

FAUW FORUM

Faculty Association of the University of Waterloo Newsletter

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Number 93, March 1999

President's Message

by Fred McCourt

The ides of March is just passing as I write these words, and that tempts me to comment on our Senate. I am sure you are aware that as your Association President I sit ex-officio on Senate and on the Senate Executive Committee. I have always felt strongly that because Senate is the body that is ultimately responsible for academic matters at UW, including the establishment and preservation of academic standards, it is important that every faculty member be prepared to serve from time to time as a member of Senate, thereby contributing to university governance. It would seem, however, that the majority of faculty members at Waterloo look upon our Senate simply as a poor cousin of the Canadian Senate in Ottawa. Surprisingly, it is closer to the triple-E Senate than its richer cousin, as it is (partly) elected, not entirely unequal, and effective at what it does, with its mix of ex-officio senators, plus elected faculty, staff and student senators. The faculty at UW are even guaranteed a majority of elected Senate seats by the University of Waterloo Act. How is it then that two at-large Senate seats lie vacant and will remain unfilled unless there is a petition from faculty members for a by-election?

A possible answer to the question posed above is that of a mix of overwork coupled with apathy. This answer is supported by the paucity of returns of self-assessment forms that were sent out to sitting Senators by the Secretariat over a month ago asking both for feedback on whether Senate is deemed by its members to be doing an effective job or not, and if not, how to make Senate a more productive body. It's hard to believe, perhaps even somewhat shameful, that we collectively have been unable to find seven or so individual faculty members who are willing to serve on Senate from among the nearly 700 faculty members at UW. One is tempted to respond, should anyone complain about how ineffective our Senate is, that "we get the government that we deserve". To carry this concept a bit further, it would seem to me that if we choose not to participate in Senate elections we will not have a very good case to make should Senate then do something that we think is wrong. To appreciate that what I am saying is not simply rhetoric we have only to think of what occurred recently at Carleton University. Fortunately, I don't think that the same thing is likely to occur at UW now or in the near future, as our senior administrators have, in my opinion, generally adopted a more sensible approach to dealing with university governance than has the Carleton leadership.

While I'm on the subject of our Senate, there was an interesting exchange at the February Senate meeting between some of the student senators and

PLEASE NOTE NEW LOCATION

Annual General Meeting

Wednesday, April 7, 1999

2:30 p.m.

DC 1302

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President Downey, centred upon what the primary responsibility of the university should be. The exchange of views followed a discussion of what was essentially a student white paper on the fee structure at UW, dealing in particular with the wisdom of further increases in fees and of the potential introduction of differential fees at UW. Several students spoke about their views of the importance of accessibility, with one or two of them contending that it is the duty of a university to ensure that its programs are accessible to all who qualify. After a few moments of (surprised) silence from the rest of us, President Downey responded by pointing out that it is really the duty of government to assure accessibility to higher education, and that not only is it beyond the resources of an individual university to attempt to ensure accessibility of its programs, but that it would also be inappropriate for any university to try to relieve the government of its proper responsibility in this matter. He went on to express his belief that the purpose of a university is, and should remain, the creation and dissemination of knowledge through its scholarly and teaching functions.

Interestingly, a similar view was presented in the February 26 issue of *The Times Higher Education Supplement* in an article by Ms. Claire Fox under the title "Picky, coddled students? Make them read *Beowulf*". Ms. Fox speaks to what she sees as the increasingly defensive stance being taken by institutions of higher learning while they come under attack as being elitist if they express concern for the potential sacrifice of liberal education in the name of accessibility. She comments in particular upon the introduction of what may be called "student-centred" models for institutions of higher learning. Although her article is directed towards what she sees happening in the United Kingdom, I believe that her message applies equally to the Canadian setting as well. I believe that there is also a substantial message in her article for UW academics to consider, and Senate is, in my opinion, one place where such consideration should take place. A synopsis of her article can be found on p. 11 of this issue of the *Forum*.

We are not the only academics in Canada who are concerned about the nature and operation of our decision-making bodies. The Concordia University Faculty Association newsletter for February, 1999 contains an interesting opinion piece by Professor Harvey Shulman, an Associate Professor of Political Science at Concordia, with the title "Why CUFA Needs You! Reflections on University Governance". While not everything said in this article applies to us at UW, I was

still sufficiently struck by the similarity between Professor Shulman's observations regarding the way in which things happen at Concordia and my own observations of what appears to be happening at UW to request that our Editor reproduce the article in this issue of the *Forum*. I hope that you find it as enlightening as I did.

It is with some regret that I must report to you that Professor Frank Reynolds has resigned from the FAUW Board of Directors. Frank has been a stalwart supporter of the Association for many years now, and has made considerable contributions to faculty issues in the service of his colleagues on campus. In particular, he has served variously as FAUW Treasurer, Chair of the FAUW Pension & Benefits Committee, Chair of the FAUW Compensation Committee and FAUW Chief Salary Negotiator, and as a member of the Faculty Relations Committee. He has also served us in the larger forum as OCUFA Representative for a number of years and as Treasurer of OCUFA and as a member of the OCUFA Executive Committee. It would certainly be remiss of me not to mention the nearly ten years that Frank has represented faculty on the University Pension & Benefits Committee. His comprehensive knowledge of pension and benefits issues has proven to be of great help to us a number of times; his expertise in the area of actuarial science has enabled him to help clarify our understanding of the rather complex and sometimes arcane issues of employee pensions and benefits. The FAUW is very grateful to Professor Reynolds for his many contributions to and his championing of faculty causes over the years both on and off the Board.

Finally, I'd like to make a few quick reminders. Firstly, the end of the UW fiscal year will be upon us in a little over six weeks, so if you haven't already remembered to collect your receipts for the Faculty Professional Expense Reimbursement Plan, it may be time to begin! Secondly, I have from time to time mentioned our web site, maintained by Professor Bill Power, and in particular our "FAUW News Site" section, which is updated regularly by Professors Lynne Taylor and Andrew Hunt of the History Department. Synopses of a number of articles of interest to faculty members can be found at <http://watserv1.uwaterloo.ca/~facassoc/>. I am certain that both our web site managers and/or the *Forum* Editor, Professor Vera Golini, would welcome comments or Letters to the Editor on any of the material that has been mounted at this web site. Moreover, I feel fairly certain also that they would

welcome any suggestions that you might have for other material to be mounted at this web site that may be of interest to UW faculty members. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Lynne and Andrew for their

willingness to assume this rather daunting task and for the fine job that they have done of editing, synopsising and mounting this material to make it so readily available to us all.



The following recent article opens a wide window to a documented view of the bias and discrimination toward women in Science at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. It inspires conscientious academics to ask themselves whether women in Science and in other Faculties at their own institutions enjoy fair treatment and remuneration commensurate with their accomplishments and talents. Read on.

MIT women win a fight against bias In rare move, school admits discrimination

*By Kate Zernike, Globe Staff, 03/21/99
Reprinted Courtesy of The Boston Globe*

CAMBRIDGE - The women professors at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology presumed that their numbers were low for the reason everyone had accepted as fact: Girls just don't like science.

Then they took out their tape measures.

Sneaking around the nation's most prestigious institute of science in 1994, 15 women went office to office comparing how much space MIT awarded women with what men of equal status got. It was less by about half.

Salaries were less, too. As was the research money given to women. And the numbers of women on committees that made decisions about hiring and funding.

There were no women department heads and never had been. And while MIT lavished raises on men who got job offers elsewhere, it simply let the women leave. They might have been expected to leave, anyway, since MIT had made most of them so miserable.

Like most universities facing complaints of bias, MIT at first resisted the women's charges of inequity, resisted even giving them data they asked for.

But unlike schools that have waited for lawsuits to act, MIT did something rare in academia: The institute looked at the numbers and admitted it was wrong.

And in a report that will be presented to the faculty later this month, MIT's top administrators, all white men, will admit they have discriminated against women for years, in ways that are subtle and unintentional but very real.

MIT has done more. In the four years since the women faculty first suggested there was bias, the institute has

raised women's salaries an average of 20 percent, to equal men's; increased research money and space for women; awarded them key committee seats; and increased the pensions of a handful of retired women to what they would have been paid if the salary inequities had not existed.

It's all because three unhappy women professors happened to compare notes one day.

The story of how these women got MIT to recognize and acknowledge bias offers a portrait of how discrimination works, often so subtly that many women themselves don't believe it exists.

"I have always believed that contemporary gender discrimination within universities is part reality and part perception," MIT president Charles M. Vest wrote in a letter prefacing the report. "True, but I now understand that reality is by far the greater part of the balance."

National numbers were bad, too

It might have been easy in 1995 to dismiss the numbers as a reflection of the national picture. A full academic generation into the women's movement, only 26 percent of tenured faculty nationwide were women, compared with 18 percent in 1975. It's not that women aren't entering academia; in 1995, 43 percent of faculty in tenure-track positions nationwide were women, according to the American Association of University Professors. The problem has been especially pronounced at elite universities.

Because the numbers were so small, a woman who suspected discrimination might as easily conclude that

she was the victim of circumstances particular to her case.

That began to change in 1994, when MIT told Nancy Hopkins, a prominent DNA researcher, that it would discontinue a course she had designed that was now required for 1,000 students a year.

She had worked for five years to develop the course; in the previous two years, a male professor had joined her in teaching it. The man, MIT informed her, was going to turn the course into a book and a CD-ROM - without her.

Hopkins drafted a letter to Vest about how she felt women researchers were treated, which she described as her "enough is enough" letter. When Hopkins discussed it with a woman colleague, she asked to sign it, too. They got to talking about their situations, and eventually the discussion expanded to a third tenured woman on the faculty.

They decided to poll every tenured woman in the School of Science - one of five at MIT - to see whether what they had experienced were individual problems or part of a pattern.

They were surprised to find out how fast they got their answers. Within a day, they had talked to all 15 tenured women (there were 197 tenured men) and agreed that there was a problem and that something had to be done.

True to their fields, they looked first at the data.

The proportion of tenured women on the faculty had not moved beyond 8 percent for two decades. There was little hope for change: only 7 women were on the tenure track, compared to 55 men.

Plenty of women were entering science in the first place. In half the six departments in the school of science, there were more women undergraduates than men.

Was child rearing part of the problem? Certainly, childbearing years coincide with the years when most women get tenure. And, true, of the women with tenure, half had children, which is statistically low.

But that was a minor part of the story. The main part was resources.

Much of the problem had to do with the way MIT paid salaries, requiring professors to raise a portion of their salaries from outside grants. And women were required to raise twice as much in grants as men.

Getting the information the women needed was not without struggle. When they asked for information on space awarded to women, MIT insisted they got the

same space as men. But when the group checked the numbers, the women realized that was only because the institute had counted office and lab space for women, but only office space for men.

Individually, some women said they had sensed discrimination but feared that they would be dismissed as troublemakers or that their work would suffer from the distraction of trying to prove their point.

"These women had devoted their lives to science," Hopkins said. "There was a feeling that if you got into it, you weren't going to last; you'd get too angry."

But the hurdles in getting research money, space, or support were already costing them time.

"It takes 50 percent of your time and 90 percent of your psychic energy," Hopkins said. "Time is everything in science. Six months can cost you the Nobel Prize."

Complaints won a 'total convert'

Within a few months, the women presented a report to Robert Birgineau, dean of the School of Science.

"The unequal treatment of women who come to MIT makes it more difficult for them to succeed, causes them to be accorded less recognition when they do, and contributes so substantially to a poor quality of life that these women can actually become negative role models for younger women," the women wrote.

In short, they said, they were so miserable that any young woman looking up at them would think, "Why would I want that?"

All 15 women crowded into his office to present the report.

"There are many unhappy faculty at a university, so for each one, you might be able to rationalize why that person might be unhappy," Birgineau said last week. "But meeting this whole group of women together, it was very much the whole was more than the sum of the parts. You could not rationalize their situations as based on the idiosyncrasies of individuals. It took this set of women coming together and speaking in one voice to see what the issues were."

Birgineau, Hopkins said, "became a total convert."

He did his own quick investigation to see if the numbers were correct. (They were.) And he made quick remediation. Immediately, he boosted women's salaries an average of 20 percent and eliminated the requirement that women raise part of their salaries from grants; MIT is moving to eliminate the system for men, as well. He began aggressively recruiting more women faculty.

He also moved to set up a committee that would investigate gender inequities further, as the women faculty had requested. While the women had anecdotal evidence of similar bias in the four other schools at MIT, they and the dean decided, to save time, to limit the investigation to the School of Science.

But merely setting up the committee took six months, as Birgineau struggled to persuade department heads that a problem existed. The department heads suggested that the women simply didn't do as well in the masculine, competitive culture of MIT.

Finally, with a push from Vest, the department heads agreed to participate. The committee consisted of a woman from each of the six departments in science - except for math, because there were no women math professors - and three department heads.

One woman told the committee how her department head had withheld the fact that she had children when her name came up for tenure; it would be a strike against her, he told the woman.

Another told how she told her male supervisor she wanted to run a larger lab. "Do you think you can?" he asked.

The report, stripped of the most damning stories about individuals, was released to faculty members on the institute's Web page this week and will soon be released in a faculty newsletter. It acknowledges that there is evidence of "subtle differences in the treatment of men and women," "exclusion," and, in some cases, "discrimination against women faculty."

The inequities, the report said, extended to salaries, space, research, and inclusion of women in positions of power. An underrepresentation of women making key decisions had bred male "cronyism" that for women meant "unequal access to the substantial resources of MIT." While junior women faculty were generally supported, their supervisors began to marginalize them as they advanced.

"It's not as if this was an institution that didn't want women," said Molly Potter, a cognitive scientist. "There's acceptance of them in general."

"But when it came to decisions about who gets what, who succeeds, who gets the creamy appointments, who gets the awards that can be distributed by recommendation or the will of the department head, it's the buddy system," Potter said. "The men were the buddies of the men."

The report dismisses the argument that women didn't

succeed because they weren't good enough. "The opposite was undeniably true," it says, noting that 40 percent of the 15 women have been named members of the National Academy of Sciences or the Academy of Arts and Sciences.

It wasn't just men who raised talent as an explanation for women's failure to thrive; some women had secretly worried it might be true about themselves. And that was precisely what made it so hard for them to speak up for so many years.

"It's very tough, because the whole debate about affirmative action we're having in this country is based on the fact that along with affirmative action comes the feeling on the part of the recipient that 'maybe I only got here because I am a woman or a black or something'," said Lotte Bailyn, the dean of the MIT faculty and a professor at the Sloan School of Management who studies barriers to women and minorities in the workplace. "It's clearly not true here, as I think in most places, but many women don't want to get caught in the possibility that they or other people might think so."

A decade's progress in one year

MIT has responded, as one woman said, with "more progress in one year than was accomplished in the previous decade."

In addition to salary, space, and resource increases, Birgineau said he expects to have a 40 percent increase in the number of women with tenure next year, bringing the percentage to above 10 for the first time. The institute corrected some pensions, one by \$130,000, the other by \$80,000.

MIT is also looking at ways to allow women to incorporate child raising into scientific careers, with, for instance, a provision allowing them to stop teaching and then get back on the tenure track without penalty.

Significantly, Birgineau said, five of the six women expected to get tenure this year have children.

The report urges the establishment of committees in the four other schools at MIT and a similar effort to consider why minorities have not made progress in science.

A cynic could argue that the institute addressed the problems only because it realized it might soon be looking at a lawsuit. The federal government last month filed suit against Stanford, for instance, for not doing enough to aid the progress of women.

But among the women, any cynicism yields to gratitude.

“I was unhappy at MIT for more than a decade,” one woman told the committee. “I thought it was the price you paid if you wanted to be a scientist at an elite academic institution.”

“After ... the dean responded, my life began to change,” she said. “My research blossomed; my funding tripled. Now I love every aspect of my job. It is hard to understand how I survived - or why.”



The following article appeared in the February 1999 issue of the Concordia University Faculty Association newsletter and is reprinted with Professor Shulman's permission. Harvey Shulman is Associate Professor of Political Science at Concordia. He is a Permanent Fellow of the Liberal Arts College and served six years as its Principal. He was a member of Concordia University Senate at various times in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s. He served on the CUFA Executive from 1993-1998, and was Co-Chief Negotiator of Concordia's last collective agreement.

REFLECTIONS ON UNIVERSITY GOVERNANCE

by Harvey Shulman, Concordia University

THE PROFESSORiate

Concordia is not particularly interesting these days, if judged by the quality of debate and discussion in its councils and deliberative bodies. This is not to say that our classes are dull, research is poor, or students are necessarily badly educated. Indeed, I assume the opposite is true. Faculty appointed in recent years have impressive credentials; it is not unusual for an advertised position to bring forward upwards of 100 applications for one job. It is disheartening to sit on [Departmental Promotion Committees] DPCs, and in many areas of the humanities and social sciences to eliminate large numbers of aspiring, qualified academics to arrive at a short-list, and then to reject all of these but one. With a paucity of available probationary positions at universities for well over a decade, universities have accumulatively educated and graduated more under-employed and unemployed Ph.D.s in our history, all eager, if not desperate, for a full-time appointment.

The most recent survey of the Modern Language Association described current doctoral graduates in English, Modern Languages, Comparative Literature and other humanities areas, as having a survival rate [receiving a full-time academic appointment] comparable to passengers on the Titanic.

Despite this surplus of credentialed faculty-in-waiting, all is not well in the lecture halls of academe. Never in the history of universities have faculty [and graduate students] researched and published so much, so soon, to be professionally competitive. Indeed, one sometimes cannot help but think if it is possible to have written more than one has read. Dissertations seem to be less an exercise to challenge the writer's intellect than to choose a project that is manageable, quickly completed and simultaneously

publication-ready, perhaps in some disciplines demonstrating mastery of a suitably opaque post-modern idiom, and written about something that few academics [let alone students] will understand, read, or care about.

The competitive pressures on these aspiring academics are immense and academics hired a generation earlier are unlikely to have experienced similar job search stress. The funding sources for graduate students and the decline in government subsidies to universities, both put a premium on graduating students as quickly as possible. The student who took ten years to complete her degree [or who has not been offered a position for years] will find it increasingly difficult to receive a probationary position in the university.

It is not unusual for members of DPCs to have fewer publications and a lower research profile than the candidates they are assessing. The applicant's dossier will normally include the standard, effusive letters of support, alleging this is the department's best student in twenty years and sometimes claiming this equally for all three of the students for whom the same referee is writing. Predictably, this appraisal is repeated annually as departments "market" their doctoral students to assist them in their quest to attain a position. Of course, this ritual is understandable; large numbers of unemployed, completed doctoral students might lead us to reasonably wonder why so much of our resources are going into "training" students in yet one more indistinguishable and undistinguished doctoral program, the graduates of which cannot find suitable positions commensurate with their qualifications.

Successful applicants require a strong research profile. Although advertisements mention our commitment to teaching, it is difficult to judge pedagogical promise and

proficiency from candidates' dossiers. Short-listed candidates are often invited to meet with the department [not all faculty bother to attend] to present on an aspect of their research, but not all academic units will invite students and simulate a classroom environment, to better determine the candidate's teaching potential. In addition, I doubt if any applicant is ever interviewed because the DPC was impressed by the teaching commitment noted in the applicant's dossier. Has any DPC recommendation stated something like "this dossier looks interesting; she has ten years teaching experience as a part-timer and sessional appointments in four different universities, excellent teaching evaluations, has prepared courses in all areas of our discipline, would be a terrific instructor in general education courses, has served on numerous department committees and Faculty Council. Let's move on her hire before somebody else gets her to teach 18 credits?" Hardly!

Letters of recommendation often comment on the candidate's promise as a teacher. Invariably, these observations are noted at the end of a letter [often providing more information about the referee than the candidate] that focuses on the "cutting-edge" nature of the aspirant's scholarship, even if she has yet to "scratch the surface." The candidates' course work and comprehensive fields are often illuminating in that they frequently indicate the narrow focus of their studies and sometimes the absence of a general familiarity with the major texts, fields and traditions of the discipline. The point here is not that we should hire generalists without a specialized research profile, it is rather to understand the reasons for the fragmentation of academic life that sometimes characterizes departments. Curriculum frequently reflects a balance of sectoral interests and accommodations rather than a coherent overview of the discipline. Why raise problems as long as one's own field is reflected in the requirements?

Departments normally recruit faculty who can successfully compete for grants. Tenure considerations will include assessments of teaching ability, but this is an elastic requirement for faculty who are successful researchers. This is not to argue that productive scholars have poorer student evaluations than colleagues who teach more and publish less. But what kind of teaching: electives or required courses, introductory or advanced, seminars or large classes, related to one's research or in a new field, undergraduate or graduate, for specialized students or as electives, responding to needs within or outside of the Faculty? The reality of assigned university teaching is that funded researchers not only teach less, but their teaching and research are frequently symbiotic.

Those whose academic profile is less directed to funded research often teach a range of courses for diverse constituencies that require extensive preparation and grading. They will also likely assume a disproportionate responsibility for time-consuming committee assignments, service and representational duties. Perhaps teaching and research are both needed, valued and fairly rewarded, but they are not the same thing. For many faculty, a modem and an e-mail account are far more important for their career, scholarship and recognition, than meetings and discussions about the education of their students, or concern with what was discussed at the Board of Governors and Senate.

It seems reasonable to assume that the research productivity we demand of new faculty, and the fact that they were good enough to be hired, will mean an ever-increasing proportion of good researchers at Concordia, who will teach less than their predecessors. Their priority, perhaps understandably, will not be university governance, time-consuming committee work, or faculty associations; it may not even be Concordia University. Their task will be to build a dossier that is portable and marketable, thereby becoming a valued "commodity" outside the university.

To be clear, these observations are not an exhortation to recruit faculty to service or administer the university, nor should we assume that the absence of traditionally required university credentials, or the lack of a research profile, means good teaching. They are relevant, however, for our understanding of what Concordia university is, what it was and where we are going, and we should not be naive about their consequences, favourable or otherwise. It might also be worth reflecting on the distinctions between a university whose ideal is [was?]that of a community of intellectuals rather than a community of professionals. The debate about teaching and research, whether they are mutually reinforcing or very different activities, is often inadequately conceptualized. The issue is not simply whether both can be done well by individual faculty, but to understand how graduate training, hiring, professional advancement, career profiles, and undergraduate and graduate education, impact on the nature and character of the university.

THE MANAGED UNIVERSITY

What has all this to do with university governance? A great deal! Universities are organic entities; they are more than the sum of their departments, and departments are more than the sum of their individual faculty. The quality of university life begins in its classrooms,

laboratories and libraries, but these are minimal, not sufficient venues to measure academic vitality. After five years on the CUFA Executive, two and a half years negotiating our Collective Agreement and many years of participatory service in numerous university forums and councils, it seems sadly but increasingly clear that there is a deeply rooted passivity and quiescence informing faculty involvement in university governance. Senate, the highest academic body, normally receives and approves agenda items without questions or debate. Few seem particularly concerned about this. Perhaps it is timely to directly elect Senators from the respective faculties rather than through Faculty councils, constituted primarily by department chairs. If, as some have argued for many years, the university is defined by its engaged faculty and students, the university, so understood, is in danger of atrophying or being reconceptualized in the image of always transient senior administrators.

To Aristotle, citizenship was not only a birthright, but required informed participation in the governance of the polis. He also understood that some minimal material security is a prerequisite for a citizen to properly reflect and deliberate on public affairs. New and junior faculty [and sometimes more senior faculty] often do not have a sense of security, the temperament, time or desire, to actively participate in university governance. Nor is it recommended that faculty and librarians shift priorities away from satisfying the expectations of their department and discipline [unit], contract renewal and tenure considerations. Many new faculty are simply relieved at having secured a position, adequate facilities and research funding; the last thing they have in mind is university governance, faculty associations or the Kafkaesque labyrinth of university committee structures.

It would be a mistake to exaggerate or romanticize an apocryphal past of faculty participating fully and disinterestedly in the academic life and governance of Concordia, nor should we fabricate or nostalgically lament "the good old days." We have experienced our share of public embarrassment and conflict that nobody would want to revisit. This said, we should not ignore the evolving faculty and administrative culture that exacerbates the withdrawal and isolation of most faculty from decisions that affect our vocation and life.

The decline of faculty participation in university governance may also be partly explained by many years of inadequate and declining resources to meet basic academic needs. Most of us have internalized the culture of despair and scarcity, and we preach it to each other even if we do not understand it and, as "realists," we accept what we have, thankful that it is not worse and go

on prepared to do more with less. This seems to satisfy us because we know it can be, and indeed might be, worse. It is as if we have been declared a natural disaster area and it is unseemly to offer protestations and criticism over what can only be seen as secondary concerns in a time of impending difficulty. In times of real or apprehended crisis, deliberative bodies invariably become weaker and executives become ascendant. This managerial "imperative," however, might be expected to elicit some expression of concern: alas, not a whimper or lament are heard.

The vision of our university as a marketplace of ideas and ideals, a place for public, reasoned debate and disagreement, is absent. The goal of individual faculty is now more likely to be an unencumbered and autonomous existence appropriate to the professional needs and expectations that we have created. We are, however, neither a community college nor a research institute. As a university our task is both teaching and scholarship, and teaching compels us to ask what students need to know, not simply what we want to teach. It demands content and substance more than pedagogical techniques, superficial innovation, or teaching awards. These should not be equated with meaningful teaching any more than military music should be confused with music. Teaching means mastering an area of knowledge, dedication to, and a passion for, learning [not unlike research, I think]. This imperative demands a university where creative tension and disagreement is valued and encouraged, in the classrooms, councils and boardrooms, an environment where faculty are encouraged to express opinions, but it also means that, at times, "doing our own thing" is not enough.

THE FACULTY ASSOCIATION

(This section has been mildly edited to delete some details very specific to Concordia.)

The relation of the Faculty Association to its members is interesting and troubling. In April and September of 1998, a new Collective Agreement was ratified overwhelmingly by an impressive majority of Concordia University Faculty Association (CUFA) members. Although such a level of support is informative, it should not lead one to draw unfounded conclusions either about faculty and librarians' familiarity with a Collective Agreement, or about their ability to understand its importance. When CUFA members – or even Administrators for that matter – read this document, it will usually, understandably, be in connection with issues affecting situational concerns, such as contract renewal, tenure, merit recognition,

salary and workload.

Faculty involvement with CUFA is minimal. It is normally difficult to fill vacant seats on CUFA Council, attendance at meetings is uneven, and what gets communicated back to constituency members is problematic. Academics are not attracted to university careers because they want to participate in faculty associations. Very few are willing to spend any time with union issues and are quite content to see someone else assume this responsibility, as long as it frees us to do our work. Where there are no major controversies affecting their career, this apathy seems salutary. However, there are consequences to this culture of withdrawal and non-involvement in faculty associations, just as there are in faculty invisibility in the institutions of university governance.

Most of us think, teach and research independent of collective agreements. If all we did was predicated on the articles of our Agreement, we would probably destroy the University. Our workday does not stop after eight hours; we think and work on weekends and on "holidays." Few of us say no to tasks because there is no legal basis to compel us to do it. We mostly oversee our own professional responsibility and integrity; no "boss" truly directs our productivity. The university is not a corporation; faculty own their intellectual work and administrators periodically are selected to act as our stewards and, ideally, see their service as temporary before happily returning back to the work which brought them to a university career.

When the academic life of the University is disproportionately filtered through collective agreement articles, grievances and arbitrations, something is wrong. However, the interests of Members require that we remain continually vigilant in all sectors of University governance, to assure that the intellectual work of the full-time faculty and librarians are protected and privileged. That is why we need good academics to get involved in CUFA. The most important task of CUFA is to be clear and unwavering in our willingness to use the Collective Agreement where needed, to act on principles that affect our fundamental rights and needs, and to circumscribe any administration that might see the Collective Agreement as an irritant to be ignored or violated. We need to be able to distinguish major issues from individual complaints, and to act appropriately to resolve differences in a manner proportionate to the problem.

Sometimes the outrage of an individual CUFA member appears excessive and ill-advised. In a recent

CUFORUM exchange, only one faculty member responded to counter the accusation of another member that their Executive was in bed with the Administration. In another instance, a colleague widely disseminated a rationale explaining his anger about performance evaluation procedures. One reason for this displeasure was that a dean did not follow the Provost's written interpretation of the relevant Collective Agreement articles. Regardless of the substantive merit of this case, no faculty member, to my knowledge, has expressed any concern about the danger to Members inherent in an argument that seems to privilege an administrator's interpretative gloss of the collective agreement over the negotiated text. One reason for having a faculty association, and collective agreements, is to delineate the respective rights and responsibilities of the membership and Administration, and to avoid situations where administrative discretion and opinion supersedes the negotiated articles.

The non-involvement of ordinary members in the on-going work of the Faculty Association has always been fraught with danger, especially now with so many of the most committed and informed membership having recently retired. CUFA elections have rarely provided an abundance of candidates for office, or clarity about where they (we) stood on issues of importance to the membership. Future Executives and negotiating teams will need direction and clear objectives to represent the membership effectively, but will there be sufficient interested and able candidates willing to come forward?

What is to be done?

- Do we continue to elect Executives privileging the academic mission of what a university is and to support a careful demarcation between academic and labour relations issues, or does CUFA move toward a non-academic model of union involvement?
- Should Members' dues be used to mobilize around, or respond to, social agendas that might be popular with some, but not with others?
- Should faculty and librarians strive for a faculty-administration co-managed university, or a faculty association that strives for as much separation as possible from management, thereby assuring greater autonomy in opposing potential intrusions in, or misapplications of, the Collective Agreement?
- Will faculty and librarians take the time to educate themselves about the current pension arrangements

and whether it is in our interest to move expeditiously to establish a separate pension fund that responds more directly to our own needs?

Where will CUFA stand on privatization, technology and long-distance education developments, and how they may impact on our Members' rights ? Do we here need to consider special collective agreement articles?

One of the most important challenges is to make faculty aware of the danger of how faculty associations and administrations might quickly transform, especially in periods of disinterest, non-involvement, and uninformed and passive faculty and librarians. Regardless of current

views on the union executive and/or our senior administrators, unanticipated events and changes produce their own dynamic and potential antagonism. CUFA requires an informed and wary membership, who understand that it does not take much for a very different, heightened adversarial situation to emerge, and to transform their academic solitude into grief and misery. It is not clear that the transformed and transforming university community is sufficiently familiar with what goes on in the University, how it may deeply affect them and how if vigilance is absent, faculty and librarians become passive observers rather than active participants in the conduct of university governance.



Letter to the Editor

Dear Editor,

I am disappointed that you have decided not to publish my update on Dr. Ewa Lipczynska's lawsuits against her research supervisor and UW. On the other hand, I appreciate your inviting me to submit a one-column letter for the consideration of the *Forum* editorial board.

The procedure I followed in writing the update was to present the positions and logic of the opposing sides by quoting from and summarizing public documents available to anyone in the Toronto and Kitchener courthouses.

In my view, the reasons you cite for rejecting my submission do not outweigh the public interest in being informed about public issues. While I do not plan to publish my submission on the web, any UW professor can request a hard copy from me, free of charge, or arrange to peruse my copy of the court documents. My extension is 3660.

Ken Westhues
Sociology

NOTE from the Editor: The *FAUW Forum* sent Dr. Westhues a statement detailing reasons for which editorial board members recommended against publication of his article at this time, given that the courts have not passed judgement. Moreover, although Dr. Westhues does "not plan to publish" his submission on the web, its appearance in the *Forum* would have implied publication on the web of details of these two court cases that are at present *sub judice*. Interested readers are welcome to contact the Editor or Dr. Westhues for any further elucidation.

Picky, coddled students? Make them read Beowulf

Because we have received no response from the Times Higher Education Supplement to our repeated request for permission to reprint their article by Claire Fox, the following "synopsis" of it has been attempted by Fred McCourt. The original article appeared in The Times Higher Education Supplement of Friday, February 26, 1999. It is copyrighted by The THES.

In a recent article with the catchy title "Picky, coddled students? Make them read *Beowulf*?" Ms. Claire Fox took on the issue of what, for lack of a better terminology, has been referred to as the "dumbing down" of academia. She begins her article with the question "Is our culture dumbing down?", quickly pointing out that our academic institutions have been placed on the defensive and effectively silenced on this issue by a charge of elitism that is leveled against any who dare to suggest that the concept of a liberal education may have been sacrificed on the altar of accessibility.

It is suggested, in particular, that academics have lost confidence in their roles as intellectual leaders. Simultaneously, there is an attempt to shift the centre of academic life from expertise and subject knowledge (read "academics") to students. And thus, as a consequence, leads to having those who are the most educated allowing the organizing principles of higher education to be determined by those who are much less educated. Any suggestion by academics that they should know best what a university education should be is regarded as arrogant in the extreme. In such an atmosphere "dumbing down" becomes an apt phrase.

Until relatively recently, students applied to universities for acceptance into a preferred program of study, and universities selected and rejected them based solely upon perceived and proven potentials and capabilities without having to be concerned about what consequences being highly selective would have on the institution. Now universities and colleges must compete for students. It is this element of competition for students (read "funding") that leads to attempts to make programs of study attractive to larger and larger numbers of students. In short, students have been converted into "consumers", and the professoriate have been converted into salespeople, who are exhorted by their deans to "sell their wares" to these consumers. The courting of student approval becomes a necessary "marketing strategy."

While the moves described above started out as pragmatic responses, driven in many cases by the overcrowding and underfunding that has accompanied mass higher education, they have evolved into new educational dogma into which many people have bought. Student-centred assessment is contrasted positively

against more demanding traditional methods: for example, exams and competition are castigated as elitist because they necessarily challenge rather than simply award. It is as if modern undergraduate students cannot make the grade without having the grading system modified.

Any attempt to organize higher education around a principle of keeping students contented leads to a reluctance to make sound judgements: after all, students who fail will not be happy customers! Acceptance of a principle of student-centredness forces the adoption of a focus group approach to what happens in universities, and could lead to professors living in dread of the end-of-term assessments. This may sound extreme, but it does not strike one as an impossible outcome of catering to a student-centredness principle.

Ultimately, student-centredness has to be viewed as patronizing, as it suggests that undergraduate students cannot cope unless their studies are made exciting and immediate. This may work well in kindergarten or in some sort of play-school, but we all know that the real rewards of higher education cannot be attained without true intellectual struggle. It would be foolish to expect to be liked by students while force-feeding *Beowulf* to them. A course that leads to a deeper understanding of a subject area or that induces critical thinking is not one that can be presented by means of the slick Powerpoint presentations that are often utilized these days to make a course "exciting".

One potential consequence of an education based upon the student-centredness principle is a loss of intellectual coherence, particularly in the area of curriculum and individual course design. For example, the English Department at Cambridge University in the United Kingdom has been debating whether or not to drop a required course in Anglo-Saxon from its curriculum, it would seem because such a course might put off potential students. It thus appears to be immaterial that the students stand to gain a more complete grasp of the English language by studying this potentially difficult aspect of English literature. Another potential consequence of student-centred learning is an abdication of responsibility, which can be illustrated, for example, by the fact that forty-four (English language) universities

do not make a study of Shakespeare compulsory in their English literature programs. This appears to be due to a new-found reluctance to indicate which writers are better, or more important, and so on. Ascribing equal merit to everything will surely contribute to a dumbing down of students in the sense that students who leave the university unable to distinguish the shoddy from the superior or the serious from the trivial will indeed be dumber than when they first arrived.

Dressing up student-centred education as student choice or as student empowerment is both disingenuous and a cop-out. How can students choose wisely in a "pick and mix", modular, or interdisciplinary degree program when

they have not yet acquired the experience or depth of understanding of the subject areas that would allow them to construct a meaningful syllabus? They need the leadership and guidance that only academics can provide as to what makes up a proper discipline of study. Without that guidance how will students immerse themselves sufficiently deeply into a subject area to become truly critical thinkers? After all, this is what universities and academics are supposed to do: induce critical thinking in those who graduate from their academic programs.

Teaching Evaluations

The FAUW Board is looking for up to four volunteers to investigate the development and use of teaching evaluation questionnaires in the various faculties. Some of the issues to be studied are: uniformity of questionnaires, possible uniformity of their use in determining annual performance evaluations, and the best method of running and evaluating such questionnaires.

We would like this to begin as soon as feasible, with an end date of June 15th.

Please contact Fred McCourt (x3024, mccourt@theochem).

FAUW Forum

The FAUW Forum is a service for the UW faculty sponsored by the Association. It seeks to promote exchange of ideas, foster open debate on issues, publish a wide and balanced spectrum of views, and inform members about current Association matters. Opinions expressed in the Forum are those of the authors, and ought not to be perceived as representing the views of the Association, its Board of Directors, or of the Editorial Board of the Forum, unless so specified. Members are invited to submit letters, news items and brief articles. Please send items to the members of the Editorial Board, or to the Editor. Current and past issues of the Forum are posted on the FAUW website. If you do not wish to receive the Forum, please contact the Faculty Association Office and your name will be removed from the mailing list.

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