

# SAFAGRAM

## President's Message



By Doug Spurgeon

Bargaining is now beginning for our Collective Agreement, which is due to expire at the end of June 2010. Thank you to all those who came forward to be part of the bargaining team as well as those who are contributing to the benefits team. As well, thank you to those members who have come forth with ideas for this round of bargaining. Without the ideas from the membership, bargaining would not include those pieces which the membership feels are important and vital to the work environment here at SAIT. I encourage all members to continue bringing both ideas and concerns forward. Any information that the bargaining team can gather helps create an agreement that encompasses the needs of the members. Bring your ideas and concerns to the SAFA office, and we will ensure that those who bargain on your behalf receive the information.

Several members have come to the office to discuss issues which sometimes are not specifically outlined in the Collective Agreement. I want to remind everyone of the grievance procedure as outlined in Section 20 of the Collective Agreement. We're not calling for more grievances, but as members you do need to know your rights. If you feel your rights have been violated, then you have ten days in which to file a grievance on the issue. If you feel there has been a violation or if you are unsure and feel that something isn't right, please send me an e-mail or come to the SAFA office to discuss the situation. There have been many issues over the past that have been solved without going through the formal grievance procedure. Some of the issues have been a simple misunderstanding, while others have been a misinterpretation of the rights outlined in the Collective Agreement. You must remember that management has the right to manage, but at the same time, it must be done fairly. Only by bringing issues forward can resolution, in whatever form it may take, be truly achieved. The current SAFA Executive have made great strides over the past couple of years in bringing forward issues that do not always have to go through the formal grievance procedure. Everyone must realize that if an issue or concern is kept buried, then nothing can be done. Only by bringing these concerns forward will your school/department or larger SAIT management know about the concerns. Please do not assume that it is known.

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SAFAGRAM editorial policy, as approved by the SAFA Executive on June 14, 1995, is as follows:

1. The Editorial Board has the final say as to what is included or deleted from the newsletter.
2. Editorial Board decisions about newsletter material must be agreed to by consensus.
3. The newsletter will include a disclaimer stating that the views expressed in its content do not necessarily represent the views of the Editorial Board or SAFA.
4. All material included in the newsletter must
  - be signed by the author when submitted to the editors, but anonymity may be requested and granted for printing.
  - be based on "reasoned argument" if personal criticism is used.
  - not involve name-calling.
  - not include sexist, racist, or homophobic comments.
  - be related to SAIT, although this will be interpreted broadly.

The views expressed in SAFAGRAM do not necessarily represent the views of the Editorial Board or SAFA.

## Library Report



By David Luinstra

### ☞ Meet Your Librarians

*David Luinstra - New Coordinator of Instruction and Communications*

In January 2010, David took over from Nora Robinson and is responsible for coordinating SAIT Library's instruction program as well as being subject liaison for the Energy and CITD programs.

David has a Bachelor of Music degree from the University of Calgary and has spent many years teaching and performing music. He also holds a Master of Library and Information Studies degree from Dalhousie University. Upon graduation, David spent four years at the Calgary Public Library (CPL), where he coordinated programming, outreach, collections, and information services at the Crowfoot Library. At CPL he developed a passion for customer service, outreach, and education that he intends to bring to his position at SAIT.

SAIT's Library offers a wide variety of instructional sessions ranging from tours and orientations, to basic library research sessions, to advanced research tutorials on specific assignments. Please contact David to arrange a Library Research Tutorial for your class!

All the librarians are committed to helping your students make full use of the wide range of materials available at the SAIT Library. We look forward to building relationships with the wider SAIT faculty.

*Ewa Piorko - Technical Services Librarian*



Ewa has a Master of Arts Degree from the University of British Columbia in Contemporary European Studies and a Master of Library and Information Science Degree from Dalhousie University. Prior to joining SAIT, she worked as a Librarian with the University of Chicago Booth School of Business and previously Ewa was a Media Librarian and Radio Archivist for the Canadian

Broadcasting Corporation. Her research interests include organizational information behaviour, interactive information retrieval, digital archives, and records management. Her team is responsible for licensing all of our electronic resources, e-books, AV materials, and purchasing print materials.

*Kat Marlowe - Instructional Librarian/Web Development Librarian*



Kat Marlowe (BA Honours, MLIS) joined the SAIT Library in November 2005, following earlier appointments at Grant MacEwan University and the University of Alberta. In her instructional role, Kat teaches hundreds of students each semester how to navigate and evaluate academic information sources and use the information in a professional, ethical manner.

She also leads development of the SAIT Library Website, including milestones such as the launch of a new website in 2006 and completion of a formal usability study addressing student needs in 2009. Kat is a leader and active contributor to a variety of technology initiatives at the Library aimed at streamlining processes and improving the user experience.

*Dave Weber - Customer Relations Librarian*



Dave is originally from Nelson, British Columbia. He completed an undergraduate degree in history at the University of Lethbridge and a Master of Library Science at the University of British Columbia. He began his college library career at Medicine Hat College and arrived at SAIT in 1988. He is a member of the Library skills instruction team and leads the Library

liaison team for the CALS, Construction, Manufacturing, and Transportation departments. Dave is the SAFA executive member for Division 4: Library, CITD, and Academic Counsellors.

### ☞ Library Distance Education Services

SAIT has a growing population of more than 1000 distance education students. The Library is working hard to enhance their service to distance education students and to develop a successful and enriched learning experience for both the distance education instructors and students. The following resources are available for distance education students:

- Books and videos sent to them by mail (free of charge) for a 4-week loan period with a possibility of renewing
- Access to library online databases and e-books
- The Alberta Library Card (TAL) – A library card, free to all SAIT students, that allows students to borrow material from any participating library
- Ask a Question – a service offered through The Alberta Library (TAL) that allows students to e-mail reference questions to library staff
- Dedicated phone line and e-mail

Students must have a library PIN to access these library resources. They can obtain a library PIN by contacting library staff via

- Phone: 403-210-4531
- FAX: 403-284-8619
- E-mail: [library.de@sait.ca](mailto:library.de@sait.ca)
- Website:

<http://library.sait.ca/servicesdistancestudents.asp> ☛

## Collective Bargaining

By Sean O'Flynn



We are entering into collective bargaining with the sincere hope that faculty and management can come together to start the long process of improving our relationship. We have a

positive feeling that we will be able to solve problems and build a stronger collective agreement, thereby providing the stable foundation necessary to accomplish the mutual goal of having SAIT become a premier polytechnic. There is simply no way to accomplish this goal without management truly embracing the direct role faculty play in the students' learning experience during their time here and the success they have afterward.

While there is no doubt that this round will be challenging as management

decides where to allocate their money, the bottom line is they have money. It is where they choose to spend that money that is important. If SAIT is not willing to spend money on faculty, then faculty must be willing to rise up and say that it is not right. There is money for ever-expanding management positions, demolishing buildings and then rebuilding, and many other ventures but not for faculty. However, we believe that management is prepared to recognize your contribution to SAIT and is ready to admit that a stronger collective agreement can help to improve the overall environment and ultimately benefit the students' experience at SAIT. There have been problems, and there will continue to be problems; but if management is willing to make a statement through total compensation and contract language that you are valued, then we are off to a great start.

A clearer picture of where we stand and where we are going this round will come once collective bargaining starts. It is important to be united in our goals

of improving working conditions and improving the experience for students who attend SAIT. If it turns out that our optimism was in fact misplaced, then it will be essential that faculty members unite together and take overt action to show management that we are willing to fight for what we believe in. Being willing to publicly stand together and demand change is our leverage against management if things turn confrontational. AUPE members are also starting collective bargaining, and it is important that we stand united with them as both SAFA and AUPE work to ensure that management is willing to invest in their people as well as their buildings. This will also help management to realize that working with their employees is their best strategy for trying to make real, long-term improvements to SAIT. However, as stated before, we believe that management has already realized this and is willing to sit down with the Association to work constructively on creating a more functional collective agreement. ♦♦

## Understanding Stress in Students

By Danica Heidebrecht, SAIT Student Development & Counselling Services

Do you ever wonder why some of your students complete assigned tasks with what looks like relative ease while others seem to dread and question the entire process? An understanding of the stress response may help to explain this.

Before we start though, know as instructors that many of you already are great resources and supports for your students, especially when they're overwhelmed. The intention of this article is to provide some information on stress to support you as you likely have encountered or will encounter many variations of stressed-out students.

A common misconception is that stress is caused by a specific event. In the example above, it becomes clear that there can be quite a variation in how students experience the same event. Some become easily overwhelmed; others have high thresholds for tolerating multiple demands. Research suggests that the experience of stress is not based solely on the demand the person experiences but is also influenced by a number of factors that either protect or aggravate one's response to stress.

For one, the perception of stress is often based on how students are making sense of the event and whether they feel

equipped to manage the demand. If students feel they have the skills to address a situation, their stress level will likely be manageable. Conversely, if students feel they do not have the knowledge or expertise to manage the stressor, it can add to their experience of stress.

Interestingly, stress can sometimes be internally generated—meaning, it is based on the demands students may place on themselves. This has nothing to do with what you did or didn't do as an instructor. Think of a student who strives only for "A" grades and, consequently, taxes herself/himself by worrying excessively about the assignments, ruminating about her/his performance, losing sleep, and maintaining an incredibly demanding study schedule in order to be able to maintain this grade. Sometimes the fear of failure can be so intense that even though there is no evidence the student will obtain a lower grade, the possibility of anything less than an "A" is enough to send the student into a panic. Logically, this assessment might seem irrational. However, under duress, it can seem very real. In fact, research tells us that during these times we actually have less access to the part of our brain that is responsible for rational thought. So in many ways, frazzled students may not be

operating in a completely rational manner. Memory, concentration, and performance can all be negatively affected by stress. So, poor performance in class is not necessarily a reflection of the student's true ability had they not been under pressure. Stress management strategies can be effective in this way as they assist students in re-engaging the part of the brain that is so critical for learning.

In our department, some of the common concerns we see students struggle with are as follows:

- managing the multiple demands of student life—academic tasks, financial pressures, social and relationship concerns;
- managing anxiety and the pressures associated with wanting to succeed;
- dealing with the inherently stressful demands of specific courses or simulations;
- dealing with unexpected personal concerns that at times are too much to juggle when a student is in the midst of his/her studies.

Many people make assumptions about what stress looks like. You may even assume you'll be able to tell when your

## A CLASSE Experience in Teaching Excellence

By Faculty Development Services

Have you ever noticed a gap between what you think is important for your students to be successful and what your students are actually doing?

Increasingly, SAIT instructors are discovering that a confidential CLASSE survey can help bridge the gap. In the fall 2009 semester, almost 50 instructors used a CLASSE in a total of 88 classes. More than 80 percent of instructors who completed a feedback survey agreed that using CLASSE was beneficial to their professional development, and almost 90 percent indicated that they would use it again.

What is the CLASSE?

The Classroom Survey of Student Engagement (CLASSE) is a survey that determines the gap between the behaviours you regard as important for your learners to succeed and the behaviours students are actually engaged in. The CLASSE is confidential and voluntarily requested and delivered by you in the classes you choose. Each CLASSE offers timely, formative feedback that allows you to make adjustments in your course delivery within the semester. CLASSE works by correlating data about student behaviour with your priorities to identify matches and mismatches. Interpretation of this data creates opportunities for you to develop new strategies and, potentially, to enter into transformative dialogues with students. These dialogues can lead to greater student engagement.

How does the CLASSE work?

The CLASSE works best if it is delivered during the first 1/3 to 1/2 of a course; this allows time in the semester to examine data and respond by discussing the results with students and making changes as needed or desired. Surveys are supplied and data is correlated by Faculty Development Services.

To use a CLASSE with students, follow the steps listed below:

1. Sign up with Faculty Development Services by using the link in the e-mail that was sent in early January or by e-mailing [faculty.development@sait.ca](mailto:faculty.development@sait.ca).

2. Attend an orientation session (first-time users) or book an appointment with Faculty Development Services to receive administration instructions and the surveys.
3. Complete the Faculty CLASSE survey to indicate how important you think specific behaviours are for the class you intend to survey (40 behaviours are targeted in the survey). When students complete the survey, they will record how often they engage in each of the specific behaviours.
4. Administer the 10 to 15-minute survey to students (on paper or electronically if all students have access to a computer in class).
5. Submit surveys to Faculty Development Services for confidential data interpretation that is returned to only the instructor.
6. Receive class-specific information on the matches and mismatches to determine areas of strength and areas that offer opportunities for change. [one week after administering the survey]
7. Request Faculty Development Services to assist in interpreting results and/or in exploring potential changes in class delivery. [OPTIONAL and recommended for first-time users]

What's new with CLASSE for Winter 2010?

Improvements this term include

- an online delivery option for in-class administration IF all students have access to a computer
- an opportunity to add up to two customized questions (some lead time is required to include customized questions).

The future will likely see the use of clickers and SMART Response to survey students in the classroom, and online delivery may be developed. For more information on using a CLASSE to improve student engagement and enhance student success, contact [faculty.development@sait.ca](mailto:faculty.development@sait.ca). ➡



January 25, 2010—the Olympic Torch as it passed SAIT on its way to the 2010 Games.



ICT's very own Greg Smith was part of the Olympic Torch Run in Strathmore on Tuesday, January 19, 2010.

President's Message  
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Concerns that members have do not have to be related to just portions of the Collective Agreement. SAFA is involved in several joint committees in which the identification of issues and concerns are discussed, and an attempt to resolve the issues are made. Safety concerns should be brought forward to safety committees in each area. Collective Agreement issues are brought forward at the Joint Advisory Committee, and concerns that are common to SAIT or affect the institute overall are brought directly to the Senior SAIT Executive through the Joint Executive Committee. No one should feel that his or her voice is too small to be heard. SAFA acts as the voice of the membership.

By now everyone should have received an e-mail in regard to the Emergency Response Plan. All members should seriously review and consider opting into

the notification of messages. Should an emergency happen, knowledge of events is what will help all of us keep those who have been entrusted to our care safe.

I would like to call on each school/department to submit articles to the SAFAGRAM. Everyone receives too much bad news these days. It would be nice to show off what is happening in the different areas of the campus

“No one should feel that his or her voice is too small to be heard.”

and share the good news of what members are doing. It is also another way in which members all across the campus can connect and share what works. Use these articles to promote your programs. By knowing what is happening, word can spread. Often people who are considering SAIT as a choice of schools ask me about different programs here at SAIT. This may be one way in which we could also promote the various programs that are delivered here and help increase enrolment.

I would like to close with a couple of tax tips that I use each year. Please bear in mind that I am no tax expert.

Tip 1 – The money that you pay to the Association in the form of dues is fully deductible under “union dues” from your gross income thereby lowering your net income.

Tip 2 – Don't forget about medical expenses. You can access your record of medical expenses with Sun Life directly from their website. A printout of what you had claimed and what was paid and not paid is available to you. The amount not covered can be used to increase the allowable medical expenses. Also, for those individuals, like me, who are still on the “old” plan, any premium amounts that you pay for private health care can also be lumped into the medical expenses. The monthly payments for Sun Life are eligible as they are considered payments to a private health care plan. ♦♦

Understanding Stress in Students  
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students are stressed. It is important to know that stress can manifest in ways that are kept underground. Instead of being outspoken about it, some might never open up about just how overwhelmed they may be feeling. Headaches, stomach troubles, emotional outbursts, and self-destructive thinking can all be signs of stress. In fact, there can be a sense of shame attached to letting you know what they're grappling with. They might be resistant to asking for help as well; i.e., an assignment extension fearing that they might be looked down upon or perceiving that they might be inconveniencing their instructors, who in many cases, they respect and look up to.

Some cues that may be worth noting are as follows: withdrawal from their classroom peers; shifts in how they typically function; or a decline in their typical academic performance. In these cases, it may be appropriate to ask them what is happening. Saying something like, “I've noticed you seem less engaged in class lately, just wanted to check in with you about how you're doing. How are things going? Anything I can help with?” This can be a way of acknowledging the issue and finding out how best to help

the student before the student's concerns potentially escalate. Keep in mind that the student also has a responsibility in terms of assessing and determining what might best help him/her.

Male students particularly may be less inclined to show more vulnerable emotions. Though they may not outwardly display stress, they can experience it internally nonetheless. Sometimes it comes out as apathy, aggression, or substance-use.

There is no easy guide to determine when a student will get stressed out, or what this will look like, so it can be helpful to listen and inquire about what's happening with the student. Assignment extensions or a discussion about resources and supports on campus that might help the student in managing the stress might be worth considering. A meeting with a learning strategist through the LASC (Learner Assessment and Skills Centre) might be enough to help the student gain study strategies to learn how to study more efficiently, thereby freeing up some time to attend to some of the other things the student may have on his/her plate.

Resources are available on campus to assist students in managing stress as they tackle the demands of student life. At Student Development and Counselling Services, we work with students to provide support and help them engage in more adaptive coping methods. Referrals from instructors are always welcome.

If you'd like to discuss this topic further or consult with one of our counsellors about how to best support students, you can reach us at SAIT *Student Development & Counselling Services*. 403.284.7023

#### References:

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News Item: SAIT and SAFA enter contract negotiations

Well, I didn't invite him either,  
but given the circumstances,  
I think we're just going to have  
to deal with it ...

