

# SAFAGRAM



Volume 1 • No 2

June 1995

## EDITORIAL

### The Democratic Way

On June 1, we elected our secretary/treasurer and one faculty board rep. for the coming academic year. A number of other positions were filled by acclamation. Our representatives for 1995/6 now include

President: John Schmale  
 Sec/Treas: Ed Beeler  
 Directors: Len Filmer, Dan Wallace, Irene Langille, Jan Nyholt, Fred Malley, and Ed Logue

Academic Council Members: Henry Van Malsen, Randy Paul, Bryan Buell, Jennifer Prest, Ray Gauthier, and Chris Perry

Faculty Board Reps: John James and Lorne Rankin

The SAFAGRAM Board thanks those who let their names stand and congratulates those who were successful. And of course we include our appreciation for all those members who continue to serve on Faculty Council and the various SAFA, ACIFA, and joint SAFA/SAIT committees.

This process of choosing our own leaders is true to one of the fundamental values of our society - democracy - something we occasionally take for granted, casually assuming it is the Canadian way. Often it is. But often it is not. Many of our institutions, particularly our workplaces, follow top-down models of governance that impose layer upon layer of control, each layer accountable to the layer above rather than to those below.

SAFA maintains an interest in instituting democratic governance at SAIT, starting with instructors selecting their deans and coordinators. Management, to put it delicately, has not matched this interest. Discussions on the topic are stalemated.

Nonetheless, those of us who believe in collegial or democratic governance can continue to promote the concept. Perhaps democracy, that ancient and most tolerable form of governance, will eventually prevail.

In the meantime, let's not take what we have for granted. Let's exercise the democracy available to us through SAFA and vigorously support the leaders we have chosen. A good start would be to bring our information and views on the workload study to our executive. The more we support them, the better they can represent us. ♦

## FAQs

by Mattie Gillespie, SAFA Administrative Secretary

**FAQ:** Is the SAFA office closed for the summer?

**A:** Yes, the SAFA office will be closed for a well-deserved summer vacation period commencing Monday, July 17 until our re-opening on Monday, August 28, 1995. But that doesn't mean we're not on call for urgent matters. In fact, SAFA staff take turns trekking in from the bush to scrutinize the mail and monitor the answering machines weekly, responding to calls from their hammocks as urgency requires. Those machines will give the outgoing message that any more urgent calls (requiring a SAFA representative to return to campus from vacation to assist) can be made only through the SAIT Human Resources office. HR staff will contact a SAFA rep. to contact you or help you reschedule your department meeting until an available rep. can be found. Also, SAFA and HR have agreed to extend the time limit to Sept. 15, 1995 for initial filing or conveyance to a higher level of any new or existing grievances respectively, which may arise over the period

June 30 to Sept. 11, 1995 inclusive. So, if it's really urgent, please do not hesitate to proceed as outlined above, but if it's at all possible to postpone routine inquiries, we'll appreciate your patience. Enjoy your time in the sun, and we'll see you next semester!

**FAQ:** How do contract Instructors obtain an official receipt of payment of Association dues for their audited financial statements?

**A:** SAIT Finance Dept. has now programmed their system to issue receipts to any contract Instructor for payment of Association dues for any specified period of instructional time, but on request only. Please contact Accounts Payable Supervisor Sarana Chung (8328/M132) to request your "Dues Deduction Report," providing her with your corporate name and the period of instructional employment at SAIT for which you require a receipt of SAFA dues for audit purposes. (Contractors require these receipts, as their corporate pay stubs do not show an explanation for the association fees deduction.) ♦

## OVER TO YOU: Letters to the Editor

### Good On Us

Congratulations on the excellent production of your enthusiastically received newsletter. Everyone who has read the first edition of the SAFAGRAM has expressed delight with the timely articles, layout and sections.

The SAFAGRAM will definitely be a useful vehicle for SAIT Instructors to express

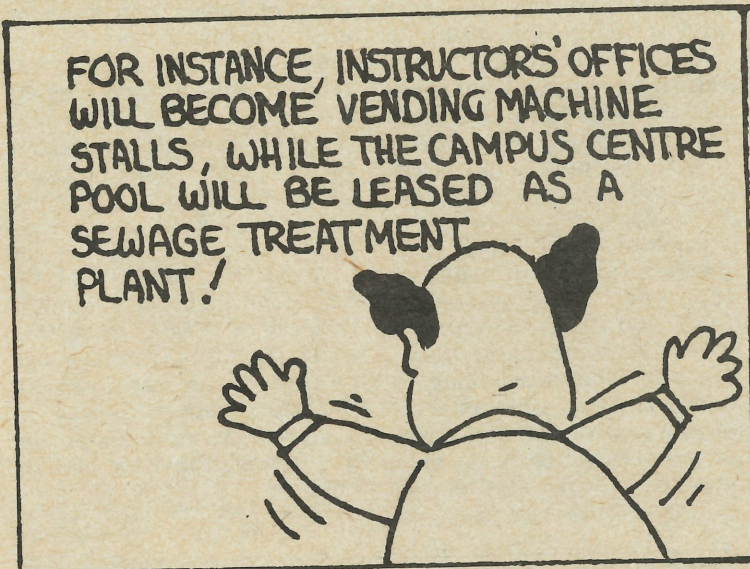
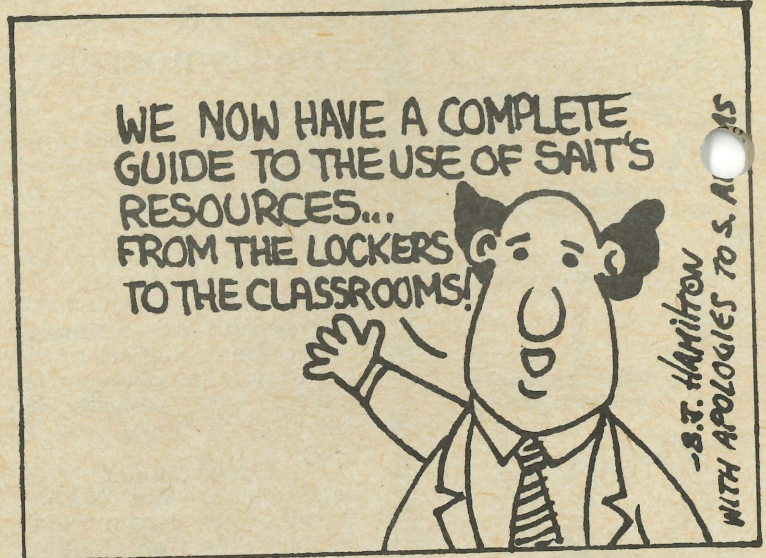
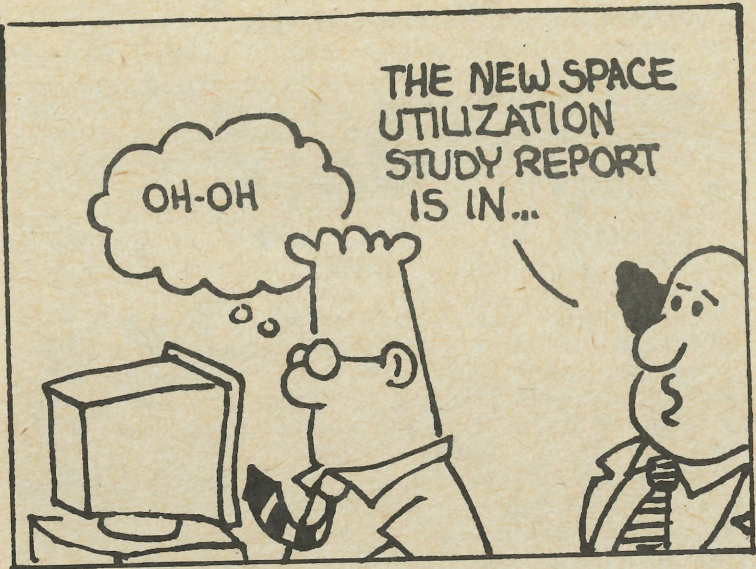
their views and concerns. The issues in the first volume are already being discussed over coffee tables around the campus.

The SAFA Executive Committee would like to take this opportunity to convey our appreciation for all your hard work in getting this project off the ground and to offer our continued support for the future in this very worthwhile SAFAGRAM venture.

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# SAFAGRAM

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approved by the SAFA Executive on March 8th, 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.

## 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 Bucks, John and Jack.*

## Two Bucks

"Teaching runs rampant in the family," says John (Jack) Buck, an instructor in Math, Physics, Computing. He cites aunts, uncles, and cousins, along with two of his three brothers and both his parents. Many faculty members will remember Jack's father, John Buck, who spearheaded the Pre-Careers program at SAIT and who taught in the Math, Physics Department for 22 years.

Teaching was a third career for John Sr. He has the unusual combination of a B.Eng. in Civil Engineering, a B.D. (Bachelor of Divinity) plus an S.T.M. (Masters of Sacred Theology)—all from McGill. First he practised





John Buck and family in his priestly period (Jack, far right).

engineering for three years with Shawinigan Water and Power before returning to school to obtain his B.D. in 1953. He then worked full time as an Anglican priest in Montreal completing his course work for his masters degree in 1961 while "building a church" and fulfilling his priestly duties. During this time, he also produced four sons (Jack is number two).

How did an Anglican priest from Montreal start another career teaching at SAIT? John explains that it happened because of his thesis. His research on Canadian church history from 1875 to 1925 opened his eyes to western Canada. He began to think that you "couldn't call yourself a Canadian until you lived in both the East and the West." When a professional opportunity arose in Calgary in 1965, he agreed to move his family to serve as a priest at Christ Church in Elbow Park.

Two years later, in 1967, John decided that as an "avid Canadian" he wanted to do something to contribute to Canada's centennial. He chose to come to SAIT. The federal government had started initiatives in the '60s for increasing technical training (one of the reasons why the Tower Building was built with government money), and John knew he had talents to offer in this area. He had always been interested in cars and mechanics and joined

SAIT to teach math to apprentices.

In 1972, the Alberta government initiated a Pre-Employment

Program (PEP) in technologies giving SAIT the chance to run a trial class of students. Three teachers were selected, and when one opted out, John was chosen to design the physics course. As he says, he "never looked back." The program was advertised as Pre-Careers in 1973; John was

appointed as the first co-ordinator, and he stayed with PreCareers until his retirement in 1989. He claims that he truly had a "wonderful time" developing special courses and teaching.

John instigated the addition of English to the primarily math, physics curriculum in Pre-Careers. With his humanities background, and fearing the "us engineers don't need no English" syndrome, he made communications and liberal arts instructors part of the Pre-Careers strategy planning, not just a service area.

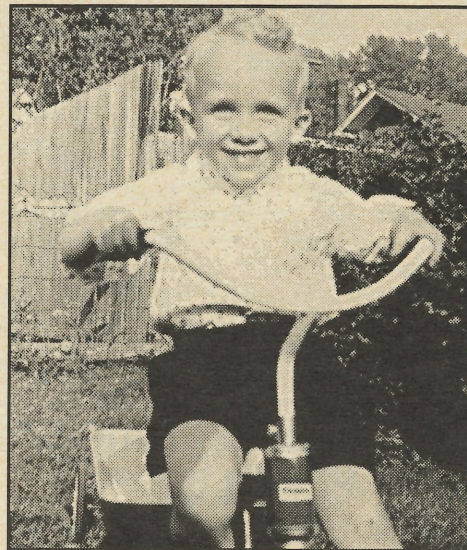
John feels, however, that "the most important piece of work" he was involved with at SAIT was his Effective Study Methods (ESM) course. Knowing that "you can't do physics unless you are a student," he began introducing effective study techniques in the first three or four hours of his physics course. Eventually, he was delivering his new "gospel" campus wide at department request plus training other instructors to teach the essential procedures of how to study and learn effectively.

Today in his 70th year, John Buck Sr. is busy, active, and still enthusiastic about learning. He and his wife love to travel (they've been to Ireland four times, to Montreal every spring, and to France, Belgium, the U.K., and Maui); and when they're not hitting the airways, they're hitting the hiking or skiing trails. John also swims

in SAIT's pool at least once a week while he's in Calgary and is still active in pastoral duties as an honorary assistant at Christ Church.

Recently, John has been acting as agent and promoter for his wife's new book. Titled *Stream of Memory*, it is Laurel Buck's enchanting memoirs of growing up in the '30s on her grandparents' farm in the Eastern Townships. (John calls it "creative non-fiction" and urges any faculty members who are interested in a copy to call him at 243-2803). After a multi-faceted career, 22 years of it at SAIT, John now appears to be thoroughly enjoying his retirement.

It's not hard to understand why John Jr. (Jack) refers to his father as "inspiring." Jack became an instructor at SAIT in 1985 in the same department and same area of study as John. Their offices were



Jack Buck in his pre-SAIT days

across from one another for the four-year overlap before John retired, and Jack says "it was good to have him as a resource."

Jack taught his father's ESM course and was also involved with Pre-Careers right from the beginning. He even stepped into his father's shoes and became coordinator of Pre-Careers July 1993. His pathway to SAIT, however, was somewhat different from John's.

Not quite knowing what he wanted to do, Jack went to U of C for one year in general studies. Then he heard from

his dad about a new program starting at SAIT--Engineering Science Technology (EST). Its purpose, to develop solid skills in math, physics, and English, appealed to the generalist in Jack; and he was especially keen to get involved in the Environmental Control option. He was accepted into the first class of ESTs with Alan Cassley coordinating and obtained his diploma in 1975.

Jack remembers the "high quality of instruction" he received and the "superb" instructors he had--instructors such as Lorne Tetarenko, Fred Trotter, Dale Earl, Alan Cassley, Chris Sparks—to name a few. As he got to know his instructors, he also started to take part in the weekend hiking and skiing that was a part of that "dynamic" department in the '70s. (Jack even recalls that Ken Myrhe led most of the trips).

Jack worked as a technologist in an oil company for six months after SAIT but began to feel that he should broaden his education. Like his parents, (his mother has an M.A. in English), Jack also had a strong interest in the humanities. He returned to university 1976-78 for a B.A. in liberal arts.

For the next two years, Jack worked at jobs such as driving truck and traveled both to Quebec City and Europe for extended periods. Still trying to decide

what to do for a career, he tried one semester of a B.Ed. in 1980. Then he remembered from his technologist's work that engineers were the top of the heap in the oil company. So, like his father before him, Jack switched to engineering. He obtained his degree in 2 1/2 years. Again like his father before him, Jack worked for three years as an engineer. His job was with Environment Canada (PFRA) building and rehabilitating irrigation structures in south eastern Alberta. Then the rampant teaching gene must



The Mutant Gene  
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have kicked in. Jack applied for and was hired as a full-time instructor at SAIT.

With eight years of post-secondary education in a broad range of subjects, Jack finds it "ironic" that he teaches physics—the only course he failed way back in his very first year of university. But, he feels, this is probably the very reason why he can now teach physics effectively to students struggling with it.

Jack still hikes and skis—activities he participated in as a boy with his close-knit family. He also bikes everywhere (his father notes that in almost every picture of Jack as a child he was on a trike or bike). You might catch him in his fourth floor office in the Senator Burns Building or dashing down the back stairs at the end of the day with his bike helmet and backpack.

Both Jack and his father John are known for their energy, their geniality, their wide-ranging interests, and their love of teaching. SAIT students have been fortunate to learn under two generations of Bucks so far, and with teaching running rampant in the family, who knows? We could always use more Bucks. ♦



*If you have a philosophical concept you'd like to share with your colleagues, send it in to "Soap Box." In this issue, Art Schlenker, an instructor in Communication Arts, talks about*

## Knocking the Net

The Internet... The Net... The Information Highway... It's everywhere and it's getting crowded. Non-users are warned that they will be left in the Ditch of Ignorance if they don't climb aboard right now. Daily come announcements of new and exciting sites that must be visited or you'll be a nobody, sneered at by the new aloof group that has mastered the system, who speak knowingly of downloading, cruising, surfing, cybersexing and other real fun-sounding recreations.

For the computer-disdainful, the computer-confused, or just the plain computer-distrustful, the constant, per-

vasive compubabble about the info-highway not only is threatening, but must most certainly be something sinister and downright immoral. So there.

Sure, users say they're conversing via e-mail with people from all over the world about culture, hobbies, deep academic matters and such. They say they're visiting countless of the millions of easily accessible and comprehensive data banks on virtually every known subject. When they have a spare moment, they say, they dip into a few of the ten thousand plus newsgroups where they can instantly interact with contributors either on an individual basis or by posting to the virtual world. They claim to visit the Louvre, to listen to Beethoven, to play chess with a scholar in Africa, to obtain up-to-the-minute research data, to find the weather report for Ireland.

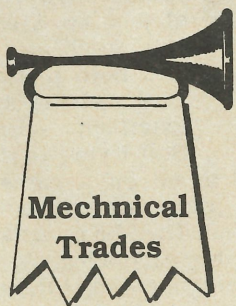
But what is generally suspected and widely broadcast, though, is that what Net Users are actually doing is squir-

relling away information on building bombs, taking part in subversive discussion in "alt.overthrow.everything", gambling, and accidentally running into the nests of porn, erotic pictures and other not nice sites that litter the highway. As a result, the Net and those using it must be contributing to, or becoming part of, the General Moral Decay of our Society. In a big way.

Resist! Don't get sucked in by the vortex created by the passing bandwagons trundling steadily along the superhighway. Don't fall for the ad nauseam media hype and the smug "we have secret knowledge" expressions on the faces of Net users. Show that you're strong. And right.

Besides, if many more sign up there's a good chance of a longer wait at some of my favourite sites next time I log on. ♦

## 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. Simon Bergen-Henengouwen, an instructor in Mechanical Trades and Technology talks about some of his students and their flying machines.*

## SAIT'S PRAIRIE FLYER II

What happened to the PRAIRIE FLYER I? Well it competed last year and placed third. Still it was the best glider in our estimation. This year the scoring formula more adequately recognized gliding time. With a new group of students and a new airplane, the P.F. II won it all: first prize at the Canadian Aeronautics and Space Institute (CASI) Free Flight Competition held in Ottawa on May 6, 1995.

So what's this competition anyway and who entered? The CASI gliding competition is open to all Canadian university and college students. This year, student groups from UBC, Queen's, Carleton U, Laval U., and Ecole Polytechnique entered, plus of course SAIT. Remember the concrete

toboggan (Structures), robot wrestling (Electronics), culinary competitions (Culinary Arts), CMA accounting competition (Business), off-road vehicles (Mechanical) and don't forget the SAE heavy lift competition (Aeronautical). (I apologize for those I have missed.)

The object of the CASI competition was to design, build, and fly a free flying (no radio control) glider whose assembled dimensions had to fit into a 2 meter x 2 meter x 1 meter box. The lighter the better. It had to be hand towed to a height of 50 meters and released. The flight score was then obtained by multiplying the payload in grams by the gliding time to the power of 3.5. Maximum gliding time was limited to 90 seconds, in case a thermal caught the glider and it flew

longer. Sound complicated? Not really. All that was required was a light weight, very stable (remember, no pilot) airplane capable of achieving high lift, low rate of descent, at low Reynold's number. Whoa! What's Reynold's number? No, it's not the address in Wetaskwin. Well, sit in a few Principles of Flight lectures if you can.

Students were able to go through some of the design, construction, and testing during scheduled class time and do so with the assistance of Rudy Pekau and me. Since the final score consisted of both a student report and presentation (50%) and the actual flight scores (50%) the division of responsibility was easy for the two of us. I looked after the former and our man

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Blow Your Horn  
Continued from Page 4

from Messerschmitt and model glider builder "par excellence," Rudy Pekau, handled the supervision of the building and testing. The result was a balsa wood/carbon fibre/Monokote glider which, despite the substitute broom stick fuselage, was still the lightest of all the competition gliders.

As a class project it ran smoothly. AET-3 students met with instructors at timetabled intervals to perform their tasks. They were taken through the entire design process. First came the gliding score optimization, which involved examining the

variables affecting the score and once determined selecting the correct combination of these to maximize the score. This is a standard numerical non-linear optimization problem covered in Engineering Numerical Analysis. Next they had to select a wing and tail so that excellent lift and stability would be assured. This relied heavily on material covered in Principles of Flight and Advanced Calculus. Strength of the composite wing spar required knowledge of Aircraft Structural Analysis. Some of the many hours involved in construction occurred in Engineering Materials lab and instruc-

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The Prairie Flyer II with student designers (L to R) Nathan Aligizakis, Jason Kuczak, Scott Wales

Photo by George Webber

## SAFA REPORTS

### PERSPECTIVE

by John Schmale, SAFA President



Summer is almost here and, by the time you read this, some of you will already be on vacation. After the most stressful and strenuous year for workload that I have witnessed, you each deserve your vacation - take it and enjoy it.

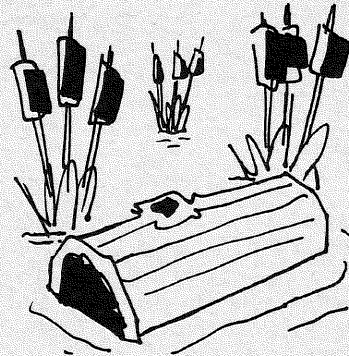
You need not be concerned by unknown evils created by a new workload system in the collective agreement. You can enjoy your vacation, worrying only about the well-known evils lurking in the present system. In the next academic year, you will have a chance to determine the weighting factors of each of your courses. The targets of this weight typing are to reduce inequities in workloads across the campus and to identify

instructor duties by more than the time spent in class.

It will be extremely important that every Instructor be very objective in determining her/his course(s) type(s) because the number of hours and the weighting factors are the major items to be negotiated against cost if the new model is accepted. If every Instructor were to think that his/her workload is the heaviest, and all of their courses were type A, the cost of the plan would be huge. The extremely high cost would require that weighting be very low, thus actually increasing the required instructional hours after negotiation.

We must realize that the workload plan should be used to solve workload inequities; some instructors may have an increased load and others a decreased load. Will you be able to support your weighting decisions relative to others in your section, department or division? Please realize that the Board of Governors will not ratify a workload agreement that costs substantially more than the present. But realize also and be assured, that your SAFA Executive, Negotiations, and Steering Committees will not allow an across-the-board increase to the workload of instructors already stretched to their limits. ♦

### BOG Log



by Georgina Kiraly, Faculty Board Representative

*[Since we have had "countless" communications on SAIT's finances, (pun intended) I have chosen to eliminate redundancies and not discuss the subject at all.]*

A key role of the Board of Governors is to take decisions that guide SAIT into the future. The Board's role is not to manage nor to imple-

ment. Effective implementation depends entirely on sound management and the contributions of all the people at SAIT. The distinction is an important one because I believe the Board has made significant, positive decisions this past year. I'd like to highlight just a few, particularly those that relate to **People, Progress and Profile...**

**People.** The Board recognizes that SAIT is in the "people business." For those people who need our services, the Board has asked the institute to increase access not only through traditional enrolment but also through alternate delivery systems and through year-round programming. Our learners need and want choices; they need and want flexibility. By meeting these needs, SAIT will prosper.

The Board also recognizes SAIT's people—those compe-

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### Thanks ...

The outgoing SAFA Executive wishes to acknowledge the diligent and effective service of SAFA President John Schmale and Administrative Secretary Mattie Gillespie through the past year.

John's quiet and diplomatic consultation with all members of the SAIT community has helped to foster an atmosphere of mutual co-operation across campus. Largely as a result of this more co-opera-

tive environment, SAFA has successfully concluded contract negotiations well before contract expiry, and has had to pursue no new grievance cases this year. Most significantly, John is to be credited with innovation of the current Workload Study Implementation Plan, a scheme endorsed by SAIT management and SAFA alike.

Thank you, John and Mattie... and keep up the good work in the coming term.

1994 - 1995 SAFA Executive



BOG Log  
Continued from Page 5

tent, skilled, and committed faculty and staff who are key to SAIT's future success. The Board, for example, has decided that a Human Resource Plan is required to encourage and support professional/skill development, reward performance, and provide a stimulating and empowering work environment. This is a very good decision! Remember, it is management's task to develop and implement the plan.

**Progress.** The Board wants to see SAIT grow, to become the "premier polytechnic." Many of the decisions taken were with that end in mind. We have had to plan for SAIT's future during difficult times and within imposed constraints, yet, the intention has always been to move forward and to grow. SAIT has already started centres of applied technology (through effective fundraising); is offering some of the first applied degrees in the province; has instituted the first 2+2 partnership; and on and on...

**Profile.** Isn't it to our benefit to become more self-reliant? To become a more responsive organization? To develop as a polytechnic institute offering a full range of programming? To know in what areas we should focus our expertise and in what programs and services we can be the best? Shouldn't our programs meet national and international standards? The Board has decided "yes"; hopefully, the people at SAIT will also agree and will make it so. ♦

## SAFA...IT'S YOU AND I

by Darcy Ellison, Director, Division C

Here's the second in a series of articles about SAFA, the SAIT Academic Faculty Association. SAFA is you and I...SAIT's Instructors.

As we mentioned in the first article, SAFA administers its mandate through its Executive and Faculty Council. In the last SAFAGRAM piece, we looked at the Executive Committee, comprised of the President, the Secretary-Treasurer, a Past Executive Representative, and

two Directors from each of the 3 groups or 'Divisions' of SAIT's various academic departments. Of course, with the results of the June 1 election, the Executive will change effective September 1, 1995. (Our executive for 1995-1996 is named in the editorial.)

Executive members raise and discuss issues that are relevant to all SAFA members, but they take all important decisions of general concern to Faculty Council for further discussion and ratification. Faculty Council is the "grass roots" representation of our faculty association.

Faculty Council representatives are democratically selected by the members of each department for a one-year term.

There is no standard campus-wide election format for Faculty Council reps...each department

devises its own democratic selection process. In some departments, reps. are selected over a cup of coffee; in others, formal nomination and election decides. Usually, department members decide at the beginning of the fall term who will sit on Faculty Council as their representative for the coming year.

According to SAFA's Constitution, no member may serve more than three consecutive full terms in the same position, ensuring a representative presence for each department. A Faculty Council representative and an alternate is selected for each 40 members or portion thereof in a department. So your department representative or his/her alternate is an immediate voice, speaking for close colleagues. Get to know your rep. He or she is your SAFA contact.

Faculty Council meetings usually occur on the first Tuesday of each month, except July and August. Most reps attend regularly, but in the event of an unacceptable number of absences by a representative, a two-thirds majority of the members present may move a resolution to advise all faculty in the repre-

sentative's department of the absences and recommend that a replacement be appointed. Your Faculty Council rep. is there to voice your concerns.

Faculty Council is responsible for recommending policy to the Executive. All policies established by the Faculty Council and adopted by the Executive remain in effect unless changed by a General Meeting of all members. Agendas for Faculty Council meetings are prepared by the Administrative Secretary in conjunction with the Executive and approval of the President, but Council members are free to raise issues as they see fit. In addition to discussing specific items of departmental concern,

Faculty Council must also authorize expenditures above the line items approved in the budget

for any fiscal year.

The SAFA Constitution states that "Department Representatives shall be responsible for channelling individual Member concerns to the appropriate body." That means that your concerns can be aired at Faculty Council meetings and flagged as issues-for-discussion at SAFA Executive meetings.

And issues are aired! SAFA regularly deals with concerns at the departmental level. Resolution of individual member concerns is often achieved by direct intervention by Faculty Council reps., Executive members and SAFA's President. No muss, no fuss—just satisfaction of members' concerns!

Remember, your immediate voice for your working conditions is your Faculty Council Representative. But the system—essentially a grass roots democratic system—depends on your input. Talk to your Faculty Council rep., or better yet, think about becoming a Faculty Council Representative yourself. It's your job, your department—it's your SAFA!

Next issue—SAFA Committees, what they do and how you can serve! ♦

## EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE REPORT

by John Schmale, SAFA Pres

A summary overview of a few of the prominent points of discussion at the Executive Committee recently have been:

### Negotiations Steering

- negotiations strategy planning
- discussion & feedback to SAFA Negotiations Committee

### Workload

- discussion & feedback on workload implementation plan

### Quality of Instruction

- effects of coring on programs
- class sizes
- instructional assistant roles - description & application

### Board Policies

- review, discussion & feedback on proposed new & revised Board policies, guidelines & procedures

### Member Liaison

- planning, review & communication of feedback on SAFA Climate Survey, Instructor Quality Improvement Report, Faculty Community Service Survey

### Administrative Liaison

- conveyance of member concerns to SAIT Administration at Joint SAIT Management/SAFA Executive Committee meetings
- monitoring Academic Council agendas

### Event Planning and Funding

- ACIFA Conference, Election, Workload Information Meetings, Ratification Meeting

My thanks go to the SAFA Executive Committee, Faculty Council members and all SAIT Instructors for the support that they have shown me over the last year. It has been a high tempo learning experience, filled with new challenges, creating exciting personal growth. Without the important hard work of everyone on all existing SAFA Committees, we could not achieve the small successes won over the last year. ♦



## PD SECTION

## RAPPORT BUILDERS AND BUSTERS

by David Pike, Teaching and Learning Centre

One of the most common criticisms of course leaders comes immediately after the most common compliment: "Knows his stuff...Knows her stuff...but...". The complaint that follows usually concerns organization, rapport, or both.

Given enough resources and some technical advice, the "organizationally challenged" can soon make satisfying improvements. Rapport, on the other hand, is often thought to come naturally or not at all since it involves a particular ability to see that a complex, dynamic, psychological situation is unfolding.

An interesting way to assess the rapport in any given teaching and learning environment, whether you are course leader or a course participant, is to complete the following checklist by writing down specific words and actions that created or compromised the rapport.

### The course leader made the participants feel...

welcome  
safe  
comfortable  
important  
competent  
understood  
responsible

If you can say "yes" and here's how, the rapport is probably good. If you have to say "no" to any of these, the rapport is probably not so good.

Rapport-building is viewed as unproductive coddling. But adults vote with their minds if not also with their voices and their feet. As research shows, they can't work or learn if they feel threatened and disrespected. It only takes a matter of seconds to build or damage the foundations for learning and working together.

One thing is certain: an environment of challenge and support seems to produce not only the best working rela-

tionships but also the best learning and the best work.

*For handouts on rapport-building, conflict resolution, and mediation, or copies of an article entitled "Threat and the Human Brain," come to the Teaching and Learning Centre, N202, or call 8107.*

## SPEAKING OF EDUCATION

*"Speaking of Education" gives instructors an opportunity to share an educational theory, technique or approach they have found to be of value. Our contribution this issue is from Jim Drever, an instructor in Print Management, who asks the question*

### Do Competency Based Education Programs Allow for Critical Thinking?

an excerpt from a paper by Jim Drever, Communication Arts Instructor (PMT)

My motivation for this topic came from talking and listening to fellow instructors about competency based education. Most agree it can work in some, but not all, programs. Their primary concern is that thinking skills are not addressed. I disagree. I believe competency based education programs could actually increase thinking abilities for the learner.

Given that diagnostic skills would be classified as critical thinking, then yes a competency based education program would very easily include thinking skills. But do employers and learners need a higher level of thinking abilities? With the current rapid technological changes and the economic climate, there is a great demand for thinkers. Employers now

### An Honor Indeed!

In 1960, Garry Weimer graduated from SAIT with a diploma in Industrial Electrical Technology. Early this year, he became president of Westinghouse

Canada, a company with sales of over \$500 million a year and more than 2500 employees. A long but worthy and eminently successful road. You do us proud, Garry!



favor people with high level skills in problem solving and innovation over people with only specialized psychomotor skills. Therefore, the goal of any vocational program should be to develop thinking skills and psychomotor skills to an equal level. Past experience in supervisory roles has taught me to seek out potential employees with higher level thinking skills rather than ones that have practical experience only. If they have qualities that include reflective thinking, innovation, integrity and are creative, then the job skills they may lack will develop naturally.

Again, the issue is -- Does a competency based education program allow for critical thinking? In most, if not all, vocational occupations, the worker must have a fair degree of diagnostic skills in order to be successful. Case in point: motor engine repair - the worker is using diagnostic skill most of the time. In printing - the press operator is continuously monitoring the quality of the job and using diagnostic skills at all times.

We can teach diagnostic skills in a competency based education program if the learning objectives and the

measurement of completing those objectives is clear. For example, we may have this terminal objective: "Given 4 samples of a printed job, analyze the differences in quality and give explanation in writing as to the cause of each difference". This exercise would develop analytical skills that would aid in the learner's abilities to operate a printing press and to perhaps increase

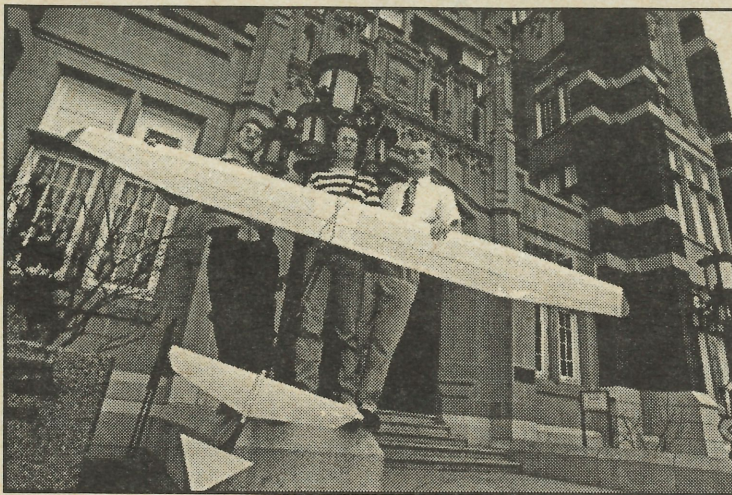
**"Learners should have the ability to transfer and apply the skills to all aspects of their lives"**

his/her opportunity for advancement. It would also increase his/her value as an employee. Ideally, critical thinking should

encompass different levels of thinking. We as educators will have to define the level of thinking we believe is necessary for the learner. I believe that learners should have the opportunity to achieve high order thinking skills. The learners should have the ability to transfer and apply the skills to all aspects of their lives including their working environment, home life, and communities. This transfer would result in living a more fulfilling life and would result ultimately in lifelong learning. If people were to continuously use their thinking skills, whether learned or intrinsic, they would tend to take on more complex problems as they mature and as their life experiences broaden. ♦



Blow Your Horn  
Continued from Page 5



Winners at the Canadian Aeronautics and Space Institute Free Flight Competition, Ottawa, 1995

## GRAFFITI NEEDS ASSESS- MENT:

**Getting your first 15 minutes with a group off to an unusually effective start.**

by David Pike, Teaching and Learning Centre

Instructors and facilitators who'd like to waste no time setting the scene for a course or for accomplishing a task will find this simple technique unusually engaging and revealing:

1. Tape up to 10 blank flipchart sheets to the walls around the room.

2. Write different sentence beginnings at the top of each sheet in order to prompt your group to reflect on various aspects of the course or the task at hand:

For example,

The main question I have as we begin is...

My greatest concern this semester is...

I learn the most when...

These sessions will be most valuable to me if...

Previously my experience in this area has been...

and so on, according to what you'd like to get out in the open.

3. Ask participants to wander around the room completing the sentences.

4. Use their responses to acknowledge the range of needs, goals, experiences, etc.

to discuss what you'll be doing, why and how.

These sheets can be saved and reposted on subsequent days to keep starting points in mind and expand those perspectives.

Most importantly, there's immediate and continuing feedback on the individual perspectives of course participants.

Reference: Barbara K. Goza, "Graffiti Needs Assessment: Involving Students in the First Class Session." *Journal of Management Education*, 17:1, February 1993, pp. 99 - 106. ♦

## THAT'S A GOOD QUESTION

In the last issue we asked:

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?

We received one response from an instructor in Mechanical who noted that he had found a helpful article entitled "Student Test Anxiety: What Can College Instructors Do to Help Reduce It?" in *Innovative Abstracts* (Nov. 20, 1992, Vol XIV, No. 29). The article talks about both the physiological symptoms of test anxiety (sweaty palms, butterflies, etc.) and the cognitive component, wor-

tor/student "free" time. And we know what a precious commodity that is these days!

Like so many successful projects, the students and staff had help. Canadian Airlines provided the transportation for Rudy and three students, Scott Wales, Jason Kuczak and Nathan Aligizakis. Edo supplied some of the carbon fibre. Jan Leinweber, SAIT Library, ordered a book on gliding and a computer program for airfoil design and selection. Dr. Paul Penna at the National Research Council in Ottawa, via the Internet, supplied airfoil data that was unavailable

through interlibrary loan. Autocad drawings were duplicated in SAIT's drafting stores. Heather Ansari, Stu Birkett, Educational Resources, provided transparencies of some computer graphics for the verbal presentation. And finally SAIT's state-of-the-art composite lab with computer controlled autoclave and filament winder provided the resources to do the job properly.

Who says we can't compete with the universities? We do it all the time! And we do it better! The glider and trophies are on display in the Colonel James Walker Building. ♦♦

ry. Excessive worrying directs attention toward the student's own anxious thinking and away from answering questions.

Our respondent says he has implemented some of the recommendations in the article with good results. He interviews students about their anxiety to find out what they think might be contributing to it. Some with poor learning and study strategies he refers to the Learning Centre; others with high levels of anxiety he refers to counselling.

This instructor also gives students a simple technique called "thought stopping" (outlined in the article), pro-

vides practice quizzes, discusses test-taking skills, and gives out copies of the article to students.

(A copy of the article can be obtained from the Teaching and Learning Centre, Local 8107. Thanks to Jeff Horne who responded—his students must really appreciate his concern.)

This issue's question is **QUESTION: How do you "break the ice" in your first meeting with a class?**

Send your answers (and good questions too) to SAFAGRAM, care of the SAFA office, N201.

