

SAFAGRAM

President's Message



By Doug Spurgeon

This edition's message is going to be very different. I ask for your indulgence and patience for the length of this particular article and that you do read it in its entirety.

Embedded within my article in this edition are the thoughts of a former faculty member from a few years ago. I have not edited the letter nor had I asked for this. I was approached and asked if I would consider sending it to the SAFAGRAM Editorial Board to see if they would run the article. Upon reading the article, I asked the writer if I could include it within my message and was granted permission by the writer.

I explained to the writer that I do plan to include it unedited but that I do also plan to include my comments at the end of article.

My reasons for including this article are varied, but the main reason is one that I see as a failing across multiple realms of society today and not just union management relations. This main reason is one of history. Too often today I hear the phrase "look to the future," "forget the past," and "Today is what matters." If society forgets the lessons of the past, then we are doomed to an infinite loop of the same destructive episodes, and all those who had fought before us would have done so in vain.

It is with this thought and the remembrance of those who have fought to raise us above that I feel the voice of a fallen faculty member is important to hear and to reflect upon. Please read these thoughts and reflect on your experiences from the past.

My motivation to write this article is not to "stick it" to SAIT. SAIT is where I began my professional career as a student. I remember the fun that I had with my classmates and the instructors at the time. Even though I attended university I always identified more with SAIT. When I secured a full-time teaching position at SAIT I was absolutely thrilled. I wanted to make a contribution to my industry and to the students.

When I was a student I was never aware of any political issues. As an instructor, however, I found that the students were very aware of the politics

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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

Q and A on Grievances

1. What is a grievance?

The easy answer is to look in the Collective Agreement. What constitutes a grievance will be clearly (more or less) defined under the section covering grievances (Section

20). Essentially it is a dispute between the Association (union) and the Employer that concerns any of the following:

- (a) a difference regarding the interpretation, application, operation or contravention or alleged contravention of the collective agreement.
- (b) a complaint regarding an alleged unjust treatment or discrimination.
- (c) a complaint regarding alleged unfair working conditions.
- (d) a complaint regarding the dismissal, suspension or demotion of a probationary academic staff member.
- (e) a complaint regarding any disciplinary action involving financial penalty, other than the one described in 20.01(d).

It may involve one faculty member with an issue specific to that person (some form of discipline for instance). This is called an **individual grievance**. It may involve more than one faculty member in a department or school that all have an identical complaint (like the assignment of Class Contact Hours (CCH) within a department). This is called a **group grievance**. It may involve seeking to enforce an obligation that is alleged to arise out of our Collective Agreement (such as classifying an Instructor as a “casual” employee when they should be classified as a “temporary” employee). This is called a **policy grievance**.

It's important to note that grievances on paragraph (b), (c), and (d) above may be heard at Levels 1 and 2 only. However, a decision arising from a grievance hearing that is “capped” at Level 2; for instance, any complaint regarding the dismissal, suspension, or demotion of a probationary academic staff member would potentially be subject to judicial review. Grievance on (a) and (e) above may be referred to an Arbitration Board (Level 3).

2. What is the procedure for getting a grievance resolved?

In all instances, there is the opportunity for informal discussion in an effort to resolve the conflict. The affected individual or group can meet with their Academic Chair or Dean. I always advise and it is your right to have a SAFA representative accompany you to this meeting to discuss the nature of the proposed grievance. My experience is, once the formal grievance procedure commences, that positions can become rigid. We move from a consensus-based agreement (win/win) that preserves relationships to a decision based on argument (win/lose) at a formal grievance hearing. Generally, the faculty member(s) is simply looking for justice and is open to the informal process; however, this approach requires a willingness on both sides to reach a fair result. So, if we are unable to find a satisfactory resolution to our differences through informal discussion, we can still move to the grievance process.

3. Who “owns” or has “carriage” of the grievance?

In essence, this means unions have a lot of discretion when they deal with grievances. For example, unions may settle or drop grievances even if the affected employee disagrees. To counterbalance this power, The Labour Relations Code requires unions to treat fairly all members of a bargaining unit. This duty of fair representation requires unions to exercise this power in good faith. This usually means unions must carefully examine grievances. The union must also consider the significance of the case and its consequences for the union and the employee. The representation by the union must be fair, genuine, and not merely apparent. The union must act with integrity and competence as well as without serious or major negligence. The union must act without hostility toward the employee. This means the union's decision must not be arbitrary, capricious, discriminatory, or wrongful.

4. What is a reasonable time limit for submitting a grievance?

Our Collectively Bargained Agreement (CBA) requires that a Level I grievance must be submitted within ten (10) days of the date upon which the academic staff member has the first reasonable opportunity of knowing that a grievance has allegedly occurred. Typically I would ask either for an extension to file the grievance pending the outcome of meeting informally to attempt to resolve the issue or file the grievance with an extension to the time limits in order to facilitate the two sides meeting informally. Either way, it's **very** important to maintain the time limits.

Some grievances--those that revolve around demotion, suspension, or termination--are presented at Level 2. In the case of a Level 2 grievance, the timelines are within five days of receipt of the written notification of the demotion, suspension, or dismissal. In the case of a proposed policy grievance, the two parties (SAIT and SAFA) meet in an attempt to resolve the grievance. Failure to resolve the grievance within fifteen (15) days of filing entitles the grievor to advance the grievance to Level 3 (arbitration) within an additional ten (10) days.

So, what happens in the event the timelines are not met? Well, it has more significant consequences for the Association than it does the Employer. If the Employer (SAIT in our case) misses a timeline, the grievance is simply advanced to the next level. However, if the Association misses a timeline, it is fatal to the grievance. SAIT can declare the grievance “abandoned” and it's over. This is called “time barred.”

Because of the significance of maintaining timelines, the definition of a “day” also becomes important. Is it a calendar day, a work day, or what? The “rule of thumb” is that if the number of days is divisible by 7, then it is calendar days. If it is divisible by 5 then it is work days. In our case, we can look to Section 1 (Definitions) in our CBA to find that a “*day*” means *work day unless otherwise specified; and “work day” means any day on which an academic staff member is normally expected to be at his place of employment. Saturday and Sunday are not normally days of work.* Currently, we have a dispute as to whether a vacation day would count or not. The Association's position is that it does not count when considering timelines because it doesn't meet the definition of a “*day on which an academic staff member is normally expected to be at his place of employment.*” This dispute is going to arbitration.

If you have questions about this or any other labour relations topic, please contact me by phone, e-mail, or come to the SAFA office for a coffee and a chat. ☺

of the day. This was not fair to the students or the faculty.

At SAIT I found my first passion—my chosen profession. At SAIT I found my second passion—teaching. And then, ironically, SAIT took both of them away from me.

If SAIT would concentrate on cooperating with, and supporting, faculty instead of confronting them SAIT could be the Premiere Technical Institute that it has always claimed to be.

Reflections on My Position Abolishment

It was the last work day in June and I was looking forward to a restful summer. It had been a very challenging year. One of the instructors in my group had his position abolished exactly one year earlier; his workload had been shared among the remaining faculty. The Academic Chair for my group also had his position terminated at the same time. No reason was given for these actions although we knew that the motivation was political. We were dealing with a micro-managing, confrontational Associate Dean who had taken a special “interest” in our group. The first indications of this “interest” showed itself in the termination of the previously mentioned instructor and Academic Chair. The Associate Dean had two notches in his belt.

We also had a new Academic Chair who did not turn out to be the positive force the faculty had hoped. I had been dealing with debilitating medical issues and a catastrophic family situation; something that SAIT was unsympathetic towards. Exhausted and demoralized I just wanted to tie up any loose ends and begin my vacation. There was only one more task to perform before leaving for the summer break. That task was to get my PPR signed by the Academic Chair. Nothing could have prepared me for what happened next.

As I approached the office of the Academic Chair I was greeted by a dark office, locked door and a note which read “Let’s meet in HR.” I had worked long enough at SAIT, twenty years on contract and full-time, to know exactly what this meant. It meant that the last twenty years that I had invested in SAIT, and in education, was about to be erased. Why, I did not know. At 55 years of age my position was going to be “abolished” just like my other two colleagues. I felt like I had been gutted; I felt nauseous. The Associate Dean now had three notches in his belt. I later found out that another instructor in our group had his position abolished shortly after mine. The Associate Dean now had four notches in his belt—four out of a group of eight.

I immediately went to my office to collect my personal items and erase any of my personal files from my SAIT computer. As I left my office to go to Human Resources I found the Associate Dean haunting the hallway outside my office like some kind of ghoul looking for me. He escorted me all the way to Human Resources—down the hallway, up the elevator, down the hallway. This was such a bizarre and surreal experience; I walked along in stunned silence. I will never forget the look of perverse self-satisfaction on his face. I was reeling and thoughts spun around in my head like a tornado.

I was delivered to a small room in Human Resources where there was an HR representative and someone that I did not recognize. The Academic Chair burst into the room and informed me that my position had been abolished and that I was no longer an employee of SAIT. The Academic Chair left immediately before I could ask any questions or make any comments. The HR representative then introduced the stranger in the room. He was an employment counsellor from a company that SAIT had contracted for job placement services for the people that SAIT was terminating. Then the HR representative left the room, again, before I could ask any questions or make any comments. This process was over in an instant—less than a minute. In that instant SAIT stole my career and my livelihood from me. SAIT put me and my family at great financial risk. SAIT erased the twenty year investment that I had made in SAIT and in education. SAIT took from me what I was and who I was without apology or explanation.

Advertisements came out almost immediately to fill the positions that had just been abolished. I guess that I am unclear on how SAIT defines abolishment. Obviously the positions were not abolished as the classes still had to be taught. It is my understanding that many part-time people were hired to shoulder the workload. Two of the classes that I taught, a senior second-year course and a related first-year course, were taught the following Fall semester by a 19-year old new graduate of my program! This shows the disregard that SAIT has for education and for industry and it shows the contempt that SAIT has for faculty. To add insult to injury this student contacted me and asked to have my class notes for the courses he was teaching.

I opted to engage in the arbitration process to see if I could get some answers and an explanation of why my position had been abolished. What I learned from the arbitration process was that I had absolutely no power and that SAIT could do what it wanted any time it wanted without explanation. No one at SAIT is accountable or responsible. Through the arbitration process I became aware of a certain recurring phrase: “SAIT has done nothing wrong.” This refers to the fact that SAIT has followed the procedures it has set out for itself. It does not refer to ethical, moral or socially responsible behaviour. SAIT has a code of ethics that exists only for “show.”

I have found the search for employment to be an interesting journey. Despite my educational background other academic institutions see me as being too close to retirement age to invest in and the private sector sees my extended time in education to be a problem. At nearly 60 years of age, when I should have been looking forward to retirement, I have been left to literally start over. My investment in SAIT and education have been a colossal waste of my time and, at this

late stage of my life, has put me and my family in jeopardy.

I had the opportunity to meet with an individual who was involved with my position abolishment at a high level and to discuss the situation. I was told that my position abolishment was not because of classroom performance or economics. It had to do with personalities, ego and politics. Describing my position abolishment he said, ***"It was an execution."*** At my age and after a twenty year investment in SAIT, what SAIT did to me was both vicious and cruel.

The fact that the Associate Dean eliminated four members out of a group of eight indicates that there is a problem with the management at SAIT. It was pure politics. Although SAIT has never been perfect I remember a time when SAIT was not so driven by politics. Politics to the extent that half of the faculty members of a group can be eliminated. I find this to be shameful and unconscionable behaviour. It is my opinion that the Lewis administration introduced a meanness-of-spirit to SAIT management that was allowed to flourish.

The isolated and insulated environment in educational institutions like SAIT are ideal hunting grounds for bullies and sociopaths where they are able to operate unchecked. That is exactly what happened to my group—we were targeted by a bully. Once the bully sets his eyes on you there is nothing that you can do.

SAIT has dealt me a blow from which I have been unable to recover. However, as I lay in bed at night, staring at the ceiling unable to sleep, my heart pounding, pondering an uncertain future, I am comforted by the fact that SAIT has done nothing wrong.

Having read the article we need to put some perspective back in place. Was this the feeling and experiences of all? Were there individuals who were not witness to this type of conduct or behavior? More importantly, is this still the ruling order of the day?

I would like to answer the last question.

I have been involved directly with the Faculty Association for 13 years, the last 7 as the President and lead voice of the Collective Faculty. I believe that I have fought hard over the past years to make improvements in both the treatment and working conditions for Faculty and have been fairly successful in both areas. I also believe that advancements are going to continue and pieces that I have put into play will move forward and again promote a greater environment for Faculty.

Going back to that last question; look around and truly see the atmosphere around you.

When I came back on the campus in January, one of the first things I noticed is that I had a clear sidewalk in which to trudge to my office. As the semester has progressed I have seen a more open willingness to collaborate on problems rather than dictate a solution. I hope I am not alone in this observation.

The most telling of all pieces is something that most people will not be aware of. Our new President, Dr. David Ross, and I have had pens down, paper forgotten discussions monthly. These discussions have varied in length from 45 minutes to nearly 2 hours and have been open, frank, and extremely honest. Rest assured that our new helmsman has heard the Faculty and the Faculty have heard him. We have always had to work together but moving forward I see a better chance to work in partnership rather than rule through dispute resolution.

I have been often referred to as the "bulldog" for Faculty. With the winds that will eventually bring spring so too will change take effect on the campus on more than just the landscape. These changes moving forward will need the help of all across the campus regardless of affiliation to employee groups. Perhaps it is time to put the leash back on the bulldog.

I ask everyone to have patience, provide input, and assist the Faculty Association in these changing times. Together we will influence the culture and reshape the committee to be something of pride. Look to the future but remember the past "lest we forget." ➡

EMPLOYEE & FAMILY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Confidential, Professional Assistance for Life's Concerns

What is an Employee and Family Assistance (EFAP) Program?

Almost everyone, at some time in their lives, will have difficulty dealing with a problem. Your health, happiness, social and family lives, or work performance may be impacted.

SAIT provides a confidential EFAP which can help with many concerns or problems. This professional counselling service is provided through Organizational Health Incorporated (OHI), which is off-campus.

A **partial** list of what is covered for you and/or your family includes the following:

- stress at home or on the job;
- marriage/relationships;
- mediation;
- grief;
- conflict with supervisor, colleagues, or the public;
- financial difficulties;
- anxiety, depression, and other psychological problems; and
- many more.

The earlier you address a distressing situation, the easier it will be to manage.

Call OHI at 403.777.1272 or Visit OHI website at www.ohiinc.ca

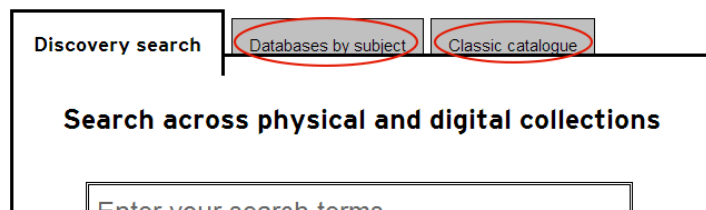
A New Way to Search Your Library

By Alison Hart

The Library's search box has changed!

Previously, users were greeted by the classic catalogue where they could search for books, videos, and journal titles separately. Now, our Discovery search box searches for books, videos, and even searches within our journals for relevant articles at the same time. Instead of doing a separate search for books, then heading into one, two, three, or more databases to find articles, you can now search a huge array of resources all in one place.

If you do prefer to use the catalogue or a specific database, you still can. Those options are still available through the "Databases by subject" or "Classic catalogue" tabs on the Discovery search box.



Some of the Library's resources are unique and can't be found using Discovery search. For example:

- Apprentice instructors and students who need a practice exam should go directly to the [Apprenticeship and Trades](#) databases for the [Trade and Apprenticeship ExamBank](#).
- If you are repairing your car, go directly to our [Transportation](#) databases for [Mitchell ProDemand](#) or [ALLDATA Online](#).
- If you need to look up legal cases, you can access [Westlaw](#) through our [Business and Law databases](#).

Discovery search is a great way to access or to search the entire catalogue quickly and easily.

- Using the Search box is a really comprehensive way to search for all types of Library resources, which include books, eBooks, streaming videos and journal articles, simultaneously.

Punography

I tried to catch some Fog. I mist.

When chemists die, they barium.

Jokes about German sausage are the wurst.

A soldier who survived mustard gas and pepper spray is now a seasoned veteran.

I know a guy who's addicted to brake fluid. He says he can stop any time.

How does Moses make his tea? Hebrews it.

I stayed up all night to see where the sun went. Then it dawned on me.

This girl said she recognized me from the vegetarian club, but I'd never met herbivore.

I'm reading a book about anti-gravity. I can't put it down.

- **Enhanced catalog records** feature the book cover images, subject headings, availability information, awards, review citations, and more.
- You are presented with searching strategy that is similar to Google or other search engine searching. It truly is one-stop searching with **direct links to related information**, and it will also provide users with more scholarly or peer-reviewed content.
- For full text searching of journals, magazines, or trade publications and relevant book content, our Discovery search is the best tool to use.
- Discovery will provide you with the most relevant sources first. You can then use the options found on the left-hand side of the screen to limit your results by year, format, etc.

With this great new tool, we are now able to maximize the value of our entire collection of eBooks, books, journals, and streaming video collections.

If you need more information or help with searching, please contact the Library through

- email at <http://library.sait.ca>
- phone at (403) 284-8616
- [our in-depth research service](#)
- [Ask us a question](#)
- Chat Reference
- Library Information Desk ↔

SAIT/SAFA Workload Committee Report

By Donna Campbell

The SAIT/SAFA Workload Committee continued its meetings in December and January, where we concentrated on how Sections 36.02 and 36.06 (Class Contact Hours or CCH) and 36.10 (Development and Preparation) work, and any issues identified by SAFA members in the past survey.

In its discussions, the Committee is trying to ensure that recommendations do not add unnecessary complexity to Section 36 and that recommendations recognize the unique requirements of each of the Schools at SAIT.

The Committee also had discussions about many new staff arrivals at SAIT over the past few years and that it may be appropriate post Committee for a presentation on Section 36 to be made. This would ensure that all levels (executive, management, instructors, and staff) have a good understanding of how it works.

At the February meeting, the Committee will concentrate on Sections 38.08 and 36.11 (Assignable Work) and continue discussions about scheduling concerns.

The SAFA Committee members are Richard Thompson (Construction), Earl Simpson (M & A), Roger Duckworth (Business), and Donna Campbell (ICT). ↔

