

THE NUFA NEWS

NUFA Communications Committee

April 2015

JARVIS | KUNDRATS | PETERS | WENGHOFFER

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NOTICE OF THE ANNUAL (2015) GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

The AGM will be held on Tuesday, April 28th at 2 pm in room F210 of the North Bay campus, and via video-conference in Classroom 3 at the Bracebridge campus, and in room 207 at the Brantford campus. Please note that child-care reimbursement is available by contacting Angela in the NUFA Office.

NUFA invites nominations for Executive and Standing Committees. Advance nominations will be announced 48 hours prior the meeting. The Executive/Standing positions are listed below:

NUFA Executive

President
Vice-President
Treasurer
CASBU Officer
Grievance Officers (2)
Member-at-Large (APS)
Member-at-Large (AS)
Member-at-Large (SSoE)
Member-at-Large (CASBU)



NUFA Standing Committees

Communications Committee
Constitution Committee
Gender Equity and Diversity
Scholarship Committee
Social Committee

The University under Review

by Rob Breton, NUFA President

It is no secret that the University is undergoing a thorough financial review, initiated by MTCU and conducted by Price Waterhouse Coopers (the same company that counts the ballots for the Oscars). It is my understanding that the University requested special funding from the province, given the cuts to seats in the B.Ed., and that MTCU made the review a requirement for any potential extra funding.

I wish I knew more. At first, the President told NUFA that we would be given an opportunity to meet with PWC. But that never happened. After repeated requests to meet with the auditors, the last I heard from a representative who answered my message to the President was that they would be “inquiring with PWC to see whether or not they require a meeting with NUFA.” If PWC needed to speak with us was never the issue. We wanted to speak to them.

We wanted to ask them about the University’s finances, about the University’s own accounting practices, and about when the review would be completed. We didn’t think that the auditors would answer questions regarding the conditions under which MTCU would provide the University with a special envelope. So we can’t quite understand why we were—apparently—stonewalled. I had said to the President that I would report to OCUFA and CAUT our discussions with the auditors. I cannot believe that they would deny us access to the auditors because we share information with our provincial and national advocates. Transparency and openness have to be valued at a public institution and the fear of ... I have no idea, should not dampen the development of a culture of transparency and openness.

If the University considers the final report to be confidential, we don’t. We will file a Freedom of Information request to see it once it is completed.



Preparation is Essential

A Message from the Strike Preparedness Committee

by Jeff Dech, Strike Preparedness Committee Chair

At the NUFA special membership meeting on March 11, Donna Gray from OCUFA described strike preparedness as a form of strike aversion, suggesting that having a well-organized plan for a potential labour action is in itself a means to decrease the likelihood of such an event. The NUFA strike preparedness committee (SPC) has been working with this mindset since our meetings began in January. There has been tremendous volunteer participation on this committee, with 22 members offering their time and energy to ensuring that should a labour action be necessary, it can run as smoothly and effectively as possible.

One of our first tasks has been to collect and organize offsite contact information (email and/or phone number) for all FASBU members, in order to establish a secure communication network for use in the event of a strike or lockout. We have this information for almost all of our members, and would ask that anyone who has not yet provided an offsite email or phone number to please submit that information to Angela in the NUFA office as soon as possible.

Please pay close attention to email over the coming months, should a labour action be initiated, we will need to communicate with all members quickly and efficiently. The SPC continues planning for all aspects of a labour action, and would be grateful for any additional volunteers. Please contact the SPC chair if you would like to help out.

Future issues of the *NUFA News* and/or *Bargaining Bulletin* will likely contain more updates and specific, useful information from the strike preparedness committee.



Toward a Universities' Pension Plan?

by Larry Patriquin

In 2014, the Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations (OCUFA) entered an agreement with the Council of Ontario Universities (COU) to explore the possibility of creating a defined benefit (DB) pension plan for employees in the university sector. This pension would have much in common with similar ones that have been set up for municipal government employees (OMERS), health care workers (HOOPP), college faculty and staff (CAAT), and school teachers and staff (OTPP). Since last autumn, a number of meetings have been held, with the goal of establishing a Universities' Pension Plan (UPP), with numerous stakeholders involved, including senior administrators from most Ontario universities (including Nipissing) and dozens of unions – faculty associations as well as unions that represent staff (CUPE, OPSEU, and USW).

Since last year, with the support of funding from the Ontario government (which strongly supports the creation of a UPP), the project has been able to employ consultants, two lawyers and two actuaries, who are working diligently to develop the legal framework for the plan (an overall Board of Trustees plus an organization to carry out day-to-day administration) as well as the plan design (How much money will members and employers contribute? How much of a pension would we receive for each year of service? Will pensions be linked to inflation? And so forth).

To give you an idea of the complexity of this process, our last province-wide plenary was held in Toronto on February 19. At that meeting, the lawyers and actuaries were given some broad parameters for moving forward (for example, it was agreed that total union-employer contributions should be about 20 percent of salary). The next stage in the process was supposed to be unveiled at a meeting on April 7, but this meeting was cancelled, as our consultants required more time to work out the legal and financial details. The results of their work will now be presented to us at a plenary session on May 22. The next step will be to produce a draft report over the summer and submit a final report to the government by October.

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Toward a Universities' Pension Plan? (Continued)

by Larry Patriquin

Once the plan has been developed, we will need to work through “transition issues.” At each university, the administration and the union(s) will need to agree to enter the plan before any move is made. At institutions that already have a DB pension, it seems obvious that either all employees will move into the plan or all will stay out (and remain in their current plan). For those of us in a defined contribution (DC) plan, however, things are not so cut-and-dry. While all our new employees could move into the UPP, as NUFA's representative, I have raised the possibility that our individual members could have options as to how to proceed. These options might include:

1. *Total Defined Benefit*: Some could place all future contributions in the UPP and use their “capital accounts” (in our case, with Standard Life) to purchase “years of service” in the plan (paying X dollars for each year of service, with the “transfer value” amount to be determined by the UPP's Board of Trustees).
2. *Hybrid*: Some could place all future contributions in the UPP, while maintaining their “capital account,” converting it to a Life Income Fund upon retirement. In effect, they would have two pensions: the provincial UPP (DB) and their university-based DC.
3. *Total Defined Contribution*: Some could choose not to enter the UPP, continuing with their current university-based DC plan until retirement.

Whether it will be possible to have any or all of these options remains to be seen. The discussion and the work on developing the plan continues. We will have more information for you by this autumn. In a best-case scenario, NUFA members would not have any key decisions to make about their pensions before winter 2016 at the earliest. In the meantime, you can keep abreast of the process by consulting the OCUFA website put together specifically for this project: www.ocufapensionreview.ca

Defined Benefit (DB): *The benefit payable from a defined benefit plan is defined by a formula typically based on earnings and the number of pensionable years of service. The amount of pension is guaranteed by the employer and cannot be reduced.*

Defined Contribution (DC): *The benefit provided from a defined contribution plan is a lump sum amount. Contributions into the pension plan are defined (not the benefit) and accumulate with investment income in an “account” specifically for retirement.*

NUFA Learning Opportunity Awards 2014-15

by Angela Fera, NUFA Executive Assistant

We are pleased to announce that in this academic year, NUFA has provided over \$12,000 in Learning Opportunity Awards to students. These awards are designed to encourage the continuation of learning experiences and projects outside of the classroom. Twenty-three students received awards this year. Of those students, most have presented, or will be presenting at conferences. The recipients are as follows:

Jordan Andrews – *Society for Neuroscience*, Washington, DC
Brogan Bailey - *Eastern Canada Sport and Exercise Psychology Symposium*, Ottawa
Christopher Black - *Congress of the Humanities and Social Sciences*, St. Catharines
Nafisa Kattarwala - *International Association of Social Science Research*, St. Petersburg, Russia
Nicholas Landry - *Society for Neuroscience*, Washington, DC
Jemanica Lapensee - *Canadian Society for the Study of Education*, St. Catharines
Ben Lovell - *Society for Neuroscience*, Washington, DC
Matthew Mavor - *International Biomedics Conference*, Glasgow, Scotland
Christian Patton - *Eastern Canada Sport and Exercise Psychology Symposium*, Ottawa
Amanda Paulin - *Global Branding Conference*, Turku, Finland
Shane Peterson - *International Biomedics Conference*, Glasgow, Scotland
Devyn Richards - *Eastern Canada Sport and Exercise Psychology Symposium*, Ottawa
Zachary Root - *Eastern Canada Sport and Exercise Psychology Symposium*, Ottawa
Scott Roscoe - *Erindale Chemical and Physical Science Society Conference*, Toronto
Daniel Southwell - *International Biomedics Conference*, Glasgow, Scotland
Emma Vanderlee - *Annual International Conference on Nursing*, Athens, Greece
Taunya Wideman-Johnston - *Values and Leadership Conference*, Huntsville



The following students received NUFA Learning Opportunity Awards for a range of learning experiences:

Emily Dahlmer – *Fine Arts Visual Arts Field Trip*, Ottawa, Montreal
Ben Fraser - *Atlanta Lecture Series in Combinatorics and Graph Theory*, Atlanta, Georgia
Brooke Haugh - *Values and Leadership Conference*, Huntsville
Evan McCrory - *Fraud and Anti-Counterfeiting Conference*, Toronto
Megan Annette Prescott - *Abisko Scientific Research Station*, Abisko, Sweden
Lisa Taylor - *National Conference on Financial Literacy*, Vancouver

CONGRATULATIONS to our award winners and best wishes on their many and varied learning experiences and projects!

Details and applications for the **NUFA Learning Opportunity Awards** may be found on the **NUFA website** at www.nufa.ca. Two new application cycles have been added this year, with deadlines on: October 15, December 15, February 15, April 15 and the **new June 15 and September 15** deadlines.



Spotlight on Research: Dr. James Abbott (A&S)

From Floodplain Fisheries to Circuit Boards: Subsistence Livelihoods and the Global Commodity Trade in Southern Africa

A fisherman pulling his catch into a dugout canoe in southern Africa may seem far removed from the globalized demand for copper as an essential component of every electronic device. However, within the last decade, dramatic environmental and economic changes have linked these two activities together, posing questions about future food security in the area. James and his coauthors recently published the results of a 7-year study of fisheries in the Upper Zambezi River in the *Journal of Southern African Studies* showing how this occurred.

To understand how these changes came about, one has to start with how China's manufacturing centres meet global demand for electronic devices, with the demand for commodities such as copper growing dramatically. In order to meet an ever-expanding need for metals, China began developing mines in Africa that were previously deemed uneconomical, due to poor extraction and transportation infrastructure. Decrepit mine sites revived and expanded and new roads were constructed to allow for quick transport to coastal ports.

At the same time, the Upper Zambezi River experienced several years of above-average annual floods, boosting fisheries production. Local fish vendors, mostly women, capitalized on this intersection of abundant cheap fish with a growing demand for cheap protein in mining centres several hundreds of kilometres away. Vendors travelled by bus or transport truck on the newly built roads, finally arriving at Kasumbalesa, a teeming market locale on the border between Zambia and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

What is the significance of a previously small-scale fishery suddenly expanding both the volume extracted and the geographical reach? While the change occurred when both the economy and the floodplain were highly productive, both have since waned, the former in response to the global recession and the latter due to lower flood levels and perhaps overexploitation of the fishery. The volatility of the expansion and contraction of this commodity chain illustrate the need to manage resources not just for optimum economic use, but also for sustainable goals of food security.

NUFA/NUSU Letter to Board of Governors (March 3, 2015)

To the Board of Governors of Nipissing University,

The Nipissing University Student Union and the Nipissing University Faculty Association write this open letter to you, the Board of Governors, to express concern and frustration over recent decisions made by the administration to reduce the faculty complement by approximately 13%. Morale among faculty and students is reaching an all-time low. Students don't know if the professor currently in front of them has been targeted for no-return and as a result, classroom dynamics are altering. The 22 faculty slated for non-renewal will not be able to commit to the long-term development of their students. We are concerned that with the loss of approximately 135 face-to-face courses, the educational experience at Nipissing University will be compromised.

The University needs to discontinue its reliance on contract academic staff but also provide job security for all faculty. In the current year, more than 50% of classes are being taught by non-tenure stream faculty and the precarious nature of their employment has never been so obvious. Since the Board of Governors is concerned with the long-term interests of the University and the city, please begin to realize that only job security and more tenure-stream positions will ensure that Nipissing can continue to be the great University we all want it to be.

The cuts came without faculty, student, or Senate consultation. Was there consideration of the implications on students currently enrolled in programs? Chairs of academic units have already indicated that they will be forced to cancel courses and change their programs. Reducing the number of course offerings creates long-term difficulties for academic units: a department that offers fewer and fewer courses will be less and less attractive to students, resulting in even fewer students, classes, and faculty. Please consider the long-term interests of the University and reinstate at least some of the lost Limited Term Appointments but as tenure-stream positions.

Sincerely,

Chris Burke, VP External, on behalf of NUSU Board of Directors

Rob Breton, President, on behalf of NUFA



Precarious Labour Forum (April 14, 2015)

by Gyllie Phillips, Past-President & NUFA Executive Member

On Tuesday April 14, NUFA and the North Bay and District Labour Council (NBDLC) co-hosted a forum on precarious labour at the Discovery North Bay Museum. The event consisted of a presentation by five panelists from different labour sectors and a Q&A discussion with the audience. The room was full, with roughly fifty people in attendance, and the discussion was wide ranging and informative. Nicole Beaulieu from the Sudbury Workers Education and Advocacy Centre discussed the effects of inadequate labour law. NUFA/CASBU's own Mark Crane and Rhiannon Don discussed the particular situation faced by precarious workers in academia. Henri Giroux, President of the NBDLC, summarized some highlights (low-lights?) from a survey of CUPE members on their experiences of precarious labour, and revealed that this is an increasing problem even among unionized groups. Finally, Wayne Smith (Unit Chair at Community Counseling Centre of Nipissing and a United Steelworkers executive board member for the North Bay region) made a rousing pitch for the need for solidarity within and across union sectors. Also in attendance, though not on the panel, were Rhonda Miller from the Ontario Nurses Association, Ian Hall from the Nipissing University Student Union, and Sheldon Forgette, North Bay's Deputy Mayor. They each added their voices to the discussion, addressing, respectively, cuts to nursing at the hospital, political mobilization of youth, and the relation between worker-citizens and their elected representatives. The evening ended with some positive ideas for concrete follow-up action: the creation of an activist and advocacy group "North Bay Together" and ideas for participation in the "Fight for 15 and Fairness" campaign that was launched on April 15, 2015. Following all that was some great food, drink, and conversation. Thank you to the NUFA Executive for their support for the event, and to all NUFA members who came out. I hope that we can keep this conversation going and especially work on making tangible demonstrations of solidarity with the precarious workers in North Bay, to show our support as workers and as fellow North Bay-ites.



Special Announcements

Births

On January 20th, 2015, baby **Alexander** joined the family of Joanne Valin (English Studies, A&S Faculty) and Marc Emond.

Note: The Communications Committee thanks all who provided birth announcements. Submissions are invited for all future issues.



Faculty Appreciation Day Event (April 1, 2015)

On April 1, 2015, there was a gathering at the Wall on the North Bay campus to publicly acknowledge the many contributions that have been made by colleagues whose contracts will not be renewed in light of recent administrative budgetary decisions.

