

BULLETIN

FASBU BARGAINING BULLETIN

Keeping Collegial Governance Alive

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Our new proposed article on Governance (Article G) is at once breaking new ground and returning to first principles. Universities are founded on the idea of bi-cameral governance, with the academic side of the house resting in Senate and the fiduciary and operations side of the house with the Board of Governors. Since the early days of universities, there has been an uneasy alliance between these forces, but recent decades have seen the alliance dissolve into opposition. Increasingly, austerity ideology has driven Boards and Administrations, at Nipissing and elsewhere, to use operational “levers” to drive academic programming. At Nipissing, we have seen this in a myriad of ways, from squeezing programs and research funding at the expense of administrative costs and new buildings to diverting discussions of program priorities and planning from Senate committees to outside processes, such as Program Prioritization. As a result, NUFA Members have been increasingly disturbed by the direction of decision-making power away from Members, Departments, Faculties and Senates to a concentration of upper-administration out of touch with the day-to-day business of the university. The bargaining survey told us clearly that you have lost trust in our administrative leadership and that we need to take steps to return to the principles of shared governance that founded the modern university.



That shared commitment can be manifested in a number of ways, outlined in the article. We need a reminder that the Board and Senate are partners in the operation of the university. We need a return to observing the spirit and the letter of the law when it comes to the Nipissing University Act. We need to make sure that all university policies affecting the working conditions of Members are consistent with the language of the Collective Agreement—heading off possible legal conflicts before they arise. We need to ensure Faculty Members have a consistent role and voice in the hiring of all senior administrative positions—a safeguard that should exist independently of hiring policies controlled solely by the Board, where faculty representatives are out-voted. Bargaining so far has revealed how much we need greater transparency when it comes to the reporting of all information, especially financial information, coming from the operations of the institution. Since the priorities of the academic side of the house seem to be determined only by money decisions these days, the academic side of the house needs to be able to see where the money comes from and where it goes to. Our focus on Governance this round is an attempt to redirect the ship, reminding us all, faculty, administration, staff, students—that we share this place and its mission. It is not a business to be run for the sake of the bottom line; the university is a public institution whose healthy bottom line must serve the core mission: the development and transmission of knowledge. Faculty really care about the direction and health of the university, about students’ experience and education in the classroom, and we form a powerful concentration of expertise, experience and dedication.

**Let’s get back to sharing the vision and the future of Nipissing.
Let’s take better care of this relationship.**