback from the CAUT Forum for Aboriginal Staff, and a meeting CUASA convened with the representatives from the Status of Women Committee of OCUFA (the Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations). The role of the committee will be to provide advice and guidance to CUASA on issues of concern to women and racialized communities.

CUASA welcomes volunteers who may be interested in serving on this committee. Please contact Patrizia Gentile (Patrizia_Gentile@carleton.ca).

CUASA Council Update

The next regular meeting of CUASA Council is scheduled to take place on Monday, February 22 from 16:15 – 17:30 in Room 404, Southam Hall. The agenda for this Council meeting will be available one week prior to the council meeting.