

# THE NUFA NEWS

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NUFA COMMUNICATIONS  
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### Contents:

PP.2-3. *Message from the NUFA President*

P.4. *Education and Mobilization*, by Gyllian Phillips

P.5. *Updates from CASBU*, by Rhiannon Don

PP. 6-7. *Spotlight on Research -Remembering and Renewing the University in a Technological Society*, by David Tabachnick

P. 8. *Updates and Events*

P. 9. *Cartoon* by Terry Dokis

# A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

## CAUT, OCUFA, NUFA, AND THE IMPORTANCE OF SOLIDARITY

Welcome to another year! As this year's president of the Faculty Association, I look forward to working with all our members, committees, and teams. We have so many wonderful, knowledgeable, and indefatigable people working for NUFA this year that I feel an overwhelming sense of confidence, even as a first-time president. From our experienced bargaining teams to our incisive grievance officers, we feel ready for the challenges ahead – and it helps to be anchored by our oh-so-dedicated Executive Assistant.

The theme for this edition of the NUFA NEWS is the importance of solidarity and mobilization, and I have been asked to contribute a few words on CAUT and OCUFA, organizations that provide Nipissing Faculty with solidarity beyond our walls and help us get mobilized both inside and

outside those walls, in the short term and long term. The Canadian Association of University Teachers is “the national voice for academic staff.” Founded in 1951, CAUT now represents 68,000 teachers, librarians, researchers, and other academic professionals at over 120 Universities. As an active member of CAUT Council, NUFA helps set the policies and procedures of the national organization, but we often find ourselves availing of their expertise. Offering training workshops in bargaining, health and safety (for JHSC Members), executive roles, and much, much more, CAUT is an invaluable resource for NUFA. We frequently seek advice from CAUT for even ostensibly small matters, and are awarded with careful, considered responses. But CAUT also brings us together with other Faculty Associations and it is from this

service that perhaps NUFA benefits most. Knowing what administrators are attempting at other institutions, and how other Faculty Associations have responded (again with their own advice from CAUT), not only helps us prepare for the actions of our own administrators, but creates a profound sense of deeper purpose. We need to defend academic freedom, for example, when under attack at a sister institution, and we do; if it comes under attack here, we know we can count on faculty associations from around the country aiding us. This is the power of solidarity and mobilization. When a Canadian professor gets fired for his student's art performance – if you don't remember this one, check out the CAUT website under “academic freedom” (there are all-too-many from which to choose) – we all benefit from the national outcry.

## President's Message Continued from p. 2.

NUFA is also an active member of OCUFA, sitting on its Board of Directors and helping shape its missions. The Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations is the provincial counterpart to CAUT, with 27 member associations. It works with us on grievances, bargaining, and the operations of the Executive. But OCUFA also lobbies government on our behalf and warns us when measures are introduced by the Ministry of Training, University, and Colleges, for example, that would impede on an Association's collective bargaining rights. OCUFA has spearheaded the campaign to make Associations aware of the implications of the MTCU's "Planning and Innovation Fund," as it explicitly states that the government will favour universities that plan for program prioritization ("eliminate" programs that fail

to win the market's approval) and course re-design (utilize cheap online courses and sign-up for provincial-wide "foundational courses," online 1<sup>st</sup>- and 2<sup>nd</sup>-year courses that would strip departments and universities of their autonomy). For this the government promises to give universities money to hire consultants. Threats are always looming: Tim Hudak has stated his intention to introduce "right-to-work" legislation, abolishing the Rand Formula and ending automatic dues check-offs. In other words, union members would no longer be required to pay dues, though unions would have to continue all the work that they currently do, even supporting "free-riders" (until, of course, the union can no longer operate, which is the obvious goal of "right-to-work"). OCUFA's own "Education and Mobilization Plan" seeks not only to make

Associations aware of these threats, but to organize all those in the province who care about higher education so as to take action.

It is a sign of the times these days that faculty associations rarely have a moment to organize campaigns, to lobby governments, to fight for the idea of the University -- the day-to-day work is startling. But it is crucially important to remain aware of the bigger picture, and that is why Angela forwards to the membership what we consider the most significant weekly bulletins OCUFA provides (you can see them all at the OCUFA website). As the organization itself states, "Each individual association is relevant locally, but our real strength and potential can only be realized if we recognize that there is strength in numbers."

**Rob Breton, NUFA President**

# EDUCATION AND MOBILIZATION:

UNIVERSITIES ARE ONLY AS STRONG AS THEIR FACULTY (ASSOCIATIONS)

by Gyllian Phillips

We are all aware of the growing pressure, both on unions and on universities as publicly funded institutions, to “reform.” Austerity-anxiety has been stoked by governments who are using the economic recession as an excuse to dismantle the autonomy and strength of university faculty and our Associations. Last year, OCUFA announced its plan to help educate voters in university communities about the crucial role played by individual institutions and in particular by their students and faculty members. Dubbed the “Education and Mobilization” plan, this initiative focused on generating a buzz on campuses, in the media, and in the wider community through public events such as panel discussions and town hall gatherings. The idea is to put some pressure on local politicians to advocate for the universities in their ridings—and for voters to put pressure on

representatives whose governments are mounting attacks on university autonomy and on organized labour more generally. Many Faculty Associations across Ontario organized town halls to which media were invited, along with writing op-ed pieces and engaging in individual lobbying of MPs and MPPs in their ridings. This year, OCUFA is launching phase two of the plan which is aimed at educating and mobilizing members of Faculty Associations. The first step will be to survey members to find out what they think of their Associations. Broadly speaking, the survey will ask these types of questions: what do union members get for their dues dollar? What do members give to their Association in addition to dues? What else could Associations and their members do to be strong advocates for the value of their own labour? Following from the survey

results, OCUFA hopes to help Association leaders to find support from each other and to find ways to expand their members’ engagement with the work of the Association, through research into “best practices,” workshops and other means. The bottom line is that we all need to be working hard to protect our rights as unions, to increase solidarity with other Faculty Associations and with the labour community, and to make sure that our labour as Faculty is recognized for the essential role it plays in shaping ethically and economically strong communities. NUFA needs your energy, ideas—and labour—to kick-start this advocacy and profile-raising work in our own region. Please keep your eyes open for opportunities to “Educate and Mobilize” in the coming months and let the NUFA Executive know what you can do to help.

# UPDATES FROM CASBU:

## MOVING TOWARD COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

### **Bargaining Update:**

The Collective Bargaining Committee for CASBU is in full swing in preparation for entering into negotiations in 2014. Over reading week, the CBC hosted Chantal Sundaram from CAUT to run a workshop on collective bargaining that saw greener committee members go up against an administration composed of seasoned members in an attempt to reach a settlement. Though CASBU's time at the table is still several months away, the workshop provided a valuable opportunity to practice negotiating skills and tactics.

In addition to their bargaining efforts on behalf of the fictional Great Northern University Faculty Association, the team was able to work through some of its own proposals as they

prepare to present their negotiation package to the membership in the coming months.

CASBU will be looking to hold a social evening towards the end of term as an opportunity for members to connect with one another.

### **Fair Employment Week:**

21-25 October is Fair Employment Week across Canada. CAUT has put together a website at <http://www.fairemploymentweek.ca> that outlines growing concern about the treatment of contract academic staff at universities across Canada. Fair Employment Week is an opportunity for NUFA to raise awareness about casualization and equity at our university. The familiar, provocative posters

designed by CAUT will be featured across campus addressing issues like wages, job security, academic freedom, and working conditions.

CAUT has written an open letter to the College and University presidents, outlining their concerns about the increased reliance on contract academic staff and demanding fairness for CAS faculty. You can sign the letter to show your support for your colleagues at: <http://www.fairemploymentweek.ca/take-action/>

# SPOTLIGHT ON RESEARCH:

## Remembering and Renewing the University in a Technological Society

by David Tabachnick

I have been asked to write something about the future of the university in the context of our technological society. This relates to the main argument in my recent book *The Great Reversal: How We Let Technology Take Control of the Planet* (University of Toronto Press, 2013). On the face of it, the university system has been influenced and transformed by various technological innovations. For example, the internet has transformed the way both students and professors engage in research. This has both good (e.g. access to more information) and bad (e.g. rampant plagiarism) consequences. We have and will continue to debate the way particular technologies influence our scholarship and pedagogy. However, the deeper and perhaps more significant dilemma is the way in which we have more and more defined the university in terms of technology itself. Rather than understanding technology as mere devices and gadgets, or even as massive technological infrastructures like the internet, we can understand it as an overarching idea or concept that has come to

influence, if not dominate, our day to day behaviour and thinking. Through the lens of technology, we have come to see the world as a massive resource which energies are to be tapped and used toward the achievement of certain ends or toward solving particular problems. This makes some obvious sense when we consider the use of coal, oil and gas or the sun and wind as natural resources that help run global industry and economy. Again, we have and will continue to debate the good and bad of this planetary project. At first, it may not seem suitable to apply this same analysis to the university. Academia is not of the same kind as a coal mine or a hydroelectric dam. But, we need look no farther than the Council of Ontario University's vaunted "Ensuring the Value of University Degrees in Ontario" (2011) document, which explains that "Ontario university graduates are engines of innovation and growth in a globally competitive economy," to understand that...



**David Tabachnick is the 2012 recipient of the Chancellor's Award for Excellence in Research for, among other things, the publication of his book *The Great Reversal: How We Let Technology Take Control of the Planet*.**

**Congratulations David!**

# Remembering and Renewing the University

Continued from p. 6

...at least from the perspective of policymakers and politicians, the university is a storehouse of human resources that must deliver fuel to the economy in the same way as a refinery and pipeline or a reservoir and high-voltage power lines.

This document provides additional instruction for the development of “degree level expectations” and “learning outcomes” as part of a new “Quality Assurance Framework”; the consequences of this demand have been felt here at Nipissing in myriad of ways such as pressuring us to establish government approved “learning expectations” for each of our programs. Within this framework, the university is further encouraged to produce “socially responsible and globally-aware citizens, who value critical thought and ethical action”, but we are quickly reminded that “University

graduates expect their degrees to prepare them for careers...

Graduates want to know that the quality of their educational credentials will be understood and valued by employers.” In truth, ethics, citizenship, critical thinking, and social responsibility do not *necessarily* jibe with and often conflict with what is “valued by employers” in a “globally competitive economy.” This odd but common characterization of the goods of the citizen as one and the same as the goods of the economy highlights that, when it comes to public universities in Ontario, we are at a cross-road with cross purposes. Needless to say, the teaching of ethics and critical thinking should not be justified in the terms and demands of economic growth.

But, at this cross-road, we may be still able to find the right path. Despite the fact that it is presented within the

technological framework, this remembering of the once principal mandate of the university: to lead the next generation of citizens to be responsible, ethical and critical, offers us an opportunity to renew our sense of purpose. We can remember and articulate this obscured mandate of our university and attempt to renew and guard our institution against the power of the planetary technological project. In the immediate term, perhaps this goal of remembering and renewal will inspire us to influence the new strategic plan.



**NOVEMBER 5TH, GMM:**

The NUFA General Membership Meeting is being scheduled for Tuesday, November 5, 2013 at 4:30 pm in H104 on the Main Campus, the Lecture Hall on the Bracebridge Campus, and Room R307 of the Wellington Building on the Brantford Campus. The theme for the meeting will be *"Transformation", "Prioritization", "Innovation", "Diversification" - Where are We??*

**OCTOBER 30TH, SJC MEETING ON PREGNANCY AND PARENTAL LEAVE:**

The NUFA Representatives on the Special Joint Committee

(SJC) on Pregnancy and Parental Leave will be having an open meeting of the Membership on Wednesday, October 30, 2013 at 3:30 pm in Room 307 of the Main Campus, the Lecture Hall on the Bracebridge Campus, and Room 207 of the Wellington Building on the Brantford Campus. The meeting has been scheduled to consult with the membership on recommendations for improvements to pregnancy and parental leave. This SJC came out of the last round of FASBU negotiations (see Appendix K of the FASBU Collective Agreement). NUFA Representatives on the SJC are: Rob Breton, Rosemary Nagy and Kurt Clausen.

UPDATES  
AND  
EVENTS



# SOMETIMES YOU JUST HAVE TO LAUGH

