



Brandon University Faculty Association

Newsletter September 2017

Edited by Lisa Robson, PhD, Department of English and Creative Writing and BUFA Secretary

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approaches, the main page will feature it. Currently, the deadlines for applying for tenure and promotion are listed. Soon the page will include the deadlines for departmental/program teaching load decisions.

We continue to have Maureen Barrett send out messages to the membership. Please note that she uses the subject line to indicate general FYI messages versus important, even time-sensitive messages. I realize we all get too much email. However, this is our main means of communication apart from the website and seasonal newsletters.

We welcome Ben Davis as the new sessional rep on BUFA. We thank Velvet Maud for her service last year in the position.

I would also like to thank Kelley Mitton for the BUFA logo design!

Lastly, I want to thank Dion Wiseman for all of his work as BUFA VP. He was a great details person in the position. On a more personal level, I thought everyone should know that with the loss of my brother last November, Dion stepped in and took over both roles for quite some time. This meant a lot to me and we all benefitted as he ensured BUFA tasks were taken care of.

President's Report

Doug Ramsey, PhD, Rural Development

We are late getting this newsletter to you. We had hoped to have it out well before tenure and promotion application deadlines. Please accept my apologies.

First, I would like to say welcome to all new members of BUFA. For all, I hope you had productive summers but that you were also able to find time to relax and spend time with family and friends.

We have been adding new information to www.bufa.org. This includes more deadline reminders and other information under the Important Dates and Sessional Instructors pages. When an emerging deadline

Vice-President's

Report *Bryan Hill, PhD, Chemistry*

Fall term has arrived, and with each passing year the beginning of term seems to present itself sooner than it did the year before, one of the many joys our newer members will discover for themselves. I hope summer was both productive and rejuvenating for everyone. We just had a student come in with a very insightful question that typically we wouldn't address until mid-October. So as the leaves turn yellow and red we once again find ourselves surrounded by keen new faces, hungry for knowledge with plenty of questions.

We've been working on a number of items over the summer: PDA requests, course cap changes, and sessional travel compensation. For the most part we have been very successful. The administration accepted our position that research itself is professional development and a valid expenditure of PDA funds. In short, all PDA claims that involve research should be approved by your Dean if they are accepted under other research claims such as BURC and the Tri-Council.

The course cap issue is certainly more complex, but we have been persuasive with the Employer on some points and continue to push for just treatment according to the CA. The issue of course caps largely arose out of a directive by the former President to raise caps so that students on waiting lists could register for their desired courses, a directive that wasn't enforced by all the Deans.

What we have found and brought to the administration's attention is that a waiting list with 30 names does not necessarily mean that 30 students do not have access to that course. In some cases, students already enrolled in a given course are on the waiting list for another section in the same course. Increasing the cap on the section with the waiting list would mean

that other sections are being drained of students. How this strategy is a benefit to anyone is beyond me. The university registrar is looking into preventing this type of scenario from happening in the future.

There were some other enrolment oddities we brought to their attention that are also being worked on. What we fundamentally objected to was cap increases that had a profound implication for a member's workload (e.g., adding a lab section, changing the way the course would be taught), as well as the manner in which the administration sought to raise caps.

In the next few weeks as departments meet to develop workload and timetable recommendations for next year, you should provide your Chair with a clear rationale for the caps in your courses. Everyone can monitor enrolments in their own courses between April and August, but your Chair should have a clear picture of enrolments in all departmental courses. In certain circumstances it is easy to increase the course cap (with your permission); in others it is only possible with added resources, and in some cases it is just impossible.

You know what is best for your students. If need be, let your Chair be the point person for you.

Finally, we are working on a travel compensation package for sessional contracts that will be fair and equitable for our members. This issue has arisen with the start of the Dauphin Campus.

Course Caps – *By Doug Ramsey*

I know you have all been bombarded with messages about this issue. I will keep this brief. We are working with the Employer to draft an MOU regarding how course caps

will be addressed in the future. BUFA is not concerned with that small number of students on waiting lists that can be easily accommodated. This is a regular occurrence and has rarely proven to be an issue. As Bryan states above, our concern is with longer waiting lists, the accommodation of which would require changes in pedagogy and a notable increase in the work involved. On September 20th we filed a formal grievance against the Employer for violating the CA in their approach to seeking course cap increases.

A complicating issue is that we are facing increased enrolments at a time when we are transitioning towards 15 credit hours as the standard teaching load at BU. We were very clear in negotiations that this transition was to allow faculty more time for research. Thus, simply increasing enrolments in remaining courses was not acceptable.

Our concern this summer was that many courses saw larger than normal waiting lists and that Deans, under the directive of the President, were asked to have caps raised. This was short-sighted and did not take into consideration either faculty or students

PDA – by Doug Ramsey

We are happy to report that a resolution was found to the recent denials of PDA claims. Bryan has commented on this above. However, we want to reiterate here that in addition to resolving the PDA issue, the Employer also agreed to begin discussion on how internal research grant funding can be increased.

The Hedge – By Doug Ramsey

As most of you will have followed, the proposal to destroy the hedge along 18th Street in the quiet of summer was met with fierce opposition. After hearing from many people who felt at a loss for what to do, I wrote a letter to the editor in the Brandon Sun and following this, started a petition at change.org. Within four days, this petition had more than 1,500 signatures. Most of the comments left at the site were from people who have at some point in their lives had a connection to BU. I then did an interview for the Brandon Sun. That same day, the Employer backed down, temporarily, from destroying the hedge.

It is now up to all of us who want to keep the hedge to engage in any future stakeholder meetings and consultations. When these are announced, we will let you know and encourage you to voice your opinions. Clearly, the hedge is important to many—and for reasons some of us had never thought of!

Benefits of Note

We will continue to include the following notices in the newsletter due to popular requests. Our Collective Agreement (2015-2019) can be accessed at www.bufa.org for more details or you can contact HR.

Health Spending Account

In addition to Blue Cross coverage, each year members have access to a health

spending account: \$400 for full-time employees and \$200 for part-time employees. Details can be found at <https://www.brandonu.ca/hr/files/Health-Spending-Account1.pdf>

Please note that you can carry forward health spending account funds for one year but that receipts cannot be carried over from a previous year. As an example, if you need new glasses, you can carry forward \$400 from 2016 and add it to your \$400 for 2017. However, if you have a chiropractor receipt from August 2016, this must be claimed under the HSA by the end of February 2017.

Tuition for Dependants

Members now receive a waiver for tuition for their dependants taking courses at Brandon University (less other fees). This is a taxable benefit. Details can be found at <https://www.brandonu.ca/hr/files/Tuition-Waiver-for-Employees-and-Dependants.pdf>

Fees for Dependants

Prior to gaining tuition for dependants in the current CA, BUFA had a fund that members could apply to that would cover a portion of their dependants' tuition. The membership voted to rename and redirect this fund to cover fees not covered by the provision above. Please contact Maureen Barrett at the number below for details on how to access this fund.

Dates and Deadlines

Tenure and Promotion: October 1.

Departmental Teaching Load: October 15 (see Article 9.4 for details, including the transition to 15 CH process)

Notice of Fall General Meeting

This meeting will be held on Thursday October 26th, 2017 at 4:30 p.m. Location TBA. Details to follow from Maureen Barrett.

BUFA OFFICE

If you have any questions, please contact an executive member (see www.bufa.org for contact information) or Maureen Barrett, our Administrative Assistant:

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CAUT

The Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT) is the national voice for academic staff in Canada. They have a wealth of resources that can be accessed at www.caut.ca.