

TRUFA Monthly



February 2015

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Faculty of Arts Video

Arts faculties across North America are facing declining budgets and uncertain futures despite the fact the programs they provide are an essential element of post-secondary education. To showcase the excellence of our own Faculty of Arts here at TRU, TRUFA is in the preproduction phase of a Faculty of Arts video that highlights the importance of the Faculty of Arts for TRU students' education and its impact on the wider Kamloops community.

We will, in the coming weeks be gleaning suggestions for locations and interviewees for the video. If you would like to participate or can nominate distinguished arts alumni who may be interested in participating, if you have compelling visual material (video, photographs etc.) of your work here on campus or abroad, and would like to share it in the video please contact Jason Brown at jbrown@trufa.ca.



We're on the web
www.trufa.ca

CAUT Council Report

Tom Friedman

For more than a decade, TRUFA has been a member of the Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT), which represents about 70,000 instructors, researchers, librarians and other academic staff at nearly one hundred colleges and universities across Canada.

For more than a decade, TRUFA has been a member of the Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT), which represents about 70,000 instructors, researchers, librarians and other academic staff at nearly one hundred colleges and universities across Canada. Since 2006, the TRUFA president has attended the twice-yearly meetings of the CAUT Council, the governing body of the association. Here's a brief summary of CAUT's Council Meeting held in November.

First, every November CAUT organizes a Parliament Hill lobby, through which local faculty association presidents lobby their elected Members of Parliament on key post-secondary education issues. On Thursday, November 27th, I—along with the University of Northern British Columbia Faculty Association president Jacqueline Holler—met with Kamloops-Thompson-Cariboo MP Cathy McLeod. We spoke about three key issues identified by CAUT as of prime importance:

The need for improved funding for post-secondary education through the Social Transfers to the Provinces

Despite federal funding being increased by 3% during the current fiscal year, the British Columbia government is cutting funding to post-secondary institutions by 2%. I pointed out to Ms. McLeod that CAUT and its members would like to see better accountability for federal funds being sent to the provinces. For the last decade, CAUT has proposed a Post-Secondary Education Act, which—like the Canada Health Act—would guarantee transparency and accountability in the allocation of federal funds to colleges and universities.



Stronger support for basic research

The budgets of the tri-council granting agencies under federal jurisdiction—SSHRC, NSERC and CIHR—have not kept pace with research needs. To add to this problem, a significant amount of

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funding has been shifted from basic, discovery/curiosity-based research, to what is now called “targeted” research, research focused on commercial applications and patents, and partnerships with industry. I asked Ms. McLeod to lobby her government to restore basic research funding to its pre-2011 levels.

Improved access to PSE, particularly for Aboriginal students

CAUT would like the government to increase the maximum Canada Student Grant from \$2,000 to \$6,000, a level closer to the average Canadian undergraduate tuition rates. In addition, while aboriginal students have access to the federal funding through their band councils, that funding has been static for years, and there are currently long waitlists for aboriginal students who have the talent and desire to pursue post-secondary education. I asked Ms. McLeod to lobby her government to make improvements in these areas.

National Union of CAUT Report

On Friday, November 28th, I met with the 25 other members of the National Union of CAUT (NUCAUT)—those unionized faculty associations who formed a national union so as to be affiliated with the Canadian Labour Congress. Reports from all faculty unions indicate that the situation we face at TRU is not unique. The growth of administration, the new ‘managerial’—rather than academic—approach to university governance, provincial underfunding are all issues being faced by our colleagues across the country. While some successes have been achieved—notably at the University of Saskatchewan—we have much work to do to counter these disturbing developments.

The formal meeting of the CAUT Council began in the afternoon of November 28th with a report from CAUT’s president Dr. Robin Vose (St. Thomas) on the “state of the academy.” Again, many of his remarks touched on issues that we have experienced here at TRU. He also highlighted a number of important CAUT campaigns that are beginning to have an impact on government policy: the “Get Science Right” campaign, the “Canada’s Past Matters” campaign, “Library and Archives Canada” campaign and others that reflect Canadian academics’ concern with actions by the current federal government: muzzling federal scientists, pulling the funding from important environmental and cultural research, closing libraries and archives, and allowing political ideology—rather than academic judgement—to determine the direction of federal funding of national institutions.

Fairness for contract academic staff

A panel discussion “Fairness for contract academic staff” was held that afternoon and included three special guests:

- **Theresa Montaña**, President, National Council for Higher Education, National Education Association (USA)
- **Jeannie Rea**, President, National Tertiary Education Union (Australia)
- **Sylvain Marois**, Vice-President, FNEEQ-CSN (Quebec)

The panelists focused on ways that faculty unions can best represent the needs of contract academic staff, and indicated how unions in their three jurisdictions are dealing with the new “Precariate”—those academics holding precarious or contingent appointments. Some have fought for and won *pro rata* pay and benefits for those in non-tenured positions; others have forced the opening of tenure-track positions so that contract staff can at least apply for positions with job security; others have severely limited the hiring of contract staff through faculty complement provisions.

One major portion of the CAUT Council agenda is dedicated to a report by the Executive Director on academic freedom issues across the country. Newly appointed Executive Director David Robinson outlined the major threats to academic freedom, including casualization and reliance on contract academic staff, commercialization of research, reluctance of universities to support ‘controversial’ research or teaching, and threats to civil liberties in general, which have had a chilling impact on the willingness of faculty to speak out.

CAUT Associate Executive Director, Sylvain Schetagne who spoke to the FPSE AGM in May 2014, gave an updated version of his address “The attack on labour rights in Canada.” Of particular interest to all faculty associations is the spectre of federal bill C-377, an amendment to the Income Tax Act. Since unions are not required to pay income tax, the federal government is using this proposed legislation to require all unions to make their financial information open to the public and would force unions to justify all of their activities to ensure that they were focused only on labour relations activities. CAUT and the Canadian Labour Congress have repeatedly pointed out that this proposed legislation targets unions unfairly—since corporations or other non-profits are not affected—and that unions like TRUFA always make their finances open to their members. It is believed that the Harper government wants to make sure that employers have inside information on the ability of labour unions to pursue arbitrations or to pursue job action. CAUT has been actively lobbying both MP’s and Senators to oppose this punitive bill.

One of the best reasons for a TRUFA president to attend CAUT Council has less to do with the formal sessions or even the invited guest lectures, and more to do with informal encounters with colleagues. I was particularly pleased to have had the opportunity to meet with the Confederation of University Faculty Association of BC (CUFA-BC) leadership—Dr. Doug Baer (UVic), President, and Dr. Michael Conolon, Executive Director—and the presidents of all three newly unionized BC university faculty associations—Dr. Jacqueline Holler (UNBCFA), Dr. Julian Christians (SFUFA) and Dr. Helga Hallgrimsdottir (UVicFA). I spoke to all of them about the need for some information sharing, particularly about bargaining since all three institutions, along with TRU, negotiate under the Public Sector Employers’ Council (PSEC) umbrella, unlike FPSE locals, which negotiate with the Post-Secondary Employers’ Association (PSEA). Although all of us are under the BC provincial mandate, it is possible that the four ‘regular’ universities (along with UBC) – in contrast to the special purpose teaching universities – may enjoy different opportunities to meet our needs. I will be reporting on developments regarding that information sharing request.

TRUFA’s membership in CAUT continues to be a major benefit to all TRU faculty. It’s been nearly nine years since we called on CAUT to provide assistance as we began to negotiate our first university collective agreement, and the strong support continues from the CAUT elected leadership and professional staff. We are truly fortunate to have this organization on our side.





Report on FPSE's 'Open to Learning Conference

*Open To
Learning:
Policies and
Perspectives on
Post-Secondary
Education in BC*

Vancouver
January 24, 2015.

At the May 2014 Annual General Meeting of the Federation of Post-Secondary Educators of BC (FPSE-BC) delegates overwhelmingly supported a major campaign designed to change the public debate on post-secondary education in this province. With the BC government's announcement of a "Re-engineering Blueprint" for the post-secondary education system—a shift in policy toward "learn to earn" and a focus on job skills—educators quickly realized that the multi-faceted roles of our colleges and universities were under threat. While the ultimate campaign goal is to influence government policy and improve the level of nature of funding to our institutions, the immediate target is the general public. The campaign will begin to help British Columbians understand the value of post-secondary education, its role in building a strong economy and healthy, engaged citizens, and the long-term cost that chronic under-funding and the imposition of narrow mandates for our colleges and universities will cause.

As part of this campaign, AGM delegates voted to support a major conference to set the stage for a major media campaign, which

will be rolled out in mid-February. This conference – *Open To Learning: Policies and Perspectives on Post-Secondary Education in BC* – was held in Vancouver on January 24, 2015.

Conference attendees heard that a major shift in government policy and lack of adequate funding were not the only problems to be confronted. High tuition fees along with diminished support for students mean that student access and success have raised barriers for thousands of students. In addition, the 'casualization' of academic employment—the increasing reliance on contract or non-tenured faculty—means that the learning experience of students and the ability of institutions to meet their legislated mandates are both threatened.

The keynote speaker was Professor Gary Rhoades (Arizona), whose academic research looks at higher education policy. He spoke about the ways in which policies in the U.S. are now being imported into Canada: attacks on tenure, program rationalization, and precarious working conditions for faculty.

rationalization, and precarious working conditions for faculty. Professor Rhoades, formerly Secretary General of the American Association of University Professors (AAUP)—the U.S. equivalent of CAUT—told delegates that only 30% of all courses in American colleges and universities are being delivered by tenured faculty. While TRU has a collective agreement that is meant to ensure that 70% of our courses are being taught by tenured faculty, our employer is still not in compliance in a number of academic units. Tenure, of course, is not just about job security for individuals, but also enhances the ability of departments and Faculties and Schools to engage in long-term academic planning. An over-reliance on contract faculty with last-minute postings and the scramble to recruit means that departments are not being afforded the opportunity to focus on developing new programs and responding to student needs.

Following Professor Rhoades were Jim Soles, a former Assistant Deputy Minister in the Ministry of Advanced Education and Jim Reid, President of BC Colleges, the consortium that speaks for college Presidents in BC. Jim Soles presentation chronicled the arch of post-secondary education policy in BC over the last sixty years, a period in which there has been enormous expansion, but also one in which the shift over the last decade and a half in priority has moved against the

principle of access. Jim Reid talked about the important role that post-secondary institutions play in BC and how that potential can be better utilized. Both men demonstrated the potential harmful effects of a government policy whose narrow focal point is direct training for job placement, but fails to allow for broad access. While job training is surely one of the key mandates of our institutions, such a policy does not take into account the other values that post-secondary education provides to students and to our communities.

The final two presentations focused on the more immediate concerns: mobilizing to build public support and challenging the current arguments that are used to justify “re-engineering” of post-secondary education in BC. The issue of mobilization was discussed in detail by Mira Oreck, Director of Outreach and Partnerships at the Broadbent Institute. Her experience with campaigns in both Canada and the US has sharpened her belief that organizations need to set very clear objectives that resonate with the public. Following Ms. Oreck was Igliska Ivanova, Director of the Public Interest Research Desk at the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternative’s BC Office. Ms. Ivanova’s research showed how affordability and access in BC have been a growing problem. As well her research showed that despite claims that undergraduate degrees, especially those in the

humanities, do not lead to successful employment outcomes, national research shows that employment stability of these grads is significant. In fact, surveys in Canada show that the number one job requirement most in demand by employers is communication, a skill most effectively delivered through studying the humanities. This conference has helped set the stage for the work that FPSE will take on in the coming month. Members of the federation will be at bargaining tables across the province, negotiating for fair compensation for faculty, but also for institutional funding priorities that favour front-line education over administrative growth, and that recognize the need for faculty workloads that allow for professional development and support for students. Beyond the bargaining table, our goal is to engage communities and government in a discussion about the social and economic role played by our institutions, and how access, affordability and funding are key components of achieving our collective mission.

Submitted in solidarity,
Tom Friedman, TRUFA

President



TRUFA Bursaries Awarded

On November 20, 2014 seven TRU students were awarded bursaries from the TRU Faculty Association. Each of the seven recipients received \$720.

The student recipients are:

- Emilan Aerius
- Kaylee Athans
- Kyle Barclay
- Amanda Blackstock
- Philipa Dutt
- Stephanie Mackenzie
- Rebecca Patton



TRUFA Vice President, Star Mahara with TRUFA Bursary winner Stephanie Mackenzie

Congratulations!



TRUFA Vice President, Star Mahara with TRUFA Bursary winner Philipa Dutt



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