

EDITORIAL

Yes, faculty member, this is your SAFAGRAM. Just more variety in a new package.

Why the change? Well, in arbitrary times, and these times are indeed arbitrary, the need for good communication, always great, becomes even greater. We hope that the new SAFAGRAM, by improving communication among faculty members, will accomplish at least three things. These are, not necessarily in order of importance, as follows.

Firstly, the new SAFAGRAM will provide a forum for faculty voices, your voices, to be heard on the issues that confront instructors. Edicts and issues are being imposed on us that demand broader debate if we are to have healthy, constructive decision making.

Secondly, the new SAFAGRAM will help maintain solid rapport between SAFA Members and their Executive.

And thirdly, the new SAFAGRAM will provide a platform for professional development, a place where we can share our ideas and the ideas of others to help us become better instructors.

The new SAFAGRAM is a vehicle for all of us to have our say, to get to know each other better, and to share our expertise. So take advantage. If you have a brilliant insight, a noble idea, a withering barb, don't leave it languishing on the coffee room table, donate it to SAFAGRAM. Write a letter to the editor or a short essay for "Soap Box." Submit a question about teaching to "That's a Good Question" or a short essay on teaching for "Speaking of Education," or send a note about an accomplishment of one of your students, past or present, for "A+." Submission guidelines are included in the masthead on page 2.

If you enjoy playing with words and ideas, join us on the Editorial Board. No experience required - enthusiasm a must. Or if you just have an idea about how to improve your SAFAGRAM, send it along.

But for the moment, read on. And Enjoy.

FAQs

One of Mattie Gillespie's innumerable duties as our Administrative Secretary is to answer many of the same questions over and over again. FAQs (yes, you guessed it: Frequently Asked Questions) provides her with the opportunity to save you a call.

FAQ: On what can I spend my \$300-per-SAFA-member SAIT Professional Development funds?

A. All permanent salaried Instructors are entitled to \$300 (pro-rated for part-time permanent salaried Instructors) towards a short-term professional development activity, but applications must be obtained from, submitted to and processed by their dean's office before June 30, 1995. With their dean's approval, eligible faculty may employ their entitlement, "...to pay the cost of tuition, registration and associated travel expenses for courses, seminars or conferences, memberships in professional or trade organizations, subscriptions to professional or trade journals, books and software related to your area of expertise and/or a modem..." for a home computer. "Any and all activities designed to foster skills, knowledge and confidence in an academic staff member's relevant field and as a manager of the learning process..." are eligible for approval. Such funds are in no way guaranteed to continue in the 95/96 academic year, so "use it or lose it!"

FAQ: Will there be any more permanent Instructor positions abolished during the remaining months of this academic year and if so, when and how will they occur?

A. SAIT management has advised the SAFA Executive there will be no voluntary

abolishment packages offered between now and September 1995 (but there could be a few selective abolishments for which it might be possible to volunteer if specific skills can be spared).

FAQ: Would John Schmale be there, please?

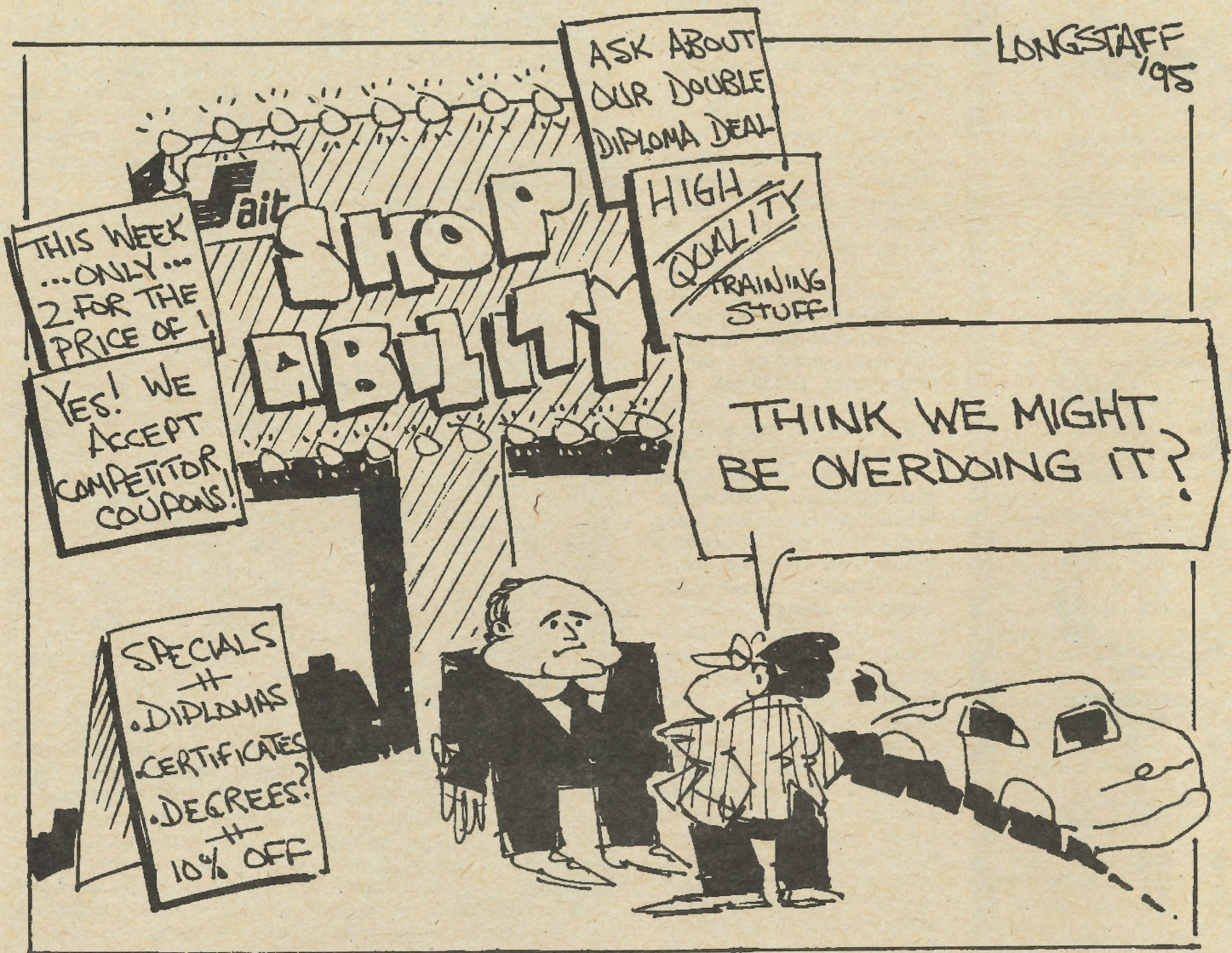
A: He is and definitely will be if you book an appointment at the SAFA office (8321/8378). Although the SAFA President has many commitments that require his presence elsewhere on campus and off - SAFA Executive Committee, SAFA Faculty Council, SAFA Grievance Committee, SAFA Negotiations Committee, Joint SAIT/SAFA Workload Study Committee, Joint SAIT/SAFA Recognition Program/Steering Committee, Joint Management/ SAFA Executive Committee, Joint SAIT/SAFA Employee Benefits Committee, Joint SAIT/SAFA Advisory Committee, SAIT Values Committee, SAIT Discrimination Committee, SAIT Total Quality Initiative (TQI) team, ACIFA Presidents' Council, ACIFA Negotiations Advisory Committee, arbitration, grievance and bargaining seminars and conferences and a few government and Advanced Education press conferences (phew!) - he is most often found hard at work at the SAFA office during the work week, receiving phone calls, faxes, mail and walk-in inquiries and requests for consultations, coaching and counselling from any SAIT instructor with personal, classroom, department or general concerns to share, no matter how big or small, urgent or long-term, formal or casual. Please don't hesitate to call - the lines are open.

more FAQs on Page 8

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SAFAGRAM

Editorial Board

Darcy Elison
Betty Hersberger
Bill Longstaff
Shelagh McCormick
David Pike
Rosanne Audia-Ranieri

Layout

Lynn Wright

Printed by

Quick Print Graphic Services

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 care of the SAFA office, N210. Please keep submissions under 300 words and, if possible, submit on a floppy disc (Mac or DOS) with an accompanying hard copy. SAFAGRAM editorial policy, as approved by the SAFA Executive on March 8, 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.

OVER TO YOU: Letters to the Editor

Budget Surplus

There is a disturbing trend sweeping North American business that seems to imply that workers and profits have nothing to do with each other. The logic seems to lead to the conclusion that if we terminate the employees we will logically have more profits. In the language of the accountants, employees are liabilities anyway, so why not seek to eliminate those liabilities?

Here at SAIT, the bulk of our recent budget surplus is tentatively slated to be spent on renovations. It is not to be spent on relieving the current unreasonable workloads of instructors who were partly responsible for incurring the surplus.

We are a business now, a business like any other, whose focus is on minimum cost per unit. Our focus is not on quality per unit but on lowest cost.

Does anyone remember when Detroit automakers were intent on providing lowest cost and not quality in their car production while the Japanese concentrated on quality? One of the big three almost went under. Do we also have to go down that road to find out the marketplace's harsh realities, or are we, as educators armed with the experience of the past, going to lead our industry and students into a tomorrow that places quality first?

Wayne M. Bernier, Instructor,
Communication Arts Department

THE MUTANT GENE

by Shelagh McCormick, Instructor, Communication Arts Department.

We were intrigued by the extraordinary number of fathers and sons who have both taught at SAIT—we even know about a father/daughter combination. One offspring remarked, tongue in cheek, that it must be a "mutant gene" that causes this phenomenon, hence the name of this column. This issue features the Ellisons, Bert and Darcy.

Bert Ellison's association with SAIT spans almost 60 years. He was a student, an instructor, the father of three SAIT students, and the father of a present instructor. Included among his lasting gifts to SAIT are rocks, clocks, and his only son, Darcy.

Bert first came to SAIT as a student in the 30's, graduating as a motor mechanic in 1936. When he returned in 1960, however, it was as a petroleum geology instructor in the Petroleum Technology Department. He taught geology for 22 years, retired from SAIT in 1982 at 65, and then went to work for Trans Alta estimating coal reserves until 1985.

Today at 78, Bert is still interested in rocks and in teaching. He moved to Brampton, Ontario, close to his "beloved Canadian Shield" in 1985 and still teaches the occasional night class in geology at Humber College.

Oldtimers may remember Bert as "Uneasy Rider". Every summer for years, he rode his BMW motorcycle across Canada on geological field trips collecting samples and enthusiastically investigating anything geological—from gravel pits to road cuts to mines. The observations from these trips were sent back to the Emery Weal in the form of letters which were avidly read by the SAIT community. Eventually in the early 70's, he got his own column titled "Uneasy Rider". (Darcy notes that Bert is an excellent travel writer and treasures the letters Bert wrote while on a six-month tour of Australia.)

Bert is also the force behind the various strange rock outcroppings found here and there on campus. To

inspire his students, he had large glacial erratics, all different and all selected for their geological interest, brought to SAIT. The next time you are walking by, note the rock in the courtyard east of the Aircraft Test Centre and some of those close to the entrance of E Block in the rock garden. One legendary rock on campus was found by Bert in a new NW subdivision (it may be the one now covered with paint outside the Student Centre). It was so heavy that it apparently bowed the lowboy of the developers who had been persuaded to deliver it.

Other mementoes left by Bert include SAIT's original master clock and one slave clock now ticking away in a glass cabinet in Heritage Hall. The saga of how Bert had the old clocks unearthed and restored is well documented in the same cabinet (first floor west of the main doors).

The Ellison involvement with SAIT continues with Bert's son, Darcy, who is presently teaching architectural drafting, illustration, and design in the ACET Department.

Darcy remembers practically growing up on this campus. He took art courses at ACA, and he and his sisters often visited Bert for a milkshake break in the basement of the "Polish Corridor" (between Heritage Hall and Automotives). Through Bert he met such well-known

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RRSP Review

by Ron Hill, Instructor, Business Department

On February 27, 1995, the Minister of Finance, the Honourable Paul Martin, presented his budget to the House of Commons. Three changes were made in the area of personal income tax which may be of interest to SAFA members.

1. Retiring Allowance Rollover to an RRSP

a. Retiring allowances are included in income in the year received. A deduction from income is permitted if all or a

CHBA Competition

March 30 was a day of reckoning for SAIT's first year Architectural Technology students. Each year at this time the Calgary Home Builders' Association, the CHBA, judges entries in the Student House Design Competition. SAIT students enter their second term house design projects, competing for scholarships and industry recognition.

The CHBA generously sponsors the annual competition, providing judges from the home building industry, scholarships and cash awards, and a chance at city-wide recognition for successful entrants at the Association's annual awards banquet.

As part of their first year studies, Architectural Technology students design a house. They take the project from the initial analysis of the site, a 'real-life' lot provided by the CHBA, through preliminary concept design, to a complete set of working drawing blueprints for their house design. Design parameters, including overall house size and 'architectural controls', are established by the CHBA at the beginning of the term.

Every student's design response is different, and the

CHBA judges look for the 'workability' of each design, the design's 'buildability', and the graphic quality of the presentation. Students present their design concepts on presentation boards showing plans and a rendered perspective view, and a 1/4" scale model of the proposed design.

Competition is stiff! Students appreciate the value of industry recognition, and the judging is never easy. Chosen as this year's winners are:

Design - 1st, Duc Le; 2nd, Kevin Zerr; 3rd, Shari Notschke. Presentation - 1st, Kevin Zerr; 2nd, Carthy Chan. Model - 1st, Gerald Bevans; 2nd, Kevin Zerr

In addition to these prize winners, 19 Honourable Mentions were awarded among the three judging categories. In effect, all students win, by experiencing the design process.

The CHBA Student House Design Competition adds a degree of realism to SAIT's Architectural Technology students' academic studies... they can 'feel' the result of those 'all-nighters'! And SAIT can feel proud of the industry recognition achieved by all the entrants to the Competition.

Congratulations to this year's CHBA winners!

portion of the retiring allowance is transferred to an RRSP.

b. Generally, the maximum deduction that is permitted equals the total of \$2,000 times the number of years of employment with the particular employer.

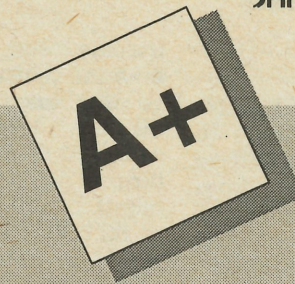
c. This deduction is still available, but the change resulting from the recent budget is that years of service after 1995 will no longer count in determining the rollover amount.

If, for example, the position of an instructor with ten years

of service were to be abolished at the end of 1995, then the rollover allowed is \$20,000.

If, on the other hand, the position of this individual were abolished at the end of 1996, the extra year of service would not count. That is, the rollover amount allowed would not be \$22,000, but would be frozen at \$20,000. Effectively, your years of service to the end of 1995 determine the maximum deduction, even if the severance occurs five years from now.

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RRSP Review
Continued from Page 3

2. RRSP Contribution Limits

The contribution limits to an RRSP will be reduced to \$13,500 in 1996, down from the previous 1996 limit of \$15,000 and from the 1995 limit of \$14,500. This affects individuals who earn in excess of \$75,000.

3. RRSP Over-contribution Allowance

a. Generally, there is a penalty tax of one percent per month on excess amounts contributed to an RRSP. Prior to the 1995 budget, an over-contribution of up to \$8,000 did not result in a penalty. The excess amounts are not deductible at the time of contribution. The main advantage is that the related investment income inside the RRSP would be sheltered from tax.

b. The change is that, commencing January 1996, this allowable over-contribution amount will be reduced to \$2,000.

If you over-contributed more than \$2,000 before **February 27, 1995**, a phase-in will permit you to retain existing excess contributions until they can be deducted against new RRSP room, rather than forcing withdrawals from the RRSP. For an individual who earns an income of \$50,000, for example, and is a member of a pension plan, the contribution limit would be 18% of earned

income, or \$9,000. The amount that could ordinarily go into an RRSP would be \$9,000 less the value assigned to the pension plan (known as the pension adjustment) of about \$6,500, that is, \$2,500. Thus an individual would be able to reduce any over-contributions at about \$2,500 per year, depending on the level of income.

If, however, you over-contributed more than \$2,000 after **February 27, 1995**, your excess will be taxed at one percent per month, starting January 31, 1996. (By then, your 1996 limit will have taken effect, so the excess will have fallen.) If you withdraw the excess, it will be taxed as income. You could consider leaving it in and paying the penalty rather than the tax if the excess will be eliminated in the next two or three annual contribution limits.

If you over-contributed on **February 27, 1995**, your dilemma is similar to those who contributed after budget day with one difference. The excess may be withdrawn, by January 31, 1996, without being taxed as income. Leaving the excess in will bring a penalty of one percent per month effective January 31, 1996.

For further information, call Ron Hill at 8790.



If you have a philosophical concept you'd like to share with your colleagues, send it in to "Soap Box." Bill Longstaff, a member of our Editorial board, leads off with

A Statement About the Mission Statement

"SAIT shall be an innovative organization equipping people to compete successfully in the changing world of work by providing relevant, skill-oriented education."

On everything from panelled walls to letterheads, these stirring words seek to inspire us. They are, of course, SAIT's mission statement.

Mission statements can do good work. At their best, they can define a common purpose and unite people behind it. At less than their best, they can be exclusive and do more dividing than uniting. Unfortunately, SAIT's tends to do the latter.

Not that there isn't good stuff in it. "Innovative organization" is good. "Relevant, skill-oriented education" is good. But the phrase "to

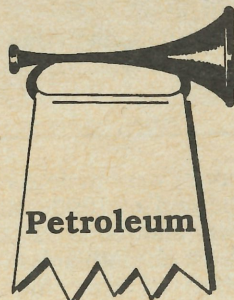
compete" is bad. Bad, because it carries a political bias, a hint of right-wing dogma, and mission statements for publicly funded institutions, which are after all accountable to everyone, shouldn't be biased against anyone. They shouldn't exclude from the mission those who don't share the bias.

What then to do with this little rascal "to compete"? "To cooperate" would be better. Cooperation is certainly a nobler purpose than competition. However, cooperation carries a bit of bias itself, drawn from the other side of the political spectrum.

The choice is obvious: "to contribute". Here is a phrase that is politically neutral, yet it has substance. It has a good, solid, civic-minded ring to it. It represents the very essence of professionalism: contributing to one's society.

So, Board of Governors, will you rid us of this troublesome pest "to compete," and unite us with "to contribute"? Heaven knows we need a little unity.

Blow Your Horn



"Blow Your Horn" is an opportunity for instructors to educate the rest of us about their program by providing a personal view of what they and their students are up to. Champak Bhaumik, an instructor in the Energy and Natural Resources Department, leads off with his thoughts about the Petroleum Program.

Over a glass of beer in one of our gatherings at the north end of the campus, Brian, a sincere student, summarized the past two years. "Cheers. It was tough and thank God it is finally over." He continued, "Never thought it would be so difficult to become a Petroleum Tech." Well, probably in every corner of the campus there is a sigh of relief from the staff and students alike. We feel as though we just finished preparing a heavyweight boxer, ready to step in the ring.

Let us go back two years and have a closer look at the program that produces a Petroleum Tech. There is plenty of oil deep in the earth, but sometimes it takes a little drilling to convince the oil to come up. But where to drill? Viewed from a jet, the world

does not seem so large. However, when it comes to selecting that 200 mm hole to be drilled in an ocean of land, we feel so hopelessly lost.

To begin with, a lesson in geology. We work our way through faults, valleys, dip, sedimentary and metamorphic rock. We study the earth from top to bottom, learning secrets of how hydrocarbons are accumulated and trapped, then learning to interpret electronic logging to confirm the existence of oil and gas.

Finally, through drilling, we provide an access for hydrocarbon to arrive at the surface.

Making a hole deep in the hot treacherous core of the earth requires a wide knowledge in drilling. Students study heavy, sturdy drilling equipment in the lab and con-

tinue their learning while preparing various types of drilling mud and studying the use of chemicals which may lengthen the life of tubulars.

Sometimes the drilled hole may have to be deviated or horizontal. Then there is the need to exercise caution and concern for our environment as we practise the method of optimized drilling.

Along the way, students are taught calculus, computer science and the art of communication. Today's Petroleum Techs are more than just technicians; many of them will be heading for higher learning in various universities in North America, where others will join the oil patch. Our graduates are well versed in recent developments in

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SAFA REPORTS

Perspective

John Schmale, 1994/95
A President

SAIT's worldwide reputation has been earned by the hard work of its instructors, who deliver an excellent skills-based education in a wide range of disciplines to students who have been extremely successful in their chosen careers. To maintain that reputation we have been constantly aware of the skills that are required by the industries that we supply. Our success has been proof that SAIT has adapted and updated its programs to meet and even to lead industry through technological change.

Over the last several years, technology has grown at such a rate that the content forced into programs has become impossible to effectively deliver in the allotted time.

We are caught in a dilemma. The only way to deliver the skills that industry requires is to increase the course and program lengths. Cutting out unrequired elements and "nice to have" material has long ago been done; going further only erodes the foundation, without which success could never be achieved.

At the same time as the increase in quantity is demanding an extension to programs, financial restraint has overruled, which has meant the cutting of instructional hours and increasing class sizes wherever physical-ly possible.

The result has been that instructors have continued to maintain and add to the content that advisory boards are demanding. This leads to frustration and stress for both instructors and students.

Blow Your Horn

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production practices, enhanced oil recovery and above all, petroleum economics.

Not all the starts make the journey; a few leave the program on the way. It takes a great deal of dedication, discipline, and perseverance to achieve the special status: "A Petroleum Tech".

The only way to deliver the required increased content is to increase the time given, either by increasing course length or "add ons" to the programs. "But this is too expensive..." we are told by management, "...we won't be competitive. Educational technology in the form of computer-assisted learning, competency-based training, and distance education are all available, and coring will help alleviate the problems..." they say, "... because they are more efficient."

These are simply methods of getting instructors to deliver the material to each student individually, either in a lab, shop or over a telephone, while paying them for doing it only once.

I am not convinced that the students' understanding level and the quality of skill-based education are enhanced by larger classes, fewer experiential opportunities for the students, the dropping of math components from some engineering programs, and the lowering of prerequisites.

Efficiency is the target that we strive for continuously, but we have abandoned effectiveness for too long.

We must begin now to rebuild our courses, program departments, and institute by making effectiveness our goal, before SAIT's tradition of quality and excellence is lost.

BOG Log

by G. Kiraly

During the past two years, I have been asked a number of structural as well as procedural questions about our Board of Governors. When I was asked to contribute a regular column as a Faculty Representative of the Board to SAFAGRAM, I thought it would help if the first submission addressed some of the facts.

Overview

The SAIT Board of Governors is comprised of 16 individuals from diverse backgrounds, some of whom are appointed, some elected, who share a common goal: providing direction and guidance to the Institute through the Mission Statement, Vision and Mandate Statements, as

well as through policies.

The makeup of the Board is

| Governors | Terms of Office |
|--------------------|------------------|
| Public Sector (10) | 3-year terms |
| President (1) | Length of office |
| AUPE (1) | 3-year term |
| Faculty (2) | 2-year term |
| Students (2) | 1 - 3-year terms |

Board Work

To provide effective governance for SAIT, the Board of Governors begins each academic year by conducting a three-day planning session in August. At this session, Board objectives are determined, and from these objectives SAIT's Tactical Plan is created.

As the academic year unfolds, the Board holds monthly public meetings at which Institute issues are discussed. Representatives from all constituent groups serve as resources at these meetings.

Often the issues brought to the table have been reviewed closely at the Board's committee level. Each member of the Board of Governors usually serves on two of the four sub-committees: the Executive Committee (Board Chair, Vice-Chair, SAIT President, and Chairs of the three sub-committees), Academic Committee, Support Services Committee, and the Finance Committee. These committees meet monthly as well; the key resource people are the respective Vice-Presidents.

Each member of the Board is also assigned a liaison role with one or more SAIT departments. The purpose of this role is to help familiarize the Governors with the forms and functions of SAIT's departments.

There are additional responsibilities for particular Governors. For example, one Governor participates on SAIT's Academic Council. Another is actively involved with our Alumni. The Governors from the faculty and students fulfil yet another role, one mandated from their constituent groups: they serve as liaisons to Faculty Council and SAITSA respectively. Consequently, when the Board of Governors meets to provide direction and guidance to the Institute, it does so taking into account a broad range of perspectives and inputs.

[I'm looking forward to the next edition in which we can 'talk' about some of the decisions made by the Board this past year.]

SAFA ...

You and I

by Darcy Ellison,
Director, Division C

Welcome to the first of a series of articles about SAFA, the SAIT Academic Faculty Association, as SAFA's constitution defines our association. SAFA is you and I ... SAIT's instructors.

Most SAIT instructors take SAFA for granted ... we pay our dues every month and don't give much more thought to the privileges and responsibilities incumbent on each member. This series of articles will help to explain SAFA's mandate and the scope of our association's activities.

SAFA did not exist prior to 1982. Institute instructors were employed directly by the Provincial Government as public service employees, and belonged to SIA, the SAIT Instructors' Association. In 1982, the Government granted autonomy to the Institute and established the Board of Governors to oversee its administration. At the same time, SAFA was incorporated as a non-profit society by the Technical Institutes Act to represent the Institute's faculty as a collective body.

Among SAFA's Objects, under the present SAFA constitution (last revised in 1993), are

- To foster standards of excellence in instruction.
- To foster good relations between the Association and the Institute and its Board of Governors.
- ...to promote and establish appropriate remuneration, fringe benefits and working conditions for all Members of the Association.
- To establish with the Board the means by which the Members may further their professional and educational development.
- To promote and establish good relations amongst members.

There are other Objects set out by the constitution, large-

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SAFA ... It's You and I
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ly having to do with SAFA's relationship to the Board, to the Institute, to academic associations and to other bodies... but, for the most part, this is it... this is SAFA... you and I. SAFA administers its mandate through its Executive and Faculty Council. And that's where you 'have a say.' Each year, by constitutional mandate, SAFA elects members of its Executive, Faculty Council, Academic Council, and faculty reps to the Board of Governors. Nominations are accepted from each Department or group of Departments, for elected representatives. SAFA is a democratically administered professional association.

More about the Faculty Council in the next edition. For now, let's look at SAFA's Executive. SAFA's constitution states that... "the business and affairs of the Association shall be managed by the Executive." That means that the day-to-day business of SAFA is discussed according to a weekly agenda set by the President.

John Schmale, 1994/95 SAFA President, in conjunction with the Administrative Secretary, Mattie Gillespie, prepares an agenda of timely topics, some of which arise from SAIT management or Board initiatives, through faculty inquiries to Mattie, or as issues that are deemed of importance to SAFA members in general.

At each Wednesday's meeting the Executive discusses Association affairs, approves expenditures as outlined in the Constitution, and refers some policy decisions to Faculty Council for approval. Executive members also sit on Faculty Council.

Your elected SAFA Executive consists of the President, the Secretary-Treasurer, a Past Executive Representative, and two Directors from each of the groups or 'Divisions' of SAIT's various Departments. The Constitution defines the Divisions as follows:

DIVISION 'A'
Mechanical
Auto-Diesel
Power Engineering/

Chemistry/Petroleum
(ENRT)

Phys.Ed./Leisure
DIVISION 'B'
Business Education
Communication Arts
Math/Physics/Computing
Health Sciences
DIVISION 'C'

Architectural & Civil
Engineering (ACET)
Electrical / Electronics
Hospitality Careers
Counselling
ERC
C & I
Extension

Current Executive members
are

PRESIDENT

John Schmale, Auto-Diesel
SECRETARY-TREASURER
Barry Pratt, Power/Chem/
Petro (ENRT)

DIRECTORS DIVISION 'A'

Ed Beeler, Mechanical
Len Filmer, Mechanical

DIRECTORS DIVISION 'B'

Marilyn Anderson,
Health Sciences

Gregg Tranter
Business Education

DIRECTORS DIVISION 'C'

Darcy Ellison, ACET
Fred Malley, Hospitality
Careers

PAST REPRESENTATIVE

Cliff McDonald
Electrical/Electronics

SAFA Executive members discuss issues that are relevant to all SAFA members... grievances, remuneration, workload conditions, professional development and expenditures. And they review policies and issues proposed by SAIT, Advanced Education and ACIFA.

But the Executive needs our input. What is the "hot issue" in your department? Get in touch with your Division Executive Director. Or better... contact your local Faculty Council Representative to have your issue discussed. Meanwhile, don't forget that SAFA's Constitution, and minutes of all its official proceedings are available for viewing by any member through the SAFA office on the 2nd floor of the Senator Burns Building. Contact Mattie Gillespie at 8321 or 8378.

Next issue... what SAFA Faculty Council Representatives can do for you. Stay tuned!!

PD SECTION

SIR & Variations:

Help Us Make Some Good Decisions

by David Pike, Teaching and Learning Centre

Lately the most recurrent themes in faculty and student comments about the Student Instructional Report (SIR) reveal dissatisfaction with the way it's treated, not, on the whole, with what it is.

While instructors commonly report that SIRs guide them in making or recommending improvements in course design, management, delivery and assessment of learning, the most common complaints are that the feedback comes too late and is used summarively before it has had a chance to serve its initial formative role.

For their part, students are usually left wondering if their ratings and comments have any effect or weight unless individual instructors make a point of referring to the role previous SIRs have played in helping them make improvements. Here again, the instrument itself seems to be accepted, but questions of timing, coverage and subsequent communication about results persist. One suggestion that emerged from a recent session with student senators involved communicating the general trends of SIR results to the whole campus; then, recognizing the constraints that we all face, we could make teaching and learning improvements an all faculty/student body cooperative venture instead of a lonely and often polarizing task.

From a strategic point of view, the costs and benefits of using SIRs have to be weighed against the alternatives. Field tests of SIR II, which by all accounts is an improved SIR, are currently underway elsewhere. In any case we need to present recommendations at the end of this semester based on the best evidence and information we can gather. Generally speaking, the options are likely to be these:

a) Purchase SIR II and improve our handling of it

b) Purchase an alternative instrument

c) Develop our own instrument, and

d) Dispense with student ratings altogether.

(That last option might free up some time and money, but the damage to our public relations, our professionalism, our credibility as evaluators of human performance would be total. Besides, no one has seriously suggested we consider it.)

Faculty members who aren't getting the course/instructor feedback they need from students are invited to drop into the Teaching and Learning Centre to examine and try out some new instructor-controlled software for customizing questionnaires and graphic reports to suit any evaluation requirement and provide immediate formative feedback. We have a site licence for Computerized Assessment of Teaching Systems (CATS).

Finally, the external research of student rating form specialist Lawrence Aleamoni and others comes to research-based conclusions that may surprise if not convince our SIR infidels-in-residence. (Some of my best friends are SIR infidels.) His findings will also give those of us who've been thinking we should generate our own form reason to proceed very carefully.

1. 95% of the student rating forms used in North America are invalid and unreliable, but SIR is among the 5% which are exceptions to this appalling fact.

2. The "Dr. Fox" factor (being popular but not effective) corrupts most student rating forms, but not the SIR.

3. Students' course grades aren't highly correlated with their ratings of the course and the instructor.

SAFA has taken a leading role in helping us deal with this perennially controversial issue by funding May and June PD sessions entitled "Putting Students' Feedback

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SIR & Variations ...
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on Instruction in Healthy Perspective". You can help us make more respectable and effective decisions by contributing, as many of you already have, to the ongoing discussions.

If you have some evidence and ideas to contribute or would like to help us evaluate the CATS software, arrange a visit to the Teaching and Learning Centre by calling 8107.

Speaking of Education

"Speaking of Education" gives instructors an opportunity to share a technique or approach they have found successful in the classroom. Our first contribution is from Dave Samson, an instructor in Electrical/Electronics, who talks about

Do All Adults Become Adult Learners?

We all wonder when we step into a new class who we will have for students. Will these students want to be told when to come to class, where to sit, what to do, and what they need to know for the exam? Will they be independent learners? Maybe they'll be somewhere in-between. We assume our students will all be adults, but will they be adult learners? Broadly defined, an adult learner is goal-oriented, motivated, and self-disciplined. However, it may seem to us that many of our students have not yet developed these characteristics. We see behaviours that do not appear to be effective, logical, or rational. But some student behaviours that we associate with adolescence could, in fact, be justifiable actions; for example:

1) Skipping class - perceived as a lack of commitment, it could be due to family issues, or because of an information overload condition; the student has taken a much needed 'mental health' day.

2) Late assignments - perceived as lack of time management skills, it could actually mean the student is well organized, but the assignment is low on his/her priority list.

3) Lower marks than the teacher's expectations - perceived as the student being an underachiever with little motivation, it could also signify a student is getting exactly what he or she wants out of the course but the knowledge does not coincide with the evaluation system.

4) Dropping subjects within a term - perceived as being an academic failure, it could also mean a student knows exactly what he or she can accomplish and will not jeopardize the overall goal.

These are examples that we can all relate to during our years as students and instructors.

The transition from adolescent to adult learner can occur anytime during an adult's lifetime. The instructor has a considerable influence, positive or negative, during this transition. Age, as well as social, cultural, and academic backgrounds are all factors that affect the dynamics of the classroom. What we think of as a class of students must be looked at as a grouping of individuals - individuals who have different goals and are at different stages in becoming adult learners. How do we as teachers meet these challenges that lie beyond mere instruction? One step may be to discard our outdated conceptions and experiences about learning. The long used approach that "I will teach the way I was taught" may benefit only a small portion of the class.

Audience analysis is important in recognizing the learning styles and the stages of critical thinking skills within the class. Being able to effectively deliver material to individual students and to provide strategies to increase thinking skills will ultimately prove successful for the transition of adults to adult learners.

Portfolios

by David Pike, Teaching and Learning Centre

Powerful Generators and Communicators of Continuous Learning and Accomplishment for Instructors and Students

Investors and artists prize their portfolios for good reason, and now, increasingly, so

do proactive college students and instructors. Attuned to the opportunities that flow to those with the initiative to develop and apply a particular set of skills, these newest portfolio builders want to illustrate the scope and quality of their work over time with something more convincing than say a transcript, a credential, a resume, a letter of recommendation, or a supervisor's evaluation form.

Think of them as amplified resumes that contain (or refer to the available-upon-request) hard evidence, the actual products and results of good learning and good teaching.

The very act of opening a portfolio raises the most important career questions: what am I trying to accomplish? how am I doing? what should I learn next? what philosophy informs my work? how effective am I at working with others? If people who were thinking about hiring or promoting or working with me said "Show us something you've done and something you're trying to accomplish," what would I show them? Right away the portfolio starts generating dividends. You're out of the rut of just waiting for your instructions or going through the motions. You're focused on accomplishments you'd be proud to present: a group project that made a worthwhile difference, an improvement in course design or delivery, a videotape of a presentation, "before and after" performance ratings. The list of what's commonly included in a portfolio runs to over fifty items.

Best of all, because they're so valuable to the people who create and own them, motivation to keep them up to date is high. And because they're so immediately credible to constituencies both inside and outside the academic realm, they have become in the last decade a powerful assessment tool of choice for more and more faculty members, their students and employers. Electronic portfolios in particular hold enormous potential.

If you're interested in finding out more about portfolios or in getting together with some colleagues in the spring to hatch a faculty and student

project or two, drop in to the Teaching and Learning Centre (N202), call David Pike at 8107 or send an e-mail message to david.pike.

That's a Good Question

Often, when instructors get together over lunch or coffee, discussions emerge about what happened in class that day. Inevitably questions arise about what we essentially do at SAIT, questions about teaching/training and learning.

These questions, and the responses and advice we may receive from colleagues on these questions, are a precious resource. We thought we'd like to tap into this "resource" in this column: That's a Good Question.

If you'd like to ask a teaching/learning question or if you'd like to offer a "tried and true" solution or response to a question or problem that you see asked here, this is your opportunity. Questions and responses will be anonymous unless you request that we print your name. We welcome your input! Send your questions or answers to SAFAGRAM, care of the SAFA office, N201.

This issue's question is ...

QUESTION: What do you, as an instructor, do to prepare your students for the stresses of final exams? In other words, what advice do you offer about preparation for exams, other than to study the material?

VOTE! For Your

- President
- Secretary/Treasurer
- Divisional Directors
- Academic Council Member
- Faculty Board Member

June 1, 1995

from 10:30 am to 4:30 pm
(Advance Poll - May 24)

VOTE!

UPCOMING CONFERENCES

Some of the conferences you might keep in mind for PD season:

ACCC - Association for Canadian Community Colleges
"Strategic Alliances Stratégiques" - Victoria, June 4-6, 1995

ACIFA - Alberta College of Institutes Faculties Association
"Managing the Process: Renewal-Regrowth-Rejuvenation" - Olds College, June 4-7, 1995

Third International Symposium on Technician Education and Training
"Innovations 20/20" - Vancouver, June 10-14

GMCC - Canadian Rockies Great Teachers Seminar - Nakoda Lodge, June 11-16

Creating Excellence Seminar
"Creating Excellence: A Seminar for Innovation and Celebration of Good Teaching." - Kananaskis, August 20-23, 1995

For more information on these and other events, call David Pike at 8107 or drop in to the Teaching & Learning Centre, N202.

The Mutant Gene
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instructors as John Kaplan and Fred Jorgenson.

Before coming to SAIT as an instructor himself, Darcy first completed a degree at U of C in history and philosophy and worked five years in the Arctic (as a philosopher, Darcy?). He then made a career change to theatre administration. While House Manager of the Performing Arts Centre during the latter phases of building, he reviewed many construction drawings that sparked his latent interest in architecture.

Like his father before him, Darcy became a SAIT student. He enrolled in Architectural Engineering around 1988 and recalls being especially inspired by Stan King. This led Darcy to enter the masters program in Environmental Design at U of C.

SAIT continued to have its hold, however, and Darcy worked for Campus Development in the summers and taught his first night course here in 1989 while he was still a university student. Next came a few day courses, then a full-time position in 1991.

The Ellison association with SAIT also includes two of Darcy's three sisters who also

attended SAIT—one in Medical Laboratory (now a pathologist in Los Angeles), and one in Library Information (now working in that field). As well, Darcy's wife, Paula Harris, is currently an instructor at SAIT in the Communication Arts department.

Darcy recalls that as a young person he was "really proud" that his dad worked here. During the many visits with his father, he developed a sense that faculty was a "prime resource" of SAIT, valued for "their body of expertise", "the campus's greatest asset."

SAIT is lucky to have had two Ellisons as instructors—both with very different areas of expertise and talents: Bert with his fascination for rocks and his writing talent; Darcy with his extensive knowledge of architecture and his artistic talent.

Darcy can be spotted occasionally on the third floor of the Senator Burns Building heading off to his next class. He invites anyone who wants to reminisce about the "Ellison connection" to call him at 8745.

P.S. If you know of other "mutant genes" at SAIT who might be profiled in the SAFAGRAM, please call 7264.

... more FAQs

FAQ: What does SAFA do for contract, wages and Con. Ed. Instructors?

A: SAFA welcomes more input and feedback from contract, wages or Con. Ed. members and encourages them to liaise with the SAFA President, Executive, or Faculty Council Rep. on their common and unique concerns and needs.

FAQ: What value did SAIT students get from their new 5-day (Feb. 16 - 20, 1995) spring break?

A: At the March 7, 1995, SAFA Faculty Council meeting, the SAFA Executive Committee requested SAFA Faculty Council Reps. to elicit feedback from their department colleagues on this question. Instructors with constructive input are asked to do so either directly to their dept. rep. for channelling to SAFA prior to the April 26, 1995 Joint Management/SAFA Executive Committee meeting or directly to the SAFA office (by note N201, by phone 8321/8378, or fax 284-0005).

FAQ: Why does Shinerama always fall during my Friday class time?

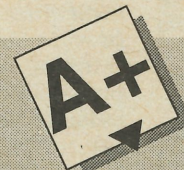
A: Not this year! SAFA has received confirmation from SAIT management, in response to our request on behalf of feedback from SAIT faculty, that SAITSA has agreed to hosting the next Shinerama Day on Wednesday, Sept. 13, 1995. Many faculty complained that, due to so many Friday classes being cancelled for a variety of reasons, it was diffi-

cult to cover all course materials in the fall semester.

FAQ: Why do I see new furniture coming into SAIT while Instructor position abolishments and department budget cuts continue? These purchases are the result of prior-approved spending of a department's share of their earned revenue. Chief Financial Officer and Vice-President/Administration Keith Pedersen advises that this is the third year of such profit-sharing and this year, \$.5M of contribution margin sharing was returned to department budgets as previously explained in *Communications Within SAIT*. Deans may use this earned revenue program profit-sharing to save permanent positions if they wish. Some departments have no significant earned revenues due to the formula used for their calculation. The SAFA Executive Committee suggests Deans could tag new items as being purchased from these funds so instructors may better understand such acquisitions.

FAQ: Is there still a computer purchase plan?

A: No, sorry. The original plan which provided for loans to Instructors for computer purchase were discontinued when SAIT opened its own discount computer store, which closed over the 94/95 Christmas vacation period. Information Systems suggests SAIT Instructors shop for bargains at the U of C computer store with their SAIT Employee ID card.



Award Winner

Congratulations to Bill Jones, a second-year Computer Technology student, for the **Best Newsletter Article of 1994**, awarded by the Alberta Chapter of the Society for Technical Communication (STC). Bill received a certificate and a cheque for his article titled "Objection handling ... it starts when you open your mouth" published in the STC newsletter, *SuperScript*.

We heard about the award when Bill stopped in personally to thank his technical writing instructors Shelagh McCormick, Chris Horgan, and Georgina Kiraly, all in Communication Arts. Thanks Bill and again, congratulations!