



# President’s Message



By Blair Howes

*Hello Faculty,*

From my SAFAGRAM a year ago... “What a start to the academic year so far”

First and foremost, this is an end to an era—Al Brown, the SAFA LRO announced his retirement in June of this year. He finishes his career with SAFA at the end of December. In January, he and his wife will be winging their way to somewhere sunny and warm... and it is well deserved.

Officially, I started working with Al on SAFA business about 9 years ago as the SAFA Vice Chair and have never looked back. I have placed a lot of value in Al’s wisdom and his gentle nature in dealing with the membership. This would be his twelfth year of service to SAFA. He has played a big part in gaining some of the things we enjoy as members over the last two bargaining cycles. This has included dealing with some of the “not so pleasant” business for SAFA—bargaining roadblocks by management, grievance dealings, and sitting through abolishment meetings is the least favourite job for both of us.

Over the years, I have thoroughly enjoyed my daily conversations with Al. There was the occasional golf game with him over the summer months. As I reflect, I have most enjoyed the casual teasing we gave each other over our trade designations (Al is an electrician and I am a plumber). We seemed to have found a

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## Editorial Board

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Send submissions to SAFAGRAM, care of the SAFA office, N201 or e-mail submissions to [kathie.dann@sait.ca](mailto: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.

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real synergy to get the daily business of labour relations at SAFA completed in a timely manner and have always bounced concepts and ideas off each other to that end. We have usually turned “no win” scenarios with management into dealings that have benefited everyone involved.

I have grown to call him my friend and from the bottom of my heart wish him the very best in his retirement and future dealings within the labour relations market. Recently at the Western Regional Conference in October, I referred to our working relationship with *We are like chips and dip. We just naturally work well together.*

Al, thank you for your commitment to both SAFA and me over the years.

Blair

Now on with the rest of the updates:

July and August were full of interesting things for me as I started my secondary role as President of ACIFA. My full return to SAFA work was about mid-September. The first 60 days were filled with the normal work of the President, implementing the new Collective Agreement with SAIT, and populating our new joint committees. I can't thank Jessica Norman enough for her work in getting these things off the ground. In some cases, some of these items were slow to start, but I have every confidence that they will be fully populated by the new year and will start to gather and populate some very important data for the next 18 months before we go into full negotiations once again.

Where to start this message as we come out of the Government of Alberta (GOA) restrictions and to try our very best to return to what the perception of normal is and like many people normal will never be the same as it was pre-pandemic.

This reminds me of the pivotal shift we all managed at the start of the pandemic. This transformation is now ever shifting to match what student and Faculty needs are. I believe this will be the new normal.

I still actively meet biweekly with the presidents of the 13 other colleges and would remind all that four of those institutions are still in collective bargaining. To add to that, I am now also attending biweekly meetings with Alberta Federation of Labour to make sure the colleges sector is in tune with the other organized labour groups in the Province.

As for our new Premier of the Province, SAFA must remain like Switzerland (neutral in our opinion of the GOA) but I personally can't help but think all Albertans will suffer under the new Premier's leadership.

Several ACIFA Member presidents met with the Advanced Education Minister in September and raised some concerns with the start of the new Academic year.

Below is a copy of the authorized Meeting Minutes that includes the questions that were raised and the Minister's responses to those questions.

#### Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, September 14, 2022

By Microsoft Teams with Office of the Minister of Advanced Education, Demetrios Nicolaides

Minister Nicolaides  
McKenzie Kibler  
Blair Howes  
David English  
Keith Gardner  
Sally Stuart  
Shauna MacDonald  
Brian McCulloch  
Gail Hiar  
Peter Johnston-Berresford  
Alex Caldararu  
Leslie Sayer  
Natali Rodrigues  
Neil Napora  
Victoria Kirchner

## 1. Meeting Opening

The meeting opened at 13:00.

### Discussion

2. What is going on with SAIT and provincial exams now that a new board has been established and there are no longer any government restrictions related to COVID?

Minister Nicolaides said the short answer is, it is still to be determined. No decision has been made as of yet as to whether provincial exams will continue or not. They will be extending the pause on these exams for the year.

3. The faculty-appointed board members on the BOG at the institutions are excluded from the in-camera portions of those board meetings. Outside of collective bargaining, we find the practice discriminatory and not in fair transparency.

Minister Nicolaides said that he has not heard about this. He agreed that it is concerning and he doesn't know what the rationale would be. He said that he would be happy to look into it more and get a sense of where this is happening, and then he could connect with the board chairs and get an understanding from them as to why this is happening.

Blair agreed that this is quite concerning, and he added that this is a problem at all of our institutions, not just a couple.

Shauna added that one of her elected board members recently was told that all of the non-faculty board members get to vote on the chair and the new members, and faculty members do not. (She noted that this is hearsay, and she has not yet looked into this further).

Minister Nicolaides said that the PSLA does not detail any specific way as to how a board chair is to be selected. The only thing that the act says is that the board chair is directly appointed by the minister. He said that he's heard that some recommendations have been elected by membership, and some have just been appointed by the faculty association directly. There is no consistent process there.

Natali said there a misunderstanding at her institution as to how they arrive at the board, and who they are as a board member. They are an internal board member, but they don't have the right to sit on finance or HR committees. This is problematic as they are not able to exercise their full fiduciary responsibility. She added that this includes not receiving the budget in the same way as other members on the board receive the budget.

Minister Nicolaides agreed and said that they are full members of the board, and there is nothing in legislation that says that the faculty representative can not be on the finance or HR committee. He said that he will talk to the board chairs and see where this is coming from and why this is happening. He brought up the idea of asking the ethics commissioner to give us a view as to if these are actual conflicts and maybe give us some guidance from an ethics and conflict standpoint. He will ask his team to do some preliminary homework as well as ask officials in advanced education to let him know what their professional views are.

4. What are the plans for the new apprentice style training for the advanced school of technology at SAIT? Has there been any movement on getting the credential recognized outside of Alberta?

Minister Nicolaides said they have not done a ton of work at this stage to ensure recognition of those credentials outside of Alberta. He anticipates and imagines that if they are recognized under the Alberta credential framework that that would carry weight against other provinces. With respect to expansion of apprenticeship, he thinks this is an area where we could continue to accelerate things. For new apprenticeship style programs, there needs to be employer recognition, and curriculum still need to be written.

5. Do you have any idea as to what Monday the 19th has to bring?

Minister Nicolaides said that it was just announced that it will not be a statutory holiday. It's being identified as a day of mourning. Employers are encouraged to provide flexibility.

6. In regards to the Premier's task force, why is the only representative on that council from post-secondary from a private college when the vast majority of our students and learners are coming from public post-secondary institutions?

Minister Nicolaides said that one of the members of the committee is a former president of NAIT. Subsequent to his time at NAIT, he was president at GPRC. There is a voice there through Dr. Feltham.

The intent is for the group to operate as an industry-based advisory council to create a vehicle for industry groups, representatives, and employers to engage regularly with the Premier about the skill needs in their respective industries and sectors of economy.

7. Discussion concluded at 13:39.

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*I would like to send and acknowledge SAFA's support and solidarity to our fellow instructors at the Universities under CUPE local 3912. ACIFA sent financial support to them during their strike. It looks like a win for the members and a positive move forward.*

As we round the corner of 2022 and brace for 2023, I want to remind everyone of the need for all SAFA members to send an alternate e-mail address to Kathie in the SAFA office in case of a communication breakdown between SAFA and SAIT. Also, visit the SAFA website often in the new year for regular updates.

And a repeat as a reminder from last November's SAFAGRAM below:

That brings me to a very important update for all Faculty members concerning mutual agreement. As we all know, SAIT, in the 19/20 academic year scheduled fall classes for Faculty outside of the four corners of our Collective Agreement **without gaining mutual agreement** with those affected members. That was a serious breach of the agreement and resulted in a policy grievance being filed by the Association. (Still remains unresolved in SAFA's opinion.)

That form changed sometime around the end of June or early July 2021 **WITHOUT** any consultation with SAFA.

I will list the descriptors (supplied by Employee Services) of the new form below and add my comment in bold. Please note that the part on the form that provides a fence of protection for you the Faculty members (**comments section**) has completely disappeared from the form.

The descriptors from SAIT management are:

- a. **Instructor conflict** – SAIT has courses where there is only one instructor who can teach the class—there may be a time when this causes a course to be scheduled outside of Section 36.
- b. **Resource constraint** – In some courses the room is the constraint—it could be a specialized lab etc.
- c. **Student scheduling conflict** – this is mostly in LAS, the core courses are sometimes difficult to schedule.
- d. **Program requirement – this should be a discussion at JAC—I am working with the associate deans to communicate what program requirements are in advance of using this as a reason.**  
**Still No reasonable explanation has been made to SAFA on what program requirements are.**
- e. **Scheduled overload.**
- f. **Instructor request** – this is to capture when the request has come from the instructors themselves.
- g. **COVID protocols** – we were hoping to drop this one, but...

I cannot stress enough that maintaining your conversation and social contact with your colleagues is very important these days and through the holiday season. Although some “shop talk” is required, I would also encourage other conversations of mutual interest other than work.

I remain dedicated to Faculty and remind everyone that I continue to meet with the other Faculty Association presidents throughout ACIFA to ensure we have current and up-to-date information as to what is happening at the other institutions. As well, we are meeting with the Government of Alberta officials in our sector.

In closing, I would like to wish everyone a very safe *work from home* and *work from campus* experience in 2023.

Always, in service of membership.

Blair

**TO WISH YOU AND YOUR FAMILIES THE VERY BEST FOR THE UPCOMING HOLIDAY SEASON.**

On behalf of me and the SAFA Executive team, be well and stay safe.



# Labour Relations Officer Report

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By Al Brown (LRO)

Dear Faculty Colleagues,

Recently, I've had several questions regarding casual sick leave, general sick leave (GSL), long term disability (LTD), and the return-to-work process.

Employers have a legal duty to take reasonable steps to accommodate individual needs to the point of undue hardship. This is called the Duty to Accommodate. The Supreme Court of Canada says: "The purpose of the Duty to Accommodate is to ensure that persons who are otherwise fit to work are not unfairly excluded where working conditions can be adjusted without undue hardship." SCC decision (Hydro Quebec)

Examples of Duty to Accommodate:

- Providing special screens and software for people with visual impairment
- Allowing employees to take time off to attend medical appointments
- Managing employees' schedules in a way that balances their work and caregiving obligations
- Making wheelchair access available to people with disabilities

Any accommodation must be based on a need related to a ground that is protected under the Alberta Human Rights Act.

The Alberta Human Rights Act prohibits discrimination based on the protected grounds of race, colour, ancestry, place of origin, religious beliefs, gender, age, physical disability, mental disability, marital status, family status, source of income, and sexual orientation.

The employer (SAIT), the employee, and SAFA, have a duty to cooperate in the accommodation process. It is important to note that employers must advise employees what the consequences will be if an employee does not cooperate during the accommodation process. Failure to cooperate in the process may result in the employer denying the employee's request for accommodation.

The Duty to Accommodate as it relates to disability—mental or physical—caused by illness or injury has a lot of moving parts. Thankfully, we have a process that we can follow.

If you are ill—flu, cold, etc., you may be absent from work for up to three consecutive work days without penalty. You have up to ten casual illness days available to you annually. This is provided in Section 25 of the Collective Agreement. The "Casual Sick Days" reset on January 1 each year.

Keep in mind that you may have time off for the purpose of attending a dental, physio, optical, or medical appointment and that it will not be charged against Casual Illness nor deducted from your pay provided that:

- (a) You have been given prior authorization by the Dean/Director or Academic Chair, and
- (b) You work one (1) hour in a half-day absence. A half-day absence is a consecutive four (4) hour period of time prior to or after the mid-point of your work day—typically noon. For more information, please refer to Section 25 (Casual Illness) in the SAFA Collective Agreement.

If, however, you are absent for more than three days in a row, a doctor's note is required. On the fourth day of absence, you are required to provide a note from your attending physician. The required information includes the date your absence commenced and the expected return date. You do not need to go into details concerning your illness or injury at this time.

Lifeworks won't accept any medical notes or information if you do not have an active sick leave file or accommodation request. The medical note should be sent to Karen Lobo, SAIT's Wellness & Ability Management Advisor at [karen.lobo@sait.ca](mailto:karen.lobo@sait.ca)

After the referral is received, a Lifeworks Case Manager will contact you within 1-2 days to gather more information and request further medical details from your physician. Once they have reviewed all the medical information, they will contact us and provide their recommendations for an accommodation.

On the fourth day of absence, you transition from *Casual Illness* to *General Sick Leave* (GSL). You can receive income replacement for 80 days (including any statutory holidays). Depending on your years of service, you

can receive up to 60 days at 100 percent, with the remainder at 70 percent pay. The GSL days reset on your anniversary date (the date you began employment at SAIT). Please refer to Section 23 (General Illness) in the SAFA Collective Agreement.

If your illness/injury requires that you are off for more than 10 consecutive work days, you will be asked to provide a medical certificate completed by your physician on the 11th day of absence. The information required is as follows: When did you become disabled or sick? What is the prognosis for your return? What is the basis for medical conclusions and any restriction or limitations caused by the disability? SAIT uses a third party (Lifeworks) as the interface so that your private medical information is not shared with SAIT.

DO NOT give your private medical information to anyone except Lifeworks.

During the initial 80 work days of General Sick Leave, SAIT's Return to Work Coordinator will contact you concerning your benefits. If you are off for more than 30 or 40 days, even if it is anticipated that you will be able to return to work prior to the end of the 80-day GSL period, you will receive the application forms and instructions for transitioning to Long Term Disability (LTD). It is important that you submit these forms because there is always a delay between submitting the forms and being approved for LTD. That way, in the event you do not return to work before your GSL expires, you will be able to transition to LTD benefits seamlessly.

Typically, the return-to-work process begins when the instructor expresses an interest in returning to work. You should be prepared to provide medical documentation from your doctor indicating that you are able to return to work and detailing any limitations or accommodations that may apply. In order to protect your privacy, there are limits on what medical information SAIT can request and who gets to view it. SAIT has a Return-to-Work Coordinator (Lifeworks) who effectively "blinds" them to any medical information not required for formulating a return-to-work plan. What they are entitled to know is how your restrictions and any accommodations required are connected to your illness.

Lifeworks cannot contact or ask for information directly from your doctor without your "informed" consent. That means that you understand the reasons for and the limitations of the request. Whatever information they are requesting must be focused on what is reasonably required to accommodate your disability. SAIT may have some follow-up questions or require more details once they have made the initial request from your doctor. This follow-up information must be only to assist in determining the correct accommodation for your restriction.

When SAIT becomes aware that you intend to return to work, they will make enquiries to your department about the types of suitable work that is available. The Association has a role to play in facilitating the accommodation process. Often, the Instructor may feel more comfortable communicating through the Association. You have the right to have a SAFA representative with you during any return-to-work meeting. If you have any questions regarding these meetings, please contact the SAFA office.

The longer the absence the more time it may take for you to return to work. This can be complicated if there are delays in getting medical information from your doctor or if assessments are required such as ergonomic assessments and reports. However, once SAIT is made aware of your desire to return to work, they need to take steps to commence the process. At the early stages, SAIT may simply make inquiries and seek information. If you can demonstrate through the requested doctor's opinion, etc. that you are ready and able to return to work, SAIT must continue with the return-to-work process.

Once you have returned to work, the responsibilities of the parties continue. SAIT must monitor you to ensure there are no issues with the return to work. It may be necessary to re-evaluate the work as you progress with the return-to-work plan. You will be expected to communicate any issues with the work so that SAIT has an opportunity to adjust the plan. The Association is still engaged in the event you require representation.

A return-to-work plan after a lengthy absence may require time for SAIT to prepare. In addition to understanding your capabilities and restrictions, SAIT has to ensure there is productive and suitable work. This can cause tension as SAIT will be going through their due diligence process to prepare for the return to work while you will want to get back to work as soon as possible, especially after a long absence as there is a real need for income.

A return to work can be stressful. You may have feelings of anxiety as you are re-integrated into the workplace. SAIT may suggest a graduated return-to-work plan with reduced hours in the beginning building toward a full workload. In some cases, it may be beneficial for you to visit the workplace to be re-oriented with practices, procedures, or the general environment.

As a result of the normal stress associated with returning to work, you may make mistakes, take longer to complete assigned work, or be less productive in the early stages of the return-to-work plan. You may even initially feel unwanted and consider quitting because of the stress and anxiety associated with returning to work. Your Academic Chair and your Dean need to have patience as you progress toward a full integration back into the

workplace. They should focus their efforts on ensuring you have a supportive environment that is conducive to a successful return to work.

The key to much of this is getting the Association involved early so that we can stay in the loop as effective communication at the early stages of the return-to-work plan will help make it a success. Please alert us at SAFA if you are going on General Sick Leave, Long Term Disability, or returning to SAIT on a return-to-work plan.

Also, please keep in mind that there is 24/7 counselling available through the Employee and Family Assistance Program. This confidential, professional assistance is free and available to all academic staff members. Just stop by the SAFA office to pick up a brochure or call 1-800-663-1142.

*Enjoy your December Break*

## The Library Report

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Hilary Stamper, Learner Services

### Copyright Support: Welcome David!



We are pleased to announce David Layton as SAIT's new Copyright Officer, who will be providing guidance and support to Faculty, staff, and students about matters relating to copyright, intellectual property, and related permissions and considerations. The Copyright Officer role and function is now officially part of the Reg Erhardt Library, which will mean better coordination between OER initiatives, Open Access support, and processes for using licensed materials.

You're encouraged to reach out to David with your questions at [David.Layton@sait.ca](mailto:David.Layton@sait.ca) for assistance with any copyright and intellectual property related needs.

### OER Foundations Certificate Program

A new, exciting opportunity for professional development is starting soon at SAIT. Staff will be able to earn a Certificate and PeopleNow credit in Open Educational Resources (OER), as well as develop their own custom OER plans for their courses with a dedicated expert.

Registration for the certificate is now open and the first workshop, [Foundations of OER 1: What is OER?](#) will take place in-person on December 20, 2022.

For more information on the OER Foundations Certificate, as well as links to the other workshops in the series, go to <https://libguides.sait.ca/OER/certificate>.

### Library Instruction

From September to November of this year, our six Librarians will have visited and taught in a total of 90 classes. These library instruction sessions are an opportunity for students to learn valuable research and information evaluation skills, collectively known as information literacy.

As fellow Faculty, Librarians work on developing learning objectives, lesson plans, activities, and assessments in order to improve the effectiveness of our information literacy instruction. The two-hour library instruction sessions usually occur only once in students' entire programs. This "one-shot" format means it is essential that course curriculums incorporate the principles of information literacy such as reflective discovery, understanding of how information is created and valued, and the ethical use of information to advance communities of knowledge ("Framework for information," 2015).

Our Librarians really enjoy meeting students and Faculty through our Library Instruction program. We are always looking for more opportunities to collaborate with Faculty, course designers, and SMEs to improve information literacy instruction at SAIT. If you would like to read more about the Library's instruction program or reach out with questions, you can e-mail [library.instruction@sait.ca](mailto:library.instruction@sait.ca) or visit: <https://www.sait.ca/student-life/reg-erhardt-library/faculty-resources/instruction-support>

### References

Framework for information literacy for higher education. (2015) Retrieved [November 13, 2022] from <http://www.ala.org/acrl/files/issues/infolit/framework.pdf>

## Cam's Corner

Cameron Gall

### LAPP Update

I attended the LAPP Conference in October at the Delta Hotel in Calgary. It has been a turbulent year that saw many executives leaving the organization. LAPP feels well placed to move forward in what they expect to be a financially interesting year. The monetary fund itself is in great shape and is 124 percent funded—meaning that we have a large buffer to tackle any unknowns. There will not be any adjustments to LAPP contributions this year.

## Sustainability Course (Online)

By Sonia Perna, Instructor  
Communication & Liberal Arts Studies  
CORE Education, Learner & Academic Services

### ENVS 128: Sustainability at Work and Home

Have you ever wondered how to take small, simple actions towards sustainability on campus and at home? ENVS 128: Sustainability at Work and Home can provide you with answers. This free, interactive online course for SAIT staff and students explains how we can live sustainably within the limits of available physical, natural, and social resources.

**SAIT Students:** Please register through MySAIT/MyStudent and be sure to select “student” if prompted. The CRN is 61481 Semester Non-Credit 2022-2023. You have 16 weeks to complete the course. Enter a start date that works for you. You can then access the course through D2L/Brightspace. Those registering for a non-credit class must have an online student account. Please connect with [as.admin@sait.ca](mailto:as.admin@sait.ca) if you are having any challenges registering for the course.

**SAIT Staff:** If you are without a student account, please complete the following **add/drop subject registration form** noting the course information and submit to [as.admin@sait.ca](mailto:as.admin@sait.ca) for processing. If you have a student account, please follow the above registration instructions for SAIT students.

The course can be completed in just a few hours—either in one sitting or several small blocks. Staff can list the credential as Personal Development. Please promote this course with your students.

If you would like to be part of this important work, contact the LAS Environment Committee [lasec@sait.ca](mailto:lasec@sait.ca) to be included in our monthly meetings.

### ANAGRAM Puzzle

Rearrange the letters in the following word(s) to get a word or words that serve to describe the original word(s).

#### Original Word

ASTRONOMER  
THE EYES  
THE MORSE CODE  
DORMITORY  
ELECTION RESULTS  
SNOOZE ALARMS  
A DECIMAL POINT  
ELEVEN PLUS TWO

NO TWELVE PLUS ONE	ELEVEN PLUS TWO
W I M A DOT IN PLACE	A DECIMAL POINT
ALASI NO MORE Z'S	SNOOZE ALARMS
LIES - LET'S RECOUNT	ELECTION RESULTS
DIRTY ROOM	DORMITORY
HERE COME DOTS	THE MORSE CODE
THEY SEE	THE EYES
MOON STARKER	ASTRONOMER
<b>Rearranged</b>	<b>Original Word</b>
<b>ANAGRAM Puzzle Answers</b>	





# Season's Greetings

from the SAFA Editorial Board

