



President's Report

CCFA Annual General Meeting

25 June 2020

What a year.

At our 2019 AGM, I reported on a challenging labour relations landscape for CCFA members. We were in the middle of a drawn-out bargaining round, handling a large number of grievances, and facing a strong possibility of more with the imminent move of Health and Human Services to Interurban. In the background, we were busy providing policy input to the College, working on internal bylaws and policies, pursuing our payroll investigation, working with the Federation of Post-Secondary Educators (FPSE), and attending to all the myriad tasks that occupy the faculty union.

Then COVID.

Everyone has their own version of what that little phrase means. This is a global crisis, and many have been hit much harder than Camosun faculty members. But the struggle for us has been real nonetheless. First, everyone worked like mad to shift the winter term online. Then we learned that remote instruction would continue in spring, summer and fall terms. No commensurate development time was provided. Even those fortunate enough to be on SD are realizing how much more is needed to prepare online learning at the standards we expect of ourselves. The risk of burnout from this sustained effort is genuine; people are already taking unpaid leaves, or retiring early, or preparing to work through vacation. Many of our term colleagues' contracts are not being renewed, as the college prepares for lower enrollments and lost tuition. It's a brutal situation. And while it could be worse (witness Manitoba), the government expectation for post-secondary institutions to operate this way without violating collective agreements is frankly stupefying.

Just as this has been hard for you, it has been hard for us as CCFA reps. Here are some highlights of our work during this time:

- Along with reps from CUPE and BCGEU, I invited myself to join the College's COVID emergency response team. This group of senior administrators reacts to and plans for the ever-changing health orders and realities on the ground. I want to acknowledge how hard they are working. For the unions, this is a chance to get advance notice of plans and news, to provide feedback, and to highlight concerns and needs. We have made a positive difference.
- In March, in response to the government mandate noted above, we issued a statement to the College outlining our expectations around upholding key provisions of the collective agreement.
- We have held many side meetings with administration on specific issues. They are responsive to our meeting requests and very polite, but concrete results have been few.

- We requested an extension of job security provisions for term faculty members impacted by loss of work due to COVID, including rights of first refusal and pattern for regularization. After over five weeks' delay, the College turned us down. After some pressuring, they agreed to entertain a revised variance proposal, which we have submitted.
- We asked the College to draft a new policy around administrative access to faculty D2L sites. They did, and although it poses potential problems, it is now in effect.
- We pushed the College to acknowledge your excessive workloads, and to relieve them. They denied that there has been any violation of the collective agreement, but expressed an openness to creative workload adjustments given the unique situation. We provided a number of cost-free ideas, but have not seen evidence of implementation of any of them.
- After over two months of attempts at collaboration, we decided to grieve excessive workload in winter and spring terms. For the uninitiated, grievances are our mutually accepted means of formal dispute resolution. They are more common than you might think. And we have found that they are often the only way to open real dialogue about your issues. In this case, we hope they will prove our need for support in order to sustainably deliver education through the pandemic. We believe, by extension, that this will benefit the students who expect our best.
- I wrote to the Board of Governors, outlining our difficulties and asking them to advocate for a more sustainable funding model from the government to see us through this. The CCFA office can provide a copy of this letter upon request.
- I helped initiate a coalition of Vancouver Island post-secondary unions that is working on advocacy for the funding just outlined.

This work has required a lot of hard decisions on the fly. I can assure you that we have done our very best according to our legal duty to represent your interests and our own moral compasses. If any of it sounds wrong, feel free to let me know. We will keep trying.

COVID has of course disrupted bargaining too. Kelly will tell you more about that, but I fervently hope that by the time you read this, we will have a tentative agreement for a new collective agreement in place, or be very, very close.

Here are some of the other things that have kept me occupied this past year...

Regular business:

- Meetings with faculty members and departments, often with Frank Jankunis, Tana Kristjanson and/or Kelly Pitman.
- Meetings of CCFA committees: Executive, CMC and CNC.
- Bargaining meetings with the employer, both in person and online.
- Meetings with Labour Management Committee to review general areas of concern.
- Meetings with administrators about topics such as policy revision, payroll, labour relations, etc.
- Board of Governors: writing CCFA reports and attending some meetings.

- Interurban drop-in sessions with Tana, Frank, Kelly and/or Blair Fisher. I particularly want to acknowledge Tana's work as our main presence at Interurban and in virtual drop-ins.
- Operational stuff: emailing members, banking, *Confluence*, etc.

FPSE business:

- I have attended many meetings of FPSE Presidents' Council, initially in Vancouver, then on Zoom. There were a lot of these due to contract negotiations and COVID. Major themes have included bargaining, advocacy and FPSE governance. Last week, I led a CCFA delegation to the FPSE AGM, which was on Zoom. It's unfortunate that was required this particular year, the 50th anniversary of our federation. A great meeting in Vancouver had been planned.
- I also participated in FPSE's Ad Hoc Committee on Climate Change. This group met once in person, and drafted an action plan for FPSE. It also had the happy side-effect of spinning off a new local group: the Camosun College Climate Coalition (C4). You should hear more from them in the near future.

Projects:

- Bylaw revisions:
 - We passed a small one at the fall GM to allow our AGMs to take place in late April.
- Payroll investigation:
 - We presented the results to administration on several occasions, and prepared a guidebook called *Check Your Cheque*, which was emailed to you recently. That took longer than expected because they changed the pay advices. Major credit goes to lead author Tana, and to Janice Shewey for her dogged payroll questions.
- CCFA harassment policies:
 - We are developing harassment policies to cover CCFA members engaged in union work, and for CCFA office staff as required by WorkSafe BC. (Extra credit to anyone who notices that no measurable progress has been made. COVID.)
- CCFA office:
 - Autumn Frimann left for greener pastures in Denmark, and we lucked into the wonderful Laurence Toffoletto as her replacement. Laurence immediately helped Peg Ford to renew their collective agreement with us (the CCFA is P&L's employer, and they are their own little CUPE local.) They are an excellent team, as many of you can attest.

I want to finish by singing the praises of the entire CCFA team – not just the Executive, but every single committee member. Each has gone above and beyond to serve you in terms of time, energy and commitment. I couldn't ask for a smarter, more principled and more fun group of colleagues. The way they have risen to the COVID challenge - getting it done, learning to Zoom (yes, even Mark) and supporting each other - has been nothing short of remarkable. I am honestly humbled to lead such a group.

Sorry to burden you with such a long report, but it has been a long year. Thanks for all you do, and for allowing me to serve you. Please contact me if you have any questions or comments.

- Chris