

QUFA VOICES

Compensation
And Benefits

Anomalies

Merit

Workload

Performance
Indicators

Equity

WHY QUFA VOICES?

Why produce a faculty-librarian-archivist newsletter? Our real inbox clutter of paper and our virtual inbox clutter of ones and zeroes include plenty of communication in certain directions—from the administration to academic workers, students and staff, and amongst students via several regularly appearing publications. But there is currently no academic worker-controlled forum in which we can express our views regarding this community. Hence *QUFA Voices*, to encourage regular and sessional academic workers to become more involved in what goes on at Queen's University through open and honest public discussion.

We must deal with many important issues that relate to our academic and financial interests in this institution and that are relevant to our participation in broader communities. As a union, the core of QUFA's mandate is to improve working conditions for our members, to fight for increased salaries and benefits and for better equity and accessibility provisions. This clearly constitutes what some might refer to as our "core business."

If we see ourselves as a business union, then that might be all we expect. However, if we see ourselves as participating in a strong Canadian tradition of social unionism, and if we take seriously the responsibilities that go along with our privileged position as academic workers, then we must also cultivate relations of solidarity with other communities—graduate and undergraduate students, staff, precarious workers of all kinds on the campus, the people of Kingston, Ontario, and Canada, and people all over the world, including not only the business elites perpetuating the neoliberal revolution, but also those who are marginalized by it and therefore oppose it. If we're going to "engage the world," then we must engage all of the world.

This means fighting the corporate colonization of our campus, whether it takes the form of de-regulation of tuition fees, secret deals with bad

corporate citizens like Coke, Starbucks, and So-dexho, or the implementation of a two-tier "star" system of academic recruitment. It means defending Queen's University as a public institution, not a "store" that sells "knowledge" on the open market to the highest bidder. When we engage in these activities, we not only attend to our own interests, but we build relationships of trust with the people with whom we live and work.

We will need these relationships if we want to make any significant advances on our own position. In the previous round of bargaining for "regular" academic workers, our team presented six priorities that had been formulated through in-depth consultation with our membership. These were:

1. Compensation and Benefits
2. Anomalies (reducing Principal's anomalies fund, which creates inequities)
3. Merit
4. Workload
5. Performance Indicators; particularly, the mode of evaluation of teaching and flaws in USAT
6. Career Equity in both recruitment and ongoing employment processes such as tenure and promotion

While we were able to make some advances on compensation and benefits, there was strong resistance to addressing the other issues. If we are going to make progress in these areas, then we need to have a stronger sense of just how widespread the problems are, and we need to talk more about what can be done to solve them. Simply seeing that academic workers are willing and able to discuss these issues in public will go a long way towards convincing the administration to take the issues seriously.

Beyond these material interests is the matter of feeling like one is a part of a community with a certain degree of self-awareness and a desire to recognize its relationships with others. For me,

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that's a crucial aspect of being a public intellectual.

Richard Day, Chair
Political Action and Communication
Committee
Queen's University Faculty Association

Richard Day is an anarchist sociologist who teaches in the Department of Sociology at Queen's University. His current research focuses on radical social movements, and he has been involved in various initiatives to construct sustainable alternatives to the system of states and corporations, such as community-based educational institutions and food, housing, and financial co-operatives. He has also been active in local, national, and international struggles against neoliberalism, capitalist globalization, and the corporate colonization of postsecondary education.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

QUFA was founded in 1951 as a non-unionized Faculty Association organized by the professoriate to articulate and protect the collective interests of academic staff, with librarians and archivists joining in 1977. Ten years ago, QUFA members embraced a very significant change in the structure of the Association by voting to become a trade union and the exclusive bargaining agent for full-time faculty, librarians, and archivists under the Ontario Labour Relations Act—the Faculty, Librarians, and Archivists Bargaining Unit (FLABU). In May 2003, QUFA organized a second bargaining unit—the Sessional Adjunct Bargaining Unit (SABU)—that includes almost all part-time faculty at Queen's. One of our current goals is to work towards the amalgamation of the two bargaining units in 2-3 years time.

Back in November, we celebrated the tenth anniversary of the certification of FLABU. This is an appropriate moment to take stock of what collectively we have been able to achieve over the last ten years, and to outline some of the issues and challenges that currently confront us. Faculty Associations have never just been about pocket-book issues such as

salaries, benefits, and pensions. From my own perspective, and having worked at Queen's since 1971, one of the most important achievements of certification has been the vast improvement in the transparency, fairness, and consistent application across departments and Faculties of personnel processes—from initial appointment, through renewal of appointment and tenure, to promotion.

QUFA has also worked hard to improve the working conditions of part-time and contract academic staff and to resist the casualization of academic labour. The first Sessional Adjunct Collective Agreement expires this Spring. The bargaining for a new SABU agreement, which has just commenced, will endeavour further to improve the conditions of employment for this group of our members who play such a critical role in providing academic programs at Queen's.

Through collective bargaining and the involvement of dedicated QUFA volunteers on various University committees, we have made some progress towards the goal of meaningful employment equity at Queen's, but much more remains to be done. In last year's FLABU bargaining round, we pushed for the establishment of a joint-committee to oversee a review of employment systems at Queen's, with a particular focus on issues of equity. After some foot dragging by the administration in appointing their members, this joint committee recently met to begin its work.

We now have four professional full-time staff who provide support and advice to various QUFA committees and respond to issues affecting members. On a daily basis, the QUFA Office receives a steady stream of questions and requests for assistance from individual members. It seems that over the last few years, it is increasingly QUFA that provides the principal source of academic mentoring and counselling to members on how to prepare for appointment renewal, tenure, and promotion, as well as trying to resolve issues relating to intra-departmental relationships, working conditions, inconsistent merit assessments, and benefits.

Besides the bargaining for a new SABU Collective Agreement, several other is-

ssues are currently occupying QUFA. These include: the ongoing and complex discussions regarding changes to the Pension Plan being proposed by the University Pension Committee; the ongoing discussion led by the Principal regarding the future direction for Queen's; the consequences of the ending of mandatory retirement in Ontario (especially regarding the question of employee benefits once an active member passes the age of 65); problems associated with the move to centralized computerized time-tabling; the joint committee on the employment systems review; and a second newly established joint committee to review the efficacy of USAT and to consider alternative approaches to the evaluation of teaching. I plan to address some of these issues in more depth in future columns.

One of the most immediate issues for QUFA over the last year has been the establishment of a working relationship with the recently arrived Senior Officers of the University. A number of senior positions (including that of Principal, V-P (Academic), V-P (Operations and Finance), and V-P (Human Resources)) have new incumbents appointed from outside Queen's within the last couple of years. In addition, there are several new Deans. We are concerned that it has taken longer than expected for the new administration to settle in and for progress to be made and decisions taken on several important issues.

Finally, we are now experiencing a significant shift in the demography of our membership. The last five years have seen a significant number of faculty retire and a welcome increase in the hiring of new young faculty. This trend will continue over the next few years. According to OCUFA, over 20% of faculty in Ontario universities are now under the age of thirty. Consequently, faculty associations have to reorient themselves to the needs and concerns of younger faculty. We also need to ensure the continual renewal of the Faculty Association. QUFA relies on dozens of volunteers to serve on Executive, QUFA Council, and various QUFA and university committees. With many of our established activists approaching retirement, we have to find ways to encourage our younger colleagues to be-

come active members in the union. This is an important issue to which I will return in a future column.

John Holmes
QUFA President

John Holmes came to Queen's in 1971 as a one-year sabbatical replacement appointment in 1971 and never left. He holds an appointment in the Department of Geography where he teaches economic geography and writes on issues related to innovation, work, and employment in the automobile industry. He was Head of the Department in Geography from 1993 to 2004.

REVIEW: COUNTING OUT THE SCHOLARS

Counting Out the Scholars: The Case Against Performance Indicators in Higher Education. By William Bruneau and Donald C. Savage. Toronto: James Lorimer & Co., 2002.

PIs [performance indicators] were never about quality. They were and are about cuts and control. (69)

If you feel measured to death, misrepresented by measurement, or simply mis-measured, you will want to read *Counting Out the Scholars: the Case Against Performance Indicators in Higher Education*. William Bruneau and Donald C. Savage outline their central points in their introduction. They stress the difficulty of measuring the “intangibles of education—critical thinking, creativity, tolerance, wisdom.” They continue: “Nevertheless, measuring is what the universities are forced to do. Many governments have decreed that what is not measurable is not valuable” (2).

Performance indicators have a surprisingly long history, which Bruneau and Savage trace from the mid-nineteenth century to the first years of the twenty-first. However, they

became the vogue in the Thatcher/

Reagan era and beyond—one part of the movement to transform universities into business corporations complete with CEOs and the top-down structures favoured by the business community. (2-3)

Compulsory performance indicators for universities are linked to the rise of the corporate paradigm since about 1980. They go hand in hand with severe cuts to university funding (Bruneau and Savage provide ample statistics of how much funding universities have lost in the last ten and twenty years). Bruneau and Savage argue that “performance indicators neatly transferred the blame for the consequences of these cuts from the governments that inflicted them to the universities and then their faculties” (3). In a later chapter, “Common Sense and Statistics at War,” they elaborate on this transfer of responsibility from the accountants and managers who create performance indicators to the members of the university who are driven by them:

In an odd twist, the responsibility for mistakes (and benefits) flowing from PIs are to be assigned to the victims, that is, the professors, students, and staff who do the work of public higher education. PIs thus combine the worst features of your average hit-and-run accident with reasoning that assigns blame to victims. A familiar and analogous story in the 1980s was the assignment of blame for unemployment to the jobless. (59)

Faculty in universities are being asked to contort their teaching and research to a system of a numbers grid which has little to do with education but much to making managers, whether government or administrators, feel satisfied that they are doing their jobs. Faculty and students also absorb the consequences of being contorted by numbers. Numbers, as we all know, force educational choices on us. If we accept their authority, it is hard to defend underenrolled courses, such as Old Norse or Arabic, which may enrich the intellectual life of a department or university. Bruneau and Savage point out an unexpected consequence of educational design by numbers:

In 1999-2000 American universities and colleges graduated only eight ma-

jors in Arabic The FBI possessed tapes on the bombing at the World Trade Center [not to be confused with September 11] before the explosion, but could not translate them. (152)

In the name of accountability, PIs take power away from the university. Interestingly, Queen's created its own PIs designed to “make the university's quality visible to all” (202). These included the “elite quality” of the students, “the faculty's Killam, Steacie, and other awards . . . its gender composition,” its library, and the “excellent student satisfaction ratings Queen's continues to enjoy” (202). Queen's can no longer stave off the provincially mandated PIs, but Bruneau and Savage suggest that Queen's might “take the lead in Ontario in attacking province-wide, centralized PIs just as the London School of Economics did in the UK in March, 2001” (203).

Bruneau and Savage show how damaging performance indicators have been to the educational systems in the U.K., the U.S., and New Zealand, and they suggest in their survey of Canadian Universities from B.C. to Ontario that they will be equally damaging here.

Their conclusion stresses the importance of academic freedom and tenure to the excellence of universities, of self-government, and free critical inquiry. Teaching is “a work of continuous transformation—the life-long education of critical thinkers . . . and the creation of a community whose practices and institutions embody fairness, respect for persons, and equity” (224). They suggest that good research has close links to teaching and should be driven by societal, not corporate, interests (224). They believe that departments should be reviewed every eight years (more frequent review is not cost-effective). Accountability should consist of reporting the form and content of teaching and research in universities and the kind and extent of service work done by teachers, staff members, and students (224). In short, a university that is about education, the pursuit of knowledge, research that faculty members believe in, a university where ideals are not bent out of shape by numbers.

This book is a call to faculty members to

take back their universities. Let us hope we are not so entangled by measurement that we cannot hear it.

Elizabeth Greene

Elizabeth Greene retired from the English Department in 1998 and now teaches a course in Contemporary Canadian Women Writers as a sessional adjunct. She believes that education should be about transformation and growth.

CHALLENGING OUR STUDENTS' ASSUMPTIONS

Over the past few years, I have spoken with many professors about the nature of effective teaching and the evaluation of teaching. I have also seen many of my colleagues in their classrooms, read their teaching evaluation results, discussed the difficulties they are encountering in their teaching, and heard first-hand reports of the strategies they have used to address these difficulties. My colleagues bring to these conversations a diversity of values, experiences, beliefs and purposes. They meet their students in an incredibly wide range of contexts and situations, and they employ in their teaching a variety of methods and skills. It comes as a bit of a surprise to me, then, that I see such similarities among them in some areas of teaching.

One similarity I am particularly intrigued by is the extent to which teaching "problems" originate with challenges to the assumptions of our students. In fact, I think it could safely be called a recurring issue in effective teaching, and an issue that has serious implications for the evaluation of teaching.

Teaching that challenges learners' assumptions is more complicated than teaching that confirms what learners already know. The act of challenging students' assumptions is relatively easy, and often unintentional. The difficulty lies in challenging students in a way they can learn from. This kind of teaching demands of teachers a capacity to create conditions that enable students to engage in something that is uncomfortable

for them. It is the kind of teaching we expect university professors to do.

Many professors search actively for opportunities to challenge students, believing that these challenges invigorate the process of teaching and learning. A good number of us teach course material that is intrinsically challenging to students' previous assumptions about a particular topic or the world in general. For example, high performing mathematics students will find out at some point that they must learn to look at math in an entirely new light if they wish to continue in the discipline. Also, many young adults will have their beliefs about their own capacity to control their lives challenged in sociology classes, where they learn that their family background and gender are significant indicators of their future success. It is also true that some of us challenge students' assumptions simply through our personal qualities, not by our pedagogical choices. If students assume (even implicitly) that the most credible university teachers are white middle-aged male professors, that leaves many among us whose physical appearance will challenge students as soon as we enter a classroom.

Many of us have precious little training in how to teach in the university—even at the simplest level of communicating what we know to students. If we operate as teachers (by accident or by design) at the more complicated level of challenging students' assumptions, what can we expect of ourselves and our students? Well, we shouldn't be surprised if students react negatively to our challenges; even the most skillful and experienced teachers can face student resistance in their classrooms. On the other hand, we needn't accept the notion that challenge is always associated with a negative student reaction. Students in professional programs, for example, often respond quite positively to the challenge of an invitation to evaluate their own learning, and can be tremendously excited by advanced theory courses when the theory is connected to their everyday lives. We must continue to look for ways to challenge that do not alienate our students whenever possible, accepting that this is a difficult task for which we may be ill-prepared, and at which we may not succeed. Teaching in a way that invites stu-

dents to learn from the challenges we pose demands a set of teaching skills that takes time, experience, and energy to develop.

Let's take a closer look at a typical situation. We sometimes hear stories about professors who attempt to do something different from the norm in their classrooms, and how the students react negatively to the change. The introduction of small group work in a lecture course, for example, often brings with it student complaints that it is unfair and/or a waste of time. The reaction is not surprising—the professor has challenged the students' assumptions about what kind of teacher/student roles and behaviours are legitimate and effective in the university setting. Students who have grown comfortable and competent in conventional classrooms don't like the feeling that all the rules have changed. Beyond that, professors who try new approaches may not have the necessary skills to be entirely effective the first time; it takes practice to perform with ease and finesse. Small group work is complicated by issues of pacing, grading, and interpersonal communication which test the mettle of even the most committed and skillful teacher. Still, the professor who assumes that a different approach will cause a negative reaction and backlash from students may be quite mistaken. Many students need and are actively looking for alternative experiences, including opportunities to learn from teachers with diverse perspectives and innovative approaches. A challenging change could prompt students to engage deeply in learning, and might even be rewarded with their wholehearted seal of approval!

It's important to remember that the burden of responsibility for student reaction to professors' challenges shifts to the students when the challenge you pose is not one you have chosen to make for educational purposes. I have, unfortunately, observed too many classes where students ignore, obstruct, or laugh at professors who speak with foreign accents, have unconventional personal interaction styles, use examples that indicate that their experiences have been quite different from their students' experiences, or even wear clothes that somehow identify themselves as "outsiders." If your very presence makes students un-

comfortable, it complicates your teaching, but it is up to the students to find ways to learn with you.

When we reflect on the effectiveness of our teaching, and review the student evaluations of our performance, we need to take into account the extent to which we are challenging (again, by choice or by accident) students' assumptions, and consider the potential impact of our challenges on students. Their ratings may tell us more than we care to know about how they are experiencing the challenges we pose. A negative student response cannot be ignored, but must be interpreted by the teacher: does it indicate that a sensitive nerve has been touched by a significant learning experience, or does it mean that students have been so alienated that they have not been able to engage? Always, whether assessing our own teaching or that of our colleagues, we must remind ourselves of the unfairness of the situation for those teachers whose only challenge to the students is their colour, gender, appearance, age, and so on, and we must acknowledge those who have succeeded in challenging the students while also engaging them. If challenging students is what we want, we need to lend our real support to those (including ourselves!) who are struggling to find ways to do it more effectively. And we mustn't be tempted to let students off the hook—they too have responsibility for building the kind of teacher-student relationships that support a learning community. We must be honest with them, explaining that a meaningful education is not always comfortable for students or teachers. Posing and accepting challenges is always a risky business.

In the university, we will always support the importance of challenging our students' assumptions, and presumably, our own. How can we do a better job of helping students learn from these challenges?

Challenges to our students' assumptions are more likely to be accepted if they come from a variety of sources (some familiar to the student). Members of the university community can support each other by echoing the essence of our peers' challenging messages in a wide range of contexts. For example, the atti-

tudes of a male engineering professor towards his female colleagues, expressed in a lunchtime conversation with students, send powerful messages about the role of women in the engineering profession.

Support is crucial, not antithetical, to challenge. Far too many well-intentioned university professors act as if the best way to challenge students is simply to remove support. Wrong! Support is the rich dark earth in which challenges take root. Students flourish in an atmosphere of respect and affirmation; strengthened through support, they are more likely to be intrigued by challenges.

Part of teaching through challenge must involve showing students how to respond constructively when their assumptions and beliefs are challenged, how they can learn from this process, how to be open to other perspectives without the fear that they will lose their own perspective, or become persons they do not want to be. Our own modelling can be a powerful teaching tool.

Not all professors and all courses need to challenge students' assumptions at all times. Are the challenges we pose worthwhile? Are we the right persons to be doing the challenging? Is this course the appropriate location for the challenge? Each text, each course, each discipline offers students a different window of insight, another way of knowing themselves and the world. Use that text, course, and disciplinary perspective to guide your decisions about areas in which to challenge students.

Just because we envision the university as a place to learn, grow, and develop beyond our expectations, we mustn't forget that we are all ordinary persons here, persons who frequently want the excitement of expanding our perspectives, yet sometimes want and need to retreat to the comfort of the familiar.

In summary, we should be challenging our students' and our own assumptions in the university, encouraging those teachers and students who choose to play the role of challenger, and supporting the teachers and students whose very presence in our midst challenges

our notions of who we are as a community. At the same time, we must take care to build a community where students and faculty will *welcome* the challenges, be able to learn from them, and not feel a need to defend themselves or hide away.

Susan Wilcox
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Susan Wilcox is Educational Developer (Faculty/Adjuncts) and Associate Professor in the Centre for Teaching and Learning. She is cross-appointed to the Faculty of Education and Department of Women's Studies. Susan's scholarship in adult and higher education is concerned with dialogue, critical reflection, and self-directed learning and with transformative models of continuing professional education and development.

SESSIONAL ADJUNCT BARGAINING UPDATE

The conditions of employment for Sessional Adjuncts are governed by a Collective Agreement between the University and The Queen's Faculty Association. The current agreement expires on April 30, 2005 and the University and the Association will begin to bargain for a new collective agreement in early February. The Association has elected a negotiation team, surveyed Sessional Adjunct members about their concerns, and begun to prepare bargaining proposals to present to the University. The QUFA bargaining team consists of Marvin Baer (Chief Negotiator), Gaston Tremblay, Aurora Dokken, Monika Holzschuh-Sator, and Colin Galinski. The University Administration's bargaining team includes Rod Morrison (Chief Negotiator), Doug Morrow, Elaine McDougall, Alistair MacLean, and Ramneek Pooni.

The QUFA bargaining team has met several times since December and has consulted with a larger advisory group of Sessional Adjuncts to identify the members' concerns and to develop a list of improvements to the existing Collective Agreement. This list includes extending benefits (such as supplemental medical, dental, life insurance, and pension) to Sessional Adjuncts that do not have alternative coverage, revising the minimum pay scale to take into account experience and workload, improving the working conditions, improving the appointment and reappointment provisions, and more generally assimilating the rights of Sessional and Term Adjuncts.

Marvin Baer

Marvin Baer is a retired Professor of Law and chief negotiator for the current round of bargaining. He was instrumental in the establishment of QUFA as a union and has been heavily involved in negotiating for more than a decade.

NEWS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

CAUT Travel Advisory: Attending Conferences in the United States

After September 11, the United States began making changes to its policies with respect to travel to or through their territory. A number of academic staff have approached CAUT for advice in relation to these policies. Last June, CAUT issued a travel advisory regarding a traveler's rights when at an American border—whether a land border or at a pre-clearance area in a Canadian airport. That advisory is available on our website: http://www.caut.ca/en/publications/traveladvisory/traveladvisory_ustravel.pdf

Of special concern to many Canadian academics are the rules governing admission to the United States in order to attend conferences, workshops, or other academic meetings. In a variety of situations, a visa is now required even though the person is a Canadian citizen. Rules for permanent residents of Canada ("landed immigrants") are even stricter.

This advisory is posted on the CAUT website: www.caut.ca.

New Web Site, New QUFA Identity

Thanks to the excellent work of a local firm WebWoods <http://www.webwoods.com/>, QUFA has a new Web Site <http://www.qufa.ca/>, housed off-campus, new letterhead, and the template for *QUFA Voices*.

FROM THE EDITORS

QUFA Voices addresses calls from our members for regular and timely communication about the concerns and work of QUFA.

To complete the basic newsletter framework—PACC challenge, President's report, major issue, bargaining update, announcements—members must speak.

Our next issue will feature a variety of views from our diverse membership. The editors welcome and encourage thought-provoking commentary.

Please submit all materials by mid-month to mayr@post.queensu.ca

Robert G. May
William J. Egnatoff

FORUM

This space is reserved for letters to the editor.

Please submit all materials by mid-month to mayr@post.queensu.ca.