

# BULLETIN

## FASBU BARGAINING BULLETIN

### A Fair Say

As NUFA awaits the arrival of the Ministry of Labour conciliator and the recommencement of contract negotiations with the Employer on October 7th, it is helpful to reflect on what remains unresolved at the negotiating table. Last week (September 16<sup>th</sup>), the NUFA Bargaining Bulletin focused on wages and the importance of NUFA standing firm in our demand that Members be fairly compensated, particularly in comparison with our counterparts within the academic sector. This week NUFA (re)turns its attention to an equally important issue—maintaining and improving Members' fair say in academic decision-making.

Past-President and current Collective Bargaining Committee Member Gyllie Phillips wrote an article on this topic in the June 17<sup>th</sup> Bargaining Bulletin, entitled *Keeping Collegial Governance Alive*. There, she entreated us all to recommit to the first principles upon which academia was founded, specifically respect for the practices of shared or collegial governance. At first blush, focusing on such an abstract concept may seem less important than obtaining a financial settlement and less urgent than enhancing job security, but we strongly believe that it is inextricably linked to our ability to deliver the core mission of the university: the development and transmission of knowledge.



It is only with Members' participation in collegial governance—having a fair say in decisions that impact the academic focus, direction, and extent of programs, and the future direction of the institution—that an enriching student experience and the overall health of the university can be assured.

So what has NUFA proposed in this area? As you may recall, NUFA tabled a new article on Governance (Article G—so named because it has yet to be agreed upon and numbered for the Collective Agreement). This article is neither innovative nor revolutionary. It outlines what most of us would deem to be best practice for open and transparent governance (e.g., access to detailed financial reports; participation in the development of policies related to terms and conditions of employment). It

codifies for the first time what has been past practice, and in some cases university policy, with regard to Members' rights to participate in academic decision-making at all levels (e.g., participation on search committees for academic administrators). So why do this?

Recent years have seen increasing instances of transgressions of numerous Board and Senate policies, refusals of requests for information, and obfuscation in relation to questions about decisions that have had an impact on academic programming. By identifying important aspects of collegial governance and embedding them in the Collective Agreement, both the Employer and Members are rededicating themselves to what should be our shared vision for the university.

NUFA is also asking for a small change to Article 4: Management Rights. Specifically, we are asking for the insertion of the following into the Collective Agreement: “The Employer will exercise these management rights in a fair, reasonable, and equitable manner”. It is a simple statement but one that limits the Employer’s ability to exercise their management rights in any fashion they see fit, in other words arbitrarily. Similar language exists in numerous Collective Agreements across Canada and, from NUFA’s perspective, it is a statement that we all would hope is standard practice.

Finally, NUFA is standing firm against the Employer’s proposals to eliminate Chairs in the Schulich School of Education while simultaneously reducing compensation to all other Chairs and limiting that compensation to course release. Chairs are an essential part of collegial governance, at once an important voice for academic units and an indispensable element in the organizing and structuring of academic programs. The bargaining table is the wrong place to discuss the role of chairs; those discussions are more appropriate for Academic Units, Faculty Councils and Academic Senate. Accepting the Employer’s proposals would both impair and harm all Members’ ability to participate in collegial governance at the academic unit level.

Ensuring we have a fair say in the academic decision-making at the university demands commitment on the part of Members and vigilance against the subtle and not-so-subtle erosion of a collegial system that is, without hyperbole, the foundation of great post-secondary education. It’s not as obvious an issue as fair pay but it is no less important to the continued health of the academic enterprise of the university.

## **REMINDER:**

We will be holding a **SPECIAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING** on  
**Tuesday, October 6th @ 7pm**

Rooms: **F213** in North Bay, video-conferenced to Brantford **207** & Bracebridge **227**

