



Volume 5 Issue 4

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The CUPE newsletter is published by CUPE Local 3911. We welcome your submissions, letters and comments. Opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of the authors and not necessarily those of CUPE Local 3911

Editor: Natalie Sharpe

HAVE YOU TOLD THE PRESIDENT THE VALUE YOU BRING TO THE SUSTAINABILITY OF ATHABASCA UNIVERSITY?

AU President McKinnon struck an ad hoc “sustainability” committee for the University, and is accepting submissions until May 7th. **No CUPE individual tutors or AEs are represented on this committee.** Your CUPE executive recommends that every one of us submit a response to the committee.

Two years ago, CUPE’s Ad Hoc Undergraduate Learner Support System Committee wrote detailed reports on the importance of involving the tutoriate to improve the AU educational system. These reports were presented and adopted at our AGM in 2013 and then distributed to the Deans.

The first “Findings” report focused on the importance of pedagogy. This is a summary of its key points.

1. There must be individualization -- different courses will require different teaching models. Therefore your committee recommends CUPE3911 take the position that any model of course delivery be based on the specifics of that course, and that meaningful input from tutors/academic experts and designated faculty should determine how the course will be taught.
2. There are well-researched principles regarding sound pedagogy, and your committee recommends adoption of these as guiding first principles.
3. Technology is vital for AU to complete its mission but technology should serve pedagogy and not the other way around.

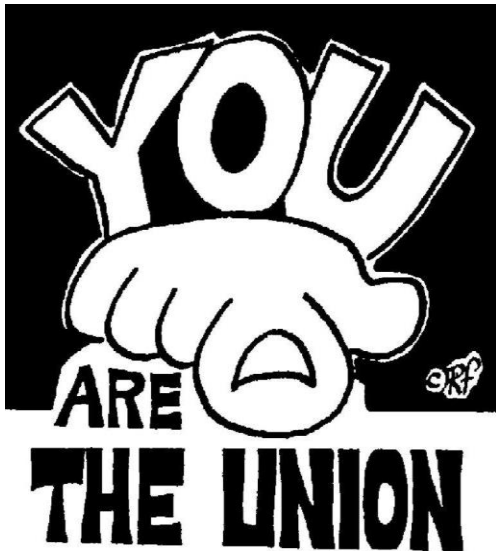
The second “Supplementary” report focused on issues that hinder the improvement of education for undergraduate students at AU. One of the key points was the University’s underutilization of one of their most valuable resources, the tutoriate. CUPE 3911 academic workers are highly educated and qualified to engage in additional work at this institution. They could provide mentoring or resource enrichment for other tutors; course development and design; construction of student assessment tools; and initiate ways to improve the teaching-learning experience. Tutor support could be more effective with workshops on effective teaching strategies for distance learning. The other problem is the top down implementation of technological change with software that has not been properly tested for its efficacy. CUPE outlined ways that we can motivate and populate a variety of



Next CUPE GENERAL Membership Meeting:

**Saturday, May 9th @
9:30a.m.**

**Teleconference
Available**



hybrid learning models so long as tutors remain the first contact for students' academic inquiries.

If you want any further information about these reports, contact your CUPE administrator at cupe3911@gmail.com. Remember that the deadline for the Task Force report is quickly approaching. The email address is taskforce@athabascau.ca. Let the President hear your voice on the value you bring to the sustainability and academic integrity of AU's future. Without your viewpoint, your role will be silenced.

RE: Conflict of Interest Disclosure Report

Recently, Learning Services has stated that tutors/AEs will be required to sign a conflict of interest disclosure report with their appraisals. When AU asked people to sign this same document for the past couple of years, we asked for legal advice, received it, informed our members that they should not sign the current document, and forwarded our concerns to AU. We just had a meeting with AU on May 1st where AU has agreed to review the current policy as it clearly is problematic for our bargaining unit. (e.g. the reference to other employment). AU has agreed that CUPE members are not required to sign this form at the current time. Learning services will be notified of this decision by Human Resources at AU.

If you are asked to sign the form, please do not sign and advise your coordinator that this is currently being reviewed.



CAN ANYONE HELP US FILL OUT OUR TIME SHEETS?

Many of our members have been Academic Experts for some time, and have learned through “trial and error” how to make sure they are being paid for all of the work they do at Athabasca University. Brenda Kuzio has developed a comprehensive list that instructs you on how to fill out your time sheet so that it is clear to those who sign off your sheets. If you do not want to have to resubmit your time sheets and want to be paid on time, take her advice. This will help you to focus on all aspects of your work that you have not had to account for in the past, if you have just moved from a block model to academic expert. You will save a great deal of time and effort if you are organized and follow your mentors.

Brenda Kuzio has offered sessions at our past tutor conferences on this very subject. She developed this important guide to make sure you are claiming every aspect of your work and are not being underpaid. Be pro-active so you are treated equitably. And if there are still questions blocking a sign off, contact your union.

HOW TO PREPARE ACADEMIC EXPERT (AE) TIME SHEETS by Brenda Kuzio

AE's are required to fill out time sheets claiming for the work they have done as an AE (excluding marking – this is paid automatically upon entry of mark in Newton).

All too often, AE's do not properly account and claim for their time as AU employees. When you do not claim for the time you have spent as an AU employee in the role or AE, you are working for free. This detrimentally affects you and your co-workers.

As of January 2015, AE has updated the time sheets to provide drop down items under “Nature of Work”. The items are:

- Academic Experting
- Administration
- Discussion Forums
- Checking Grey Matter
- Technical
- Other

Be sure to include **EVERYTHING** you do as an AU employee on your time sheets. **It is all compensable.**



WHAT KINDS OF ITEMS WOULD FALL UNDER THE GENERAL DROP BOX TERMS?

AU has provided general Guidelines. Below are attempts to slot our functions under those guidelines. [Please note that this list is not exhaustive. If you do something as an AE that is not on the list, please let the CUPE Administrator know at cupe3911@gmail.com so that it can be added to the list.

Ask yourself “would I be doing this if I was not an AE for AU? If the answer is “no” then you should be paid for it]

□ **ACADEMIC EXPERTING**

- Time spent teaching and preparing for response to student query - Research to provide response when student asks unusual question or one that goes beyond course materials but is related to the course – perhaps students ask for additional information or a student is struggling so you provide additional resource to assist
- Dealing with student issues – would include researching for a student issue; telephone calls. Email discussions etc.
- Email discussions where student and tutor have direct email contact
- Monitor Moodle for things like contract dates – student approaching end dates etc.
- Checking archived GM requests for student history if required. This is necessary when there has been a change in workload distribution or if you want to go back on the history with a student when you are running into some problems teaching them or for many other reasons that an AE, as an educator, would need to do so.
- Review student drafts and resubmissions – anything that deals with your role as an educator
- Making notations in Greymatter that go beyond existing GM requests (eg a student direct emails you – you may want to make a note in GM that says email discussion with student – keep track of the time that the email discussion occurred PLUS the time it takes you to go into the time sheet and make the entry)
- Dealing with any student issues that may arise – eg student who informally challenge marks; students who have questions on CMA’s, students who have questions on the markings on assignments
- Dealing with student issues
- Time spent on any platform used for teaching student (may be courses that use platforms other than discussion boards – eg video classrooms; conferencing etc.
- Keeping on top of course content (keeping current in your course content)
- Providing feedback on issues that arise in the course (eg links not working; changes in text book result in course issues) or on ways to improve or update the course – curriculum development review and assistance (outside and apart from SME contract)
- Dealing with plagiarism - Researching for plagiarism issues and corresponding emails with coordinator
- Creating requests in Grey Matter



- Communicating with other AU staff (Coordinators, course assistants, AE's, etc.)
 - Review student evaluations and other means of communication to AU from the students about the AE to assist in improving skills as educator
 - Performance evaluation process and review
- **ADMINISTRATION** - includes administration to do the specific teaching portion of the job and also those duties that come with being a part of the university community – this list is not exhaustive
- Tracking time and the time spent filling out and submitting time sheets
 - Time spent discussing time sheet issues, should they be raised, with coordinators and others at AU
 - Emails - Opening AU email and reviewing and responding. Includes reading AU memos, bulletins, newsletters, etc. – anything that makes you part of the university community –staying connected and informed is part of being an AU employee. Emails must be opened, read and then acted on, filed or discarded as the case may be.
 - All communications with AU personnel beyond the AU messages including but not limited to contact with coordinators, course assistants, other AE's, SSC staff, directors, payroll, etc. (unless it is course content or student related and then it can go under Academic Experting)
 - Buying/Ordering supplies that are used for AU work
 - Checking Spam (Precise Mail) and Junk and dealing with antivirus issues
 - Shredding documents
 - File management
 - Tracking time and comparing pay received to time records
 - Requesting leave or arranging coverage if required to do so
- **DISCUSSION FORUMS**
- Claim for as much time as is spent on discussion forums. This includes reviewing and preparing/calculating and entering marks into Newton
- **CHECKING GREY MATTER**
- NOTE: Claim 5 minutes a day per course to maximum of 10 minutes *for checking GM*
- **TECHNICAL**
- Dealing with/Resolving technical issues – includes any time dealing with the Help Desk, dealing with Citrix issues, Time sheet issues etc.
 - Installing programs needed for AU work and learning how to use them
 - Any software or hardware issues/support



□ **OTHER**

- Training – attending any AU training sessions that enhance/improve your role as an AE or that are taken to learn AU programs and systems
- Practice time spent working on new programs to become proficient at them – eg Citrix, GM
- Preparing letters of reference for students
- Responding to and doing AU questionnaires + AU surveys – eg ergonomic surveys; Climate surveys etc
- Attending meetings (eg course revision meetings; course team meetings or other meetings called by AU)
- Committee work – includes prep + attending

THE ANTI-RACISM COMMITTEE

The Mandate of the Anti-Racism Committee is to: “study ways of ensuring that every member of this Division be protected against any kind of discrimination or manifestation of racism thus allowing everyone to take their full and rightful place in CUPE, the Labour Movement, the Workplace and Society. The goal of this Committee is to promote awareness of racism with the facilitation of educational programs to bring up these issues through any and all channels available, with the full endorsement of CUPE Alberta Division Leadership.” (<http://alberta.cupe.ca/committees/anti-racism>) Our Local Member Rochelle Sato endeavors to make CUPE a welcoming home for all members.

CUPE ALBERTA DIVISION: ANTI-RACISM COMMITTEE – REPORT TO NATIONAL RAINBOW COMMITTEE, Committee, APRIL 2015 by ROCHELLE SATO

At the recent CUPE Alberta Division Annual Conference in Calgary on March 19 through 21, 2015, the Anti-Racism Committee gave each delegate a silicone bracelet of varying colours inscribed with these words: “CUPE Alberta Diversity our Strength.” We hope that members will wear these bracelets to call attention to this ideology. Our Committee presented to Convention, addressing why each of us had joined this committee. Our statements covered these three main points: 1) the diversity of our workplaces with people of different races and ethnicities; 2) the need and appreciation for diversity, which brings the advantage of different viewpoints and approaches; and 3) the fact that some of us as ethnic minorities deal with the potential for racism every day, due to our racial and ethnic differences from the dominant group.

To illustrate our message, we also showed a YouTube video, called “What kind of Asian are you?” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DWynJkN5HbQ> The video focuses on a common White
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American's casual questioning of an Asian woman, as to "where she was from." Her grandparents were from Korea, which became a subject of much discussion. However, the fact that his grandparents were from England, was at first considered unimportant by him, when he stated that he was a "real American." The video helps us examine stereotyping as both of these individuals had immigrant grandparents, yet the focus of difference was on the Korean grandparents rather than the English grandparents. We are hoping to tabulate members' awareness and experience with racism in their workplaces and personal lives, in order to inform the future direction of our Committee work. We will inform CUPE members of the link to this survey in the near future.

CONCESSIONS ARE NOT SOLUTIONS by Dougal MacDonald

Concessions such as teaching staff giving up a percentage of their pay or taking furlough days will not solve anything at Athabasca University. Lowering the claims of Athabasca academic and support workers for wages, benefits and pensions will not solve any problem for the university or for the economy as a whole. The demand for concessions under the rubric of making AU more solvent or more competitive is a sham and will have the overall effect of worsening the economy, especially locally in Athabasca and provincially in Alberta.

The AU administration says that concessions by AU academic and support workers are necessary to keep AU running. That is utter nonsense. To bolster their bias, they trot out the worn-out line that workers are a cost and that concessions reduce the costs of running the university, allowing them to make more profit and possibly even offer lower fees. They should be honest and simply say concessions are a way to transfer added-value from those who work at AU back to the province so it can be used for other purposes, such as further subsidizing the energy monopolies.

The fiction that concessions are solutions to whatever ails the universities, colleges, and technical institutes in Alberta, or a particular university such as AU, is worse than nonsense; it is a destructive anti-worker lie that has as its aim to force down the living standards of active and retired workers. Concessions do not reduce the university's costs; they simply transfer wealth from workers back to those who run the province for the energy monopolies. This does not cut costs; it actually weakens the economy especially in communities such as Athabasca which are directly affected, as the workers have less income to purchase goods from local businesses.

The more concessions dragged from public sector workers, the weaker the economy as a whole becomes. How could it be otherwise when the working people constitute the overwhelming majority of the people? This is especially true of the AU workers in Athabasca. All those who work at AU should unite in firm opposition to concessions. Concessions are not solutions to any economic problem including institutional debt; concessions simply make the situation worse. History also shows that concessions given are never recompensed and that giving concessions simply leads to being asked to give more concessions.



UPDATE ON PSERA AND THE RIGHT TO STRIKE by Dougal MacDonald

On April 2, 2015, Judge Denis Thomas of Court of Queen's Bench ruled that Section 96 of the Alberta Labour Relations Code and Section 70 of Alberta's Public Service Employee Relations Act (PSERA) violates the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The two provincial anti-labour laws banned the right to strike for thousands of Alberta workers, including those who work in the post-secondary education sector and are covered by PSERA. All members of CUPE 3911 fall under PSERA legislation. Judge Thomas gave the provincial government until April 1, 2016 to rewrite the offending sections.

The ruling referred to a ground-breaking ruling by the Supreme Court of Canada in Saskatchewan on January 30, 2015. That ruling struck down a Saskatchewan anti-labour law that prevented public sector workers from striking, on the grounds that the law was unconstitutional. Writing for the majority, Justice Rosalie Abella said that unilateral power violated section 2(d) of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which protects freedom of association. The Saskatchewan government was also given one year to change the law. The anti-labour law was introduced by the ruling Saskatchewan Party after winning power in 2007.

Following Judge Thomas's ruling against Sections 96 and 70, Alberta Federation of Labour president Gil McGowan stated: "Albertans have a right to work together, to look after each other and to stand up for themselves when needed. Attacking those rights doesn't lead to labour peace – it leads to long-term problems. I am very pleased that Justice Thomas in his wisdom has reaffirmed those rights." Public-sector workers in Alberta have not had the right to strike since Tory premier Peter Lougheed eliminated it in 1977 by legislating PSERA, 38 years ago.

In a related story, on March 19, 2015, the Alberta government was forced by heavy public pressure to repeal anti-labour Bill 45, The Public Sector Services Continuation Act, passed in 2013 while former Tory leader Alison Redford was still premier. Bill 45 was met with large protests from Alberta workers, but was passed in December 2013 under interim premier Dave Hancock, although it was never proclaimed or put into force. The bill, which would have introduced \$1 million a day fines to striking union workers, followed a "wildcat" strike at the Edmonton Remand Centre in April 2013, which protested unsafe working conditions.

While these victories are to be applauded, Alberta workers know that the Tories will continue to pursue their anti-labour agenda using legislative methods. On March 3, 2015, Premier Prentice announced he is overhauling provincial collective bargaining. Alberta Justice Deputy Minister Tim Grant has been put in charge of creating a "co-ordinated and long-term approach to public-sector labour negotiations". Prentice said his government is looking closely at the B.C. model, where labour negotiations have been centralized under the Public Sector Employers' Council Secretariat with a fixed fiscal framework.