

The Update



Issue 1 2014/2015

September 2014

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MEETING DATES

Socials

Hopefully you were able to attend one of the three socials held in Kelowna, Penticton, and Vernon. The final social for the Fall semester is in Salmon Arm. Come out and enjoy food and drinks with colleagues.

Salmon Arm Social: Setters Pub, Tuesday, October 7th, 5:00-7:00pm

The Fall General Meeting is scheduled for 5:30-9:30 p.m., Friday, October 17 (Kelowna Campus Cafeteria, hosted bar at 5:30pm, dinner at 6:00pm, and meeting at 7:00pm).

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).

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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 Erin Radomske at eradomske@okanagan.bc.ca. The preferred format is MS-Word.

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> Copies of the *Update* are also posted in local campus mailrooms.

Members of OCFA Council and CARC 2014-2015

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Collective Agreement Review Committee:			
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Service Acknowledgment

The OCFA would like to thank the following outgoing Executive, Council, and CARC members for their service: Michelle Nicholson, Chris Clarkson, Drew McGillivray, Jeremy Beaulne, Howard Hisdal, Alan Rice, Geraldine Street, and John Mott.

President's Report

Tim Walters

PRIMARY ACTIVITIES SINCE *THE UPDATE* IN JUNE.

Local:

- Along with many members of the Council and the Executive, I was fortunate to be able to attend campus socials in Kelowna, Vernon, and Penticton to meet new OCFA members and reconnect with returning faculty. Many thanks to everyone who came out, and particularly to our local community representatives Alan Ilicic (Penticton), Bob Groves (Kelowna), and Richard Christie (Vernon) for arranging such good nights for us all.
- Have developed work plans for the 2014-2015 year with the Executive and Council at our first meetings of the year, and I am convinced that these groups (both of which have a lot of new faces) are going to represent you very well in the year ahead. We currently have a few vacancies on Council, so if you are interested in being either our Health representative or our Salmon Arm Community Representative, please get in touch and I'll let you know what is involved.
- Rewrote and updated the OCFA handbook , which (if you don't yet have a copy) you can access here: http://www.okanagan.bc.ca/Campus_and_Community/employees/ocfa.html
- Wrote solidarity letters to BCTF locals up and down the valley, walked with teachers in my community and helped provide faculty elsewhere with OCFA materials to support their solidarity outreach with the striking teachers, made a motion (which passed unanimously) at FPSE President's Council to donate \$100,000 to the BCTF Hardship fund.
- Represented the OCFA at the college's new employee orientation in Kelowna
- Participated in a series of productive meetings with OC President Jim Hamilton and VP Academic Andrew Hay about (amongst other things) the Management Evaluation Program the OCFA launched last year, ongoing issues with Infosilem, and our concerns about OC's Bullying and Harassment policy and procedures. I'm optimistic that the college is genuinely



interested on working on these issues with us, and hope to be able to provide information about concrete developments in forthcoming issues of *The Update*.

- Attended the very productive but considerably less-fun-than-it-sounds 'Article 14-fest' in Vernon with the Exec, Bargaining committee, and campus stewards to work through some ongoing confusions regarding Article 14 of our collective agreement. I'll be in touch with more information on this shortly, as part of this year's Executive work plan for 2014-2015 is to provide OCFA members with greater clarity about what continues to be a difficult issue for many of our members, and for term faculty in particular.
- Worked with Phillip Legg (the FPSE Communications Director) on preparing the OCFA's annual submission to the Kelowna hearing of the Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services, a group of mostly local MLA's from both parties charged with collecting information that will hopefully shape next year's budget (Full text is below).

Provincial:

- At the FPSE Annual General meeting in Whistler in May (the minutes are available here: <http://fpse.ca/files/attachments/AGM2014minutes.pdf>), a motion was approved to spend up to \$1,000,000 in the coming year on developing and implementing a public relations campaign about the value of post-secondary education, including those form of post-secondary education that are not immediately connected to the as yet non-existent LNG industry. Obviously, part of the rationale for this spending is the ceaseless chatter from government about their desire to re-engineer our sector as we are beginning another round of bargaining – it's an important time to remind the public of what we contribute to the social, cultural, and financial fabric of our province. I have been appointed to the PC subcommittee charged with bringing this motion into being, and have had two meetings with the creative team and polling expert that will be developing the campaign –I think they're going to produce some exceptional work for us. Watch this space.
- Continued to work with the rest of the President's Council subcommittee on the forthcoming province wide institutional climate surveys, which will be up and running in early 2015

OCFA SUBMISSION TO SELECT STANDING COMMITTEE ON FINANCE AND GOVERNMENT SERVICES:

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to your deliberations about the priorities for the provincial government's 2015 budget. I know that many of my fellow faculty association Presidents have appeared before the Committee in other communities to address issues that they believe are critical for the 2015 budget. Some of my comments will reiterate those concerns, but from a

perspective that reflects some of the realities here in the Okanagan.

Before I get to those comments, however, I want to give Committee members a brief overview of the organization I represent and the institution where our members work. I am an English Professor in Salmon Arm and the President of the Okanagan College Faculty

Association. We advocate on behalf of around 300 faculty who work and teach at Okanagan College (OC). The college was established in the late 1960s as a community college. In the early 1990s its mandate was expanded to allow third and fourth year programs leading to an undergraduate degree. We became known then as Okanagan University College, a name and mandate that stayed in place until 2004 when we split into two separate institutions, UBC Okanagan and Okanagan College.

Like other colleges, OC has a mandate to provide comprehensive learning opportunities to students in this region through a network of 4 major campuses and three satellite campuses. Comprehensive means a full range of program offerings that lead to degrees, diplomas, certificates and completed apprenticeships. It also means providing avenues for adult learners to re-engage in post-secondary learning by completing their Grade 12 or by simply getting the necessary prerequisites for entry into different streams within the public post-secondary education system here in BC.

It would be an understatement to say that funding pressures are having a major impact on our institution: we are approaching crisis levels. The largest single investment that the provincial government makes in post-secondary education comes in the form of a provincial operating grant. Every public post-secondary institution receives one and the amount they receive is tied to the Ministry's estimate of student enrolments, course offerings and a range of other factors. In previous presentations to this Committee, Faculty Associations around the province have stressed the fact that operating grants are not keeping pace with either the demands of enrolment or the underlying cost pressures that OC and all post-secondary institutions face.

When measured on a per-student basis and adjusted for the impact of inflation, real per-student operating grants to public post-secondary institutions have been in steady decline over the last decade and a half. The February 2014 provincial budget and three year service plan for the Ministry of Advanced Education showed that by 2015-16 real per-student operating grants will have dropped by 20 percent since 2001.

When a funding squeeze plays out over the course of a decade and a half, other parts of the system get squeezed as well. The most significant impact has been on tuition fees; at OC, tuition fee revenue has increased by over 76 percent over the last eight years, and already prohibitively expensive fees are now raised on an almost annual basis. According to the Canadian Federation of Students, undergraduate tuition fees have more than doubled since being de-regulated in 2001. The impact of those increases has translated into higher debt levels for students; the CFS estimates average student debt is approaching \$30,000. Just as troubling is the fact that institutional budgets now rely more heavily on revenue sources other than their provincial operating grant. Many BC post-secondary institutions now show tuition fees and other non-provincial grant revenues accounting for more than half of the total revenue for the institution.

Those kinds of shifts—the dramatic rise in tuition fees and the increasing reliance on other revenue sources—raise serious questions about access to post-secondary education—is it becoming something that is affordable to fewer and fewer British Columbians. Affordable access to our public institutions has enormous implications for today's students, but just as significant, it has implications for how successful BC will be managing the transition to a more knowledge

intensive economy. If we make post-secondary education more difficult to access because of under-funding, BC puts itself at risk of not creating the skills, knowledge and learning opportunities it needs to succeed economically.

At a more fundamental level, however, the gradual and steady retreat in the province's share of the costs of post-secondary education raises the important question of just how public public post-secondary education is today. I know from colleagues at Thompson Rivers University, for example, that the provincial operating grant there accounts for less than 50 percent of total revenues. And when the "publicness" of post-secondary education becomes that blurry, the issues of access and affordability become that much more urgent. The 2015 budget has to begin addressing this serious shift in the province's share of the cost of post-secondary education.

Before I detail the recommendations that we want the Committee to consider I want to focus a few closing remarks on some immediate system issues that many post-secondary institutions are facing. Although our college does not have a large English-as-a-Second Language training program, we benefit from the programs provided by those institutions that do. Successful ESL graduates move into our institution to pursue greater learning and career opportunities. The loss of provincially funded ESL will have an impact on those students and, therefore, the broader system. The cuts to ESL make no sense and the 2015 budget needs to restore the \$22 million that will be lost.

Another concern we have is the government's announced plans to "re-engineer" post-secondary education. The announcement was made several months ago and we have

yet to see much in the way of details on what re-engineering will look like.

In our view, the proposal rests on some worrisome concepts. The first is the move to re-direct 25% of the provincial operating grant into high demand career programs. Provincial operating grants are already deficient, so to talk about changes to the grant will certainly create additional problems. Then there is the concept of what gets counted in terms of a high demand career. Engineers, geologists, actuaries, accountants, health care technicians, these would all fall into the category of high demand careers, but how a student arrives at that credential can cover many different paths. Will the Ministry fund undergraduate liberal arts programs that a student takes on route to one of those credentials? The answer hasn't been articulated yet and that lack of detail makes many of us wonder just how thoroughly this proposal has been thought through.

Another problem with the re-engineering proposal is the pedagogy that underpins it. Critical thinking skills are not something that can be simply pulled off a shelf. While it may be popular in some quarters to criticize liberal arts programs, the reality is that strong communications and critical thinking skills are an essential part of a liberal arts education. Moreover, a recent survey of chief executives at Canada's biggest companies found that the traits their recruiters look for in the people they hire are things like strong communications, problem solving and analytical skills. However, if we follow the proposed re-engineering proposal as it has been presented so far, funding for many liberal arts programs would be clawed back.

One final point about the funding squeeze and that is the impact it has on faculty. Our institution, and many others like OC, are

becoming increasingly reliant on contingent or term faculty. A recent CBC documentary highlighted the problems that contingent faculty face, and the exploitation of this group is rapidly becoming *the* central problem facing my profession and the post-secondary sector. Many of the so called 'precariat' are forced to work at multiple jobs to try and cobble together a full year of work, receive less pay for teaching the same courses, are unpaid for large sections of the year, receive diminished benefits, and so forth, despite typically having comparable qualifications and experience to continuing employees. Unless this government makes a greater commitment to funding post-secondary, term employees will soon teach the majority of the

courses offered at Okanagan College, as they already do elsewhere. The long term impact of this recent shift not only puts those faculty on the economic margins of our communities, but also ultimately erodes the quality of learning that our students need to succeed. It's a lose-lose strategy for our province over the long term and we need to recognize that problem and fix it. Improved funding would be the most straightforward way to address this growing crisis, but government could also pressure institutions to cap the percentage of its faculty hired on short term contracts, or take away the financial incentive they currently have to use contingent professors by insisting they provide equal pay for equal work.

In summary, the specific priorities we are looking for in the 2015 provincial budget include the following:

- 1) The funding that post-secondary institutions receive needs to better respond to the cost pressures they face. Any proposal that alters already low levels of provincial funding needs to be reconsidered. A more sensible approach in our view is to engage in a thorough review of the funding formula so that regional inequities and core funding needs for the system as a whole are adequately addressed.
- 2) Working with institutions to minimize the costs of post-secondary education borne by students including the revitalization of the student grant program which would help financially stressed students better cope with rising tuition fees and heavier debt loads.
- 3) It is to no one's long term benefit that BC's colleges and universities continue to rely more and more on contingent faculty. The adoption of a pro-rata model providing fair working conditions and equal pay for equal work should be mandated by government and funded in the budget.
- 4) A commitment to much needed infrastructure spending at older institutions such as ours is required. Because of a lack of funding in this area, our institutions are becoming less safe places to work and to learn, and less able to provide students with a cutting edge education.
- 5) Student support services have suffered as a result of under-funding. The 2015 budget needs to provide funding support for those services as part of a broader effort by government to ensure that students are able to complete programs and degrees in a more timely way.
- 6) A direct and on-going commitment of at least \$22 million to support provincially funded ESL programs delivered by BC's post-secondary institutions.

Thank you for your consideration, and feel free to contact me at any time should you have any questions, or if you would like to discuss this further.

Dr. Tim Walters,
President, Okanagan College Faculty Association

First Vice-President's Report

Rod Watkins Chief Steward

Hello everyone.

Welcome back! I hope everyone had a pleasant summer. I have a number of things to report.

YOUR COLLECTIVE AGREEMENT REVIEW COMMITTEE (CARC)

I want to begin by introducing you to our stewards. Starting up north, Terry Kosowick (Business) is returning as the Salmon Arm Steward. Joining this year in Vernon is Jeremy Lanaway (English). Returning in Kelowna is Sasha Johnston (English). Last (certainly not least) is Sharon Mansiere (Biology) in Penticton. Sharon is returning to her role as Steward after having spent last year on an ESL.

I want to welcome our new and returning stewards and thank them for their service.

Please feel free to contact your steward if you have any questions or concerns. Or just stop by to meet them.

Your Stewards:

Terry Kosowick (Salmon Arm)
Jeremy Lanaway (Vernon)
Sasha Johnston (Kelowna)
Sharon Mansiere (Penticton)

RECENT ACTIVITIES

I have had a busy September. In addition to regular meetings of the Executive, Council and CARC as well as grievance meetings with the College, I also traveled to Vancouver at the end of September for the FPSE (Federation of Post-Secondary Educators) CARC meeting to discuss with other Chief Stewards from locals around the province our ongoing grievances and other issues. I am happy to report that we are far behind many locals in the number of ongoing grievances, with some having grievances that number in the 20s and 30s. We also spent half a day learning about accommodations (more below).

I also had an opportunity to walk the picket line with embattled teachers from my children's elementary school last spring. The response from those on the line was warm and welcoming.

ONGOING GRIEVANCES

We have three arbitrations currently scheduled. First, FAC13/04 is our grievance regarding Moodle access by management and staff. If you recall, we learned some time ago that designated supervisors have been accessing instructor's Moodle sites as part of their summative evaluation of

members. We also learned that a number of staff also have wide access to some Moodle sites. We grieved that this is a violation of our and our students expectation of privacy when using school IT resources. The arbitration for this grievance is scheduled for the end of October. A related grievance, FAC13/11 grieved the updated IT policy issued by the College last summer. In this case, we grieved the assertion in the IT policy that any materials stored or transmitted through the schools servers become their property since that is a black letter violation of our copyright language. The College quickly amended the policy to respect our copyright, but as we investigated, we discovered other elements of the policy that are questionable. Again, one issue is privacy. The policy stated that no one has an expectation of privacy while using school equipment and IT services. But case law has deemed that even when using equipment or services of a body like the College, users have an expectation of privacy. The policy should reflect that. Furthermore, we also insisted that the College IT policy respect the special working conditions of instructors and researchers in academia. CAUT, the Canadian Association of University Teachers (of which we are a member as part our membership in FPSE) has issued advisories maintaining that our unique working conditions means that our e.g., teaching materials are under our own “custody and control”. For example, when an instructor moves from one institution to another, they maintain custody and control of their own lecture materials. We have asked that the IT policy respect this. The good news is that the College has been quite receptive in rewriting the policy to reflect our concerns. I anticipate that both of these grievances can be resolved in the next few weeks.

Our second arbitration is for FAC13/07- Failure to provide benefits to members over 65. This grievance has been ongoing for some time and is part of a coordinated effort amongst several FPSE locals to force the province to address the effect that the end of mandatory retirement has had on those who lose (some of) their benefits at age 65. The arbitration is scheduled for the end of January.

Our last arbitration is for FAC13/12 – Wrongful suspension. A member received a 15 day suspension without pay and this was the first discipline the employee faced. We have argued that this is not a properly progressive discipline as is required by the Collective Agreement. The arbitration is scheduled for the end of May 2015.

We have four other grievances. Three of them are Step 3 grievances, meaning they are headed for arbitration, but there are no dates scheduled yet. These three grievances all involve discipline or related issues. I will report further as arbitration dates are settled.

The last grievance involves a full-time continuing member who was dismissed during the member’s probationary period. We have grieved the dismissal on the grounds that the summative evaluations that served as the basis for this dismissal were arbitrary and unfair as well as that some of the standards being used to assess performance are a violation of our academic freedom. We are awaiting the College’s reply to our proposed remedy.

OTHER MATTERS

1. **Harassment and Bullying:** Your OCFA Council has struck a subcommittee to investigate measures that can be taken to improve the College’s handling of harassment and bullying on campus—including of our students. I have been involved with the subcommittee by providing information and proposals for action. One such action I was directed by the membership at the AGM to take was to write a letter to Jim Hamilton expressing several

concerns we have with the College's policies and practices. I delivered that letter last May. I have not had an official response, but I have been assured I will soon have one.

2. **Accommodations:** Amongst the other effects of the Infosilem rollout this last few months, has been a growth in the number of accommodation requests for scheduling changes. Because of this increase, at the FPSE CARC meeting, we spent part of a day discussing accommodations—in particular, what are the employers and employees responsibilities. Anyone who is currently or is planning to request an accommodation should have a word with your steward or myself about what your rights and obligations are.
3. **Safety issues in labs:** We have also been following very closely the College's response to concerns expressed by some of our members about the safety of some of the labs in Kelowna. The College Safety Officer, Carolyn Hayman, began an investigation last spring. We are awaiting the College to release the report. When they do, we will carefully review it with the help of the members involved to assess the adequacy of the proposed solutions.

Once again, welcome back and I hope you all have a wonderful year.

Second Vice-President's Report

Melissa Munn Negotiations Committee Chair

Broadly defined, negotiation is the process of back-and-forth communication aimed at reaching agreement with others when some of your interests are shared and some are opposed. Negotiation is the pre-eminent form of decision-making in personal and professional life. It is also increasingly the most important means of making decisions in the public arena. Even if we aren't sitting at the table, our lives are affected by the outcome of negotiations." (excerpt from Getting Past No: Negotiating your way from confrontation to cooperation by William Ury.)

Negotiations in the public sector have been very big news over the past year. From the settlement of our co-workers in the BCGEU to the recent teacher's strike in BC, many of us involved in the educational sector have been at the negotiating table trying to come to agreements with our employers. But, we educators are not the only ones at the bargaining table.

Over the past year, approximately 188, 000 members of BC's public sector unions have

negotiated new collective agreements and as the above quote suggests, our future is, to some degree, affected by those agreements which came before us; the list includes the Health Sciences Union, BCGEU, BCTF, CUPE K-12 and HEU. With minor exceptions, the pattern in the province seems to be 5 year deals with modest wage increases (5.5% over the term of the agreement), and small gains in other areas such as benefits and job protection language. There are two major public sector groups who have not yet

settled: the BC Nurses Union and the FPSE (Federation of Post-Secondary Employers) of which we are members.

Of the FPSE locals, three are currently engaged in bargaining (Douglas College Faculty Association, Vancouver Community College Faculty Association and Thompson Rivers Open Learning Faculty Association) and three more (Academic Workers Association-NWCC, Camosun College Faculty Association and us) who have opened bargaining but have

not yet swapped proposals. The remaining locals are at varying stages of readiness.

As a reminder, your Bargaining Team for this year is composed of myself, Mike Minions, Michelle Nicholson, Tim Walters and Rod Watkins. This group would like to thank outgoing Bargaining Chair, Chris Clarkson, for all his stellar work preparing for this round of bargaining; 'getting to yes' will be easier because of his efforts.

Pension Advisory Representative

Doug Birtwistle

CHANGES TO THE COLLEGE PENSION PLAN

A year or so ago a survey on options for change in the College Pension Plan was completed by Plan members including Okanagan College faculty and faculty from other B.C. Colleges. As a result, some design changes to the Plan have been proposed, discussed and accepted, with the idea being that

Following is a summary of the rule changes and some of my thoughts on the changes. Feel free to contact me if you have any questions. If you want an authoritative answer to a question concerning your pension, you should contact the College Pension Plan.

- 1. Effective January 1, 2016, active members' lifetime pension will be calculated at 2% per year for years of service earned after December 31, 2015. The 2% per year is called the "accrual rate" and is the maximum allowable by law. For years of service earned prior to January 1, 2016, active members' lifetime pension will be calculated in accordance with the rules now in place, that is, at an accrual rate of 1.7% per year below the year's maximum pensionable earnings (YMPE), with a **temporary** 0.3% bridge benefit, which is only payable until age 65 (or death of the member). This change simplifies the plan.*
- 2. Inflation protection for retired members will be strengthened. The goal is to reach a sustainable 2.75% level of indexing. The current cap on indexing is 1.83%. To attain this goal, the following mechanism was put in place, effective April 1, 2014: For every annual pay increase of 1% negotiated for plan member employees, one twentieth (or 5%) of that increase will be contributed to cost of living protection by the employer, matched by the employee. So, if we were to get a 1% annual pay raise, 5% of that would be directly transferred to the College Pension Plan Cost of Living account (COLA) by the College and another 5% of that would be transferred to the COLA by the employee.*
- 3. The early retirement reduction will shift from the present rule of 3% per annum below age 60 to 3% per annum below age 65. Again, this change applies to service after December 31, 2015. It does not apply retroactively to service you will have earned before January 1, 2016. This rule change makes the plan more sustainable and is a response to changes in life expectancy and retirement patterns of our members. The rule, in effect, will, over time, change what is thought of as the "normal" retirement age from 60 to 65.*

such changes simplify the plan, “modernize” the plan (necessary due to changes in life expectancy and a trend towards later retirement of our members), improve inflation protection for retirees, and support sustainability of the plan.

The changes will be implemented on January 1, 2016. All rules now in place are “vested”, meaning that the rules now in place will apply to all years of pensionable service you will have before January 1, 2016. The new rules will only apply to that portion of your pensionable service that you earn after January 1, 2016.

I encourage you to visit the B.C. College Pension Plan website at http://www.pensionsbc.ca/portal/page/portal/pen_corp_home/cpp_home_page/

On the main page, you will see links to *News* and to *Feature Information*. Of particular use are links to *Plan Design Q&As for Members*, *Plan Design Member Scenarios* and a *Pension Previewer*, an online tool to illustrate how the plan design changes may impact you personally. Cool stuff!

Tony William’s Memorial/OCFA Bursary

The Tony William’s Memorial Bursary is available to students enrolled in any course or program, in any course load, at Okanagan College. Recipients must be family members (i.e.; son, daughter, spouse, brother, sister, grandson, granddaughter, nephew, niece, legal ward) of current or former OCFA or OUCFA members. Selection of award recipients will be based on financial need.

The deadline for this application is October 3, 2014. If you, or a member of your family have already applied, you do not need to re-apply.

Fair Employment Week

From The Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT)

Each year CAUT and its member associations join with a coalition of unions and activists across North America to organize a week-long series of events highlighting the overuse and exploitation of contract academic staff.

Visit for more information check out <http://www.fairemploymentweek.ca> or contact Steve Weber, your Non-Continuing Faculty Rep



Photos from Campus Socials



Sorry but I forgot to take pictures at the Penticton Social☹



**Did you
miss this?**

*Don't miss
the next one*

*Fall General
Meeting*

*October 17th
at 5 pm*



See you there !