



Bargaining Bulletin #1

'Bargaining Kickoff'

October 2, 2018

Welcome to the first negotiations news bulletin relating to the bargaining of our new Collective Agreement. The current agreement expires on March 31, 2019.

Freedom

This round of negotiations is really about freedom. Not just academic freedom, but a broader view of freedom that provides faculty the capacity to contribute to the College in the fullest possible ways.

In the last ten years the post-secondary system has been under the yoke of inadequate funding, compounded by a government view that saw education as a business that needed to cut corners. This view has been enacted by the Public Sector Employers' Council (PSEC) and the Post-Secondary Employers' Association (PSEA). The government mandates of past bargaining rounds highlighted financial austerity; but, the reality has been that the PSEA has also prioritized management rights over collegial governance. The current and previous government mandates for public sector bargaining can be viewed at: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/employment-business/employers/public-sector-employers/public-sector-bargaining/mandates-and-agreements>

Some of the Bigger Issues Identified So Far

Compensation in the form of salary and benefits has lagged inflation. This reduction in purchasing power adds stress to our professional and personal lives. We are less free to help transform student lives when we are occupied with remedying financial pressure.

Douglas College is one of the very few post-secondary institutions in the province that does not have academic freedom language in the collective agreement. Under the current policy your freedom as an academic is bound by however a manager applies the Douglas College policy. Freedom conferred by someone else that limits what you can express is not freedom at all. The ability to be an academic, and to participate effectively in academic governance, requires freedom of expression that is at the very least bound by the terms of mutual agreement.

Chair and coordinator workload are in a dismal state. Not having sufficient time has reduced the freedom of these members to participate fully in the academic governance process.

The direct evaluation of Probationary and Contract faculty, and the potential for indirect evaluation of all faculty via the Course Evaluation Initiative, have both been identified as problematic. The freedom to pursue an academic life is impeded when evaluation systems are inadequate or are unreasonably applied.

The opportunity for people who want to become regular faculty is enhanced when the freedom of existing faculty to reduce workload without penalty occurs. Faculty who want to transition into retirement, or just a different work/life balance, need to be free to do so.

Our professional development funding is among the lowest in the province. The freedom to develop and deliver curriculum; to carry out research; to participate in academic governance, all require current knowledge, and that depends on funding for professional development.

What has Happened Lately

The process of identifying and consolidating bargaining objectives is well underway. The identification of objectives is based on input from: the bargaining survey; individual faculty members; committee members from Executive Council, Contract Committee, Federation of Post-Secondary Educators (FPSE) Committees; FPSE Bargaining Coordination Committee, and the FPSE Presidents' Council. The plan is to have the bargaining objectives ready for ratification by our members at the November 26 General Meeting.

A forum on academic freedom and governance was held at the David Lam campus on September 21. A second forum is scheduled for October 19 at the New West campus. The information from these forums will be used to develop principles that will guide the creation of academic freedom contract language.

Bill Archibald (DCFA Secretary/Treasurer) is organizing a sub-committee on Chair and Coordinator workload. This committee will articulate the issues and develop principles to guide the writing of contract language.

Stephen Crozier is continuing to sit on the FPSE Bargaining Coordination sub-committee that is drafting language regarding early retirement.

Informal meetings on the intersection of the collective agreement and academic governance are under way.

There was a FPSE Bargaining Conference titled, "Mobilizing Our Power" on September 29th. This was preceded the day before with all day meetings of the: Presidents' Council; Bargaining Coordination Committee; and, the Contract Administration Review Committee. Following are the highlights:

- FPSE has had two meetings with the government on finding a solution regarding funding secondary scales (Contract faculty). Separating the funding of secondary scales from other funding priorities is the best way to ensure that the money dedicated to salary increases for all faculty is not diluted.
- The bargaining strategy document approved by the Presidents' Council was ratified with some modifications and additions. This is not a public document, but I will note that the DCFA motion to add academic freedom as a provincially supported issue was approved.
- There is more flexibility to negotiate directly with the College Board on financial and non-financial issues as evidenced by the wording of the Government's mandate, and the BC Government Employees' Union settlement.
- The merit, issue content, and timing of a provincial bargaining common table was referred to the Bargaining Coordination Committee for further consideration.

Submitted by Glen Stanger, DCFA VP Negotiations