

ANNOUNCEMENTS

ACADFA FALL GATHERING

Wednesday September 16
6 PM - 10 PM

Capitol Hill Community Centre
1531 - 21st Avenue NW

ACADFA will provide
burgers, hotdogs and beverages
Please bring a salad or dessert to add to the table

RSVP

ACADFA FALL GENERAL MEETING

Thursday October 1
5:30 PM
Room 532

Snacks and Beverages and Updates from Executive

THE FOLLOWING REPORTS WERE PRESENTED AT THE
ACADFA EXECUTIVE MEETING
SEPTEMBER 2, 2015

President's Report - Alex Link

Welcome back!

The summer months were fairly uneventful. These are my activities, though, and in no particular order:

First

I attended a workplace incivility conference hosted by Mount Royal on August 25, at the college's expense. The morning was taken up with the interesting but not entirely germane topic of the psychological harm caused by ostracism in the workplace.

The afternoon, however, was a useful presentation on the relationship between academic freedom, codes of conduct, and discrimination/harassment.

The main thrust of the presentation was to clarify for administrators the fact that academics cannot be disciplined for some kinds of conduct that could see them disciplined in the corporate workplace. In short, academics are protected by academic freedom until such time as their conduct might breach laws concerning discrimination, harassment, or bullying or (potentially) violate a code of ethics. The ensuing discussion concerned how one maintains a collaborative, inclusive workplace, the inevitable grey areas that come up in discussions of harassment, and how—in the absence of recourse to a disciplinary mechanism—one encourages a positive and constructive workplace.

Second

I sent a report on the ACIFA conference to executive over the summer. I'd be happy to discuss any of that report if you like. (see below)

Third

I sent a copy of an LoU Chris Frey and I arrived at with the college regarding compensation for the upcoming eight months for the one or two faculty members who will be working as mentors for our new graduate students. I would be glad to hear your thoughts.

Fourth

The college is considering creating a Chief Librarian position, which would be the same as the current librarian position in the Collective Agreement, but with expanded duties. The College recognizes that the current librarian grid does not pay enough for such a position, and may ask ACADFA to sign an LoU allowing the permanent faculty Salary Schedule A to apply to the Chief Librarian as well.

Fifth

Soon, ACADFA will be asked to discuss the workload and compensation for the Visiting Curator position. A separate group, including several studio faculty, is currently working on the position description itself. However, it's ACADFA's role to determine how much work is required of that position, and for what compensation, once its responsibilities are established. I would appreciate any volunteers who might be willing to help determine this formula.

Sixth

While I am glad of the four new hires we have, the difficulty of hiring in the School of Communications Design continues. In June, I participated in a hiring debrief to determine the core problems here, and I also (as mentioned in my report from ACIFA) consulted with Al Brown and Terry Sway on the matter. The college has retained the applications it received for these positions and will re-consider them; it will also repost the positions and call for more applications; it will also announce a rolling deadline, indicating that the search will continue until the positions are filled.

I believe a meeting of Chairs to determine what other positions will be posted this year is to happen in the next week or two.

Seventh

I participated, with the ACADFA VP and Secretary, in determining this year's budget.

Eighth

I'm wondering whether I ought to send a note to the Membership encouraging them to search the OneClass and Course Hero databases periodically. These are web services that pay students for their notes and then redistribute them. Needless to say, the potential for the violation of faculty intellectual property and of their work being misrepresented in a public forum are obvious.

President's Report from ACIFA Conference (May 24-26, Lake Louise)
Submitted June 15, 2015

Given that ACADFA executive will not meet again until next term, and given the significant amount of material of interest emerging from this conference, I thought I'd send this report now, rather than wait until our next executive.

I attended the annual ACIFA conference at the end of May, where I attended Presidents Council and the AGM. Patti Dawkins attended as well, while Tyler Rock attended the PAC meeting and Chris Frey attended the NAC meeting. I attended the NAC meeting too.

I also attended a session on how to respond when the employer initiates a formal workplace investigation, a session on post-secondary advocacy, and a panel discussion on representing members. Lastly, I was able to consult with both Terry Sway (ACIFA LRO for northern Alberta) and Al Brown (ACIFA LRO for southern Alberta and former NDP vice president) on some matters specific to ACADFA.

Presidents Council (May 24)

The following items of interest emerged from the day's discussion:

Perhaps most notably, layoffs of faculty are occurring around the province.

-Northern Lakes college has lost 20-25% of its faculty (including members of their Executive) in abolishments, closed 3 of its approximately 30 campuses (it's a widely dispersed college), and closed 2 programs, such that it now has a ratio of 1 manager for every 5 faculty. It is considering moving entirely over to corporate training and trades curriculum, and to having managers move into positions that oversee groups of sessionals teaching courses.

-several faculty from Portage College have been laid off, including the ACIFA conference organizer herself, a member of their Executive.

-Red Deer College has lost at least 7 faculty (including members of their Executive) and 7 programs have been eliminated. Given RDC's additional nearly 10% drop in enrolment, while administrative positions have more than doubled, its faculty passed a motion of non-confidence in its administration. Their President has responded by accusing the association of having acted in bad faith since day one.

-Keyano College reminded us that several members of its Executive have been laid off / had positions abolished in recent years

-Lethbridge College has also passed a motion of non-confidence in its President, VP Academic, and Board Chair, and its Executive is also pursuing a claim of harassment by its Board of Governors. Also, their institution is offering early retirement packages, but only to selected programs; the packages themselves differ between programs.

-ACAD's report of faculty hires (albeit with 1.5 sessional positions cut) and VP and curator abolishments was noted as an anomaly in this context

Given the apparent targeting of Executive members for layoffs / abolishments around the province in recent years, which intimidates others from joining Executives, ACIFA Executive had a special meeting on the matter after the AGM to discuss "super seniority" (i.e. job protection for Executive Members). No results have been reported yet.

Council considered what its key messages to the new government ought to be. One is that the government provide "stable and sufficient" funding. I suggested a re-examination of the base funding formula, particularly given that ACAD's base operating grant is less than half that of Olds or Portage Colleges.

Olds is very slightly larger than us, while Portage is smaller. In fact, Portage's base operating grant is larger than ACAD's entire budget. In other words, we are short-changed approximately \$14 million annually in comparable base operating grants. Al Brown's immediate response was to ask why we hadn't amalgamated with SAIT.

CAFA (Confederation of Alberta Faculty Associations), an organization parallel to ACIFA and comprised of Athabasca, UAlberta, ULethbridge, and UCalgary, received reassurance in writing from the NDP, prior to the election, that any tuition freeze would be funded so as not to impact institutional budgets.

Our dues will increase by \$4 per person. I believe ACADFA can afford that without increasing the Membership dues rate.

During the meeting, the new Minister of Innovation and Advanced Education (also the Minister of Jobs, Skills and Training) was announced. Lori Sigurdson is a former instructor at UAlberta and MacEwan, a social worker, and the former vice president of Public Interest Alberta, a group that has advocated for health, education, and with particular public visibility this last election, post-secondary.

NAC Meeting (May 25 pm)

The NAC Chair will have his own report, but here are my observations from having sat in on the second half of the meeting.

-the discussions were quite similar to those in Presidents Council

-While administrations routinely cry wolf, Terry Sway corroborated the sense that ACAD's financial situation is actually pretty dire. He still recommends pursuing a salary increase in bargaining.

-Terry Sway noted that the University of Alberta's collective agreements are open, living documents, i.e. either party can alter the contract at any time, akin to drafting LoUs whenever necessary. The only exception is monetary Articles. He's interested in pursuing the idea, noting the only immediate apparent drawback is that, without a formal bargaining session, there's little incentive to bargain any non-apparent issues unless there's an obvious advantage to both parties.

-when it comes to funding Member attendance at the ACIFA conference, Red Deer pays for up to 5 Members, while NorQuest holds a lottery for a fixed number.

Workplace Investigations (May 25 am)

(Al Brown presents)

-Al Brown noted that several Agreements, including ours, contains no provision like that found in SAIT's 19.02: that Members have a right to be represented by their Association at any meeting with the employer that might be disciplinary in nature

-his basic advice to a faculty involved in an investigation involved two rules:

First, say as little as possible.
Second, tell the truth no matter how bad it is (unless, possibly, you're facing jail time). Getting caught in a lie is grounds for immediate dismissal.

-Dismissals based on job performance are very difficult to overturn

-Dismissals of probationary faculty are very difficult to overturn

-He distributed a PowerPoint on the talk, which I've added to our Grievance Officer

Advoca (May 25 pm)

(ACIFA executive members Anna Beukes and Doug Short (president) present)

This presentation (30+ people) was on how ACIFA communicates with government, and an expansion of the discussion on what its primary message to the new NDP government ought to be.

I repeated the call for a re-examination of a base funding formula (which I suspect larger institutions will resist).

I suggested we argue that for every dollar cut from post-secondary, institutions lose another dollar by diverting it away from core business to pursue funding from elsewhere to make up for the loss, making austerity funding a harmful and inefficient waste of tax dollars. Anna Beukes seems to have since taken this argument up. I would go further and say that it creates a structural conflict of interest within postsecondary institutions.

ACIFA's guest, representing faculty from Saskatchewan and puzzled by the number of ACIFA and CAFA members, suggested the amalgamation of a patchwork of Alberta's postsecondary institutions. ACIFA countered by claiming that a more dispersed Alberta population requires a dispersed system.

Representing Members (May 26 pm)

(Panel discussion with Terry Sway, reps from MacEwan and Grande Prairie, and the MacEwan Association's Executive Director)

A general overview of challenges with Executives at large and small:

-a comparison of challenges faced by Executives at large and small schools

-recognizing the unevenness of workload which can shift without warning between very little and very much in the event of a crisis

-recognizing when a grievance ought to be filed (i.e. to resolve a dispute rather than as an ineffective act of public shaming)

-recognizing when a grievance ought to be abandoned (e.g. when a negative—or even positive—arbitration result could have overall negative consequences for the Membership at large; when a Member is unsatisfied with a result the Executive deems reasonable)

-maintaining confidentiality in the grievance process when dealing with sensitive information, especially in cases of dismissal (e.g. when is Executive involved and under what circumstances?)

-the need for Executives to focus primarily on contractual matters so as to avoid "mission creep"

-stressing collegial relationships with administration, and the recognition of administration as colleagues

-the importance of training for Executive members so as to protect the Executive from potential litigation. While no formal and specific training exists, it might include mentorship on Executive, workshops by ACIFA and CAUT, and so on

AGM (May 26 am)

The AGM was fairly uneventful. I served as Parliamentarian. Elections were held, with Bob Graves of MacEwan elected to Executive VP (over Doug Spurgeon of SAIT, who asked me to speak on his behalf).

Nicole Estabrooks of Bow Valley was elected to VP PAC by acclamation. Also, during the course of the Conference, she declared Patti "Mona Lisa Expert," and marked my nametag "Does things for Money," though, she added, I do creepy things for free.

Consultation with Al Brown and Terry Sway (May 26 am).

I met with Al Brown and Terry Sway individually, primarily so I could compare the information I got from them for consistency. It was consistent in virtually every respect. Terry only gave me a little bit of a hard time for consulting him even though ACAD is in Al Brown's territory.

While the conversation was wide-ranging, I focused on two matters in particular:

Liberal Studies (CCS) Class Size

Nine sections have been cut, resulting in the doubling of some class sizes in this area.

Their objections:

-we have no contractual protection re: class size at this time; while the expansion of class size violates custom, it does not violate the contract

-we currently have classes that vary widely in size

-the employer is committed to providing marking/grading support (as opposed to support removed, anecdotally, one instructor told me his class was doubled to 170 and all grading was the instructor's)

-Terry indicated the only real recourse for sessional faculty was to refuse to teach these courses

-both recommended conveying to admin., specifically in the context of formal meetings, the impact this has on students and on faculty morale, which I've done since the conference in both a department meeting at which the AVPRAA was present and in Joint Communication. I also indicated the manner in which this decision moves in a direction opposite to that recommended by curriculum planning thus far; I also suggested building optimum class sizes into course descriptions, so as to underscore the way meeting learning objectives depends upon method of delivery

-both acknowledged that this violation of custom now gives ACADFA the opening to negotiate class size / students-per-instructor limitations into the collective agreement. While that does nothing for the upcoming year, it works to our advantage in the long run.

Ratio and School of Communications Design

The 2015 hiring season marks our third attempt to hire Design faculty since 2010. The 2010 hires were contentious and, I suspect, went through primarily because they took place at a time when we had no VP Academic and a just-arrived President. The 2014 searches in Design failed. The 2015 searches in Design will also likely fail, save for one position.

I took this matter up primarily because it conflicts with the college's imperative to meet the ratio.

I indicated that the impasse seems to be specifically around qualifications, in that the hiring committee and the employer seem unable to agree on what constitutes a qualified candidate.

Terry had little to suggest. I suggested grieving the ratio and asking that, as a resolution, the college work out its difficulties with SCD so as to allow it to continue toward meeting the ratio. He thought the idea was interesting.

Al Brown expressed disbelief that the college hasn't simply forced the issue, given that it is a fundamental right of the employer. I indicated that, small as we are, a diplomatic solution is best for people who encounter each other daily.

He, too, was interested in the possibility of a grievance as a way of adding pressure to get this issue resolved. It's a two-edged sword, though, in that it might give the employer further incentive to dissolve the committee and impose its own requirements. On the one hand, it would clear the 5-year blockage and allow us to make more progress to the ratio. On the other, it would end any hope of compromise. It could also cause the administration to pull the vacant positions from SCD and offer them to other areas where hires are more likely to succeed. Therefore, the grievance option should be considered carefully.

I also suggested making SCD hires provisional in that they might require the hires to complete an MEds, if they don't have one, within their first 4-5 years of employment. That's the main sticking point, after all. It seems an obvious solution with precedent in Glass. I mentioned the same in a meeting of Chairs on June 11, which tried to work some of this difficulty out, and the suggestion was met with interest.

Told you there was a lot.

That's all, apart from the fact that

-we spent a fair amount of time with the Bow Valley group

-we walked out of the musical entertainment Monday night

-we walked out of the non-musical entertainment (a "live game show," yech) Tuesday night

-no one could stop talking about Chris Frey's hair. Ever.

Faculty Professional Affairs Committee (FPAC) Rep – Tyler Rock

The Faculty Only section of the ACAD website --now called Faculty Resources -- has undergone an overhaul. As a result you will find that all content related to research is now located under one heading. This was something that I pushed for last winter and spring and I was happy to see accomplished over the summer. Thanks to both Su and Carissa in the Office of Research and Academic Affairs for their efforts.

As a result of changes in the Faculty Resources section you will find that the research funding we are eligible to apply for is much easier to navigate. It is under the heading Professional Expense Re-Imbursement Allotment or PERA and under the heading Research.

PERA is the money allotted to each faculty member for professional development. Under this heading you will see PERA guidelines and the PERA application form as well as a link to travel leave authorization form and the per diem schedule (located in the finance section). An important note, the PERA guidelines have changed significantly. They are much less prescriptive than they formerly were.

In the Research section you will find the research funding opportunities that faculty are eligible for including FPAC guidelines and application forms, Sabbatical guidelines and application forms and Creative Research guidelines and application forms. Each funding application has criteria outlined including eligibility and application dates so please have a look.

Again there are two easy short cuts to get to the finance forms from the faculty only page for the travel leave authorization form that many of you will need for your research applications. There is a link in the first column under general information, and a second link under the PERA heading. You can also go the longer route to the Finance section under Tools and Templates then Policy and Procedures then Procedures then 200 Finance. There you will find all finance forms and guidelines.

FPAC and Sabbaticals – DEADLINE IS FAST APPROACHING!!!

The fall FPAC applications and Sabbatical Applications are due September 15th.

ACIFA (Alberta Colleges and Institutes Faculty Associations)

As a part of the duties of Professional Affairs representative for ACAD sits on the professional affairs committee for ACIFA. I attended the ACIFA conference last spring at Lake Louise. The professional affairs committee, comprised of reps from all of the colleges in Alberta, held a brief meeting in advance of the conference. Not a lot of content was covered during the meeting compared to the winter round table discussions held in January, but overall after hearing a number of stories from a number of other institutions, it was my impression that professional development at ACAD is reasonably well supported. It was also my impression that the research being conducted here is unique in the context of those other colleges. I came away from the meeting feeling proud of the high caliber of research being conducted at ACAD.