



## *The Beacon*

Volume 5 • Issue 4 • Fall 2015

*The Beacon* is an information bulletin for StFXAUT members

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### **PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE**

What a Fall it's been! It's hard to believe that only one more week remains in the term. For many of you, a significant part of the busyness of this season has been a result of numerous forms of service to the StFXAUT. These contributions are important and appreciated. This *Beacon* contains updates from various contributors on the important work of the Association, some of which was also presented at the regular membership meeting in late October. Of course, looking forward, the most significant event on the horizon is our preparations for collective bargaining that will commence next Spring. The work of the Contract and Benefits Committee is and will continue to be instrumental in helping us prepare for negotiations, clarify the bargaining mandate, and document our bargaining positions. Please observe the updates from this committee and take advantage of your opportunities for input.

Throughout the period between collective bargaining, one of the aims of these ongoing negotiations has been to improve the retirement provisions of the *Collective Agreement*. A workable retirement incentive has numerous benefits to both the University and our members, but the details are very complex and our conversations continue to address issues of eligibility, incentive structure, employee complement, benefits continuation, timing, and more.

Significant steps forward were made to improve our health benefits plan, the culmination of several years of dialogue within the Joint Benefits Governance Committee. Human Resources was finally able to present us with a plan structure that did not cost the University more in premium payments while at the same time including numerous new benefits that were previously unavailable to our membership. The StFXAUT Executive was unreserved in its agreement that the new plan was, on balance, superior to the status quo, and so the changes will be implemented in the new year and continuously monitored thereafter.

Modifications to the system for student evaluations were also agreed upon by an ad hoc committee that has been monitoring various phases of the roll-out of the Explorance Blue system. The Administration is now authorized for a final campus-wide pilot of the system, already underway, that will result in all student evaluations being completed online without the use of paper forms, scanners and card readers. The anticipated benefits of typed comments, quicker turnaround, and reduced administration will need to be realized without a loss in perceptions of validity, response rates, and student satisfaction with the new system.

Grievance work has been unusually busy this term, and our preference for finding resolutions to issues in the informal stage again results in the need for more meetings and conversations. The StFXAUT hosted a grievance workshop in early November to offer training for our Grievance Committee and other interested members, to which the CAUT facilitator brought great wisdom and support. I am particularly grateful to the Chief Grievance Officer, Charlene Weaving, for the time and energy invested into this responsibility on behalf of our membership and in defense of our *Collective Agreement*.

I encourage all members to take advantage of the plurality of communications channels being developed and maintained by the StFXAUT. Beyond this quarterly Beacon series, content is posted to our website and promoted by our social media accounts when available. In particular, I hope you all were able to see and appreciate the Unioniversity infographic posters that were developed at the beginning of the term; planning is underway by the Communications Committee for the next level rollout of this exciting collaborative initiative.

Finally, it is consistent with our purpose to be visible within and give back to our community. To this end, the StFXAUT awarded our annual bursary to a student in financial need who applied via the Financial Aid Office; the challenge was in choosing from amongst the 71 applicants! This is a clear indicator of student need. In addition, the StFXAUT Executive received an application from SAFE for financial support from our sponsorship fund. We were pleased to be able to respond favourably to this request in full; this *Beacon* contains additional details about this important community initiative. The StFXAUT is being called upon to do more, and together we will have to consider this request seriously. When stories of conflict and human misery populate the news headlines, our own small efforts to forge peace and show kindness seem all the more appropriate.

In solidarity,  
Brad

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## **PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE OUTSTANDING TEACHING AWARD**

BY BRAD LONG

At the regular meeting of the StFXAUT membership on October 28<sup>th</sup>, the Chair of the Outstanding Teaching Committee, Brian MacLean, presented a proposal to expand the eligibility for the OTA to all academics and hence all groups represented within our membership. In addition to expanding eligibility criteria, the proposal aims to restructure the awards and the committee that adjudicates them. This proposal has the support of both the StFXAUT Executive and the Academic

Vice President. We are pleased that it, too, has the support, in principle, of the membership in accordance with the motion that was carried. The final details have to be determined, and Faculty will soon be asked to consider adopting these changes for the next academic year. Stay tuned for more information about this important enhancement to the scope and manner in which excellence in teaching is recognized at StFX.

# AUT CONTRIBUTIONS TO HUMANITARIAN CAUSES AND LOCAL CULTURE

BY MATHIAS NILGES



*StFXAUT President Brad Long presented a cheque for half of our \$3,480 commitment to SAFE to committee member and Senior Lab Instructor, Cindy Murphy, with the other half of our promise to be paid at or near the end of the 2015 fiscal year. PHOTO: Brad Long*

On Tuesday, November 10<sup>th</sup>, 2015 StFXAUT President Brad Long presented a sponsorship cheque in the amount of \$1,740 to Syria-Antigonish Families Embrace (SAFE). SAFE is a local organization that has dedicated itself to addressing the current refugee crisis, aiming to provide humanitarian aid to Syrian refugees with a particular emphasis on trying to bring two or more Syrian refugee families to the Antigonish area. SAFE, a volunteer-based organization, was founded in May of 2015 with the goal of raising sufficient funds by the spring of 2016 to bring at least one Syrian refugee family to Antigonish. As reported by CBC news<sup>1</sup>, SAFE was able to raise over \$10,000 by the beginning of September, yet indicated that it would be necessary to raise another \$17,000 to reach their goal. The AUT's donation has taken

SAFE a step closer to their goal while also demonstrating the AUT's commitment to humanitarianism, to social justice, and to supporting efforts that provide help to those most in need of assistance and protection locally and internationally. A motion passed at the November 18<sup>th</sup> meeting of Faculty calls upon the StFXAUT to do more, and so together our members will need to consider the further extent to which our revenues should be directed toward this cause.

The eighth [Antigonish International Film Festival](http://www.antigonishfilmfest.org/) took place October 23-24, 2015. As in previous years, the festival brought together a diverse lineup of local and international films and documentaries. In their statement on the AIFF website, the organizers indicate that this year's particular focus was aimed at bringing films to Antigonish that "emphasiz[e] positive success stories and reasons for hope" and that "reveal the corruption of power and squandering of natural resources around the globe."<sup>2</sup> No wonder, then, that, as in previous years, the AUT emphatically supported the event and took the opportunity to sponsor two films: Grace Lee's *American Revolutionary: The Evolution of Grace Lee Boggs* (2013), which chronicles the life and profound contributions to labour and civil rights, the Black Power movement, feminism, and Asian American and environmental justice movements of Grace Lee Boggs, Chinese-American writer, activist, and philosopher, and which is the winner of Best Feature, Toronto Asian Film Festival & Woodstock Festival and of the Audience Award, Wisconsin Film Festival; and Martin Scorsese and David Tedeschi's *The 50 Year Argument* (2014), which traces the history of the *New York Review of Books'* commitment to publishing ideas and discussions aimed at facilitating social and political change. StFXAUT contributed \$250 to the festival and functioned as one of the event's major sponsors.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/nova-scotia/syrian-antigonish-families-embrace-raises-10k-for-refugees-1.3219786>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.antigonishfilmfest.org/>

## GETTING TO KNOW YOU: DR. ROBYN BOURGEOIS JOINS COADY'S INDIGENOUS WOMEN IN COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

BY PHILIP GIRVAN

*“A nation is not conquered until the hearts of the women are on the ground.  
Then it's done no matter how strong the warriors or how sharp the weapons.”*

*-- Cheyenne proverb.*



*Dr. Robyn Bourgeois (left)  
and Caitlyn Tolley (right), a  
graduate of the Indigenous  
Women in Community  
Leadership Program (IWCL).  
PHOTO: Caitlyn Tolley*

Dr. Robyn Bourgeois moved to Antigonish this spring with her husband, Aaron, and two children, 3 year old Raylena and nearly 2 year old Marvel. Initially she wasn't sure whether the town or her new position as Senior Program Teaching Staff with the Indigenous Women in Community Leadership Program were going to be a good fit. Four months later, Robyn expressed her belief that “I don't think we've ever been so happy. Everyone is so nice”.

Work has also proven to be a pleasant surprise.

“The best experience I've ever had, ever, in the classroom. You see that light bulb, see a student really get it,” Robyn said. “These [instances] are few and far between in the university settings I've been in so far, but in this program you see it constantly. [It's] the PhDs and the MAs and everything else are definitely going to contribute, but on the ground, practical community skills are what we're needing”.

Robyn's career almost never had the chance to get off the ground.

Soon after enrolling in university, Robyn was forced into prostitution by her then-boyfriend. Fed a steady diet of drugs and forced to work the streets, Robyn only managed to escape following a violent altercation. She spent the next six months hiding out, kicking her drug habit, and laying low. Though she still lives in fear, Robyn believes that being open about her story makes her a harder target.

Recognizing this second chance, Robyn, in her words, “devoted herself to changing the world”. She studied at UBC-Okanagan and was encouraged to become a professor. At this time, she became involved in activism, particularly around missing and murdered aboriginal women and human trafficking, and began working with different indigenous groups around the country. “Growing up, we weren't really supported in celebrating or acknowledging our indigenous ancestry.” Activism allowed Robyn to reconnect with her community and culture, and drove her to pursue a PhD in Social Justice Education with a focus on indigenous studies from the University of Toronto.

This desire to combine activism with scholarship let her to Coady. Established in 2011 and offered by the Coady International Institute's International Centre for Women's Leadership, the Indigenous Women in Community Leadership Program supports indigenous women's capacity to lead, and develop their community's capacity for self-determination. Eligible to all First Nations, Métis, or Inuit women legally entitled to work

in Canada, the program welcomed 21 participants to Coady this May. Participants were taught Coady tools such as Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) and the Community Health Impact Assessment (CHIA) during the residency period and, during the fieldwork aspect of the course, used these tools to examine their communities and create a profile. “Individual women get leadership training [and] solid on the ground skills we can use in our communities, [that are] also spiritually driven by our cultural teaching and practices,” Robyn explains.

During the last week of May, accomplished indigenous women from across the country join the course to serve as mentors as participants develop projects. There are significant barriers to implementing the projects and participants can learn from mentors who have also faced struggles and barriers in their work to make positive change in their communities.

The course is “indigenous-centred, spiritually driven by cultural teachings and practices...and committed to supporting the communities,” Robyn notes. “It is a course rooted in not only social change, but social enterprise, community economic development, becoming self-determining in all capacities: economics, social, political, spiritual... It's really indigenous-centred. Nothing like this exists.”

To learn more about the Indigenous Women in Community Leadership program, please visit: <http://coady.stfx.ca/themes/women/IWCL/>.

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## APPRECIATIONS FOR THE EQUITY SUMMIT

BY BRAD LONG

On September 26<sup>th</sup>, 2015 the University hosted the first Equity Summit, bringing approximately 75 delegates from across campus together to discuss ideas and issues relating to equity on campus. Full disclosure: I was an invited delegate but was unable to attend, and therefore I am not able to report on the commitments generated by this Summit. I would like to celebrate the fact that such an important event took place, and to appreciate those individuals who have been instrumental in advancing the discourse of equity on our campus. It must be said that much of the historical groundwork was laid by StFXAUT members, in part at least through their role on StFXAUT committees such as the Status of Women (now Status of Women and Equity). The example of the Joint

Employment Equity Committee, established by the *Second Collective Agreement* but never enacted until sometime during the *Third*, highlights how the StFXAUT has been trying for years to bring along a somewhat reluctant Administration into this conversation about equity at StFX. The fact that we are at this moment now gives me pause to appreciate the insight, activism, and leadership that have been so evident amongst our own membership for so long. I look forward to being involved in the actions that will follow this Summit, both personally and as an StFXAUT member, and encourage us all to follow the lead of our colleagues who seek to construct StFX into being as an equitable community.

*A version of this article originally appeared on the [StFXAUT website](#) on October 14<sup>th</sup>, 2015.*

## CAUT DEFENCE FUND REPORT

BY ELAINE MACLEAN

The Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the Board of Trustees for the CAUT Defence Fund was held this year on October 17<sup>th</sup> in Toronto. The Board is the principal decision making body for the corporation. As the StFXAUT Defence Fund Trustee, I attended this AGM on behalf of the StFXAUT.

The fund is an affiliate of CAUT and includes 54 academic staff unions as members. Each member union names one trustee per 500 dues paying members, such that the majority of members have one trustee with the largest unions having three trustees. The trustees are required to meet at least once, face to face, each year. The location for this face to face meeting alternates between Toronto and Montreal. Additional meetings, throughout the year, are held via conference call. The agenda for the conference calls is typically to approve strike benefits to a member union facing the immediate prospect of job action. Six conference calls were held in 2015.

The fund has assets of approximately \$26.2 million and the primary mission for the fund is to provide strike/lockout pay for member unions. The fund also provides loans in the form of lines of credit and health benefit continuation in the event of a strike/lockout. In addition, funds up to \$35,000 are available for mediation or 'interest arbitration'. Assistance is also available for unions whose collective bargaining rights or right to strike are being impeded by legislation, for salary arbitration, and bad faith bargaining challenges. Trustees are invited to provide support to member unions by participating in flying pickets.

Currently, the daily benefit provided to member associations is \$84 for each member, beginning on the 4<sup>th</sup> day of a strike/lockout. This daily benefit is paid to

the member union. The line of credit provided to member associations is \$1,000,000.

Two unions were approved for membership this past year: University of Saskatchewan Faculty Association (USFA) and Osgood Hall Faculty Association (OHFA).

One motion that passed at this latest Board of Trustees meeting was that Peter McInnis, as Chairperson of the Academic Freedom and Tenure Committee (AF&T) of CAUT be appointed to serve as a trustee. Peter is our Past President and a faculty member in the History department. As long as Peter is chair of the CAUT AF&T Committee, the StFXAUT has two members on this Board.

The Board has four committees, each of which reports at the AGM: Planning and Policy, Audit, Investment, and Elections. Administrative services are handled by CAUT.

While all member unions are encouraged to report at the AGM on the status of bargaining at their individual institutions, a significant portion of the agenda is taken with reports from unions in active bargaining. The other significant portion of the agenda is taken with the Report of the Planning & Policy Committee. It is from this committee that motions, mostly for amendments to the Standing Rules and Regulations, are most often discussed and debated. At this particular AGM, there was a lengthy discussion on a motion to increase the dues from the current rate of \$5.25 per month/member to \$5.50 per month/member. The motivation for this increase was to raise the daily benefit from \$84 to \$88. The motion failed to pass, but we can anticipate it coming up again at the next AGM in the fall of 2016.

## ALUMNI SHOUT-OUT

BY PHILIP GIRVAN

*The Beacon* regularly features interviews with StFX University Alumni on the topic of their relationships with StFXAUT members who challenged, inspired, or helped in some way. This issue's interview is with Christine Johnson (BSc '00):



PHOTO: Tammy Briand

**Christine:** My name is Christine Johnson and I'm currently working as the Health Equity Lead for the Nova Scotia Health Authority in Public Health. I am a registered dietician by background and studied Human Nutrition at StFX as well as Mount Saint Vincent University.

**Philip:** Very good -- Now during your time at X was there any particular professor, or librarian, or lab instructor that helped you, inspired you, was a mentor to you?

**Christine:** Absolutely: it's actually really hard to pick one, but one stands out in particular: Dr. Doris Gillis, Professor of Human Nutrition. The reason she stands out is because, as I was studying nutrition at StFX, I wasn't really sure what avenue I wanted to pursue and I knew that I was interested

in community health and the focus of what I was seeing on clinical nutrition and the health care system and therapeutic outcomes wasn't quite what I was interested in pursuing. I was in my third year.

At that point of time, she had just started part-time and she came in and did a guest lecture in research methods. She was talking about the People Assessing Their Health Project and it was the first time that I had ever really heard about participatory research – in particular participatory research that was done in a community setting around health and what actually determined health and what those broader factors are that make people healthy or not in a community setting. That was really when the lightbulb went off, and I thought “I do have a place in nutrition and dietetics”.

It really helped me see and set my path for where I wanted to go. That really is what inspired me to pursue a Master's degree in Community Nutrition and focus on participatory research and food security. That was the original inspiration and I have continued to work with Doris. She sat on my supervisory committee for my Master's degree and she has continued to be both a personal and professional mentor in the world of public health and nutrition.

**How well do you know your *Collective Agreement*?**

**Take a quiz on page 13 and find out!**

## **THRIVING IN THE AGE OF AUSTERITY: THE CAUT FORUM FOR INDIGENOUS FACULTY 2015**

BY ROBYN BOURGEOIS

On November 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup>, 2015, the CAUT held a forum for indigenous Faculty in Winnipeg, the epicenter for urban indigeneity in contemporary Canadian society. Organized around the theme “Thriving in the Age of Austerity,” this forum provided indigenous Faculty with a rare opportunity to share and discuss their experiences in the academy, with a focus on identifying supports and barriers to success. As these discussions made clear, indigenous Faculty continue to experience significant barriers to success, including:

- Ongoing colonial racism and sexism in their engagement with students, colleagues, and post-secondary institutions;
- Chronic overextension in work load because of the high demand for indigenous labour (from students, colleagues, institutions, and communities) and the relatively low number of indigenous Faculty at many institutions to meet this demand;
- Problematic assumptions about the rigour and validity of indigenous-centred courses;
- The continued devaluation of indigenous ways of knowing and doing;
- Problematic assumptions about the competence of indigenous academics, but also other indigenous knowledge keepers (including Elders).

Faculty also identified key support systems for academic success (including mentorship and the inclusion of indigenous community), and expressed hopefulness at enhanced institutional engagement brought about by the recommendations of the final report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) on Indian residential schools. This being said, indigenous Faculty members expressed concern about the uptake of the TRC as a measure of successful decolonization and pressed for more critical discussions around what “indigenizing” the academy truly means – discussions that must necessarily involve not only indigenous Faculty but also the indigenous communities whose traditional territories our institutions occupy. These discussions and activities must also include all non-indigenous Faculty, who also carry the responsibility for decolonizing the academy. Here are some practical ways that non-indigenous Faculty can support the decolonization of their academic institutions:

- Critically examine and disrupt colonial narratives within your field of study, your curriculum, and classroom instruction.
- Critically engage institutional practices that replicate colonial oppression for indigenous Faculty and students. For example, standard weightings of professional commitments (teaching, research, and community service) are problematic for indigenous Faculty because of the high demand on their time for community service due to the relatively small supply of indigenous Faculty.
- Support the use of indigenous knowledge keepers within the academy with fair remuneration and the same workplace protections as formal Faculty.
- Support the hiring of more indigenous Faculty.
- Recognize that indigenous Faculty have expertise outside of “indigenous issues.”

## ACADEMIC FREEDOM

BY PHILIP GIRVAN

Appearing in the future issues of *The Beacon*, and on the StFXAUT website, will be a series of articles exploring threats to academic freedom in Canadian university settings, with a particular emphasis on those impacting StFX University. The series will highlight the efforts of the StFXAUT to help ensure that StFX University maintains the commitment to preserving StFX's motto, *Quaecumque Sunt Vera* ("whatsoever things are true"). This dedication to the pursuit of truth is a worthy challenge made more difficult by pressures – financial, governmental, corporate, administrative, and others, both external and internal.

The Canadian Association of Teacher (CAUT) website notes that the CAUT “actively defines academic freedom as the right to teach, learn, study and publish free of orthodoxy or threat of reprisal and discrimination. Academic freedom includes the right to criticize the university and the right to participate in its governance. Tenure provides a foundation for academic freedom by ensuring that academic staff cannot be dismissed without just cause and rigorous due process<sup>1</sup>”.

Recent attempts to curtail academic freedom at Canadian universities include:

- The questionable relationship between Enbridge and the University of Calgary that resulted in the ill-fated, and now canceled, Enbridge Centre for Corporate Sustainability located at the University of Calgary<sup>2</sup>.
- The passing and enshrining into law of Bill 100 by the Nova Scotia Legislature<sup>3</sup>.
- The sacking of Dr. Robert Buckingham, Dean of the University of Saskatchewan's school of public health, following his circulating a letter critical of that university's strategic planning process<sup>4</sup>.

I invite you to visit the [StFXAUT Facebook page](#) which highlights other recent examples of academic freedom being curtailed.

To be explored in the next issue of *The Beacon* is StFX University's increasing reliance on part-time academic Instructors to deliver courses. Other stories could include: the increasing corporatization of the University, reduced government funding, rising costs of tuition and other associated expenditures faced by students pursuing a post-secondary education, the increasing reliance on corporate partners to offer programming, the diminishing number of tenure track positions available...

I have already spoken to some members of the StFXAUT regarding these issues.

In the coming weeks, I hope to speak to more. I can be reached via emailing [girvanphilip@gmail.com](mailto:girvanphilip@gmail.com).

I look forward to hearing from you.

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<sup>1</sup> Canadian Association of University Teachers website <http://www.caut.ca/issues-and-campaigns/academic-freedom#sthash.Ci3L2h3M.dpuf>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/calgary/university-calgary-enbridge-sponsorship-1.3286369>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/national/education/cash-strapped-nova-scotia-universities-could-ban-strikes-with-new-bill/article24178513/>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.universityaffairs.ca/opinion/speculative-diction/dissecting-the-usask-fiasco/>



November 13<sup>th</sup> rally in Bracebridge, a town in the Muskoka District Municipality, where Nipissing University has a satellite campus.



November 20<sup>th</sup> early morning rally outside the office of Victor Fedeli, MPP for Nipissing, alongside members from UNIFOR and the ONU (Ontario Nurses Union).



(Left to right) Strike support from Brian Lowry, Association of University of New Brunswick Teachers (AUNBT); Jim Grant, Acadia University Faculty Association (AUFA); Bill Schipper, Memorial University of Newfoundland Faculty Association (MUNFA); and Elaine MacLean from the StFXAUT.

PHOTOS: Elaine MacLean

## THE STFXAUT STANDS IN SOLIDARITY WITH THE NIPISSING UNIVERSITY FACULTY ASSOCIATION (NUFA)

The StFXAUT CAUT Defence Fund Trustee, Elaine MacLean, participated in two flying pickets in support of the labour stoppage at Nipissing on November 13<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup>.

The StFXAUT also provided financial support to NUFU in the amount of \$1,000.

### SOME KEY DATES AND DEADLINES IN THE Third Collective Agreement:

#### December 1<sup>st</sup>:

- The Outstanding Teaching Award Committee shall invite nominations for Outstanding Teaching Awards by December 1, of each academic year (**Article 2.7.1**).

#### December 15<sup>th</sup>:

- The President shall normally communicate his or her decision regarding grant of tenure to the applicant by December 15 (**Article 2.2.3.2**).

- The Performance Evaluation Committee (see **Article 5.5** for details) of the School of Nursing shall conduct a performance evaluation of each Nurse Educator holding a probationary appointment by December 15 in each year except the initial and final year of a probationary appointment (**Article 5.4**).

#### January 1<sup>st</sup>:

- Members electing the Phased-In Retirement Option must apply in writing to the AVP no later than January 1 of the year in which they wish to commence a phased-in retirement. Phased-in retirement options shall commence on July 1 (**Article 2.5.2 & Article 3.5.2**).

# THE LOOMING ATTACK ON COURSE ENROLLMENT

BY BRAD LONG

I just wrapped up a meeting with an international student who wanted to discuss potential areas of research for his honours thesis. In this chat, he remarked upon his brief experience at StFX and described what made it “so different from back home.” In a nutshell, it’s because, less than one month into the term, his professors all knew him by name. For years, StFX has tried to – and publicly claimed to – differentiate itself based on small class sizes, high levels of student engagement, student exposure to and involvement in faculty research, and other manifestations of the same phenomenon – our unique academic experience. How, then, do we, as a University, reconcile this sentiment with the current and projected attack on “small” class sizes, admitted to by the VP Finance during the most recent budget presentations? Against the backdrop of one of the most distinctive elements of a StFX education we now hear that we need class sizes of 45 students to “break even” and that more is better.

Of course this is purely a number crunching exercise, which ignores the time and energy that goes into making courses as engaging as possible, or at least presumes that larger class sizes will be no less engaging and experiential for students as they are now. It is also a blanket statement that fails to differentiate where it makes sense for us to have larger class sizes, and where it absolutely does not. On the flip side, we are now experiencing a sporadic attack on (and cancellation of) classes whose enrollment is at or less than the arbitrary figure of 8, again without deeper analysis of the pedagogical merits for such a class size, the faculty member’s overall teaching load, and the impact on students. Students are rightfully concerned as well, as becomes evident in this quote from the *Xaverian* (Vol. 124, Issue 2, p. 3): “...but the trend of increasingly large incoming class sizes does have me worried. One of the reasons I chose StFX was for its small class sizes and intimate learning environment.” We tread down the path of demanding higher course enrollments at our peril and risk charges of misleading advertising when we erode one of the distinguishing features of a StFX education.

*A version of this article originally appeared on the [StFXAUT website](#) on October 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2015.*

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## STFXAUT BENEFIT PLAN CHANGES

In accordance with the announcements via email on November 3<sup>rd</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> in which **health and dental benefits plan** changes were announced, the following points should be noted. Existing benefits not noted below remain unaffected.

<b><u>New benefits where there previously were none:</u></b>	<b><u>Increases to annual limits where before they were inadequate:</u></b>	<b><u>Reductions to existing benefits to enable the above:</u></b>
Paramedical coverage of \$600/year for combined services: Psychologist / Social Worker, Chiropractor, Naturopath, Acupuncturist, Homeopath, Dietician, Osteopath, Chiropodist /Podiatrist, Speech Therapist, Audiologist, Athletic Therapist, and Occupational Therapist; Massage; various prostheses; IUD; laser eye surgery; surgical bras; speech aids; compression stockings; and dental implants.	Ambulance services up to \$1000 per year; orthotics up to \$300 every two years; major dental up to \$1500 per year; nursing up to \$10,000 per year; removal of lifetime limit on periodontics; hearing aids for young dependents up to \$600 per year.	Physiotherapy capped at \$800 per year; preventative dental capped at \$1500 per year; 80% coverage for tooth removal; basic dental capped at \$2000 per year; \$3 surcharge per prescription; mandatory generic drug substitution.

## REFLECTIONS ON THE QUALITY OF WORK LIFE SURVEY RESULTS

BY BRAD LONG

On September 28<sup>th</sup>, 2015, the StFX Administration released the results from the [Quality of Work Life survey](#) that took place across campus last March, announced in a press release in which a link to the full report may be found.

The StFXAUT Executive has read this report and takes little comfort in the fact that our results “are similar to those found in The Globe and Mail national study” (p.6). From amongst the main findings, we learn that “59% of the employees fell into the category of ‘I’m frustrated’ or greater for the THI [Total Health Index] index” (p.2). Moreover, “75% of the employees were found to be at a moderate risk level or greater for stress” (p.2). The largest contributor to this high level of stress is a belief that the University’s administration and operations are not working effectively (p.9). In addition, the data leads the report authors to conclude that the number of employees experiencing mental health issues “will most likely continue to negatively trend” (p.21). Overall results point to both a culture gap and a health gap, as noted in the University press release, but it is unclear how measures such as “evaluating career performance and career progression policy” (press release) will correct the deficiencies in our university culture. We call for a more active strategy for addressing the health challenges of employees that does not shift the burden for their resolution onto employees through “actions that individuals can take to improve their health” (press release). It is also unclear how developing our financial literacy will respond to the significant financial instability experienced amongst StFX employees – the largest factor to negatively impact employee health, even though 89% of respondents reported being full-time employees. Finally, we take exception to the claim that a “significant portion of the workforce was engaged in this activity and interested in the opportunity to drive change” (p.2). Considering that many non-supervisory staff were ushered into computer labs to complete this survey, it is impossible to determine whether employee participation was entirely voluntary and an expression of significant engagement in this activity. In sum, the StFXAUT is pleased that the quality of work life of our members is receiving more attention, but the next steps are the ones that will matter most. We look forward to the implementation of concrete measures that will reduce stress, improve health, restore trust, and ameliorate the workplace environment for all employees.

*A version of this article originally appeared on the [StFXAUT website](#) on October 1<sup>st</sup>, 2015.*

### **Remember to access your Professional Development Fund (PDF)...**

**Article 1.22** of the *Collective Agreement* entitles each member to an expense account, against which you can claim for reimbursement of

PD-related expenses:

[PDF Information](#)

[PDF Expense Claim Form](#)

*Some examples include:*

*Travel, iPads, laptops, software, professional registration fees, conference fees; and graduation robes.*

## ATLANTIC CANADA COALITION OF FACULTY ASSOCIATIONS (ACCFA) REPORT BY BRUCE SPARKS

The Atlantic Canada Coalition of Faculty Associations (ACCFA) is a loose affiliation of university associations that generally meets once a year. This year, representatives from institutions in all four provinces met in Halifax on October 3<sup>rd</sup>. The meeting was chaired by George Jenner of Memorial University. Besides giving people a chance to update each other on local and regional issues, there were three special presentations: financial exigency, layoffs, and downsizing (specifically at CBU) by Scott Stewart; the growth in administration positions and compensation by Marc Lamoureux of SMU; and intellectual property and commercialization by George Jenner. This information can be of value to all of us.

In spite of the geographical proximity of our institutions, we don't often get a chance to hear details of issues that affect ACCFA members outside of Nova Scotia; consequently, individual updates are vital to our understanding of the wider academic community. Problems facing other institutions alert us to issues we should watch for at home, and the solutions other associations have found are both inspiring and enlightening. The round-table format also allows for extensive collaborative discussions and suggestions.

It's safe to say that no ACCFA member feels comfortable with or complacent about the current political and economic climate. Continued low levels of government funding; the threat of interference in university governance via legislation like Nova Scotia's Bill 100; low salary gains for new contracts; the corporatization of university boards of governors; and, in Nova Scotia the real possibility of substantial faculty lay-offs at CBU, concern us all. Besides making the exchange of information efficient, meeting face-to-face is great for building solidarity with other Associations.

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### TRUE OR FALSE QUIZ: HOW WELL DO YOU KNOW YOUR *COLLECTIVE AGREEMENT*?

BY CORY BISHOP

- 1) Lab Instructors are recognized formally for any scholarly work that they conduct outside of their teaching duties. **True or False?**
- 2) Instructors at the Writing Centre receive an increase in salary step placement after having completed a Masters or PhD degree. **True or False?**
- 3) Members who have applied for tenure may make an oral presentation to the Rank and Tenure Committee. **True or False?**
- 4) There are clear rules in the *Collective Agreement* about the minimum number of students a course may contain and that courses failing to meet this criteria are cancelled. **True or False?**
- 5) For the purposes of allocating new positions, criteria for what constitutes a vacancy are commonly understood and therefore not needed in the *Collective Agreement*. **True or False?**

(Answers on the following page)

Is this our best "Beacon" yet? Let us know at [stfxaut@stfx.ca](mailto:stfxaut@stfx.ca)!

## THANK YOU

Thank you to the Social Affairs Committee members Charlie ten Brinke, Deb Graham, and Bhavik Parikh, for organizing a fun-filled, relaxing End of Term Gathering for AUT members on Tuesday, December 1<sup>st</sup>.

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## ANNOUNCEMENT

The StFXAUT Executive is pleased to announce that the [St. Francis Xavier Association of University Teachers Bursary](#) was awarded to an undergraduate student in October. This bursary is equal to the cost of one six-credit course, \$1,439.

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## YOUR 2015-2016 EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

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*The StFXAUT Executive extends their warmest wishes to you and your family for a joyous holiday season and a very Happy New Year!*

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**IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS, PLEASE CONTACT THE STFXAUT OFFICE:**

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### **ANSWERS TO TRUE OR FALSE QUIZ**

- 1. FALSE**
- 2. FALSE**
- 3. TRUE – Article 2.2.2.2:8.0 (p. 88)**
- 4. FALSE**
- 5. FALSE**