

**Report of the Annual Meeting of the Atlantic Canada Council of Faculty Associations  
(ACCFA)**

**The Meadows, Mount Saint Vincent University**

**Friday June 14, 2013 9:30 am – 4 pm**

**Present:** Rhoda Zuk (MSVUFA), Betty Jeffrey (UPEIFA), Linda Mann (MSVUFA), Jason Haslam (DFA), Anthony Yue (MSVUFA) Jim Turk (CAUT), Wayne Peters (CAUT) Moira McLaughlin (FAUST), Jean Sauvageau (FNBFA/FAUST), Mathew Reichertz (FUNSCAD), Alvin Comiter (FUNSCAD), Rudi Meyer (FUNSCAD), David McLachlan (ASTFA), Scott Stewart (CBUFA), Robert Seale (AUFA), Chris Ferns (MSVUFA/ ANSUT), Lorelea Michaelis (MAFA), Juan Carlos Martinez (MAFA), Ross Klein (MUNFA) Marc Lamoureux (SMUFU), Elisabeth Hans (FNBFA).

The Chair, Chris Ferns, called the meeting to order at 9:40 am.

**Welcome by Chris Ferns.**

**Faculty/Employer relations - overview**

After a round of introduction concerns were shared about a **growing sense of polarization between unions and boards of governors:**

- More assertive attitude of the employers is shown at negotiations; high priced lawyers are hired.
- Corporate models of government are implemented, including increasing financial compensation for senior administrators and attempts to institute post-tenure reviews for faculty.
- Bad management, such as irresponsible projects of construction, often causes financial crises. Lack of transparency at the administrative levels makes it unclear who is taking the decisions and on what basis these decisions are being taken.
- As the numbers of administrators increase, the numbers of full time faculty remain static, or decline.
- Austerity is used as an excuse to reform the universities towards a corporate model and diminish the number of NS universities.

**Roundtable**

**Ross Klein, Memorial University Faculty Association (MUNFA):**

- MUN is approaching negotiations. It is not a very convenient time; the question is whether to first engage the members or first start the negotiations.

- Post tenure review and merit pay are implemented since most of the senior administration come from outside Atlantic Region where both instruments are more common.
- Teaching only positions are increasing.
- Due to the science background of the senior executive, the importance of the Humanities and Arts is overlooked.
- Only funded research is acknowledged and only publications in well-known journals count; publications of books and non-funded research are not recognized for tenure and promotion. Faculty receive instructions in which journal and on what topic one has to publish.
- There is relative evaluation/rating of teaching instead of an absolute evaluation/rating.
- Racial discrimination has been noticed
- A significant increase in grievances is observed in regard to promotion and tenure positions. The legal expenses for the MUNFA have risen to \$65,000 per annum.
- The administration has accused faculty of self-plagiarism, i.e. plagiarism of ones own work.
- The employer does not always respect the collective agreement.
- In the collective agreement a list of arbitrators is mentioned. They are used in order, however one has to take into account that different arbitrators have different expertise.
- Regular meetings with the administration are part of the collective agreement.

**Loralea Michaelis, Mount Allison Faculty Association (MAFA):**

- MAFA is in a transition phase between older and newer faculty, which causes sometimes issues between all the stakeholders.
- The previous bargaining round was long and expensive. In the end, a conciliation board was appointed by the Minister of Post Secondary Education. This time MTA has hired a lawyer from Halifax to lead the negotiations in an effort to speed up the negotiations and avoid the previous situation.
- Working with a lawyer demands strategic planning. They will try to dominate the meetings and meeting schedule, e.g. 7 hours meeting days in the protocol.
- A large part of the operational budget is funnelled into the capital budget for building constructions.

**Chris Ferns as President of the Association of Nova Scotia University Teachers (ANSUT):**

- The NDP government did not want to interfere in the negotiations but instead slashed funding in the recent years, i.e., a funding decrease of 10%.
- Often PSE funding is a case of smoke and mirrors, there is always more money allocated than shown in the budget.
- The NS government has different financial approaches for different institutions. NSCAD is negatively targeted but a lot of NS universities have a higher debt, but the NS government finds there are too many institutions in NS and tries to find scapegoats in order to reduce the number.

**Mark Lamoureux, St. Mary's University Faculty Union (SMUFU):**

- SMUFU is the oldest union of Faculty Associations in Canada and has never been on strike.
- There are numerous grievances that go into arbitrations. W. Peters stated that CAUT is working on an arbitration database.
- The mandatory retirement age has increased in NS from 65 to 71. M. Lamoureux would like to know what language in regard to mandatory retirement is used in collective agreements.

**Robert Seale, Acadia University Faculty Association (AUFA):**

- Acadia University is one year away of the end of their contract. The collective agreement is reopened a year ahead of expiration, which can be considered as pre-opening for the new round of bargaining.
- The university has a 30 million debt. The NS government tries to slander Acadia for the same reasons as NSCAD.

**Scott Stewart, Cape Breton University Faculty Association (CBUFA):**

- Although the university used to be in a bad financial situation, they are now in a very good financial situation.
- A lot of foreign students from the former British Colonies are being recruited by the business school, the engineering school and the school of tourism, but without the requirement of a Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL). The failure rate of these students is significant and a cause for concerns.
- Issues of concern for the next round of bargaining: the course load for active researchers at Cape Breton until now it is still 3 -3 and the hope is to achieve a 3-2 load as soon as possible.
- The wording in the collective agreement is being reviewed.
- The main concern for CBUFA is the involvement of the membership.

**David McLachlan, Atlantic School of Theology Faculty Association (ASTFA):**

- ASTFA is only recently unionized and its first collective agreement was ending this year. The second round of negotiations started at the beginning of June. ASTFA expected to move quickly towards an agreement. The fact that the Administration hired a lawyer polarized the negotiations. The salaries in the current negotiations are the main issue.
- Other concerns are:
  - The number of students in online courses that raises questions in regard to pedagogy versus the monetary.
  - The struggle of ASTFA to have a voice in future development of the structure and the campus, since the property (real estate) is the biggest asset of AST.
  - AST has a \$100,000 deficit.

**Alvin Comiter, Faculty Union Nova Scotia College of Art and Design (FUNSCAD):**

- NSCAD is a 125-year-old institution, and its uniqueness justifies its existence but NSCAD is fighting for its survival. The funding formula is lower for NSCAD than for the other universities in NS.
- Since the number of universities in Halifax is large, the City of Halifax wants to move institutions from the city centre to the periphery of the city. The current harbour front location of NSCAD is looked at as nice real estate by the city by the city. It is difficult to mobilize the students for the cause.
- The majority of the staff at NSCAD is part time and is a heavily exploited group although it is organised in a bargaining unit. Some of them have health benefits but other than that the part-timers are in a bad situation.
- Financially NSCAD has an \$ 8 to \$ 9 million debt. The rest of the debt is caused by a rental agreement. None of the studies in regard to the future of NSCAD ever addressed the proper question of what it would cost to have an independent arts school in Nova Scotia.
- There is a severe lack of transparency, e.g., the departing President was allowed back into the bargaining unit with a large compensation, the hiring policies for administrators are secret, expensive recruiting consultants are hired and don't seem to perform properly, etc. etc.
- The province is trying to force NSCAD to affiliate with Dalhousie University or St. Mary's University. Affiliation means that the employees will not formerly obtain the same comparative salaries and benefits as the employees of the latter universities. It would only result in provision of NSCAD's facilities to the affiliated university; they will use their own part time staff to offer courses to their own students. It will not increase the student population at NSCAD. Moreover it would most likely hurt the identity, autonomy and the artistic output at NSCAD.
- The solidarity from the other faculty associations in NS has been strong and very appreciated.

- NS Government seems to think the bigger the better and does not seem to realize that universities are capable of setting their own terms in order to affiliate with another school.

**Jean Sauvageau, Federation of New Brunswick Faculty Associations (FNBFA):**

- FNBFA has 6 member associations.
- Four of the six member associations are in negotiations at the moment; a range of possibilities can be expected
- The New Brunswick faculty associations have seen the appointment of three conciliation boards by the Minister of PSE. FNBFA tries to lobby as much as it can to oppose the appointment of conciliation boards and keeps continuously track of the developments
- Attached is FNBFA's feedback and the response they received in regard to the MPHEC's quality insurance initiative.

**Moira McLaughlin, Faculty Association of University of St. Thomas (FAUST):**

- Faust started negotiations this spring. The administration uses the same lawyer chief negotiator as during the last round to avoid the problems that resulted in the lock out and strike of winter 2007/2008 The lawyer is a labour lawyer and the work atmosphere at the table is respectful.
- The full and part-time units have one bargaining team. The negotiations for the part time union are done first and after complete finalization the negotiations for the fulltime unit start.
- The protocol on how and when to negotiate is first agreed upon, before the real negotiations start, e.g., a month holiday is built into the negotiations schedule. Part of the negotiations is working at a meeting schedule, which allows time to go back to the membership.
- It is very important to go back to the members and keeping in touch with them.
- It is important to understand the reason behind the employer's propositions.
- The biggest issue at this moment for FAUST is to try to erase language in respect to 'respectful work environment' from the collective agreement.

J. Turk (CAUT) added that respectful work language requirements are a problem across the country. There is no protection for academic freedom.

**Rhoda Zuk, Mount Vincent University Faculty Association (MVUFA).**

- The last agreement was signed in January 2013.
- MSVUFA has close contact with the other units on campus; they often organise social events together.

- The FA now exchanges information with the University President on a regular basis in support of their mutual understanding. On an administrative level, internal coordination is often lacking.
- R. Zuk was concerned about the impact of Bill 525, which deals with the Rand formula. She was advised to make an inventory about the members' profile, in order to mobilize the members.

**Jason Haslam, Dalhousie Faculty Association (DFA):**

- Dalhousie will start its negotiations in the summer of 2014. The previous negotiations were difficult and almost ended in a strike. Part of the negotiations will be about pensions. They have a defined benefits plan and the University would like to shift to a hybrid or defined contribution plan.
- Dalhousie has a 17.5 million deficit. This is mainly a strategic deficit which led to a series of financial planning reports. The DFA asked for the real figures, but they were not revealed. Upon their request, a forensic accountant looked at the public numbers and could not confirm that there was violation, but money is being funnelled from operational budget to the capital budget.
- The administration at Dalhousie University is growing rapidly; e.g., a government relation manager and assistant vice president constructions were appointed.
- This year there will be presidential change after 18 years.
- At Dalhousie arts and social sciences are undervalued; departments are being forced to merge.
- There has been an unofficial hiring freeze for the last 5 years.

**Betty Jeffrey, University of Prince Edward Island Faculty Association (UPEIFA):**

- The Board of Governors at UPEI is starting to interfere with tenure and sabbatical applications. Whereas, in the past, it was more a rubberstamp procedure, now additional requests are added by the Board of Governors despite the positive recommendation of the application by the Dean and Vice-President (Academics).
- Discussion to what extend the Board of Governors can influence academic matters. It differs from university to university and sometimes from act to act.
- Discussion on what the file for promotion or tenure of the employee should contain.

**Strategies for resistance and change**

1. Let the strongest unions in the region bargain first to set a bargaining pattern.
2. The efforts of ANSUT and DFA to reveal the university finances were successful, but did not get a lot of attention from the NS Government.

3. It is still a question of how to address the corporate style management of universities:
  - We should realize that senior administrators in the region have regular meetings.
  - The question remains: what are the external drivers that force the administrations to act the way they do?
  - The Canadian Association of University Business Officers (CAUBO) has post tenured review on top of its list of priorities.
  - The fact that making profit for the university administration is regarded as a career incentive could explain the emphasis on profitable research and connections with industry.
4. The hiring of expensive lawyers by university administrations should only be regarded as intimidation; expensive lawyers are not necessary good lawyers.
5. It is important that faculty associations do their own financial assessment of the university finances.
6. Engagement of the membership:
  - The engagement of the membership is one of the most important current issues of faculty associations. The membership has to be woken up from their workload in order to realize they are walking on a treadmill.
  - Faculty Associations should realize that new faculty start their career at a much lower salary in comparison to their colleagues, who started before them. They often have an enormous debt.
  - Faculty associations should be more interested in their members concerns -which are not always negotiations or grievances - in serving the interest of the members directly in their day-to-day life of research and teaching.
  - The faculty associations should make it clear that they don't expect all members to be active unionists all the time.
  - Although scientists as a group are the least engaged, this group is starting to feel very uncomfortable at the moment.
  - Since the Obama U.S. presidential campaign, a lot of social media tools are developed to analyse and engage the membership.
7. Public Outreach:
  - Public outreach and education is important.
  - Universities and faculty associations are poor at articulating their purposes.

- It is an illusion that the general public will quickly understand and accept strikes, be it for bus drivers or academics, but we should continuously make efforts to keep the discussion open.
- FNBFA has, in cooperation with CAUT developed a 15 Qs&As list for the general public (attached) which will be posted soon on its website.

#### 8. Government.

- Most provincial policies are rooted in national strategic offices. But since budgetary decisions for Post Secondary Education are made by the provincial governments, it is important to address them by lobbying the provincial government.
- E. Hans proposed to expand the lobbying to a regional level, since the issues at stake are similar for the whole region of the Maritimes.

#### **Closing Remarks**

FNBFA will organise the next ACCFA meeting in spring 2014 in Moncton.

**Adjourn** at 4.16 pm