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Issue Editor: Uldis Kundrats
"Our union makes us strong"

THE NUFA NEWS

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Nipissing's Next President

Interview with our new President Lesley Lovett-Doust conducted by Issue Editor Uldis Kundrats on February 6, 2009

Can you tell me what inspires you about doing administrative work?

Compared to many administrators, I have probably spent longer being a teacher and researcher. Some people move into administration very early in their careers, and for a variety of reasons. I had really enjoyed running my own research lab and teaching courses in genetics, ecology, biology of sex and gender and other areas...and I miss that regular interaction with students. But I have always been drawn to "the bigger picture" aspect of the academic organization; I always identified with the whole institution, and liked to cross boundaries and connect with colleagues from different faculties. I was keen to influence not just the courses and students I worked with personally, but to try and make things work better across the university.

I am very interested in good process and making processes work more smoothly. So a lot of my initial motivation when I first became an associate dean was to try and get rid of red tape that would entangle students and faculty alike. I was doing a lot of student advising and redesign/clarification of curriculum. A major objective was to un-clutter the organizational side, because it's an awful waste of time if faculty are engaged in enforcing practices or regulations that are unreasonable, or that persist for the wrong reasons. Our students appreciate clarity and reasonableness and if there's a simple pathway to implement something, that's so much more useful and sustainable. So basically, in a way, I got into administration because I thought administration needed fixing!

Were there things that you observed in the behaviour and attitudes and values and the style of administrators, performing their duties over the years?

As you can imagine, I've seen a lot of changes over thirty years! The changes in academic administration are parallel, really, to what's happened in industry; the transformation from an authoritarian top-down structure to more of a collaborative, problem-solving approach to administration. As an ecologist, I'm drawn to the idea of an adaptive management, recognising that the external environment influences what goes on in any organisation. And if you're not paying attention to the outside environment, you can become very detached from the reality of the situation.

So adaptive management needs to be taking into account both changes within an organisation and changes outside, so that we make the best possible decisions that are informed by bringing all of these great brains together to problem-solve or to come up with suggestions and ideas of how to make things better.

At this time, many universities are having to address the question of how to adapt to the cataclysmic changes we've seen in the economy and the ripple effect of that has been felt now. Are there approaches to that, that are more workable than others? Are all universities equally ready to take the steps necessary to adapt?

We have a tremendous advantage, being the size we are, because a smaller institution can more readily read the outside environment, and adapt in appropriate and creative ways to the changes. It's kind of like the difference between changing tack in a small sailboat compared to a quinquereme, or *The Titanic*--well, we won't talk about *The Titanic*! So we're more agile--a more agile organisation.

As a young organisation, Nipissing is essentially defining itself with each new member of the community that joins it--each new faculty recruit, each new staff member that comes in. Each hire subtly changes the complexion of the whole community.

And so some of the change, of course, will be gradual, and some may be shaped by external factors such as changes in the demand for people in different fields, or our own and others' assessment in terms of "What does society need?" Which fields hold the best opportunities for our graduates, in the jobs of the future, the careers of the future, the professions of the future?

A recurring thought when I talk to first-year students is that they may end up being specialists in something that doesn't even have a name yet! Fields that didn't exist when I was an undergraduate are now disciplines in their own right. So the academy must always be ready to evolve and to recall its major purpose, which is to provide highly-trained and really innovative people, who will help shape society in the next round.

Do you think it's necessary to re-think what students need, especially in some of the disciplines in which a skill orientation has not necessarily come foremost in the past?

All students need a blend of knowledge, skills, capacity for analysis, exploration of innovation and creativity, and ability to work with others. Each major, and each career pathway may differ in terms of the specific knowledge and skills that are developed, but there should be some common elements to a Nipissing education. To develop that framework, we will need to think hard about the question, "What is it that no student should leave our hallowed halls without?" . . . We might say, "No one should leave this university unless they can do the following . . . or know certain things, or can manipulate certain kinds of information or can understand certain perspectives." It is an important responsibility of the faculty and administration to think through what it is that defines a Nipissing education and identify how we make sure that students acquire that through the course-work they take or through the co-curricular activities they do through experiential learning or through volunteering--whatever it might be. How do we make sure that they're going to be great and good citizens, equipped with the tools to reach their full potential?

How important do you think literacy and numeracy are in all of this?

Huge. Yes. Oh, yes--you've pressed a very important button here! I think that quantitative reasoning is critical, and somewhat neglected--being able to handle numbers and to interpret graphs and understand arguments based on numbers. But also, communications skills are critical and just regular critical thinking and reasoning skills are absolutely essential. If we ask any employer what they want to see in our graduates, they'll tell us that, too. They'll say, almost, "I don't care what major a student has, but I need someone who can think critically, communicate and write, and speak in public, and who can work through numbers and understand an argument based on numbers, as well as an argument based on words." And I think we'd almost always agree on all of those as desirable "learning outcomes", at every university. . .

People should understand other cultural frameworks and other ways of thinking that may differ from their own because, whether everyone likes it or not, there is a global economy--a global community--and it's important to be able to hold your own and communicate and be an honest participant in that. So I think helping students to develop a global perspective is important. And, of course, with my bias in ecology, I think an understanding of sustainable practices is critical, because anything that we do or invent or engage in has to be something that's sustainable. So, thinking, creating, inventing within a sustainable framework is, I think, part of a modern university education, too.

Is that long-term view something that comes easily to most administrators?

It's hard to generalize; I think a growing number of people are moving towards this kind of broader perspective. Part of the responsibility of a President is to make sure the university itself is a sustainable structure--a sustainable

organisation--despite the fact that, if you like, its molecules are in constant turnover. The particular students--the particular faculty may change from one year to the next. But there's this whole that becomes a sustainable and resilient entity, with a character of its own. And part of what I will be doing, is to seek to understand the culture of Nipissing University as it presently is and to explore some of the dynamics that exist in order to know how best to work with everyone to make things ever better, ever more resilient. We must always be working to be ahead of the curve to build the future. Because there is no standing still—as the Queen said in *Alice in Wonderland*, you have to run really fast to even stay on the same spot, and so we have to be adaptive and imaginative, and active creators of our own future.

Are there skills and abilities and a sort of mind-set that faculty members might have to summon up or emphasize in what may be a changed world of higher education for us?

I think that . . . it's very important to enjoy your life as a professor, and to have fun being part of academia. We have a tremendous privilege to be part of this community, because we have flexibility, in terms of what we do. We have the freedom to do research on the things that make us curious. We can inspire other people to work with us. Those are tremendous opportunities that people don't have in many other careers. Many of our peers who chose to work in other fields are performing complex functions, but they don't have this freedom to use the imagination and seek answers to the questions that intrigue.

I think one of the things we do need to develop is a sense of respect that acknowledges the wisdom of other disciplines; we need to celebrate each others' "interestingness." Sometimes we academics have a tendency to be a little bit tribal in the sense of valuing or promoting one discipline versus another. And so when you raise the topic of "disciplines," we need to recall that disciplines themselves are not static. A lot of the most exciting discoveries are happening on the edges or the interfaces between disciplines. So to be able to dialogue with people from other disciplines and to collaborate with them--co-teach with them or build scholarship with them is a valuable opportunity that we have more often at Nipissing than we would have at a large university.

There is a view that academic disciplines are complementary and that . . . they can function separately and representatives of them can work together on projects. Then there's another view that there should be interdisciplinary programs and departments. What's your opinion about these differences?

It is interesting to picture the academic "base camps" of disciplines as noted, and interdisciplinary areas as internodes or networks occupying spaces between the nodes. To be capable of addressing new areas, we need to have nodes that can be reconnected in different ways in the future, but the nodes themselves also evolve as they incorporate aspects of the interdisciplinary areas between them. Most complex problems call for multiple approaches, a diversity of expertise brought to the table.

A colleague, Scott Page at the University of Michigan wrote a book called *The Difference*. He developed mathematical models to examine how teams of diverse people--and that could be diverse in many senses of the word-- diverse heuristics, diverse perspectives, diverse heritage, or educational background solve complex problems. In fact, he demonstrated that a diverse group--and this is intuitively obvious in a way--is much better at solving complex problems than a relatively monolithic, but perhaps more highly achieving group of people. So a homogeneous group of geniuses will not be as good at solving complex problems as a diverse group of possibly less achieving individuals.

Recently I invited Scott to present a workshop for faculty who are involved in faculty searches; I had expected that this quantitative model of the value of diversity would be helpful to my current faculty, who are predominately in the STEM disciplines (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics). I had hoped that the demonstration of excellence as an outcome of diversity would help reinforce the moral or ethical imperative to value diversity for its own sake. We had some very interesting and productive discussions!

Do you think there's a kind of intellectual diversity that can be cultivated in the minds of faculty members and administrators, as well as students?

Yes. Most definitely. I think it's very important to do that and we owe it to students to show that there are different ways of looking at issues. And that's where something like, say, freshman seminars that are taught by people from

different fields--that are co-taught--can be very productive If someone were to take some basic concept, like energy, or diversity, and have it examined from the point of view of an artist and a poet and a biologist and a physicist, a mathematician, you can imagine that they would all bring a different, yet valid viewpoint to the table. It is not as though there's one right answer to "What is energy?", so the students would be able to see that there are many ways of looking at an issue. All are worth exploring and it really depends what aspect is intriguing to you. When they are all convened there is a greater chance that each student will find a resonant perspective that inspires them to think in original ways, and pursue questions that they find exciting. Most of all we have a responsibility as educators to echo Aristotle's point, that there are many answers to the question "why", several levels of "causation".

Do you think a project-specific perspective on the intermingling of faculty and sharing ideas is advantageous? That is, that they don't necessarily work together on an ongoing basis in academic units, but come together when there is that opportunity.

Yes. That's a very good framework--I agree with you. For example, that can be a very good way of addressing issues--say, having an *ad hoc* committee that looks at, let's say, teaching evaluations or promotion of academic integrity. Or if one were to pick a challenge: "How do we engender more engagement with the community around us?" Having a mixed group of individuals to look at such issues is more likely to come up with a good idea or two or three than just having a sub-group of folks from one area of the university address it.

That raises the more general question of checks and balances, in terms of input. How important is that, do you think--that everyone who has an opinion has a say? Do you believe in polling--surveying faculty?

I believe in engagement and dialogue and I'm glad that there already is in position a regular meeting of all the staff with the administration and also the Academic College meeting that preceded Senate today. I think that's a wonderful structure to have in place, and to make sure there is regular, open communication. When you've got an institution full of excellent minds and there are challenges in the outside world, it makes sense to tap all that wisdom as we consider what the best path might be, and decide on the actions to take to get there.

Do you think there are limitations, though, in the "town hall" concept of people speaking up and having a chance to express their viewpoints, their opinions, their wants, and dislikes in a large-group context?

I think it's always useful when one needs to get feedback on a particular initiative or plan of action. Of course it's a difficult sized group to come out with a product, so it would be important to assemble people who are particularly interested in a topic to draft a plan of action. They can then come up with a proposal that others can respond to. But again, that proposal should come back to the group for scrutiny and for improvement and polishing. This recursive process can't go on indefinitely of course; there needs to be a timeline and action once the decisions are made.

Do you believe in the "power of one," in terms of effecting change in a university?

I'm probably in the "It takes a village." mind-set. I think that leadership isn't about someone coming charging in on a white horse and putting things to right overnight. I think that the collective will and motivation of the group is critical. So a strategic plan has to reflect the goals of the community, inspired by the imagination. One always hopes that there are shared aspirational goals-- lofty goals, in terms of making things better and giving a better and better education to students, and better supporting colleagues and their scholarly achievements. I would include the goal of finding for everyone the right balance of teaching and scholarship . . . I was so impressed by the undergraduate colloquium early this spring; when you see how deeply engaged our students are, and how excellent their work is, it's clear that learning through inquiry, especially original research, is a special opportunity where we excel! It is inspiring to see our faculty engaged in that dual framework of teacher/scholar, working with undergraduates and to a growing degree, with graduate students as well. I also hope that some will find their mission in administration! So teaching, scholarship, and at least some contribution to administration and service are important aspects of being a faculty member. We will each have our own pie-chart, if you like, of the three activities sector to emphasize what we most enjoy and are best at.

Ever since I moved into administration, about ten years ago, some colleagues have asked, "What's it like to forego

research and teaching? Do you miss it?" For me these activities are still present, but simply reconfigured, in terms of the aspects of administration that I enjoy.

Nowadays, rather than teaching undergraduate classes, I have been helping to train colleagues through designing and contributing to workshops in teaching and learning, grant-writing, equitable procedures for hiring and tenure and promotion, and so forth—these kinds of mentoring-type activities have taken the place, in a way, of mentoring of my Ph.D. students and Master's students, and undergraduates. The analytical aspect of research, which I used to really enjoy—and this sounds really weird, I know—I really liked to analyze data and figure out what's going on—this has morphed into the process of analyzing and interpreting institutional data and trends. That's a critical part of sound administrative decision-making.

Are we encountering a period during which many institutions and their leadership are functioning in "survival mode" instead of planning ahead? And how far is it possible to plan ahead, with the exigencies of the financial landscape?

I think we need to be planning simultaneously on multiple levels and at different timescales. It may sound like the Russian five and ten-year plan, but I think, in all seriousness, one should have the image of the academic and strategic plan and research plans, as living documents-- sections in a three-ring binder that's adaptable and that should be open to tweaks from one year to the next. It shouldn't be something that's embossed in gold and stuck on the shelf and adhered to, necessarily, chapter and verse, or worse still, put on the shelf and ignored!

It's very valuable to be adaptive. I think it's important to have a vision that frames the decisions that will get made, so that we're always checking whether something we decide to do is consistent with the strategic plan. And if it isn't, we need to think twice about whether it's a good way to spend resources or direct our attention and energy. It may be tempting in this period to hunker down and put our heads under a blanket, but that is exactly what we should not do; we need to take this opportunity to innovate and build for the future . . .

And set very strict limits. I wanted to ask you about scalability, in terms of programs, course offerings, and the like. How do you feel about building in options that would allow innovation to take place, with the understanding that the financial and other rewards from it may not be commensurate with the effort that goes into them.

Well, in tough economic times I would argue that it's a mistake to cut back to basic life functions. That's rather like allowing your toes and your fingertips to get frostbite—and figure that as long as the heart's still going, you're okay.

So for the coming years we need everyone to make their best possible contribution; we need to retain the spirit of imagination and innovation, drawing on the talent of the faculty on deck. There may be new ways of looking at the configuration of partnerships among the people who are here already. For example there might be a demand for a certain kind of program that involves simply re-assembling, reconfiguring the modules of learning that already exist. We need to continue to think in imaginative ways about how students might fulfil their curiosity and interests, and also end up with a degree that will serve them well as a foundation for their career of choice, supported by a habit of lifelong learning.

We need to be willing to look at collaborations between departments and schools and between faculties, and not to be limited by traditions. In a school our size, we have more opportunities for that, because colleagues in another faculty may be two or three doors down the hall. So we have a real advantage that many universities lack. It's important to think in a very open way about new opportunities. We need to be ahead of the curve of student interest and demand and societal needs, rather than waiting to see what other institutions do and following their lead.

A lot of academic planners talk about the idea of “benchmarking”; surveying what others are doing as a guide to program development. This practice is useful, but it is not the best way to innovate because if we made our decisions on where others are at present, we would always be catching up! So I'd like to really use the power of brainstorming among the people on deck to develop ideas that fit with our geographical situation, the strengths we have in different disciplines--what would make sense, in terms of areas to develop, and what would be useful to our students?

Anthony Blackburn, our second president, went out of his way to demonstrate respect for and give consideration to part-time faculty--even those teaching individual courses. And a big issue in the modern world of higher education is how those workers who contribute on a contingency basis, to a certain extent, find a place or are given a place in the context of the institutions in which they work. Can you comment on that?

Well, institutions differ a lot in terms of the proportion of the teaching that's done by part-time or tenure-track faculty and that balance is something that has often come to pass because there is fluctuation in enrolment in certain fields. Every faculty member is valuable and is making an important contribution to our students' learning; some are part time by personal choice and others because they are taking a first step in their academic careers. Teaching experience is certainly an asset in securing a full time tenure track job. From an administrative point of view it's valuable to have the greater stability, of course, of having a more predictable number of students needing courses and therefore, being able to make positions permanent, but where there is a great deal of variance, it makes fiscal sense to have some flexibility in terms of part time faculty.

The colleagues who contribute through part-time teaching are real treasures in academia. They're often people who have a practical learning to bring to the table . . . people who practice law or practice in business or practice in teaching and other fields, who can bring that knowledge to the classroom and really inspire students. So they are tremendously valuable colleagues. We probably have fewer part-time instructors here, because there isn't a huge metropolitan area where there is a "transient" population of recent PhD graduates. If there are individuals who would like to do more teaching, we may have new opportunities for them to contribute to flexible learning through online and onsite/online instruction, and perhaps some strategic growth at our other campuses. Similarly if there are part time instructors who would like to become involved in research we may, in the future, be able to draw the kind of funding that would provide them with partial support, for example as research associates.

What are you looking forward to most, in taking up your duties as President here?

I'm looking forward to just rolling up my sleeves and joining the team. I'd like to start by visiting everyone and getting to know all the faculty and staff within departments and schools as well as in larger get-togethers. I want to know what your dreams are, what your goals and aspirations are, for yourselves and for all our students, so that I can help make them come true.



CAUT Some Interesting Developments

Roman Brozowski, Vice President NUFA

CAUT Benefits Trust

CAUT is forming a Benefits Trust for Faculty Associations across Canada which does not include Pensions. This would include all the Benefits we presently have in our Benefits Plan. The plan would have a Board of Trustees made up of University representatives and would be under the umbrella of the CAUT. Each Faculty would enter with their existing plan in which both the employer and Faculty pay a portion. Over time all plans would work towards standardization with improved benefits and lowered costs based on economies of scale. CAUT indicated that there are 7000 members belonging to Associations who have indicated interest in joining. The trust is something we should consider and investigate further.

Copyright

The present copyright continues to allow Faculty to copy materials as long as it is for research purposes.

Ownership Documents

The University cannot have or request any documents owned by each member. Only documents that are of an Administrative nature can be acquired by Administration from your computer or any other materials i.e. notes or e-mails to Chairs or Deans would be considered administrative while your personal emails to anyone are out of bounds. At the University of Ottawa the Arbitrator ruled in favour of the Faculty of this issue

Mental Health

An area of growing concern on the part of University Faculty Associations is mental health which CAUT is examining. Hopefully in the near future a Policy paper will be released on Mental Health.



Teaching Only Positions

Roman Brozowski, OCUFA Director and NUFA Vice President

The Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Association (OCUFA) which represents all University faculties in Ontario is a lobbying organization presenting our views at all levels of government. It also assists with information and organizing collective bargaining materials. This provides each Association with what is happening at every University including bargaining.

OCUFA also provides discussion papers on issues of concern to Faculty Associations. Some more recent papers include. Envelope Funding for Ontario Universities, College/University Programs leading to Undergraduate degrees, Workplace Violence Prevention and Career Limiting Moves and Teaching Only Positions in Ontario Universities. This piece will deal with teaching only positions and is based on OCUFA's 23 page paper.

These positions for full time faculty have been in existence for over 10 years at some Universities and more recently have been included at one university. They have also been introduced in other forms at three universities on a temporary and limited basis. Our University is one which allows 7 such positions on a limited term basis. Interestingly Laurentian university discontinued the teaching stream and instead allowed for Contract Academic Staff continuing appointments with progress through the ranks/career development increment salary escalation.

Teaching only positions put most of the emphasis on teaching in which the norm seems to be four courses with less or little expectation on research. In some cases three courses are taught during fall and winter and the fourth in spring or summer term. In many places these positions are allowed to apply for tenure or for a continuing permanent basis with some type of promotion structure.

The argument administrators make for these positions includes filling in the teaching gaps left by tenured faculty on reduced teaching loads. Such positions in terms of classroom teaching are more cost-effective for many administrators. In most places the salaries are at a lower scale and usually these people teach larger and lower level classes. It becomes clear that such positions are to the advantage of administrators and for the convenience of the tenure track faculty. In effect they become second class citizens.

In its summary OCUFA states "in addition to potential equity concerns, salary levels and structure raise issues about priorities. University administrations may speak eloquently about the importance of teaching and the need to cultivate good teaching, but do not appear to pay teachers their purported value. Conversely, if OCUFA and its members wish to discourage the expansion of teaching-only positions, salary scales comparable to other faculty ranks could serve as a deterrent." OCUFA does not support teaching only positions.



Striving for Equality in a Modern Society?

By Christina DeRoche, Co-Chair of Women's Caucus

As this year began I was very much looking forward to my involvement in academics. I have come to love being involved in NUFA's committees, especially the Women's Caucus. It was for this reason that I signed up for the OCUFA Women's Conference in hopes of meeting other female academics to hear their stories. Much to my disappointment I was told that the conference was cancelled due to lack of enrolment, which really translated to lack of interest. I kept asking myself why did this happen? Women have come so far in terms of achieving equality, why is it that there would be lack of interest. This was definitely a misunderstanding on my part, as I thought women had truly achieved equality in terms of being provided with opportunities not once thought of 50 to 60 years ago. Although CAUT reports the number of women enrolling in post-secondary institutions for both undergraduate and graduate degrees has increased, Stats Can reports of the wage gap still existing. Why? Why to all of this?

CAUT reports that although women have made tremendous strides in FTE enrolments, this "feminization of universities" is not equal amongst all disciplines, most notably within Mathematics, Computers and Information Sciences, Engineering and Agricultural Sciences. At the same time that women have been gaining in enrolments at universities, women are also gaining in becoming academics, but again not equally amongst all fields. CAUT reports that around one-third of all faculty members at universities in Canada are female; of course, these female faculty

members are strictly located within a specific subset of specialty areas, mainly Humanities, Health, and Education. Within this one-third of women faculty members, there have also been substantial gains, according to CAUT, for full-professor rankings. In 2004, there were substantial numbers of FTE faculty members at full professorship within Humanities, Education, and Health. However, substantial gains have yet to be seen in those traditionally male-dominated subject areas. It is worth noting that women have doubled their representation in Social and Behavioural Sciences, respectively sitting at one-fifth of those members.

This still leaves me wondering why the Conference was cancelled if so many women are enrolled at such universities and are doubling, and in some cases tripling, their numbers in certain faculties. The answer to this lies in the societal barriers and inherent guilt that many women academics face. As I entered the academic world and began pursuing my PhD, I was confronted with the reality of my situation as a female pursuing higher education. My choice has now been between the delaying of childbirth and beginning my academic studies or pursuing a family. This has been a difficult choice for me as I feel I should not have to negotiate the two; I should not have to sacrifice one for the other. In addition to all of this, there is an immense amount of guilt that lies on my conscious of having to sacrifice motherhood for career opportunities. Indeed, I am not the first to have felt this way. Wall (2008:219) documents the struggles of being a female academic as being unique and complex. She argues that it is “an inherently different process for men and women” (Wall, 2008:219).

This begs the question, why is it that in our modern society women and worse yet, those of minority stature, still struggle to gain in equal measure? What is it that prevents true equality from really taking place? Leahey, Crocker, and Hunter (2008:1274) argue that it really boils down to the idea of a patriarchal system of bureaucracy governed by capitalists. This longstanding and male dominated ideal has still yet to be broken through or shattered. Wall (2008:220) argues that for the longest of times men have dominated these public bureaucracies and to have this inevitably shatter in one foul swoop is impossible. CAUT reports of the struggles of women in attaining tenure positions in stating that women account for 40 percent of these positions but only 20 percent of these will actually attain tenure. Why is this? Although there is no simple answer to that question and the others, it still requires all of us to think that there is really no true equality for women, men or those of minority standing. And although women have made great strides in attaining their doctorates, why is it that I still feel the impending guilt of choosing between motherhood and career? Perhaps this is the question that needs the most attention.

References

Leahey, E., Crocker, J.E., & Hunter, L.A. 2008. Gendered Academic Careers: Specializing for Success? *Social Forces* 86: 1273-1309.

Wall, S. 2008. Of Head and Hearts: Women in Doctoral Education at a Canadian University. *Women's Studies International Forum* 31: 219-228.



Quality Matters

On March 9th, the Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations launched its *Quality Matters* campaign.

These are uncertain times for university faculty and librarians. Economic instability has worsened the underfunding problem on Ontario's campuses. At the same time, university education has become even more important as centres of innovation and training necessary to get the province moving again. The public agrees. In a recent OCUFA poll, 85 per cent of Ontarians indicated they would like to see additional funds for higher education in the upcoming Provincial Budget.

“The economy is looming large in the public's mind,” said Professor Brian E. Brown, President of OCUFA. “*Quality Matters* makes a simple point—we can't move our economy ahead if we leave our students behind.”

Quality Matters seeks to increase public awareness of the funding issue leading up to the budget on March 26th. Focused around a new website, the campaign will encourage students, parents, concerned citizens and OCUFA members to send a personal message to Premier Dalton McGuinty urging him to increase university funding.

OCUFA is using the full power of social media to support the *Quality Matters* campaign. Electronic ads have been placed on the Globe & Mail and Maclean's website, and on Facebook. A Facebook group for the campaign is also active, and OCUFA is investigating the use of other Internet services to spread the word.

For more information on the campaign, or to send a message to Premier McGuinty, please visit <http://www.quality-matters.ca>.



Fired-Up Faculty

By Rob Breton

After meeting with NU staff on March 10, President Dennis Mock convened with visibly angry faculty on March 11 to discuss the university's financial situation. Speaking for 15 minutes to a full house, President Mock suggested that the university will incur a "structural deficit," as operating costs are not being supported by matched revenue. He suggested that the university faces the "possibility of discounted BIUs" and a small decline in first-year enrolment. Though he stated that "at the end of the year, we [NU] will be in better shape than the average Ontario University," he placed emphasis on the need for the university to make cuts. Cuts had already taken place. A similar operating grammar dominated opening remarks at the subsequent senate on March 20th. At both Senate and the Town Hall a fired-up faculty asked two types of questions, one having to do with the process whereby senior administration has in recent months made decisions and the other having to do with the finances of the university.

Process

Many of the questions mentioned Angela Fera, a much respected, much-consulted, and much beloved 'resource' for faculty, especially for chairs. This article is not exactly about Angela, though many of the questions that have been asked recently recalled her skill and devotion to the university, and faculty said repeatedly that they were appalled that someone with such proficiency, and more institutional memory and curriculum know-how than anyone left in our university, would be deemed "redundant." Faculty also expressed dismay that a small group of individuals, who clearly didn't know all that Angela did, made the decision to lay her off. Dr Mock admitted that "mistakes were made" and that the ad hoc committee did not have a full understanding of the ramifications of their decisions. Moreover, it became evident in Senate that there was no plan in place at the time of Angela's forced departure to cover what she did.

The message to administration, both at the Town Hall and Senate a week later, was that laying off Angela exemplifies everything that is wrong with the way senior administrators are currently operating – that is, without any faculty consultation. This was punctuated by Chris Sarlo's letter to Senate alleging an abuse of process at senior levels, after a position in Economics was controversially changed to one in Finance/Economics without the knowledge of the School of Business and Economics. Some senior faculty members and chairs are now speaking, in fact, of a political shift in the decision-making processes of the university: faculty required to undertake service, but any attempt at contributing to the governance of our university will be silenced or ignored.

In Senate, President Mock reassured faculty that "we must all work together." The VP Finance went on to say that she would like to hear everyone's ideas on how to reduce our projected deficit. The tone if not the language was of collaboration, faculty input. But faculty senators were also told that our curriculum concerns were "being taken care of," and that the restructuring of FASS was also taking place behind closed doors. Faculty is soon to hear how the faculty support we once had will be redistributed. At Senate, there was no invitation to be part of the process of re-organizing FASS and so no recognition that faculty might know what constitutes its own needs. Language that faculty may need to be "retrained" did not sit comfortably with many faculty who looked stunned upon hearing that administrators feel qualified to train or retrain faculty.

Budget Anxieties

The second set of related questions in some way expressed doubt if the "possibility of discounted BIUs" and a small decline in first-year enrolment applications necessitate laying off the people who allow this institution to operate from day-to-day. Many have pointed out that in past years the university has been a wee bit off in its predictions vis-à-vis enrolments, and at conspicuous times. Why didn't the administration at least wait to see what the Ontario budget would offer before acting out? If we are in a dire economic situation, how exactly did we get here? Tough questions were asked about the university's finances, and how the admin imagines them. President Mock has reminded us that NU has comparably little endowment funding and that we do not have a defined benefit pension plan as do most other universities in Ontario. This puts us in a much stronger financial position than most other universities in the province. (The sagging market does not affect us as a university as it does other universities; individual members absorb the huge drop in the value of their pension funds.) The only absolute certainty expressed

at the two meetings in question was that this year's budget would be balanced.

Dr Mock

Finally, one of the unfortunate results of the barrage of faculty questions is what appears to me as a perceived understanding by some that our President, Dr. Mock, is somehow under attack. All the faculty members I've talked to have nothing but real admiration for our president and the job he has done. In fact, they speak of their desperation not to make the discussion about Dr Mock, but about process and the thinking behind recent, supposedly economic decisions. They have expressed a desire to address their questions elsewhere, but Dr Mock, who will retire from our university in the upcoming weeks, has taken full and apparently sole responsibility for the "mistakes." Managers made those "mistakes" and the feeling is that they should answer for them. Faculty is fired up, but committed to a long fight so as to retain its ability to best serve students and, what's more, to contribute to the decision-making processes at the university. We want to wish Dr Mock a gracious farewell, but we also want to wish someone else a happy return.



N U F A
ANNUAL GENERAL
MEETING:
Thursday, May 14
4:00-6:00
Room H106