



OUTSIDER: the VOICE of the TUTOR Volume 6 Issue 3

September 20, 2016

2016 Tutor Conference and Annual General Election – November 5th

For over 30 years, CUPE tutors, academic experts, markers and lab instructors have gathered for an Annual Conference and CUPE Annual General Meeting. ***And there is absolutely no registration fee.*** This is a great way to break away from the isolation of distance education and meet with your peers. The conference provides a change to engage in discussions about ongoing changes in teaching at Athabasca University; issues and challenges facing you and your local; and the work that the Executive is doing on your behalf.

Our ***Annual General Meeting*** will take place on the same day to ensure that members are able to fully engage in making decisions about their union. Here you will have a chance to review and query the Executive and Committees that work on your behalf. ***You may even decide it is time for your voice to be heard more fully and stand for election on the Executive or one of the many committees. We need your energy and your perspective so consider a commitment to serve this year.*** The conference offers you a chance to speak to individual Executive and Committee Members about the nature of the role, the time commitment, and support for your nomination. **Consider making a difference this year by becoming active in your union local.**

Advance registration is now open for the Tutor Conference, which will take place November 5th, in Edmonton (Venue to be announced). You will be reimbursed for travel and accommodation and will also receive a \$100.00 participation stipend from Athabasca University. For registration and updated information on the conference, please visit our website www.cupe3911.com. You can advance register at <https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScWsv1JwD9-CIVsCkymxSF0NhcPBdhrSwKOADOLRidZR2zJfw/viewform>

CUPE Local 3911 Call for Nominations for 2016 Executive Elections

Elections to the CUPE 3911 Executive Committee will be held on Saturday, November 5th at the Annual General Meeting. We hope that all members who attend the Tutor Conference will attend the AGM.

In the interests of an open, democratic election, we will be giving regular updates of declared candidates and the positions for which they are willing to stand. Therefore, we are asking that any member who is willing to stand as a candidate for any position declare herself/himself as early as possible, by email message to cupe3911@gmail.com. Please note that:

- Declaration as a candidate is not, in itself, sufficient for inclusion in the election. Each candidate must be nominated by one person who is present at the election meeting, in order to be included in the election.
- **Nor is advance declaration as a candidate NECESSARY** for inclusion in the election. Although we are encouraging advance declaration, any eligible member who is properly nominated at the election meeting will be included in the election.
- If candidates cannot themselves be personally present at the election meeting, they must have provided advance "acceptance" of nomination in order to be included in the election. Declaration of willingness to stand by email message to cupe3911@gmail.com would be sufficient for this.
- If more than one member is standing for the same position, a vote will be called among the members present.

The positions that will be elected on November 5th are:

OFFICERS WHO MAKE UP THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

1. Co-Chair (2 for two-year term)
2. Treasurer (one-year remainder of term)
3. Grievance Officer (one-year term)
4. Communications Officer (one-year term)
5. Membership Officer (one-year term)
6. Representative Officers (up to 8 for one-year term)
7. Trustee (1 for three-year term)

PERMANENT COMMITTEES OF THE LOCAL (one year terms)

1. Human Resources Committee (1 Chair and up to 2 members)
2. Bryon Paege Memorial Award Committee (2 or more)
3. Grievance Committee (4 or more)
4. Health and Safety Committee (2)
5. Bylaw Committee (1 Chair and up to 5 members)

REPRESENTATIVES ON AU AND JOINT BODIES

1. Professional Development Committee representatives (1 for two-year term)
2. [Harassment] Complaint Review Committee (1 rep. and 1 alt. for one-year term)
3. Labour Management Committee representatives (2 for one-year term)
4. Occupational Health and Safety Committee representatives (2 for one-year term)

ADDITIONAL COMMITTEES (one year terms)

2. Bargaining Committee (up to 10)
2. Strategic Budget Committee (1)
3. Health Benefits Committee (2)
4. PATME (President's Award for Tutor/Mentoring Excellence) (1)
5. Conference Planning Committee

You can view details of who has put their name forward or allowed their name to stand for various positions at our website – [Here](#).

Tutor Representatives Needed

Join the FHSS Faculty Council – Nominations Due Sept. 23

FHSS has issued a call for nominations for FHSS Faculty Council members. CUPE is permitted up to six representatives on this committee and we are still looking for additional members to join. **We need an additional three members to volunteer.**

Faculty Council meets periodically, usually every month of the academic year, and deals with issues of importance to FHSS (course name and content changes, cross-listing changes, program changes, etc.). Many times these issues will be of peripheral importance to tutors who aren't directly affected by the planned changes but there are often issues that are of major importance to CUPE3911 members, such as changes to the tutor model.

Why become a CUPE representative on the FHSS Faculty Council?

1. *This is the forum where issues that affect your work are presented for approval by the Faculty, and where you can hear others and also be heard.*
2. *More tutor representation will be interpreted as more interest by tutors and show that we care about more than just getting our cheques. This helps with our general credibility within and to the Faculty.*
3. *Having more voices matters, even if we all wind up saying the same thing, because we have different styles and also have different relationships with different faculty members.*
4. *We can't ask for more representation on Faculty Council if we don't even fill the six spots open to us.*
5. *If we have at least four tutors this year on FC then we can start to be an effective block of influential votes. Also, a larger number of tutor representatives allows us to spell each other off if needed.*

CUPE members are compensated at your hourly wage for attending these meetings (after filling out a time sheet). We would like to see some members who work in the Student Success Centre Model join this committee so that their voice is also represented.

If you are interested and would like more information from the CUPE Executive, please email cupe3911@gmail.com. **Note that nominations must be received by Sandra Blaquiere at sandrabl@athabascau.ca by end of day Friday, September 23 and anyone interested can self-nominate.**

Pedagogy and Research Program Service Advisory Group (SAG)

CUPE is entitled to have one voting member on the Pedagogy and Research SAG committee, which is a working group that evaluates and monitors requests for change involving enterprise systems such as Blue, Newton, Moodle, MuchLearning, and Lime Survey. It is important for CUPE to have a voice in how these systems affect our work and student learning experiences. If you are interested in learning more or putting your name forward, please email cupe3911@gmail.com.

COCAL XII – A Roaring Success!!

By Dougal MacDonald

CUPE 3911 had the privilege of organizing and hosting the COCAL XII Conference from August 5-7 at University of Alberta's Lister Centre. COCAL stands for the Coalition of Contingent Academic Labour, an international group that fights for the rights of contract academic staff in Canada, Mexico and the United States. COCAL conferences are held every two years, with the location alternating among the three countries. COCAL XIII will be held in Mexico in 2018, likely in the beautiful city of Santiago de Queretero which is 213 km northwest of Mexico City.



We welcomed 135 enthusiastic delegates from the three countries to the COCAL XII conference. There were two and a half days of excellent panel discussions and breakout sessions, as well as an evening reception at Fort Edmonton. The overall themes for the five panels were: Organizing and Reorganizing, Diversity Equity and Human Rights, Job Security, Living Well in a Precarious World, and What is to Be Done? Each panel included presenters from all three countries and were followed by several related breakout sessions. The emphasis was on finding solutions rather than merely describing problems. CUPE members played important roles acting as masters of ceremonies, panel moderators, panel presenters, and breakout session facilitators.



The keynote speaker was Dr. Pam Palmater, well-known Mi'kmaw lawyer, author, social justice activist and Chair of indigenous governance at Ryerson University. She gave an excellent talk about the need for fighting for unity between indigenous peoples and contingent workers, in order for both groups to affirm their rights. Dr. Palmater's new book, Indigenous Nationhood, a selection of her blog posts offering critical political commentary on a wide range of indigenous issues, was sold at the conference to the tune of 35 copies. Dr. Palmater graciously signed copies for those who requested it.

Greetings were brought to the conference from a wide variety of key representatives, including Honourable Marlin Schmidt, Alberta Minister of Advanced Education; Michael Phair, Chair of the University of Alberta Board of Governors; Calvin Bruneau, Chief of Papaschase First Nation; Honourable Ricardo Miranda, Alberta Minister of Culture; Marle Roberts, President of CUPE Alberta; Siobhan Vipond, Secretary Treasurer of Alberta Federation of Labour; Caroline Sale, President of the Association of Academic Staff at University of Alberta, and Dr. Alain May, Associate VP Student and Academic Services at Athabasca University.

CUPE 3911 sincerely thanks everyone who organized, publicized, donated to, and participated in, the conference. A huge amount of work was done by CUPE 3911 Administrator Kristy Burke, ably supported by student assistant Mary Morley. Special thanks to the very professional staff of Lister Centre at University of Alberta where the conference was held, and to the efficient and expert translation group. Comments from the many participants suggest that the conference was a roaring success! The delegates left with many new ideas, heightened enthusiasm to fight for their rights and the rights of all, and numerous new allies, both national and international.

Athabasca University Names Dr. Neil Fassina as President

By Dougal MacDonald

The Board of Governors of Athabasca University introduced Dr. Neil Fassina as its eighth President on Wednesday August 17, 2016. Dr. Fassina will take office on October 11, 2016 for a five-year term. He comes to AU from NAIT, where he was Dean of the J. R. Shaw School of Business and, since 2013, Provost and Vice President Academic. Dr. Fassina was selected by a search committee which excluded (included?) members from Athabasca University's three employee groups, CUPE 3911, AUPE, and AUFA.

"This is a tremendous institution with a history of seeing beyond the immediate and reaching for the future," said Dr. Fassina. "I am going to hit the ground listening and will be working with people from throughout the organization and government to address the pressures and challenges facing us....I have great confidence, however, that the tools and ability to create stability and sustainability at Athabasca are within our institution's DNA," he added.

Prior to being hired by NAIT in 2011, Dr. Fassina was a tenured associate professor with the I. H. Asper School of Business at the University of Manitoba, following a position as a visiting assistant professor at the University of Calgary. He holds a PhD in Organizational Behaviour and Human Resource Management from the Rotman School of Business at the University of Toronto, where he also instructed. He is a certified human resources professional (CHRP) and a designated director through the Institute of Corporate Directors (ICD.D).

At the announcement of his appointment to AU, Fassina stated that he intends to consult broadly and deeply within the Athabasca University and its stakeholders: “My commitment to everyone involved in Athabasca University and our community is this: Together, we will build on our strengths as a proud comprehensive academic research institution. I am confident that Athabasca University can emerge even stronger as a student-focused open university and global leader in online and distance education, research and technology.”

Athabasca University Needs Substantial Change

By Mark Dimirsky (Opinion)

Metrics of financial sustainability, technological modernity, effective pedagogy, staff morale and stagnant or declining enrollments all suggest that recent AU administrations have left this institution in dire need for change. No more “same as we have been doing” because same hasn’t worked and we’re falling further behind other institutions that are offering more contemporary and interesting courses; and therefore students have myriad options for taking courses.

Why Change Will Be Successful Now

At no time in recent memory have there been so many circumstances that favor success: AB Government publicly and repeatedly states it is committed to better funding and fundamental changes to promote long-term AU viability and a return to excellence; there is public and government support for close examination and reversal of the burgeoning and expensive administration at AU and other public universities; and, change will happen because almost all of the various AU communities, for their own reasons, see it as in their best interests for change to happen.

There will be change but the question for us is whether we will lead, or be the passive recipients.

Your Responsibility

- Take the time to question yourself about why you think what you think and then have the courage of your convictions to express your opinions and be willing to work for their implementation. Otherwise you are sitting on the sidelines and waiting for rescue.
- Write a supportive email and volunteer to work on an issue; talk/write to some friend and/or colleagues about this and energize some change efforts. Do something....no matter how small or seemingly insignificant.
- Try to keep up on the issues however you define them (by your particular course(s), by Faculty, etc.)
- Phrase suggestions for actions as constructively as possible. Don’t be a Pollyanna but ask yourself if there is a constructive and actionable path you can suggest that will honor your opinions..... and then state it to those who can help to make it happen.
- Frame your issues from two perspectives: what this means to your students and what will make you a better teacher.

What I Think Successful Change Will Look Like

Changes will primarily improve students' educations rather than improve our work situations but the two are just the opposite of mutually exclusive.

Technologies at AU verge from OK to dysfunctional and need to re-focus on helping us educate our students and do research. The tech silos need to be integrated with each other and should take their proper place as crucial but adjunctive aids to our teaching and research. Institutional needs for managerial information are real and important but should not be of paramount importance.

Modern, effective course design should result in course changes such that we avoid what was boring 20 years ago and is even more so today; we must engage our students in multiple ways and modalities. Dressing up poor course content (due to age, inaccuracies, biases, etc.) with good course design won't work.

Teacher-student communications and interactions should be improved by increasing numbers of ways we can interact and should be kept as direct as possible; students receive better educations generally if they are dealt with as people. Changes should not result in robotic, production-line interactions between teachers and students. There is a place for mechanized communications in the interests of efficiency and fairness but we've overdone that at AU and need to capitalize on our person-to-person strengths that occur as a result of the tutor model (including designated faculty serving that role).

Every student at AU should have individualized relationships with people who can answer their questions and encourage them to continue their educations. We should be trained in what to do when we think our students need help beyond that which we can provide. The most accessible help is likely to be the most useful help.

Some Likely Barriers To Change

It is naïve to believe that vested interests will cease so we should assume that all (including us) will see situations with inherent biases.

Reflexive defensiveness by us and others should be seen as likely and avoided. We understand why but still should avoid it.

Administrators at AU should be helped to see that administration is bloated and too expensive.

A lack of transparency will be a problem, so transparency should be the rule in all but the usual sensitive matters.

What is good for the student should be the goal that is paramount when we seek to change courses, programs and/or procedures. Of course, there will be varying interpretations of what that is and that will likely be a source of difficulty during the change process.

I'm asking for you to support the changes that need to be made. Send an email to me directly (dimirsky@telus.net) or to the local at cupe3911@gmail.com

CUPE3911 Professional Development Fund – Be sure to Apply!

By Mark Dimirsky

We have some money to give out but not too much so....

Each fiscal year we have \$40,000 to spend to fund our members' professional development. The details of who can apply, how and for what are available under the tutor tab on your MyAU page. We receive applications on a quarterly basis (next is October) and try to let people know within two to three weeks of getting the applications that are collected by AU's HR department (they provide details about workloads).

As of early September we have "\$X" left to award. The Committee has to be mindful that each of the past two years we have not had enough money to fully fund all the applications received and that there is an additional quarter beyond the October quarter. Therefore, we have to be very prudent but want very much to encourage members to apply to use your benefit.

The PD Fund Committee is composed of four of your colleagues from our local and two are elected at each AGM. Please think about offering your name in nomination for the Committee at the next AGM (November).

Changes to Crisis Management Resources for Tutors

Recently, we learned from AU Human Resources that CMR (Crisis Management Resources), a company that provided referral assistance to Tutor staff members seeking psychological counselling services, has ceased operations effective July 1, 2016. In its place Tutor staff members will be able to avail the service provided through the Psychologists Association of Alberta through the following link:

https://www.psychologistsassociation.ab.ca/site/doctor_search_agreement

Staff will still be able to claim psychological counselling expenses through Alberta Blue Cross. We were assured that the services available and the claim process would remain the same and that it is simply the provider that has changed.

Subsidy for History of Women's Political Activism Conference

The CUPE Executive has approved a limited amount of subsidy for any of its members interested in attending the History of Women's Political Activism Conference, October 28-30, at the University of Alberta. Subsidy is granted on a first-come-first-served basis and can be used for conference registration fees or travel. If you are interested, please contact cupe3911@gmail.com.