

August 27th 2013

Volume 3, Number 6

Outsider - The Voice of the Tutor

In This Issue

- Tutor Conference
- Finally a pension
- FHSS Manifesto
- It's my opinion!
- Labour Day BBQ and help

CUPE Links

Local 3911
Webpage

CUPE Alberta

CUPE National

Links

Alberta
Federation of
Labour

Edmonton
and District
Labour
Council

Calgary and
District
Labour
Council

ConFerEnce for TuTors and AcADemlc ExPerts

(Doesn't this make it look like we are dealing with university acronyms? Just messing with you)

Perhaps the most important conference we will EVER have is coming up soon: September 21st. As you know, we are in a BIG fight right now about how courses are going to be delivered going forward. We neeeeeeed YOU, your ideas and your opinions. We have a representative from our National Union, Margot Young, who is well versed in our situation here as well as the post-secondary sector on a national level. We also have RACHEL NOTLEY as a guest speaker: RACHEL NOTLEY!!!! Yummy food, information, and just gathering and cavorting with your fellow tutors and academic experts. Have some fun and attend. Run for office with your local: run us bums out of our volunteer positions! The more the merrier.

<http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/2013TutorConference>

PENSIONS!!!! Or You snooze; you/we lose – Rob

Wiznura

Please pay attention to an e-mail that recently came out from the university about the pension plan. It is VERY, VERY important. You MUST fill out the forms and APPLY for the pension or the university gets to keep the money that belongs to you!!! The bargaining committee worked damned hard for this, not to mention years of work by people like Donna Koziak, so pay attention and sign up.

The AU Academic Manifesto:

In case you missed all the fuss, conversations and revisions, have been living under a rock, OR haven't visited our Facebook page; here is the manifesto that many of your fellow tutors have signed onto.

AU faculty and tutors in the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences (FHSS) issued the following statement on July 17, 2013:

Statement by Concerned Members of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at Athabasca University.

We, the undersigned members of the FHSS, regard the tutoring system as crucial to both student success and to the maintenance of high academic standards for our programs. Our ability to attract and retain students depends on our ensuring that students receive as much encouragement and assistance as possible in improving their critical thinking, writing, and reading skills as well as their knowledge of the materials in particular courses. In turn, our methods and standards of assessment need to be unimpeachable so that students are assured that the outside world recognizes grades awarded by Athabasca University as meaningful and reliable.

We are, as faculty and tutors, open to discussions about ways of altering and improving the tutor system, as we have demonstrated in past discussions on the issue. But we insist that pedagogical needs, not finances, must be paramount in any restructuring of tutoring in the FHSS. We have been assured that no changes will be imposed on our faculty, though that assurance sits uneasily with the call of the Acting Vice President Academic at his meeting with Athabasca University Faculty Association (AUFA) this past April for four million dollars to be removed from the tutor budget, an amount that he suggests could be achieved in large part by all faculties adopting the model of tutoring in use in the Faculty of Business, a model in which only the professors in one course within FHSS have so far been willing to participate. While that system may suit the needs of that faculty, we are not convinced that it offers a useful model for most courses offered in the FHSS. The manner in which cutbacks in university positions occurred this past spring has also created skepticism among teaching staff about the senior management's interpretation of the concept of consultation on important matters.

We reject any effort to impose a particular tutor model across the board in our faculty, either directly or indirectly (via a withholding of funds), without the approval of our FHSS Council, our dean, and the General Faculty Council, as well as the representatives of students and tutors. The importance of the tutor system to our academic credibility is of such a magnitude that changes should occur only when there is buy-in by all the groups involved, including FHSS faculty, FHSS tutors, Athabasca University Students Union, Canadian Union of Public Employees [note], and AUFA, as well as management. Any effort that attempts to circumvent the established practices for academic governance at AU is illegitimate, in our view, and we will not cooperate in any effort to implement it. Indeed we will make every effort to involve all faculty, tutors, and students in FHSS to block unilaterally imposed changes by management.

Collegial, accountable governance and the practice of open and rigorous academic deliberation are essential to consideration of ANY teaching model change.

Signed (159 names of full time faculty and tutors).

[Note: AU tutors are organized into CUPE Local 3911

By the Time We Get to Phoenix - Dr. Dougal MacDonald

Phoenix University, owned by the Apollo Group, is the largest private university in the U.S. Founded in 1975 by former university professor John Sperling, Phoenix began by offering a business degree, then branched into other fields. Until 2013, Phoenix operated 227 campuses and learning centres worldwide, including in Canada, but

closed 115 sites in 2013 due to a drastic decline in profits following a huge enrolment drop in 2010. Phoenix began offering online degrees in 1989, awarding its first degrees to MBA students in 1991. Over 500,000 students currently participate in the university's online component, making it one of Athabasca University's main online rivals.

Phoenix tailors its courses to the demands of companies who pay to have their workforce trained. It offers courses only in fields with high marketplace demand; there are no liberal arts degrees. Students learn how to write computer programs, not how IBM helped the Nazis organize concentration camp prisoners. The faculty consists of about 1,500 full-time core instructors without tenure and 20,000 part-time adjuncts. Phoenix University owns no property, often offering its courses in the evening in nearby schools. It has no book library, no student residences, no student organizations, and no student publications. Phoenix enrolls only working students aged 23 or older, most of who are subsidized by their employers. Interestingly, when calculated using standards set by the U.S. Department of Education, the university's overall graduation rate is a mere 16 per cent.

While nominally a private university, Phoenix receives hundreds of millions of dollars in grants and loans from the U.S. government. For example, for the 2008-2009 fiscal year, the university's student body received \$656.9 million in Federal Pell Grant money, more than any other U.S. university. Phoenix's access to huge sums of public money is mainly because Apollo lobbyist Sally Stroup served as chief higher education policy maker in the U.S. Department of Education from 1993-2001 and was instrumental in redrafting the Higher Education Act to reduce restrictions on public funding of private universities.

Could a public online university morph into an institution with the same or similar features as a private, for-profit university such as Phoenix? Just to give one example, could a public university not only eliminate textbooks but also eliminate its book library? Phoenix can go "libraryless" for two main reasons. One is by getting a free ride on the backs of public libraries and public university libraries. The other is by totally substituting a virtual library for a book library. To give another example, could a public online university fully tie itself to employer needs? This would seem to be what Alberta's Minister of Enterprise and Advanced Education is suggesting should be the future direction for Alberta post-secondary education institutions, to become the abject handservants of business and industry, especially the energy industry.

This fall, the provincial Minister of Enterprise and Advanced Education is reopening the 2004 Alberta Post-Secondary Learning Act (PSLA), which governs all provincial universities, colleges, and technical institutes. Even now, consultations are being held with certain stakeholder groups, notably Boards of Governors, upper administration, and student organizations. Conspicuously omitted so far are faculty and staff. Those of us who value post-secondary EDUCATION should closely watch the changes that the Minister proposes for the PSLA, as well as any changes initiated by the administrations of our respective post-secondary institutions. If we do, perhaps by the time we get to Phoenix we'll be rising.



Edmonton & District Labour Council

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May 10, 2013

To All Affiliates, Non-affiliates and Community Partners:

Dear Sisters and Brothers:

The Edmonton and District Labour Council (EDLC) will be holding its 24th Annual Labour Day Barbecue for the Unemployed and Underemployed **this year on Saturday, August 31, 2013** at Giovanni Caboto Park from 11:30 AM – 3:30 p.m. We are working hard to ensure that this year's event is as successful as past BBQ's.

The EDLC Labour Day BBQ is significant in many ways. It provides those less fortunate with an afternoon of free food and entertainment. The large attendance at last year's event proves, to those who would otherwise cast a blind eye, that the Alberta advantage really excludes many Albertans. Last year, surprisingly, over 5,000 people showed up to be served. The barbecue is also an opportunity for employed workers to share with those who have not been as fortunate in gaining or keeping adequate employment.

The success of this event is due to those who volunteer and contribute. Volunteers and financial contributions are needed. To ensure the success of the BBQ, we need to raise over \$10,000. If you choose to contribute financially please make your cheque payable to "**EDLC Special Projects**" with a notation that it is for the 2013 Labour Day Barbeque.

New ideas are also welcome. Please don't hesitate to call EDLC office for more information or Mike McCann at 780-271-1257.

In Solidarity,

Brian Henderson, President
Edmonton & District Labour Council

Mike McCann, Chair
EDLC BBQ Committee

IS/COPE 458



ALWAYS DEMAND THE UNION LABEL WHEN PURCHASING ANY ARTICLE



SIGN YOUR CARDS!!!



Many of you have received a letter from us in the mail asking you to sign your membership forms and return them to us in the self-addressed, stamped envelope provided. We do need to solidify our membership list, so please take the time to complete this process.

If you aren't sure if you have a signed membership card with the local, please contact Jackie at CUPE3911@gmail.com.

www.albertapostsecondary.com

Advanced Education Minister Thomas Lukaszuk has been at it again. In a letter to the editor of the Athabasca Advocate newspaper, he tried to throw into question the credibility of our campaign to reverse post-secondary education cuts.

Lukaszuk did this by pointing out an error in our calculations of another province's spending on advanced education. The error, he went on to say, "leads to the question of whether any of the other numbers (used in the campaign) are accurate."

First off, let me say that we acknowledge our mathematical error and will no longer use those figures to press our case.

But more to the point, Lukaszuk is the one with the credibility problem. His party campaigned in the last election with the promise of a modest, two-per-cent increase to its investment in advanced education. But once elected, he and Premier Redford turned around and unilaterally slashed funding by 7.3 per cent. That's one more broken promise, one more betrayal of Albertans, one more reason not to trust anything Lukaszuk or the rest of the Tory government says.

Here's another thing: After the error was pointed out, we went back over our numbers and found even more disturbing data.

The PC government invests less than one per cent of Alberta's GDP on post-secondary, the lowest ratio of any Canadian province.

In terms of per capita investment in advanced education, Alberta ranks sixth of 10 provinces... not near the top, as Lukaszuk has claimed in the past.

Lukaszuk likes to say that post-secondary operating grants have increased 45 per cent over the last 10 years. And that, he claims, is not sustainable. In fact, once you take into account inflation and population growth, per capita operating grants have gone down every year for the past five years, for a total drop of nearly 13.5 per cent.

Campaign update

The Stop the Attack campaign continues to gather momentum. In Athabasca, volunteers are preparing to go door-to-door collecting signatures for a petition to be given to local MLA and (K-12) Education Minister Jeff Johnson.

In Portage College's communities in northeast Alberta, campaigners are preparing a mass mailout.

They need more help. If you can assist with either of these efforts, please email e.raz@aupe.org.

In the meantime, tell all your friends, family and contacts to visit www.albertapostsecondary.com to send a message to Lukaszuk and Redford.

I'll keep you updated. Thanks for your support.

Andrew

Stop the Attack on Post-Secondary campaign

WE ARE ON FACEBOOK.

Like us, please. Check things out. I post things of interest almost every day, sometimes more than once a day. You'll find everything from information specifically about the local to more general information about the labour movement, higher learning, CUPE national, and so on. Anything that I think might be of interest to our members is directed daily there, so check it out, comment, send things my way for posting, and so on.

<https://www.facebook.com/CupeLocal3911?fref=ts>



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