



## **President's Report**

CCFA Annual General Meeting

April 30, 2021

That was a long year. Like I need to tell you.

When I decided last spring to run for CCFA President a third time, I knew 2020-21 would be a grind. We were in full COVID mode at that point: recovering from bargaining, and scrambling to respond to an unprecedented (there's that word again) volume of faculty issues without being able to connect in person. It has been arduous. Through regular meetings and letter writing, I have strived to keep these concerns top of mind for College management and the Board of Governors, and perhaps it has made some difference. But the big picture - wholesale transition to online classes without extra time or resources – did not change, and I know it was tough on you and your students. I still hope that our grievances and Labour Board complaint (via the Federation of Post-Secondary Educators) may yield some remedy, but at this point it will be retroactive and/or preventive. The government and the College chose a path for us through the pandemic, and the tools of diplomacy and formal labour relations could not shift us onto another in a timely manner. The strained labour climate at Camosun surely did not help. We find many administrators seem primed to downplay or dismiss faculty concerns, and attempts at problem solving all too often become positional. This situation has been brewing for many years, and improving it will take determined effort by both sides. The need to support that effort from the CCFA goes a long way toward explaining the union dues increase we have proposed.

These discouraging external results make it all the more important to consider our internal state, and on that score, I believe this year has been a genuine success. Through fractured contract negotiations, record case volumes, unbelievably frustrating dealings with management, and Zoom alienation, our team has survived and even thrived. Peg and Laurence, our office staff, continued to be amazingly productive, independent and supportive of each other and all faculty members. The Contract Management Committee, under Frank's inspired leadership, has been catching your cases with compassion, courage and competence, meeting weekly and working with an admirable team spirit. Kelly's Contract Negotiating Committee is well on its way to readiness for the next round. The PD Committee hums along under Blair's guidance, supporting important faculty work despite restricted opportunities. The Executive Committee diligently oversees it all, and every meeting brings camaraderie and engaged discussion of the issues at hand. I think we are growing a really strong and inclusive organizational culture at the CCFA. If you haven't worked with us yet, I hope you will soon. All of us benefit from a diverse and engaged faculty union.

Engagement with members is a perpetual and existential challenge for any union, including ours. The great shift to videoconferencing this year was a mixed blessing in that regard. On the one hand, I'm heartily sick of my home office and my screen. I think we all miss those serendipitous encounters on campus, which often bring issues to the CCFA's attention, or allow us to organically spread the word on

things that matter. Yet, due to some combination of member interest and convenience, our general meeting attendance has boomed on Zoom. I prefer real meetings, but we will have to consider continuing this format to at least some degree in the future. We have also seen good participation in Tana's virtual drop-in sessions, and at workshops we have organized around themes like checking your paycheque and collective agreement basics for chairs. We really appreciate your interest in our work, and welcome suggestions for other engagement opportunities.

Despite the ongoing third wave of the pandemic, life may soon return to a semblance of normalcy. We are told that Fall 2021 will primarily be back on campus. Along with relief that brings some anxiety, as it seems hard to believe we will all be safely immunized, never mind the students. It will take a lot of work between now and September to pull it off safely and successfully – a goal the CCFA shares with everyone else at the college. I will keep pushing for faculty concerns to inform the planning. But I sure look forward to the time when we can get back to all our 'old problems' again. And despite the grim times, I stubbornly maintain some optimism that things may get better. Despite our labour relations woes, Camosun remains populated with kind people who value education and community spirit. Maybe the return to campus will give us renewed appreciation for each other, and things will improve. A little more trust and empathy would go a long way, in my view.

Now, as you may have gleaned already, I have decided not to run again for the CCFA presidency. I made this choice with some reluctance, because the past three years have provided some of the absolute highlights of my career. That starts with the team I outlined above: the smartest, kindest, most dedicated and frankly hilarious comrades you could ever ask for. I appreciated engaging with and learning from other faculty association colleagues at FPSE. I enjoyed having access to college decision makers, even if they usually declined to heed my advice. And this gig was a fantastic excuse to meet many, many of you. I have been continually impressed by the talent and dedication of Camosun faculty, reinforcing my belief that we deserve to be respected and heard – my motivation to take up this work in the first place. But now I need a break from the spotlight, and admin could probably stand to hear a different voice. Also, in the long run, keeping these positions in rotation makes our association stronger. I will stick around next year as Past President to offer support and meagre wisdom to my successor, who will surely be wonderful.

That's it for me, for now. Thanks for your support.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Chris Ayles', written in a cursive style.

Chris Ayles

CCFA President