

SAFAGRAM

President's Message



By Doug Spurgeon

Soon the vacation break will be here, and as the exams are finishing, I want to take this time to wish everyone a Happy Holiday Season and hope that you have a very enjoyable time with your family and loved ones.

Regrettably, it has come to light that for members who haven't been with us for more than a year there is "no room at the campus." Maternity leave is being denied these members if their service is less than one year. The medical portion cannot be denied, but the portion that falls under "leave without pay" is being denied. When asking our VP Academic about this, he stated that his only question is, "Have they been here a year?" If they have not been, then it's denied. He also went on to say that if they want the time off then SAIT will not guarantee them a job. I have also spoken to our new President on this issue and was informed that it would be looked into.

I trust that beside the bad appearance of decisions like these, not to mention the potential human rights issue this now raises as "protected grounds," become trampled, it amazes me why a "leave without pay" would be denied. After all it does not cost the institute anything other than the failure of goodwill to approve the leave. In my opinion, this is not the proper use of the taxpayers' dollars, and it is not being a "good steward of the public purse" to deny unpaid leave. At the end of October, these same "stewards" rewarded themselves with "Performance Payments," which contradicts the message from the Minister of Enterprise and Advanced Education in his letter to the Board Chairs in April 2013.

I would also like to thank James McWilliams for stepping forward and helping me as he acted in my stead over the past few months. I have had to take care of some old injuries that have become more of a hindrance this past year. With James's help, we have been able to carry on business as normal.

At this time of the year, I would like to thank everyone for their contributions to the Association and to each other. It is only because of you, the members, that the Association stands as strong and united as it is today. I look forward to finishing off next year in your service.

Have a great holiday, be safe, and see you all in the New Year. ❖

In this Issue

President's Message	Page 1
LRO Report	Page 2
Library Report	Page 3
Letter to Faculty Associations—ACIFA	Page 4
Wellness in the New Year—Take a break for your health.....	Page 5
Section 36 Workload Committee Report	Page 5
News from Articulation—November 2013.....	Page 6

Editorial Board

- Pat Squibb
- Wendy Strashok
- Patricia Brown
- BJ Hamilton—Cartoonist

Layout

Luda Paul

SAFAGRAM is published by the SAIT Academic Faculty Association (SAFA) five times a year usually closer to the end of the months 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 kathie.dann@sait.ca. Please keep submissions under 300 words, double-spaced. 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.

<http://www.safacalgary.com/>

Labour Relations Officer (LRO) Report



By Al Brown, LRO

SIR II Instructor Evaluations

How often have you heard the following when discussing the SIR II results:

“I do what I do every year. I teach the way I teach every year. [My] first year got me pats on the back; [my] second year got me

kicked in the butt; and for year three, my scores were off the charts. I got a ‘role model.’ What did I do differently? I have no clue.”

Of course, there is a lot of discussion regarding the validity of the infamous “Question 40,” but I believe there is additional underlying, fundamental flaws in the way these evaluations are used within our institute.

SIR II Evaluations are Voluntary. Students do not have to complete the SIR II evaluation, but instructors are held responsible if a significantly large percentage of the students do not complete the SIR II. Does lack of participation by a student indicate poor teaching, lack of interest in the course, or lack of confidence in the outcomes of the evaluation? (“What’s the point of these questionnaires and writing comments? They’re never acted on!” is a commonly heard student comment). Academic Chairs are free to interpret the lack of participation by the entire class any way they choose. There is no assurance that any Academic Chair will be consistent in their judgment on this issue.

SIR II Evaluations are Anonymous. Under a system of anonymous evaluations, students don’t need to take any responsibility for their opinions. With no possibility for follow-up, students don’t need to think through their decision. They don’t have to consider carefully all facts in order to come to a valid and justifiable conclusion supported by facts. An evaluation could be based solely on dissatisfaction resulting from a lower than expected grade received on an exam or from a single negative in-class experience with an instructor over the course of an entire semester.

Another potential problem is lack of ability to follow up on the results. No details can be gathered as to why an evaluation was positive or negative. Do all students with low grades give low evaluations? Do students with poor attendance records give low evaluations to an instructor they may have only rarely had contact with in class? Are low SIR scores simply due to an instructor’s attempt at a new or different approach to a course?

The Problem of Survey Data. SIR II evaluations are a result of survey data. While the survey results may give an overview of student feelings concerning a faculty member, they don’t provide an in-depth picture of what happened in the classroom. They also do not allow for in-depth interviews that could determine reasons for dissatisfaction. Confidentiality, instead of anonymity, would allow your Academic Chair to determine whether the problems were due to weaknesses in the instructor, or in the student, or in both. It would be possible to determine, for example, if there was a correlation between academic preparation of students and evaluation of instructors. Do instructors get lower evaluations from students who are less prepared?

Educational Testing Service (ETS)—the developer of the SIR II – recognizes that

... a few course characteristics appear to affect ratings and should be taken into account. Courses required by the (Institute) that are not part of the student’s major or minor field tend to receive somewhat lower ratings than other courses. Ratings may also differ because of the subject field of the course. For each of these characteristics, the differences may not be large, but together they can be significant.

What do Labour Arbitrators Say? The following is an excerpt from a “leading case” arbitration award (Humber College and Ontario Public Service Employees Union) concerning the use of Student Faculty Questionnaires (SFQ)—the equivalent of the SIR II evaluation used here at SAIT—in determining a merit increase in pay similar to our “Performance Review” process where a “Requires Improvement” results in a withholding of your grid step increase:

We do not find on the evidence that SFQ results are considered as the standard for Faculty evaluations but are guidelines for improvements to the learning environment but here the evidence discloses that (Academic Chair) relied on the SFQ student responses as an evaluation standard for the purposes of Article 14.03 A 2(a) as set out in the written warning. The results of these SFQs are hearsay evidence which cannot be relied on by the Board to base a finding of the facts relied on by the College in denying the step increment. (Academic Chair) decision in this issue was clearly set out in his letter, that the evaluation of the Grievor’s overall poor performance “as detailed in the responses and student feedback questionnaires from winter 2000” determined that the Grievor’s performance for the purposes of Article 14.03 A 2(a) was not satisfactory. SFQs are not to be used in a punitive fashion and are only part of evaluation of Faculty so that there are limitations as indicated in the memo of (Dean) to the use and application by the College of the SFQs. The reliance of the College on the results of these forms are not established as the standard of evaluation for Faculty nor are the SFQs in this case confirmed by evidence on which the Board could rely.

... Clearly, the College placed substantial if not exclusive reliance on the results of the SFQs in denying the increment to the Grievor but this being designed only as part of an evaluation process and that no common evaluation standard was established for the evaluation of all Faculty, the Board cannot conclude on this form of evidence that the College established that the Grievor failed to meet a teaching standard required by its Faculty and of therefore by the Grievor.

For all of these reasons, we find that the College did not have cause to impose discipline against the Grievor and that the Written Warning was therefore not justified. Further, the Board finds that the annual increment in September 2001 was improperly denied... therefore we find that the Grievor is entitled and shall be paid his annual increment as of September 2001.

Having regard to all of the evidence and the submissions of the parties and for all these reasons, it is the Board’s award that the grievance is allowed.

Library Report

By Jessica Norman

The Reg Erhardt Library bid a fond farewell to long-time Library Manager Susan Brayford, who retired this fall. We wish her well.



Genevieve Luthy

Genevieve Luthy has joined us as of November 2013. She worked for eight years at the Calgary Public Library, most recently as the Manager of Virtual Services. She holds a Bachelor of Commerce degree and a Bachelor of Arts in Economics degree from the University of Calgary and then worked as an analyst in the energy industry before returning to the University of Alberta to complete her Masters in Library and Information Science. Alison Hart recently asked Genevieve a few questions about her experiences:

1. How long have you worked in libraries? What interests you about libraries?

My first job was at the Banff Public Library when I was 16, so I've been working in libraries a long time. What interests me about libraries is how they connect people with the right information, whether it's for education, work, or fun. In post-secondary institutions, we tie information literacy skills to academic success, but information literacy skills serve students for their whole lives. People need to be information literate to succeed at their jobs, to find health information for their families, to make decisions about who to vote for in an election, and even to plan their next trip. Really, what librarians do is enable learning, and that's what I love about my work.

2. What will be your main focus for the Reg Erhardt Library?

I definitely want to continue the great work that is already happening in the Library. My focus will be to ensure we always provide innovative, user-centred library services and help students develop information literacy skills that serve them well beyond their time at SAIT. I'm also really interested in exploring ways that we can use online tools and emerging technology to enhance and extend library services beyond our physical walls.

3. Where do you see the Library in five years?

I think one of the biggest changes we'll see in the next five years is the further shift to more electronic resources. We already have a significant number of e-books and electronic databases, and those will only continue to grow. Although the way we access information is changing, the Library will always play a key role in creating connections to information and helping students navigate through the possibilities.

We also know that the way students use Library space is changing and providing more places for students to work collaboratively, using technology is really important. In five years, I hope you'll see more flexible, collaborative spaces in the Library that can be adapted to the way students want to learn.

4. What are your hobbies?

I grew up in Canmore, so I spend as much time as I can back in the mountains. In the summer that means hiking and biking, and in the winter, I'm out cross-country skiing whenever I can. Of course, as a librarian, I'm obligated to say I like to read, and I do! I just finished *A Constellation of Vital Phenomena* by Anthony Marra, which I highly recommend, and I'm about to start *Life After Life* by Kate Atkinson.

5. If you were stranded on a deserted island, name three things you would bring?

Well, since saying a boat or a plane is probably cheating, I'll go with a flint, a knife, and a boat building book. 🗡️

*Labour Relations Officer-
Continued from Page 2*

I believe there is a consensus within academic staff regarding the value of student evaluations. They can—if used fairly and carefully—provide valuable feedback on faculty performance in the classroom. But even ETS cautions: “While the results can be used in a variety of ways, SIR II evaluations represent only one source of data about instructional effectiveness. Other sources include self-evaluations, feedback from colleagues, administrator (Academic Chair) evaluations, and assessments of student learning.”

The recent addition of a Letter of Understanding to our Collective Agreement concerning Performance Management and Assessment of Teaching Excellence acknowledges this fact:

“SAIT confirms that Student Instructional Reports (SIRs) will not be the sole criteria used for the purposes of conducting performance evaluations. SAIT agrees to work with the Association to outline the performance management and evaluation process.”

I am hopeful there is a new commitment within SAIT senior management that significant improvements can be made in the system which may significantly improve the educational experience for students, as well as faculty members.

I look forward to seeing you all at the SAFA Christmas party on December 11. As always, please call me or stop by the SAFA office, N201 Senator Burns Building, if you have any questions. A Happy Holiday Season to all! 🗡️

Letter to Faculty Associations from Doug Short, President (Association of Colleges & Institutes Faculties Associations)—ACIFA

The [Local Authorities Pension Plan] LAPP (your pension) is changing

People are living longer. The average lifespan for Canadians, if you live to 60 years, is 87 for men and 89 for women. Pensions, originally designed when the average lifespan of Canadians was 67, built in early retirement incentives/subsidies. Additionally we have entered a period of time in which rates of return on investments are more modest. These factors have put significant strains on the finances of the pension plans. This has resulted in increased contribution rates.

On September 16, 2013 Minister Doug Horner laid out his and the Government's vision for Alberta's public service pensions. ACIFA's overriding concern is maintaining a commitment to a defined benefit plan. A defined benefit plan commits to a set retirement income based on salary and length of service within the plan.

The key points in Minister Horner's vision are [on a go forward basis after December 31, 2015]:

- 65 will become the standard retirement age
- No more early retirement subsidies incentives/subsidies on service after this date (85 factors, early retirement reductions to go from 3% to about 6%, similar to the CPP).
- Inflation protection in retirement will no longer be guaranteed but established annually based on the financial strength of the plan. However 50% of API [Alberta Price Index] will be budgeted for in actuarial assumptions and contribution rates.
 - How this works for accumulated service [example]:
 - Individual has 25 years of service until 2016, 5 years afterward, total 30 years
 - 60% of inflation is guaranteed on 25/30 of retirement income, 5/30 is subject to an annual decision
 - Same process for 85 factor
- We will be able to contribute to the Plan beyond 35 years.
- The Government through regulation will place a Cap on contributions. Currently contribution rates from the employee and employer have reached about 24%. This may potentially be limiting on Plan flexibility if the Cap is ratcheted downward and there is an adverse performance from the Plan's assets.
- The Plan will become jointly sponsored between employers and employees. The Board of Trustees will assume fiduciary responsibility from the Minister. A concern is that the Board will be "experts" [definition still unknown].

The changes mean that as we go forward we will be working longer and there will be added risk to the inflationary improvement on retirement income. However there should be a positive effect on contribution rates. The changes proposed should result in a 3.5% reduction in the combined contribution rate of the employee and employer, other things being equal. This could result in annual savings to the employee of over \$1,000.

We will continue to advocate for protection of the defined benefit and more solid inflation protection for retirees. There are other "tweaks" to the Minister's vision that we are optimistic can be enacted and work for the benefit of our members.

Doug Short
ACIFA, President and Representative on LAPP Stakeholders Group



Wellness in the New Year – Take a break for your health

If you're already thinking ahead to your New Year's health resolutions, look for fun and engaging support from the SAIT Wellness Committee.

In 2014, there will be activities and learning opportunities to contribute to your good health, including:

January: Attack of the snack analysis

February: The Importance of breaks and the physiology of stress

March: Try out Tabata, a hot new fitness trend

Also launching in January will be quick (15-20 minute) guided walks of campus; think of these as active coffee breaks without the coffee. We know that schedules don't always permit SAIT employees to take in sessions at lunch, so the Wellness Committee is planning activities for different times of day to accommodate a variety of timetables.

Information will be shared through SAITNOW Bulletins and SAITNOW (watch for a page dedicated to wellness in the New Year).

Happy holidays and a healthy new year, from your Wellness Committee!

Section 36 Workload Committee Report

By Donna Campbell

The SAIT/SAFA "Section 36 Workload Committee," established through a Letter of Understanding in June 2013, has held two productive meetings. A third is scheduled for early December before the Christmas break. A first cut list of discussion points was introduced, and will continue to be worked on by the Committee over the coming months. Section 36 deals with workload, such as class contact hours, weekend work, development and preparation, and assignable work. Updates will be provided in SAFAGRAM throughout 2014.

The SAFA Committee members are Richard Thompson (Construction), Earl Simpson (Manufacturing & Automation-M & A), Roger Duckworth (Business), Donna Campbell (Information and Communications Technology-ICT) ➡

Addicted to the Web

(Sung to the tune of
"Winter Wonderland")

Doorbell rings, I'm not list'nin',
From my mouth, drool is glist'nin',
I'm happy—although
My boss let me go—
Happily addicted to the Web.
All night long, I sit clicking,
Unaware time is ticking,
There's beard on my cheek,
Same clothes for a week,
Happily addicted to the Web!

Friends come by; they shake me,
Saying, "Yo, man!
Don't you know tonight's
the senior prom?"
With a listless shrug, I mutter
"No, man;
I just discovered
laugh-a-lot-dot-com!"
I don't phone, don't send faxes,
Don't go out, don't pay taxes,
Who cares if someday
They drag me away?
I'm happily addicted to the Web!
Happ-ilyyyyy, ad-dict-eeeed to the
Weeeeb!!! (Yeah!)



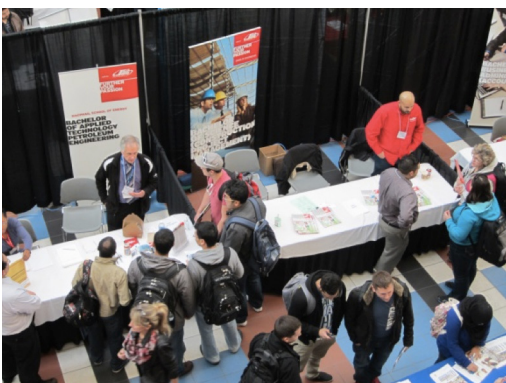
News from Articulation – November 2013



Sandra Vogel, Diane Moreau, Kim Frayn, Karen McDaniel, and two ladies from ACAT at the Transfer Options booth.



Lisa Weatherby from AMT and two reps from Embry-Riddle here to discuss an agreement.



Lots of interest in the BAPT and BSC-CPM degrees!

Thank you to SAFA members who have been talking to their classes about degree completion opportunities. This year we sent out e-mails to everyone about the Transfer Options Fair on November 14 and the response was amazing! Many students attended as well as many instructors and staff. We were also pleased to see senior executive members walk through the atrium to talk with presenters and students. Since the deadline for applications for the Professional Credential Enhancement (PCE) program is coming up fast, many instructors were there talking about degree options that were available for them, too.

Speaking about the PCE, this term I presented information at the Employee Services Workshop, and I am very pleased to say that I have been contacted by many SAFA members who are looking for degree programs. If you would like information about different programs or institutions, call or e-mail me or go to our website.

Our Transfer Options (TO) website is receiving over 7500 hits per month, and if you google “transfer options,” you will see that we are still No. 1 out of 574 million results! We are pleased to announce that there are well over 800 transfer options on the TO website. We know that 20 percent of our graduates are completing degrees, so why don’t you see where they are going at www.sait.ca/transferoptions.

If your program has a Facebook page, you can “like” us for regular updates. Follow the link on the TO website or search for us at Transfer Options at SAIT. We try to send updates to all of the school Facebook pages.

Thank you for your continued support and many great suggestions for future transfer options. We are also being approached by receiving institutions for transfer agreements because our graduates have applied there. Please contact me or encourage your students to do so through transfer.options@sait.ca if you would like more information.

Articulation Coordinator
Dr. Karen McDaniel
karen.mcdaniel@sait.ca
403-210-4238

Administrative Assistant
Kim Frayn
kim.frayn@sait.ca
403-210-5658

Well, the morale at work is frightful,
and the pension is not delightful,

and someday,
we'll all be let go,

This is it

This is it

Oh, how

CENSORED



The Alberta Government's labour policies
provides unexpected inspiration for
a heart-felt, ad-libbed version of
"Let it Snow"