

COFAS REPORT
17th ANNUAL CONFERENCE
JUNE 1 - 4, 2000, QUEBEC CITY, QUEBEC

June 1, 2000

The participants attended a reception at the Hotel Clarendon where they were able to meet old friends and colleagues and meet new participants to the conference. The participants enjoyed the horsd'oeuvres. Special thanks go to Lise Robichard and the Executive Committee at the Association des bibliothécaires, des professeurs et professeures de l'Université de Moncton, Moncton, New Brunswick for their generous donation of \$600.00 for the reception.

June 2, 2000

Local Association Political Action - Jim Turk (CAUT)

Jim Turk brought to the participants attention to two charts he provided showing revenue by source: all funds (government grants and contracts) and revenues from government grants, from fees and from sales: 1972 -1997. These charts show that there is less government money coming in and more money being charged for tuition. Charging students more in tuition causes a different assortment of problems in that the students now perceive themselves to be "customers" and the teaching faculty as service providers. Universities are being turned into a service industry. Chart 3, (government operating grants per student full-time equivalent), shows the dramatic changes between government operating grants and student full-time equivalents. Jim said that core funding to universities have been dropping, therefore causing the universities to create "boutique" programs, which means that universities are getting rid of courses such as philosophy and putting in courses that have more of a "corporate" appeal to them such as courses in computer sciences. Funding is now being directed to students through various scholarship programs and the Canadian Foundation for Innovation which takes away from the core funding of universities. Jim presented a table put out in the May 19, 2000 edition of the Chronicle of Higher Education which shows the holdings of university research libraries in the U.S.A. and Canada in 1998-99. The figures show only the larger Canadian universities but the figures are shocking in that the ranking of only 2 Canadian universities, University of Toronto and the University of Calgary, have gone up since the 1993-94 survey and the rest have dropped from their previous ranking.

The second chart shows that of the 11 institutions where total expenditures fell, that 9 of those institutions were from Canada. The situation is probably much worse in Canada, because the Chronicle of Higher Education does not collect information on smaller universities.

Jim said that funding for post-secondary education is in trouble. The provincial and federal governments are not going to address the serious erosion in university funding, therefore there will be less money for faculty, research, libraries, etc.

Jim said that CAUT lobbies the federal government to get them to behave better towards the way they treat universities, in particular in their funding of universities. They do this by writing briefs in an effort to educate the people in government. Jim is of the belief that governments are not stupid but that they usually are pressured to do things, such as provide better funding for universities, when they have their backs up against the wall. Politicians often ignore groups who they think they can ignore and who will not cause any problems.

Faculty Association Office Organization and Retirement Issue - How does an office prepare for the retirement of an employee and how does an employee prepare for retirement? - Elaine Berman, Queens University Faculty Association

Following are the notes provided by Elaine regarding the above-noted agenda item.

I have chosen to focus entirely on the first part of this topic, the organizational planning of retirement. I leave the personal planning issues for the discussion.

Background

In QUFA's recent experience, exactly 2 years ago, my predecessor, Donna Ede, who had spent 25 years with QUFA as Executive Assistant, took early retirement. She had operated for 20 of the 25 years out of offices likened to cupboards or closets in whatever building the current President worked.

Donna announced her retirement 9 months previously, in the Fall of 1997, which gave QUFA ample time to analyze and plan for the transition. Her decision to retire came less than a year after QUFA certified as a union. For most of the 25 years, she laboured alone in a 1 person office as a part-time employee shepherding QUFA through years of make-do operations, slim financial resources and the difficulties attendant upon unclear processes and procedures which hampered fair and speedy resolution for labour-management conflicts.

Once the certification process was underway in the summer of '96, QUFA had hired a second part-time staff person, Rhonda Clark-George, as the Secretary-Receptionist.

Planning the Transition

During 1996-97 QUFA restructured its internal governance. As part of that process the Executive established a Staff Relations Committee which was charged with 2 tasks once Donna decided to leave. The first was to review the office workload and make recommendations on how to redesign the 2 office staff positions. The second was to recruit and select Donna's successor.

The Staff Relations Committee initially consisted of a sub-committee of Executive members the VP, the Treasurer and a member at large, as well as Donna to deal with the first of its objectives; assessment of workload and organization priorities. Later when the committee took on the role of the hiring committee, the President and President-elect joined the group.

Decisions Taken

The Committee's recommendations approved by the Executive, reorganized the administrative and financial responsibilities between the 2 positions; both positions were to be made full-time on a 1 year probationary basis and the senior staff position was renamed "Administrative Officer". The new job descriptions were drawn up and the Administrative Officer job was advertised.

In the job ad the committee built in a requirement for a 2 week overlap between Donna's departure and the start date for whoever was hired to allow time for orientation and an orderly transition. The 2 new job descriptions were to be reviewed at the end of 1 year when the performance reviews took place.

Finally the Staff Relations Committee reiterated the need to keep a balance between a strong Executive whose key officials participate within release time buyouts, and a full-time staff complement.

Hiring Process/Handover

The job ad written by the Chair and Donna was intentionally very broad in the credentials and experience required. This reflected the breath of duties and responsibilities as well as allowed the committee to go on a bit of a fishing expedition to see who was "out there." In reality I believe there was indecision amongst the committee on which credentials and experience would be most useful for QUFA as it matured into its new unionized status: so the ad emphasized administrative, research, with legal background as an asset. Twenty resumes were sent in and 5 people were short listed, and the 5 had very different backgrounds.

Outcomes

What could have been done better/differently?

Inclusion of both staff persons on the consultations for reorganizing and the hiring process. Both Donna and Rhonda have remarked on this omission. In Rhonda's words she felt like a mushroom, "kept in the dark" during the transition period.

Two Week Transition Overlap

It was an excellent idea but unfortunately not well-implemented. Donna and I had a couple of brief conversations on hand-over matters, but basically she was engaged in mopping up outstanding minutes and tying up various loose ends.

I spent my weeks reading files and assessing the need to do a major purge of the organizations' documentation - boxes and boxes of stuff from QUFA's recent and distant past.

Luckily there was sufficient institutional memory in experienced executive members (including a President who was serving for a second term) and in Rhonda. It would have been preferable to have had a more formal/professional orientation schedule planned - I was thrown into the deep-end but survived.

Other Long Term Outcomes - Staffing

QUFA's Staff Relations Committee revised the job descriptions and established its first set of formal personnel policies for office staff a year after I was hired. Rhonda's and my jobs were confirmed as full-time and permanent.

QUFA's grievance activity has grown exponentially and last year a Grievance Officer was hired part-time (25% FTE). Just last month his contract was expanded to 50% FTE. QUFA also hired a Research Assistant last summer to concentrate on research to support our bargaining team.

Planning an Executive Retreat - Roseanne Hood and Nancy Lovelace, UBC

Nancy and Roseanne gave an informative presentation on what to look for and how to prepare for a retreat and have provided the following check-off list of the details that should be taken care of to facilitate a well-run retreat:

Four Months Ahead

1. prepare preliminary budget
2. select dates
3. form committee to interview facilitators

Three Months Ahead

1. book hotel (meeting room)
2. make facilitator selection
3. begin gathering travel schedules (bus, train, ferry)

Two Months Ahead

1. begin development of agenda with facilitator and committee
2. communicate facilitator a/v needs to hotel
3. refine budget

One Month Ahead

1. finalize agenda
2. correspond with participants re. Timetable and any specific travel arrangements
3. select final food and beverage requirements and notify hotel of any dietary restrictions of participants

Two Weeks Ahead

1. confirm all arrangements (number of hotel rooms required, food, a/v, set-up of rooms) with hotel
2. meet with facilitator to review agenda, handouts
3. distribute any pre-meeting required reading material to participants
4. refine budget
5. confirm all participants are aware of travel time tables and arrangements

Down to the Wire

1. staff & Executive Committee representatives meet to "walk through" program, ensuring each person's responsibilities are clear
2. establish what Faculty Association documentation will be taken and by whom (Guide, Agreements, Constitution, Minute Book, files)

Budget

1. ensure that facilitator and participants are all clear as to paperwork required to process expense claims
2. facilitator (fees, hotel, meals and travel)
3. hotel rooms, meals, travel for committee and staff
4. printouts

The Meeting

1. room size, any special needs
2. agenda, handouts, supplies, a/v
3. seating

The Social Part

1. meals (who pays for the liquor?)
2. any dietary restrictions (e.g., vegetarians have choices?)
3. tipping requirements
4. confirm with hotel how participants can arrange for taxis to/from hotel (necessary to pre-arrange?)

Roseanne said that it was her experience that a professional facilitator helps to keep the retreat running on a professional level. A professional facilitator will identify issues, prepare an agenda and will write a report at the end of the retreat summarizing the discussions and the recommendations made.

She said that the focus of the retreat that they were planning for the Executive was for the new members to learn about their roles and responsibilities and for the members who have been on the Executive for a period of time to refresh their understanding of their roles and responsibilities within the Association and on the Executive Committee. The retreat was also being used to educate the members and to facilitate discussion on how they see the Association evolving and what the Association's objectives should be over the next year and into the future and to plan for issues instead of reacting to the administration's issues.

Roseanne said that a retreat is a useful tool to do some serious team building, not only between members of the Executive Committee, but between the Executive Committee and staff. She said that one of the topics should be about what the Executive members responsibilities are and what are the responsibilities of the staff.

Working with Interesting People - A Day in the Life of the Faculty Association - Part II - Lori Morrinville, CAFA and Debbie Sagel, University of Regina Faculty Association

Lori and Debbie presented 9 scenarios of the different types of difficult people staff members who work at Faculty Association offices came up against and how these problem people were dealt with.

The members were told that if they did not already have a written description of their roles and responsibilities then they should work towards having this document as soon as possible. This helps when there are difficulties in the office concerning the staff and can be referred to by both the Executive and staff members. They said that it was best if there was a person, such as an Executive Director, who could act as a buffer between the staff and the Executive.

A discussion was held about the employers responsibility to provide a safe working environment for their staff. Some suggestions made were that the office door should remain locked if you are the only person in the office and that the staff are at no time under any obligation to put their safety at risk.

Group Dinner - Au Cafe Suisse

A wonderful location, good food and even better entertainment (both from the piano player and COFAS participants).

The meeting honoured Nan Sennema (Windsor) Dean of COFAS who retires June 30, 2000. A presentation was made to Nan and best wishes from all members were given to her on her retirement.

Cards were signed to be sent to Catherine MacAulay (McGill) who is on sick leave, Bob Moore (CAUT) and Sheila Hildred (SFU) who have retired and to Alan Meech (CAFA) who will be retiring December 31, 2000.

SATURDAY, JUNE 3, 2000

Disability and the Duty to Accommodate - Rae Ryan, UBC Faculty Association

Following are the notes provided by Rae regarding the above-noted agenda item:

The whole subject of disability, employment and the employer's duty to accommodate disability represents an expanding area of involvement for Faculty Associations and other groups which represent employees.

Discrimination on the grounds of disability is addressed at various levels in legislation, legal precedents, university policies and collective agreements.

At the national, federal level we have the Canadian Human Rights Act. At the provincial level, most provinces have adopted human rights legislation such as BC's Human Rights Code. At the institutional level most universities have adopted equity policies such as UBC's Employment Equity Policy. And finally, most of our Associations have bargained collective agreements which include clauses stating that there will be no discrimination, though not all of these agreements specifically mention disability.

The Canadian Human Rights Act contains some wonderful language with apparently sweeping application which extends the laws of Canada to support the principle that:

all individuals should have an opportunity equal with other individuals to make for themselves the lives that they are able and wish to have and to have their needs accommodated, consistent with their duties and obligations as members of society, without being hindered in or prevented from doing so by discriminatory practices based on race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, age, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, family status, disability or conviction for an offence for which a pardon has been granted.

The next question, of course, is "what are 'discriminatory practices'?" The Act goes on to spell that out and says that, amongst other things, it is discriminatory to deny goods or services, or access to such things on a prohibited ground of discrimination. This point becomes important when access to education is considered and that has repercussions for educational institutions like universities. With regard to employment the Act states that it is discriminatory:

- a) to refuse to employ or continue to employ any individual, or
- b) in the course of employment, to differentiate adversely in relation to an employee,

on a prohibited ground of discrimination.

The act also addresses the question of what is **not** discriminatory. It is not discriminatory if the refusal to employ someone is based on a 'bona fide occupational requirement.' For example, it is not discriminatory to refuse to employ someone as a truck driver if they are blind. This would be deemed to be a bona fide occupational requirement.

But what about 'accommodation of needs'? The Act requires that the employer (or provider of a service) 'accommodate' the needs of the person in order to meet the occupational requirement. For example, if the job requires that someone use a computer monitor, but their vision is impaired to the extent that they cannot read the monitor, but their disability can be 'accommodated' by providing a special large print, high contrast monitor, then the employer is required to do this.

Are there any limits on what an employer or provider of a service is required to do to accommodate disability? Yes, the duty to accommodate is not unlimited. The Act states that accommodation is not required if that accommodation 'would impose undue hardship.'

Analyzing University Budgets - Ron Melchers, CAUT and Ottawa

Ron is a Professor at the University of Ottawa and is presently a CAUT visiting scholar in post-secondary studies.

Ron gave a presentation, using the document he prepared, called "University Finance in Canada: 1972-1998."

He said that the budget the university puts out is not a financial budget but is actually a planning document. He said that a budget is the highest level of assumptions. Ron said that the cash flow document of the university would be a useful document for each Association to get a copy of.

Ron provided a great deal of information on the difference between what is in a university budget and a financial statement and what type of information is included and excluded from these documents. He said that he has a huge database of financial and statistical information for the past 30 years for Canadian universities and if anybody wished to have more information or had any questions to contact Rosaline Riseborough at CAUT.

Ron said that this information would be updated on a yearly basis and it was going to be a fantastic and powerful tool which would enable each faculty association to come to the bargaining table in a stronger position.

Getting the White Space Right - Combining Good Design and Useful Content on Your Web Page - David Bell, SFU

David gave a insightful and interesting presentation on the dos and don'ts on designing a web page. He provided the following recommendations:

As there is always a temptation to use too many graphics, David recommends that graphics be kept to a minimum as they tend to slow down a computer and people get frustrated while waiting for a computer to download information that, although it may look nice, is not essential to the information.

Use a uniform format and layout pages on a grid. This give the web page a uniform look and familiarity when navigating through the site. The design should be laid out beforehand.

When designing the site, it should be designed so that there are no dead-ends. Going forward and back are not always effective, therefore a link should be incorporated to move around the site, however, you should not put a link on for the page you are in.

Be careful about background colors and texture on the page. If you play with these two items too much you will not be able to read the text on the page.

Strong margins, like the layout of a book, works well and a title should go on each page. This is necessary because when you go back to look at your bookmarks you need to know what the document was called.

Keep in mind the width and resolution of the monitor of the people who will be logging onto your site. Just because you have a large monitor does not mean that everybody will have a the same size monitor.

A safe area to do your designing is 640 x 480 pixels (the lowest common denominator). In most programs you can have a fixed size or a percentage of a size. When you create elements you design so that the web page goes up as the size of monitor goes up.

You should check out your web page under different browsers and using several different types of computers as it will look different depending on these changing parameters.

Make sure that there is a text only version as people using UNIX would not be able to access the site very well. Provide an alternate choice on how the web page can be read.

Reading text on the screen cannot be substituted for reading off paper. Do not put a lot of text on the screen from one side of the page to the other. You should think about how things look on paper and try to put "air" margins around it to read it better.

Use tables instead of frames. These can be formatted in columns and are much more user friendly. Most search engines are using tables and nested tables. If a web page looks like a magazine then tables are probably being used.

The date that the web site was updated should be put on the bottom of the web page.

SUNDAY, JUNE 4, 2000

Mug (and Stuff) Exchange

The participants who brought an assortment of items with their University logos participated in the mug, etc. exchange.

Annual COFAS Salary Survey - Bridgitte Schotch, Dalhousie University Faculty Association

Bridgitte presented the information she had analyzed and prepared from the salary surveys received from across the country. Again, several large organizations did not send in their surveys which skewed the figures.

The participants thanked Bridgitte for her efforts in preparing this valuable information. Bridgitte agreed to prepare the salary survey for the 2001 conference.

COFAS Annual Business Meeting - Roseanne Hood, UBC

Roseanne Hood, UBCFA, chaired the business meeting.

2002 COFAS Location

It was decided that Banff, Alberta will be the location of the 2002 COFAS conference.

Howard Welch, AAS:UA, Ann Feilden, AAS:UA and Kim Benoit, Brock University Faculty Association agreed to share the responsibility of agenda coordinator.

Lori Morinville, CAFA, Jane Coldwell, Acadia University Faculty Association, Brenda Rennie, University of Lethbridge Faculty Association and Colleen Powell, Athabasca University Faculty Association agreed to share the responsibility of site coordinator.

2001 COFAS

Site: St. John's Newfoundland

Site Coordinator: Jill Diamond-Strong and Kim O'Reilly (MUNFA)

Agenda Coordinators: Rob Clift (CUFA/BC) and Lori Morinville (CAFA)

Hotel: Hotel Newfoundland

Election of Officers

Roseanne Hood said that the position of Secretary needed to be filled as Pat Finn would not be able to act as secretary for the next COFAS.

Chris Penn was unanimously elected as Secretary for the next 2 years.

Nancy Lovelace (UBC) agreed to replace Chris Penn as the COFAS minute taker.

Treasurer's Report

Ann Feilden presented the Treasurer's Report. Said that there was \$1389.01 in the account after all the bills were taken care of at the end of the 1999 COFAS conference. She said this was partially due to the generous contribution from BCIT and that all presentations were made in-house.

Ann thanked the Moncton Faculty Association for their generous donation of \$600.00 for this year's COFAS conference.

The minutes were accepted as received.

The participants thanked Ann for her work as Treasurer.

Other Matters

Several cards were signed by the participants and were going to be sent to those who retired since the last COFAS: Alan Meech (CAFA), Sheila Hildrant and Bob Moore (CAUT). A get well card was being sent to Catherine McCauley, McGill Association of University Teachers.

Pat Finn advised the participants that if they wished to look at a web site concerning Directors and Officers Liability Insurance that they should go to www.thehubgroup.com. This is the web site of Knox Vicars McLean (Ontario) Limited. This organization also provides information on Labour Organization Protection Plans.

The conference adjourned.

Chris Penn
UTFA