

The OCFA Update

Okanagan College Faculty Association Newsletter

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The **OCFA Fall General Meeting (FGM)** is scheduled for Friday, November 19, 2010 from 5:00 – 9:00 p.m. It will take place at the Coast Capri Hotel in Kelowna and a full dinner is provided.

Letter(s) to the Editor

Delivery of the Update

The *Update* is now distributed electronically as a PDF file by e-mail as well as being available on the OCFA webpage at

<http://www.okanagan.bc.ca/administration/ocfa/update.html>

Meeting Dates

OCFA Executive meetings are generally held once every two weeks. If you would like to bring forward a particular item for consideration please contact one of your OCFA Exec members (see page 2 for the list).

OCFA Council meetings are generally held once per month. If you would like to bring forward a particular item for consideration please contact one of your OCFA Council or Exec members (see page 2 for the list).

The *Update* welcomes letters to the editor. I encourage you to write either in response to what you read in the newsletter or about other Faculty Association matters. Letters to the *Update* do not represent the opinions of the editor nor the OCFA Executive or Council. Please send letters as e-mail to the *Update* editor Richard Christie at rchristie@okanagan.bc.ca. The preferred format is Word.

I wish to thank everyone for their submissions - Richard Christie, *Editor*.

Members of OCFA Council and CARC 2010-2011

Executive		Phone	Email
President	Tim Walters	250-718-4161	twalters@okanagan.bc.ca
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Faculty Liaison -- Non-Instructional	Mike Minions	Ext 4755	mminions@okanagan.bc.ca
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CARC:

Kelowna Campus Steward	Norah Bowman-Broz	Ext	nbroz@okanagan.bc.ca
Penticton Campus Steward	Kaya Forest	Ext 3222	kforest@okanagan.bc.ca
Salmon Arm Campus Steward	Rod Watkins	Ext 8215	rpwatkins@okanagan.bc.ca
Vernon Campus Steward	Stephen Doyle	Ext 8235	sdoyle@okanagan.bc.ca

President's Report

by Tim Walters

New OCFA council members

I am delighted to be able to welcome two new members to our Association council. Janet Mercer is replacing Derek Cook as our Business Faculty Liaison, and the Vernon Campus Community Representative position will now be held by Melissa Munn from Sociology and Women's Studies, who replaces Colin Snowsell from the Communications department. On behalf of all OCFA members, I'd like to extend many thanks to Derek and Colin for their service, and welcome aboard Janet and Melissa. If you teach in Business or in Vernon, and you don't know either of these fine folks, I'd encourage you to seek them out but quick and introduce yourself—they are now your voice on council.

OC Employee Recognition Ceremony

Last week I had the chance to represent the Faculty Association at this event for the first time, and would like to offer my best wishes to all the recipients of awards recognizing their 10 to (brace yourselves) 40 years of service to our institution. Congratulations, too, to the 15 people who retired this past year, and thanks to all of you for everything you have added to our working lives.

OC Holiday vacation policy—a Beckettian pantomime

For those of you who are new to the college, I should alert you to the existence of an annual festive tradition which you will get to participate in very shortly. Every year at around this time, OC sends around a general email notice to all employees "clarifying" its vacation policy during the holiday period, and in so doing incites mass confusion and outrage. The mayhem originates from the fact that BCGEU members are (oddly, it seems to me) required to book vacation days over the holiday period even though the college is physically closed: so if they did *or* didn't want to work from December 27th to December 31st they were historically required to submit a vacation request, even though the school was shut and they couldn't work anyway. However, given our much greater freedom to work from home or other locations as we see fit, OCFA members were never beholden to this policy, but the annual email didn't make this clear, so mayhem ensued. With me so far? Okay.

This year, an exciting new twist has been added to the tale. The very same familiar email was circulated throughout Science, Technology and Health last month, and OCFA immediately requested that a clarification be issued to our members. We were told that management was working on sorting this policy out once and for all. This work being done, I was recently informed that in order to solve the awkward problem of demanding that some (but not all) bargaining units request vacation days during a period when the college is closed and they literally cannot come to work even if they wanted to, OC management has come up with a characteristically innovative solution: open the college, so *all* people can come to work. Further—and to my mind contra our much ballyhooed commitments to both learner-centredness and environmental friendliness—while the school will be open to employees, it will not be open to the public, which is to say that it is not really open at all. So it goes.

Thus, we will all shortly be receiving a missive from on high declaring that December 27th to December 31st are regular work days and should be treated as such. Please do not be alarmed or misled by this communication. As regards OCFA members, nothing whatsoever has changed, except that the heating system at OC and hallway lights will now be turned on should you need to flee the festive or the familial for a few hours and hide out in your darkened office. It remains the case that you are not required to be sitting in your office working during any or all of this period. These days ought to be treated no differently from any other day when you are not required to teach, as has always been the case.

FPSE

Although provincial bargaining came to a disappointingly grinding halt earlier this term, we have continued to enjoy the benefits of our membership with FPSE in other ways. Last month I travelled to Victoria along with the other FPSE local Presidents to meet with the ministry and discuss sectoral issues, and also had the chance to sit down with the Canadian Federation of Students to begin working on a joint strategy to address the degraded state of post secondary funding in this province. This past weekend, I travelled with three other OC faculty members to Vancouver to attend a one day conference on governance issues, which have become an increasing source of concern in the wake of the McPhillips decision, which seemed to empower the UBC senate to overrule faculty protections enshrined in their collective agreement. Recently, FPSE has also been very active in attempting to unravel the implications of the recent ministerial reshuffle, which has been the source of much confusion and debate of late—I have asked FPSE President Cindy Oliver to briefly speak to this bifurcation at our FGM.

If any of you are interested in becoming more involved with the OCFA or with FPSE, we are currently seeking representatives to fill two vacant positions on FPSE standing committees. These committees are comprised of one representative from each of the FPSE locals from throughout the province, and concern themselves with one aspect of our professional lives (i.e. the Education Policy, Status of Women, and Pension Advisory Committees). At present, we have spaces available on both the Workplace Health, Safety, and Environment Committee and the Disability Management and Rehabilitation Committee, so if you're interested please let me know. You can read all about the work these groups do by clicking on the following link (<http://www.fpse.ca/committees>), but all that is really required for you to get involved is an interest in the applicable area, a willingness to subscribe to the listserv and advise council periodically, and the ability to travel to Vancouver once a term to attend a meeting. Think about signing up – one of the advantages of our FPSE membership is the resource sharing these groups afford us, so the more we know about what's going on provincially the better off we all are locally (see, for instance, Doug's pension report below). Every campus and every portfolio at OC currently has at least one committee representative, so if you'd like to talk to one of your colleagues about what is required let me know and I'll get you some names.

I look forward to seeing many of you at our FGM this week and, as ever, if you have any questions or concerns, or would like to get involved, don't hesitate to get in touch.

Cheers,

Tim

1st Vice-President's Report

by Sharon Josephson

Collective Agreement Review Committee (CARC) Report

Submitted by Sharon Josephson (Communications), Chief Steward
Contact: Kelowna E320; ext. 4294; cell 250-718-6387

Get to know your campus steward:

Penticton: Kaya Forest (Chemistry), ext. 3222

Kelowna: Norah Bowman-Broz (English), ext. none yet, email her at NBroz@okanagan.bc.ca

Vernon: Steve Doyle (Geography), ext. 8235

Salmon Arm: Rod Watkins (Philosophy), ext. 8215

Your stewards are your first point of contact if you have any questions or concerns about the collective agreement, generally, or about your working conditions, specifically. We're here to ensure the College acts according to the agreement and to help resolve any disagreements that may arise between you and the College.

What we're working on these days:

We recently came to an agreement with the College that term faculty members who go on maternity or parental leave are eligible for the Supplemental Employment Benefits (SEBs), more informally known as the EI "top-up," paid by the College. When a term faculty member decides to have or to adopt a baby they generally advise their Dean that they won't be taking any work for a period of time. And the Dean generally advises them that they are not eligible for the SEBs because they won't be employed by the College while they're off making a family. However, there's a bit of a catch in the Collective Agreement: according to Article 42.1, term members are eligible for the SEBs for the duration of their term contract but because they're off having a baby, they don't exercise their rights to work and so they don't have a contract which would qualify them for this benefit. The College has now agreed to give term members a contract for non-instructional duties from which they can immediately go on maternity or parental leave. This assures their eligibility for SEBs. If you're a term member and plan to start a family sometime soon, or if you lost out on SEBs for time you took off from work in recent years past, please get in touch with us.

Related to this is a grievance we have recently filed for term members on maternity and parental leaves who may lose their place in line on the route to conversion to continuing positions while they're away. While we don't have a seniority list for term members, it is generally the case that when a term member comes up for conversion, they get the next continuing position for which they are qualified. Term members on maternity and parental leave can find themselves in a position where other term members "leapfrog" over them, making it to the 16 TLU trigger for conversion before them. We are asking that term members on maternity and parental leaves be credited for the

TLUs they would have been assigned had they not gone on leave. This would ensure that they wouldn't lose their place in line.

We have also recently filed an "Eating Timelines" grievance. Our very own OCFA president, Tim Walters, found his per diem claim for breakfast (\$5.50) was denied on the grounds that he had ample time to prepare and consume breakfast before travelling from his home in Salmon Arm to a selection committee meeting in Kelowna. The Collective Agreement does not specify timelines for eating particular meals at particular times of day. We have asked for reimbursement, with interest. If you've had an expense claim denied for similar reasons, please let us know.

Finally, in a meeting last week, a new member expressed confusion over how many Deans she had to report to. Teaching at two campuses, she had two regional Deans plus her portfolio Dean. Which one was her supervisor? All of them? Another victim of the infamous matrix management system, this member made me realize that many of you likely have similar sorts of questions and may find the Collective Agreement less than welcoming when you go searching for answers. If this is the case, please feel free to give us a call or send us an email. To answer this question: your portfolio Dean is your one and only designated supervisor.

2nd Vice-President's Report

by Francie Greenslade

Negotiation Committee membership (2010-11):

Francie Greenslade (English), 2nd Vice President of OCFA, Chair of the Negotiations Committee (Local 3221 and Office PL 112) from Penticton,
Peter Murray (Physics and Astronomy), Chief Negotiator (Local 4268 and Office C 277) from Kelowna,

Nolan Fretz (Network Engineering Technology), (Local 4497 and Office C 330B) in Kelowna,
Sharon Josephson (Communications), 1st VP of OCFA (Local 4294 and Office E320) in Kelowna,
Michelle Nicholson (Business), Treasurer of OCFA, (Local 4608 and Office C 132) from Kelowna, and
Tim Walters (English), President of OCFA, (Local 8251 and Office SA 116) from Salmon Arm.

Contract Negotiation Report:

As you may have heard, things got a little heated at the bargaining table a few days ago, when the College handed over a letter informing us that their past practice of *inviting* department chairs to participate in summative evaluations of colleagues would cease with the signing of a new agreement, and that, going forward, OC would *require* chairs to participate.

This came across as an aggressive move and not at all in keeping with the spirit of problem-solving that president Jim Hamilton spoke of at the opening of bargaining. We reminded the College that our members have repeatedly and consistently expressed their distaste at the idea of taking on the managerial role of participating in the summative evaluation of a colleague. At the AGM in 2008, OCFA members passed a motion that department chairs would not participate in summative evaluations of their fellow department members.

We continue to be puzzled by OC's view that department chair is a plum job. The other day they spoke about their proposal to allow designated supervisors to initiate a review and recall of the chair, and referred to the possibility that a chair could be "demoted," as a kind of disciplinary measure. Yesterday, while the College acknowledged that chairs are not part of their management team, they said they do see the chair as "a role model, the best among equals."

OCFA expressed our surprise at such a view and explained that we see it instead as a job that someone takes on because it's his or her turn, or because fellow department members have urged him or her to do so. We don't see it as a perk. OC's proposals would make an already challenging and somewhat thankless job even more undesirable.

To discuss these issues, we're having a meeting of department chairs on Wednesday, Nov. 24th from 4-6 p.m. in E303. Chairs, please plan to attend.

Treasurer's Report

by Michelle Nicholson

Money, Money, Money

Do you know that every year members miss out on money they could be claiming from OC? There are the GIA fund, the PD fund, and the PA fund available and just waiting for you to make a claim.

The GIA (Grants-in-Aid) fund is available to all OCFA members both continuing and term. You have to apply to this fund BEFORE you spend any money. They meet twice a year with application deadlines on October 31st and March 31st. Each grant from this fund shall not normally exceed \$2,000. Add that up. \$2,000 x twice a year – you could get as much as \$4,000 a year from GIA! The College is required to provide sufficient funding for the GIA fund. So the size of this fund is determined by how much we use it. Funding is to support research, scholarly and creative activity. There are a few hoops to jump through but so what it's \$2,000 per grant! Before you can apply to the GIA fund you have to first try to get what you need from your department budget, the library (they have money to buy books your department requests), computer services, the Deans budget, or the bookstore. If none of those places will purchase what you need then you can apply to the GIA fund. What kinds of things do they cover? To name a few – capital equipment, supplies, books, subscriptions to journals, travel, conferences, tuition, and equipment and supplies for student learning projects. For travel, conferences and tuition you have to use up your available PD funds first. For members on term contracts you have no PD funds so you can go directly to the GIA fund for your professional development needs. Check out MyOkanangan, OC Express Forms, OCFA Grants in Aid for all the details and required form to fill in. Remember you must apply and be approved before spending any money. Keep all receipts for the expense claim and you will have to write a report afterwards.

The PD (Professional Development) fund is available to all members on continuing contracts. The College and the OCFA union both contribute money to this fund. Your dues are going into this fund so you should make a point of using this money. The aims and objectives of this fund are:

1. To encourage professional growth opportunities relating to teaching and professional competence.
2. To increase subject-area competence.
3. To foster and maintain currency and excellence in teaching and professional practice.
4. To provide financial support for activities such as seminars, retreats, and guest speakers on topics of appropriate concern to groups of employees.

Funding for PD is currently \$2,000 over a two year period commencing April 1, 2010 to March 31, 2012. You can apply for these funds at any time during the year. There are 5 PD committees – Arts, Science, Business, Engineering Technologies, and non-instructional. Most PD committees meet as

required when applications are received. You just fill in the form, get your supervisor or Dean to sign it, and submit it to the appropriate PD committee. Your Dean's assistant can help you with this last step. You are also required to get approval before spending money for this fund but your Dean and PD committee might make exceptions with sufficient explanation (unlike the GIA committee). You do not have to spend all of the \$2,000 at once. You can use the fund for small or large amounts. The PD fund covers travel, conference fees, accommodations, meals, and tuition. Keep all receipts for the expense claim afterwards and you will have to write a report as well. Unused money at the end of the two year period rolls over in the fund but not to each individual. So if you don't use it you lose it. You cannot combine monies from two different two-year periods. The date of the event determines which two-year period the claim is for.

The PA (Professional Allowance) fund is the only fund that you spend the money first and request reimbursement later. This fund is used for expenses that meet the following criteria:

- The expenses must be for the purposes of satisfying the employee's contractual obligation to maintain competence and currency in his or her areas of specialization or employment classification.
- The expenses cannot be of the type for which reimbursement is otherwise available from Travel Allowances (Article 37), Professional Development (Article 22), or the Grants-In-Aid Fund (Article 37).
- Allowable expenses include, but are not limited to, professional dues (see also 37.7.6), subscriptions to scholarly journals¹, books, computer software, and computer or other equipment.

The amount of this fund varies from year to year. The College puts \$35,000 into the fund each July. Unused monies roll over to the next year. A few years ago this roll over and low claim volume had resulted in a \$100,000 balance that was growing each year. So the committee raised the limit to \$500, then to \$750 per year until the backlog was used up. The balance for next year most likely will be \$250 or \$300. We are waiting for the College to approve the amount. The year for the PA fund is May 16, 2010 to May 15, 2011. During the year you spend your money on the above items and save your receipts. Once a year claim forms with receipts are submitted by May 31st. The committee meets between June 1st and 15th to approve all claims then they are sent to Finance for payment by the end of June. Claims received late take longer to approve and get paid much later. Claims received after August get held until the following June. The committee is very flexible when interpreting equipment needed to stay current in your field. Just give them a good explanation. If in doubt email Michelle Nicholson, Chair PA committee.

Guidelines and claim forms for all of the above funds are found in MyOkanagan, Express Forms. Take a few minutes, learn more about these funds and use them!

¹ Both the GIA fund and PA fund cover subscriptions and books. For these items use your PA funds 1st then apply to the GIA fund second. This overlap is being reviewed at present.

Pension Advisory Officer's Report

by Doug Birtwistle

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE FALL PAC (Pension Advisory Committee) MEETING

1. Due to recent downturns in the markets, and other factors, there is an “unfunded liability” in our Pension Plan, forcing the College Pension Plan Partners to limit inflation adjustments and to cancel funding for post retirement health and welfare benefits. FPSE has a pension-related proposal at the Common Bargaining Table. The Union is proposing that the parties agree to make the following resources available to the College Pension Plan Partners:

- a) Employee contributions to the Plan to increase by 0.16%.
- b) Employer contributions to the Plan to increase by 1.16%.

The Union proposes that the following recommendations be made to the College Pension Plan Partners regarding the use of these additional resources:

- a) Increase the Inflation Adjustment Account funding by 0.32%.
- b) The additional 1% funding to be directed to providing post retirement health and welfare premium payments with a priority towards Extended Health Benefits.

2. The Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) has been and is proposing to phase in a doubling of Canada Pension Plan benefits from 25% to 50% of average earnings on a pre-funded basis. Of course, this would require additional contributions from both employees and employers to pay for higher pensions in the future. Presently, the maximum CPP retirement benefit is \$934.17 per month. However, this amount only goes to those who have consistently earned well above average earnings over their entire working life. The average monthly CPP retirement benefit in 2009 was just \$501.97. I do not have the statistics on our particular employee group, but I am guessing that we might receive an average monthly Canadian Pension Plan benefit in the \$700 to \$800 range. The federal government and many of the provinces, as well as other interest groups, are showing more and more interest in the proposal. The FPSE supports the proposal. If the proposal does go ahead, there is some potential impact on our defined College Pension Plan. I will discuss some possible implications in a future newsletter.

3. Recent numbers for the one-year return on investments ending August 31 show that the College Pension Plan has exceeded expectations and outperformed its benchmarks. Good news.
4. An FPSE member could be laid off or fired or quit without being informed that he/she might want to consider purchasing any eligible leaves. If no longer an employee, the option to purchase eligible leaves is not available. That rule is now changed. A member now has a 30 day window after being terminated, or quitting, for which he/she can purchase any eligible leaves.
5. A discussion on ethical, or responsible, investing by our Pension Plan was held. British Columbia Investment Management Corporation (bcIMC) is the group responsible for investing our assets. Apparently, they do have a commitment and principles guiding them to responsible investing, but PAC is asking a spokesperson (the manager of ethical investing at bcIMC) to address the issue at our next meeting in the spring of 2011.
6. Two subcommittees were struck – one reviewing post-retirement pension benefits, and the other reviewing the Inflation Adjustment Account.
7. A lengthy, and yet to be completed, discussion on the Joint Presidents' Council / Pension Advisory Committee Working Group on Pension Administration and policy was held. I have a copy of a draft of the report for any person who would like to see it. It includes an overview of Partner and Trustee roles and obligations, pension governance, trustee appointments and evaluation, "goals" of the "pension promise", etc. Excellent reading.

Editor's Note: Doug Birtwistle, your Pension Advisory Officer, is organizing a pension seminar for March 31, 2011. More information will be forthcoming from Doug as he gets the details.
