

Mark's Musings

School's Out

by Mark Snaychuk

It is difficult these days to turn on any media outlet without hearing a deluge of bad news and a never-ending chorus of doomsayers. To a Martian listening in on some distant satellite dish, it would appear that the earth is populated by rabid talk-show hosts who see murder and corruption around every corner. Indeed it is sometimes difficult to argue with the bad-news junkies when you see the moral disintegration that has infected all aspects of society. Bad manners, run-away materialism, and "me-first" attitudes make it hard to believe in anything, but let's face it—the world has always been a mess!

What really sets us apart from previous generations is the notion that nothing can be done to save us from ourselves. Given this sort of apathy, it is no wonder that many of our young people have given up on our institutions. The "new-age" philosophers have cast aside time-honored values and replaced them with a hyperspace world where no action is ever judged as "right" or "wrong." Alas, the world continues to fade into shades of grey that have become indiscernible to the human eye and the human spirit.

With this type of reasoning, where only individual rights and personal choices seem to matter, the role of the teacher has become ever more difficult, and it comes at a time when public education is drawing fire from an assortment of armchair quarterbacks who have never set foot in the classroom as teachers. These "self-esteem" fanatics who have never heard of academic standards don't seem to understand that the great teachers (and I can name many here on this campus) are some of the last of the working-class heroes.

Accordingly, as another crop of graduates has walked the stage, let me tell you about the people to whom they owe much of their success. These everyday people whom we call instructors don't make too much money, and they don't wear designer clothes. They live in modest houses and wonder about whether they will ever have enough money to retire. They don't get many perks, and they struggle to get cost-of-living adjustments that will never match the inflationary pressures of a boom-town like Calgary. They absorb all the praises and criticisms that students tend to offer, and through it all, they keep a sense of humor that serves them well in the classroom.

They fight rush-hour traffic in freezing weather to get here for early morning lectures, and they pay parking fees just as students do. They buy \$2 imported coffees that stain cheap ties, and sometimes you'll notice coffee stains on a pair of weathered shoes that should have been discarded long ago.

They have great faith in people and welcome cultures from around the world. They meet after hours with students who are broke or on the verge of failing. They meet before class with students who are euphoric with stories about new jobs and a better life. They meet with parents who struggle to understand today's attitudes. They meet with families who can no longer cope with a world where isolation and anonymity are the new standards. They meet with coordinators and ask if we have any more power or wisdom than they do.

Yes, the people who make our world turn are well known to us, and until someone comes up with a better idea, then that old-fashioned notion of public education will still represent the hopes and dreams of the vast majority of Canadians. Those who preach about privatization of the post-secondary system overlook the obvious fact that few of us would have a college education if our families were forced to pay the full costs. Anyone who wants to usher out the grant-funded programs understands little about his/her own origins. Without the redistribution of wealth into public schools, there would be no middle class and there would be no multicultural entity that we call Canada.

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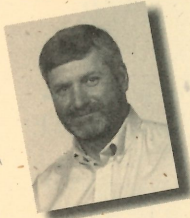


SAIT
Academic
Faculty
Association

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



by Ed Logue

As this is the last SAFAGRAM article I will be writing as SAFA president, I would like to take this opportunity to ask faculty a question. Is it time for SAFA to hire a labour relations officer (LRO)? Please bear in mind that this article is only the musings of an outgoing president and is intended only to raise the concept of a labour relations officer with faculty.

SAIT is a large and diversified Institute. Employment rights of faculty members are covered by the SAIT/SAFA Collective Agreement, and on many issues, the Employer appears reluctant to recognize the Association as the voice of faculty members and attempts to undermine rights of academic staff members. The Association has an obligation under the Post-Secondary Learning Act to protect the rights of its members resulting in more and more grievances that go to rights arbitration. Another troubling result of the Employer's attitude towards faculty members is that some faculty members are no longer willing to volunteer for Association positions as faculty view this as tantamount to putting their careers on the line.

I believe that it is imperative for the operation of the Association to have continuity in labour relations. One way of combating the Employer's move towards marginalizing the Association would be for the Association to employ a labour relations officer.

SAFAGRAM

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SAFAGRAM is published by the SAIT Academic Faculty Association (SAFA) five times a year on or about the first days of October, December, February, April, and June. Deadline for submissions is the 10th of the month preceding publication. Send submissions to SAFAGRAM, care of the SAFA office, N201 or e-mail submissions to luda.paul@sait. Please keep submissions under 300 words, double space. Submissions may be edited for grammar, length, or content.

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.

Benefits of Employing a Labour Relations Officer

1. The LRO would be an employee of the Association and, therefore, answerable to the Association and not to the Employer.
2. The LRO would provide continuity in labour relations.
3. The LRO would be responsible for the handling of all grievances that now account for a large portion of the SAFA President's time.
4. The LRO would be responsible for the preparation and negotiation of future Collective Agreements.

Drawbacks of Employing a Labour Relations Officer

1. SAFA dues may have to be increased.
2. Finding someone to fill the position may be difficult.
3. Retaining a person in the position for continuity over a number of years may be a challenge.

The hiring of a full-time labour relations officer is not a decision that should be taken lightly by the Association. It is a big step to take and will need a great deal of research and input. Our sister Institute to the north has had an LRO for a number of years now, and its employer-employee relations are much better than those at SAIT. However, this success also may be a result of the willingness of the Employer to work with the Association to the benefit of academic staff members. ♦♦

*Mark's Musings**continued from page 1*

Thus, as we head off for some much needed cerebral regeneration time, let's also give thanks to the other people who make the institution work. Thanks to all of our wonderful support staff, many of whom work two jobs just to make ends meet. Thanks to the Learner Assessment and Skills Centre and the counselors who deal with students' crises every day. Thanks to the custodians who pick up the cigarette butts and the trash. Thanks to our students' and their families who come here in search of the Canadian dream. Thanks to our management people who, contrary to some beliefs, are as stressed out and bewildered as the rest of us.

Finally, thanks to all of the people in the institution who still believe in the idea that some things will always be worth fighting for. If you are one of these people, then I wish you sunny days, some inner peace, and a ticket upstairs. See you around the asylum in September. ♦♦

SAFA Executive and Office Staff

Back row left to right: Doug Spurgeon, Perry Osweiler, Shoaib Nasir, Rob Salomons, and Luda Paul

Front row left to right: Ann Kostiuk, Ed Logue, Heather Sagan, and Ray Gauthier.
Missing: Ernie Grummett

Develop Staff Instead of Resentment

by John Hobel

This time of year many HR departments are slogging through the employee performance review process. Understandably seen as a time-consuming chore by managers and staff alike, formal performance development programs are nonetheless essential HR management tools. Done properly, they improve workers' skills and productivity; done poorly, an opportunity to align staff with the corporate plan is missed. For HR it's a chance to show its worth and embed effective people management strategies into an organization's culture.

When performance plans work well, they bring senior management's strategic plan for the year cascading down through the organization, eventually appearing as staff goals. Performance reviews are also a chance to address staff professional development, as well as being a mechanism to correct poor performers and discipline staff. What type of system to use to accomplish this is the question.

Technology can be employed, but whether or not HR decides (or can afford) to go this route, underlying principles remain the same. Two decisions to make are: When to perform reviews? And, should goal achievement be linked to compensation?

While the first quarter is typically performance review time, some organizations opt to shift the process to an ongoing yearly one in which employees receive reviews on their hiring anniversaries. (It's better than birthdays — who wants a bad review for a gift.) While this spreads out the work and avoids the organization taking a collective time out to fill out forms, it doesn't effectively support the goal of spreading an annual corporate strategy among the ranks. It's better to align staff goals and the business strategy early on and then spend the year following through. Plus, getting it done in one fell swoop is appealing for those who

prefer biting the bullet and putting the task behind them (of course checks to stay on target continue).

A colleague who worked for a large multinational that took the ongoing-hiring-anniversary route complained to me that performance reviews had become a dreaded weekly chore. The organization's system required each employee to ask five others for feedback to attach to their reviews. In practice this meant every employee could pretty much count on getting at least one feedback request a week. Time-strapped and resentful workers started taking feedback requests home to fill out on weekends. Here's where biting the bullet beats ongoing pain.

And what about tying goals to compensation? Well, that sounds like a good way to get some internal arguing started. When managers try to set goals, employees will attempt to avoid responsibilities because failure will mean a personal hit in the pocket book. The intent should be to encourage people to stretch and take risks. Why should they do so if it's their own money on the line? And wouldn't you prefer someone achieving half of an ambitious plan rather than 100 per cent of soft goals

set to safeguard salaries?

And if compensation is tied to job performance, the manager hears this: "A six! Clearly my time management skills rate a seven. A six means a smaller raise, I'm sure you meant seven."

Battles over point scores won't get HR anywhere. Employees will strive to reach goals if they're engaged in their work. What they need is a game plan, not the threat of the penalty box.

Reprinted with permission *Canadian HR Reporter*, March 14, 2005. ♦♦

“When managers try to set goals, employees will attempt to avoid responsibilities because failure will mean a personal hit in the pocket book.”

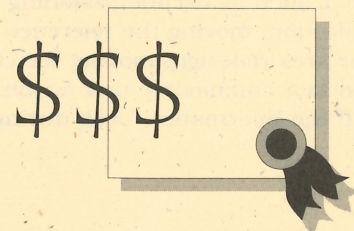
Professional Credential Enhancement Funding

by Shoaib Nasir

In keeping with SAIT Polytechnic's strategic vision of granting degrees, HR.2.2.3 Professional Credential Enhancement Procedure was passed in November 2004. SAIT employees are eligible for a tuition funding of \$10,000 per degree, as well as interest-free loans of up to \$10,000 per degree. For the period between January 1, 2005, to June 30, 2006, 83 full-time faculty and staff were approved for the Academic Credential Upgrading program for a cost of over \$300,000. This year 88% of the successful individuals are either instructors or staff members in the Academic Division.

From an operational standpoint, Executive Management will determine funding for the program on an annual basis. In exchange for the funding, the employee will be expected to return to service after program completion; the expected service will be calculated on the basis of one month of active employment for each \$300 of funding received.

Although the funding initiative will take effect on July 1, 2005, SAIT Polytechnic will still support applicants who started their program of study in January 2005. This eighteen-month period is a one-time offer only. From here on in, if approved, the funding will be available only for July 1 to June 30 of the following budget year. This means that if you are planning to start your degree in July 2006, your proposal must be submitted by November 30 of this year. ♦♦



LIBRARY REPORT



by Dave Weber (284-8476) and
Nora Robinson (210-4073)

- ⇒ E-books are here! In late April, we added approximately 19,000 electronic books to our collection. With such a large number of titles, the subject coverage is broad, ranging from highly technical information to general knowledge. A quick check in our library catalogue shows titles such as the *The CRC handbook of mechanical engineering, Robotics and automation handbook, The incredible payback : innovative sourcing solutions that deliver extraordinary results*, and *Let them eat cake : marketing luxury to the masses-as well as the classes*. Many of the e-books will allow the user (you or your students) to create personal accounts with your own bookshelves, notes, and highlighted material.
- ⇒ The e-books are all listed in our library catalogue at www.sait.ca/library. You can search for a book by title, author, subject, or keyword. To get access to a book's content, you need to click on the View button and then click on the URL included in the record. If you are off-campus, you will need your library user number (your 9-digit SAIT ID number and your library PIN). If you don't have a library PIN, please come to the Library Information Desk (Heart Building, MC111) to activate your account. To see a complete list of all our e-book titles:
 - Go to the library website
 - Click on the Library Resources/Services link
 - Select the Power Search option
 - On the Power Search page, look for the ItemType box.
 - Use the drop-down menu to select Electronic Books and then click on the Search button.
 All 19,000 titles will be listed.
- ⇒ During the first week in May, we redesigned the reference area on the main level. We lowered the shelving to improve sightlines and create a more open look. The shelving units are oriented north-south to give students more aisles to the computers and printers that are located at the south end of the first floor.
- ⇒ We have hired two Library and Information Technology students for the summer. Monica Palidwar and Aislinn Lawreniuk started on May 2. They will be working on a range of projects such as decommissioning most of the 16mm film collection, moving the reference collection to allow for the area redesign, moving the circulating book collection to accommodate new acquisitions, and helping to staff the Information Desk during the summer months.
- ⇒ Zahina Iqbal has been greatly involved in SAIT's Learning Objects Repository project. The LOR is part of a support system for Career Pathways exposing high school learners from a selection of Calgary Schools to courses being offered by SAIT. It is one of eight Collaborative Server-Based Computing Projects being funded by Alberta Learning. Currently, content for the repository from various departments and sources is being identified, categorized, and labeled to make it accessible once the IS infrastructure is installed. At the same time, the design for its distribution and presentation is being researched. The final product will give students and teachers access to teaching and learning materials that support their courseware.
- ⇒ The Faculty Resource Centre section of the mySAIT.ca myFaculty page has received an Award of Merit from the Association for Media and Technology in Education in Canada. The Library Research team (Zahina Iqbal, Terry Smith, Zahra Razaghi, and Michelle Racine Stacey) worked with CITD in developing the site that currently provides a customized virtual library as one channel for faculty.
- ⇒ The Canadian Library Association annual conference will be held in Calgary in June. Several library staff have volunteered to work at the conference and will also be attending sessions. We are very pleased to announce that Susan Brayford, our Library Manager, will receive the Canadian Technical and Community College Innovative Librarian of 2005 award at the conference. We also had staff attend the Alberta Association of Library Technicians Conference in Canmore in May. Dave, May, Nora, Zahina, and Susan all attended the Alberta Association of College Librarians spring meeting at Mount Royal College in April. Dave has taken on the job of AACL newsletter editor for 2005-2006. Nora finished her two-year term as director-at-large of the Association at the meeting.
- ⇒ The Library has started our spring-summer semester hours. From May 2 - September 5, the Library is open Monday to Thursday, 8 a.m. - 6:30 p.m. and Friday, 8 a.m. - 5 p.m. Evening and weekend hours resume in September. ♦

Low Returns Squeeze Defined Pension Plans: Original Assumptions are Proving Faulty

EDMONTON—Employees in defined-contribution pension plans could receive far lower benefits than they once expected, an actuary told an Edmonton audience of human-resource professionals Thursday.

Many defined-contribution plans were created in the 1980s, when high stock and bond returns persuaded employees that they could do better by letting their contributions rise with the markets, rather than locking in to predictable, modest rewards from the more common defined-benefit plans.

Such plans also free employers from the onus of guaranteeing pensions.

But market returns have since fallen, said David Makarchuk, a retirement-planning specialist with Mercer Human Resource Consulting in Calgary.

Future annual returns, from balanced stock and bond portfolios, now are projected at around six per cent—compared to the 10 per cent that some people anticipated when they entered defined-contribution plans.

Such plans receive a combination of employer and employee contributions that typically total five to 10 per cent of annual earnings. Falling returns could be offset by rising contributions, but “contribution rates are pretty much at the same levels today as 10 to 15 years ago,” Makarchuk said.

As a result, a 30-year employee, whose contributions equal seven per cent of earnings, eventually might receive an annual pension equalling only 24 per cent of average earnings—compared to the 48 per cent payout ratio that once was expected, Makarchuk said. “Defined-contribution plans, at retirement, might be worth only half of what they were intended to be.”

Most such plans offer wide choices in the selection of investments. Employers can help employees to make better choices, said Dave Zanutto, head of Mercer’s investment counselling in Calgary.

He predicted that many employers will simplify the choice, remove lower-performing options, and encourage “more appropriate choices of investments.”

One possibility just entering the Canadian market but becoming popular in the United States is “targeted maturity funds,” Zanutto said.

Every such fund is designed for people of a particular age or retirement date. Over time, the fund shifts its asset balance to reduce risk—just as a prudent investor would shift toward lower risk and greater predictability as his or her planning horizon shortens.

THE PLANS DEFINED

Defined-contribution plan: The employer and/or employee each contribute a specified percentage of the employee’s income. The money is invested and the eventual pension amount depends on actual investment returns. Such plans are most common among small, private employers.

Defined-benefit plan: The employer and employee each contribute specified amounts. The pension amount depends on contribution rates, years of service, and the employee’s final or highest average earnings. The plan sponsor or employer ensures that pensions are paid, regardless of investment returns. Such plans are common in the public sector.

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TIDBITS

Results

VP SUMMIT 05

Sait Polytechnic

Areas for Improvement

A number of areas continue to be identified as concerns by employees:

- Overall image has improved significantly in the last year, but there is still concern with responsiveness to the business environment, being ethical and SAIT’s ability to attract high quality employees.
- Despite improvements, employees still indicate concern with the translation of the vision into focused objectives.
- While Departmental Teams are viewed more favourably, SAIT’s President and Vice Presidents are not seen to be consistent in what they say and do not seem to be acting on the survey results.
- Encouragement of constructive feedback continues to improve, but is still well below the norm.
- Rating on respectful treatment, fairness and sensitivity towards work/personal life demands are lower than in other North American organizations.

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Rewards

NOTE 18 BUDGET

On June 3, 2003, the Board of Governors approved the revenue and expense budget for the year ended June 30, 2004.

NOTE 19 SALARY DISCLOSURE

(in thousands)	2004			Total	2003 Total
	Base Salary ⁽¹⁾	Other Cash Benefits ⁽²⁾	Other Non-Cash Benefits ⁽³⁾		
Executives:					
President & CEO ⁽⁴⁾	\$ 175	\$ 26	\$ 44	\$ 245	\$ 206
Vice President, Academic ^{(4) (6)}	144	13	35	192	154
Vice President, Finance & CFO ^{(4) (6)}	144	13	44	201	154
Vice President, Employee & Student Services ^{(4) (6)}	144	25	18	187	148
Vice President, External Relations ^{(4) (6)}	144	13	26	183	154
Board of Governors:					
Chairman of the Board ⁽⁵⁾	—	—	—	—	—
Board Members ⁽⁵⁾	—	12	—	12	10

⁽¹⁾ Base salary includes pensionable base pay.

⁽²⁾ Other cash benefits include performance payments, overtime, lump sum payments and honoraria.

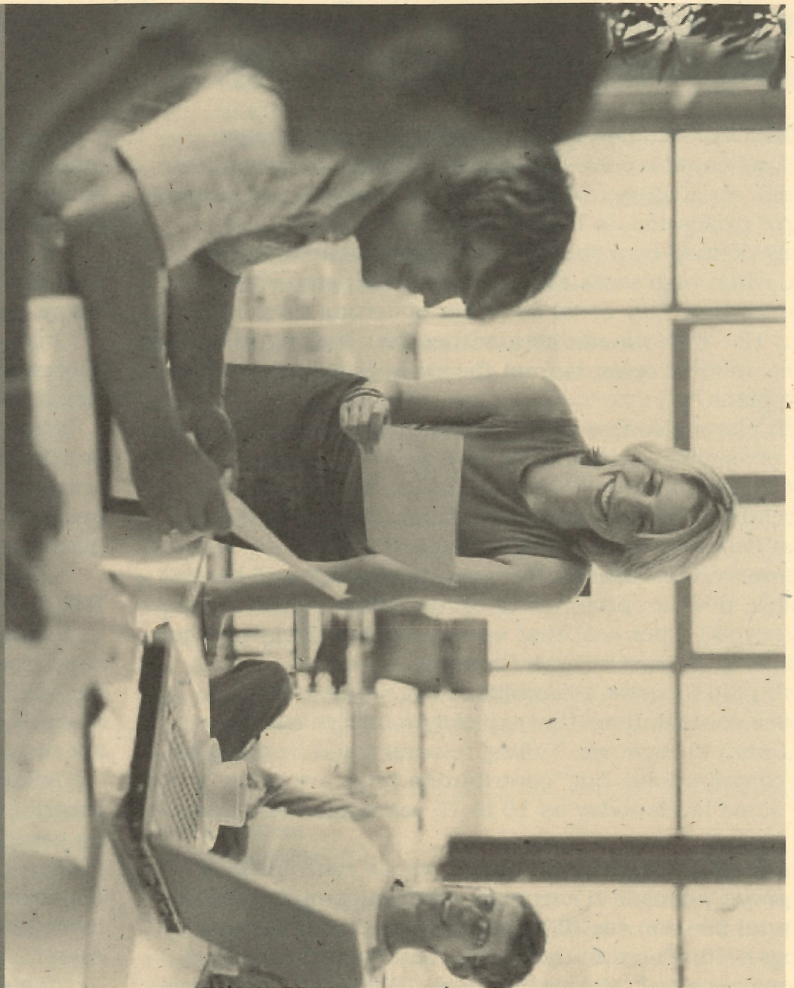
⁽³⁾ Other non-cash benefits include the Institute’s share of all employee benefits and contributions or payments made on behalf of employees including pension, health care, dental coverage, group life insurance, short- and long-term disability plans, and professional memberships.

⁽⁴⁾ Automobile provided, but no dollar amount included in the non-cash benefits figures.

⁽⁵⁾ Some members do not accept honoraria.

⁽⁶⁾ Non-cash benefits include a supplemental executive retirement plan paid on behalf of the President and Vice-Presidents in 2004, and on behalf of the President in 2003.

Page 36—2004 Sait Annual Report
Increases of approximately 12+%
(salary and benefits)



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