



## CCFA Report to Camosun Board of Governors

14 June 2021

This is our final report for the 2020-21 academic year. It's also my last as CCFA President, as I have decided to step down after three years in the role. So, a time for reflection and looking ahead.

This has been a tough few years for CCFA members. Needless to say, the COVID-19 pandemic was a factor, causing massive upheaval in the way most of us work. Camosun's faculty are a dedicated and resilient group of professionals, deserving high praise for getting us through the crisis. Many new skills were learned, education happened, and some enjoyed working from home. (For a sample of faculty stories from this year, please see [this presentation](#).) However, based on our member engagement, the great shift online was stressful and alienating for most. Many report working extensive overtime, losing vacation or scheduled development time, or taking medical or unpaid leaves. Some chose to retire early or change careers. To the CCFA, the root cause was a nearly universal violation of collectively bargained workload provisions. As you are likely aware, this prompted us to file grievances and to join with numerous other faculty associations in a Labour Relations Board application led by the Federation of Post-Secondary Educators. We now await the outcome.

How did we get here? The situation outlined above was provincial in scale, if not national or even global. But we must also look at local circumstances. The pandemic landed on Camosun at a time when faculty labour relations were already strained. Camosun's administration deserves credit for including us, along with other employee unions, in regular COVID response meetings. Our input on strategy and communications has been solicited and taken into account, and the tone of this consultation has been collegial. But when it comes to problems brought forward by faculty, we see precious little in response. Those problems continue to mushroom, often avoidably, and resolution is elusive.

In these Board reports, I sometimes include a table of grievance data. The CCFA initiates grievances, but we are not their true origin. Faculty members come to us for help, usually as a last resort, and they are doing so in ever-increasing numbers. We consult with them extensively and encourage informal problem-solving. Yet we find ourselves managing a daunting volume of formal grievances. Virtually none of these get resolved, and cases are stacking up at the highest level, arbitration. This is costing everyone time, money and stress. Most importantly, the faculty members at the centre of grievances (each a member of the greater Camosun family) are in distress, their problems entrenched rather than alleviated. Why is this happening?

It seems to me that there are two parallel sources of unrest. First, we regularly find members of the administration introducing novel and/or incorrect readings of long-established collective agreement language, and showing little receptivity to the CCFA perspective. In fact, the current administrative stance seems to be that the union can never be right. Such a positional approach leads to polarization and stalemate.

The second source of trouble is cultural. Our members widely report feeling mistrusted and micro-managed, with their needs and concerns brushed aside. The college entrusts us with nurturing the

education and aspirations of our students, and we rise to that responsibility as professionals. This has never been more evident than now, after the pandemic year. Why, then, is trust not the starting position for all faculty dealings? To fulfil its mandate of delivering the best education possible, the college should focus on supporting and inspiring its faculty, as it does our students.

Looking ahead, are there grounds for optimism? The pandemic seems to be beginning to end. The planned return to campus is causing anxiety, to be sure, but if we navigate the transition with compassion, hopefully an easier year lies ahead. I can personally attest to what a relief it is to be teaching in person again. However, the issues outlined above predate COVID-19, and unless addressed, they will outlive it too. If Camosun is the community it claims to be, then ameliorating faculty relations has to matter. Knowing Camosun's people and values, I am confident it can be done. We hope Camosun's incoming President will make this a priority, and we urge the Board to do the same in hiring that person. Improving things will take time and effort from all concerned, and perhaps some kind of formal framework. For our part, the CCFA remains a committed partner.

To close on a personal note, I leave the office of CCFA President with mixed feelings. It has been a stressful job, especially over the past year. Conflict is not my thing, and I am dismayed that so many problems persist despite my efforts. On the other hand, I could not be prouder of our team. Through an extremely difficult time, CCFA representatives have pulled together, supported each other unfailingly and respectfully advocated for our members with administration. This work has taught me what it means to have comrades. We also feel strong support from our membership, with growing participation from across the College. Speaking of which, I hope you will wish a warm welcome to my successor: Lynelle Yutani, from the Allied Health & Technologies Department. I know Lynelle will be excellent, and I'm sure you will be hearing from her.

Lastly, I want to give my usual thanks for your service. I know it hasn't been an easy period for anyone, and your contributions of time and effort are genuinely appreciated.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Chris Ayles". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

Chris Ayles

CCFA President