



## Union Invites Bob Rae to London Convention Centre, March 31



**On March 31 at the London Convention Centre, former Ontario Premier, Bob Rae, will lead a panel discussion concerning postsecondary education in Ontario sponsored by Local 110.**

The Union has invited Bob Rae to participate in a panel discussion of postsecondary education focusing on recommendations contained in Rae's landmark report: **Ontario: A Leader in Learning** (2005). Panel participants will include education researchers Mary Catherine Lennon, Glen A. Jones and OPSEU Local 110 President Darryl Bedford.

The discussion will be informed by a report commissioned by Local 110 authored by Lennon, Jones and Michael Skolnik: **The Rae Report in Retrospect** (2015). The Union invites Fanshawe College faculty, staff, and the public at large, to join this 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary exploration of postsecondary education in Ontario.

2005 was a pivotal year in the college system. Beginning in 2005 colleges ceased to be majority employers of full-time faculty and introduced instead the system of contingency hire we now know as the norm.

Ten years ago, the Ontario government proposed to make immediate and significant investment in the postsecondary educational system. Where and how the government should invest the money were open questions. To answer those questions, among others, Bob Rae was selected to lead a series of consultations with experts, stakeholders, and the public.

The Union is now hoping to answer some basic questions. Did the province and the colleges implement the report's recommendations? Where did the report's authors get it right? Where might they have gotten it wrong? What is next for Ontario colleges?

Regardless of Rae's political affiliations, then or now, he remains uniquely positioned to provide a comprehensive perspective on postsecondary education in Ontario, and the Union is pleased to provide the public an opportunity to learn more about issues of concern to everyone.

The report commissioned by the Union is entirely independent. We have not directed the research. Some of the report's findings may confirm our assumptions, others

may not. We are concerned to learn the facts and deepen understanding of our current situation by reviewing the past.

**The Rae Report in Retrospect**  
**March 31, 2015**  
**7pm**  
**London Convention Centre**

Featuring the release of a report by Glen Jones, Mary Catharine Lennon, and Michael Skolnik.

Panel Discussion featuring:

- Hon Bob Rae, former Premier of Ontario
- Glen Jones, University of Toronto OISE
- Mary Catharine Lennon, University of Toronto OISE
- Darryl Bedford, President, OPSEU Local 110 Fanshawe College Faculty Union

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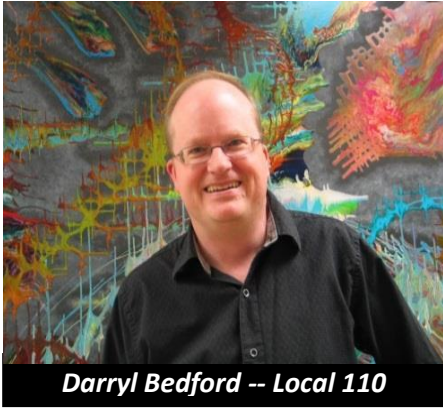
This is one of the largest issues we have ever published. There is something for everyone. **Darryl Bedford** provides hard news about the College's decision to support a family tuition program and a powerful analysis of the failed **TriOS** privatization project. **Rachel McCorriston** shines light on the union budget. **Fred Vakaris** and **Mark Feltham** provide valuable analyses of the college system and its operation. Their articles taken together form a primer for college faculty who wish to be well-informed. **Matt Farrell** and **Thomas Barnes** examine such issues and concerns as our ongoing disengagement from democracy and the role and definition of soft skills in college teaching. Members also receive timely information from **Kathryn Tamasi** and **Mark Feltham** who jointly explain the important and increasingly fraught Return to Work (RTW) process. **Mike Boisvert** muses about the perennial problem of student inattention, and **Jamie Austin** takes on **Naomi Klein** and the pretensions of public intellectuals. We also have a timely reminder for **Partial-Load** faculty on page 16 concerning **free benefits**.

Finally, **Jennifer Boswell** provides a review of a provocative article by **Keith Holler** concerning the crisis of contingent employment in postsecondary education. Holler's positions are extreme and controversial. I personally believe Holler's article misidentifies the cause of the current crisis and leads us away from the most effective strategies to combat it, but I fully recognize the frustration and anger generated by contingent employment and the need for the union to hear it and address it. I am pleased that our union has the integrity and courage to allow open expression of positions critical of the union itself. The creation of a permanent underclass in postsecondary education is the greatest professional challenge we face as faculty and as union members. Their plight is part of the general abandonment of the middle class in our time. This new majority of contingent college teachers has been engineered by management decision-making and complicit government. We must find a way to help them that is convincing and compelling if we are to prevent the planned (and now far-advanced) de-professionalization and marginalization of postsecondary teaching. I am not surprised that the union itself has become a focus of frustration and anger, this confusion of causes has occurred before in the long history of unionization. Our union demonstrates its commitment to workers and worker protection by listening to the frustrations of those who are currently denied these protections. We will continue to welcome criticism, engage it, understand the oppression driving it, and seek ways to help.

The general editorial position of **The Educator** is that faculty members are free to express their views in a considered and considerate way even if they should disagree with those of their union. We advocate and model academic freedom and the democratic exchange of ideas. Of course, our editorial core and commitment remains clear: we support union representation for all, freedom of expression, respect for reasoned debate, and the primacy of persons over mechanisms, either organizational or mechanical. Our union is a union of diverse people with differing backgrounds, ideals, and values. We represent all our members, and we welcome their participation at meetings and in the pages of the newsletter.

Our title **The Educator** is two-fold. It identifies our audience, and it declares an objective. We represent and serve teachers, counselors, and librarians: knowledge workers. We also seek to educate our membership about the conditions of their work, the structures of decision-making that affect our ability, both pro and con, to do our jobs. Being an educator is a privilege. It has always been understood as something more than simply labor; it has been honored as a vocation, literally a 'calling.' This calling is facing severe challenges. It is being reduced to a commodity increasingly mediated by machine, and teachers are often subject to central direction which is indifferent to the work they do. We need to defend our profession as well as our jobs. We will do this best by listening to our colleagues who are doing the work.

# President's Message



**Darryl Bedford -- Local 110**

## Greetings Members

First, I have some good news. After years of lobbying from our support staff counterparts in Local 109, and supported by us in Local 110, Fanshawe College will finally offer a family tuition program.

We believe that 19 other colleges have a program like this. It makes a lot of sense for Fanshawe to encourage enrolment from a student group that should be receptive. It also makes sense when the College is concerned about the shrinking pool of local students to draw from.

In this issue, we've included some details provided by the college (see box).

Next, I have some mixed news. 70 faculty members who had partial-load status in Fall 2014 are no longer partial-load in Winter 2015. On the flip side, 80 faculty have gained partial-load status. We have a net increase of 10 partial-load, but that sure is a lot of turnover.

	# of partial-load faculty
Fall 2014	233
Winter 2015	243

## What the College Giveth, The College . . . .

Obviously our situation is not the same as what is happening at Seneca College but we will continue to monitor it closely. There is no shortage of work here at Fanshawe: management should be hiring full-time and partial-load faculty in large numbers. **If you hear a manager make comments about an inability or unwillingness to hire partial-load, please let us know.**

Now, I have some bad news. Ever since the inception of the SWF in the 1980's, Fanshawe management has given complementary time to the Union's representatives on the Union-College Committee (UCC) and the College Employment Stability Committee (CESC).

The UCC meets monthly to discuss issues with the intent of avoiding grievances. With the change in leadership, there has been a more collegial tone at these meetings.

CESC's purpose is to promote employment stability at the college. If the college is considering a layoff, they must first call a CESC meeting. Confidentially the union and management discuss the situation. The committee can then consider strategies to prevent the layoff. We must have union members ready to go and willing to serve on the committee, should a layoff ever be contemplated again.

CESC should also meet regularly to share staffing data and trends with a view to improving or maintaining employment stability in the future; however, at Fanshawe the committee has not met for this purpose, unfortunately. The last time CESC met we were successful in arranging for support for the new Interior Design degree program to ensure stable employment for faculty members inside and outside the program.

This committee will be especially important on an ongoing basis for Fanshawe as the President has said there will be much program renewal, creation, and possibly program discontinuation.

Management has informed us that they now consider the union members of UCC and CESC to be "volunteers" based on an arbitration award at Sault College. They will take the time off our SWFs beginning this Fall.

The Sault award contradicts awards we have received here at Fanshawe: that faculty can volunteer for various activities but that they are volunteering to perform work and that this should be recognized as work on the SWF. We don't think the recent award at Sault stands up to scrutiny.

In my reply, I gave management my legal argument. I also gave them practical and moral arguments.

Fanshawe need not follow this most recent (and we would say flawed) award. The College could apply Article 8.04 A and mutually agree with us that time should be granted for these committees mandated by our Collective Agreement.

We have seen some positive changes under President Devlin. However, there are some managers at this college and at other colleges that wish to further a “corporate” agenda considering dollars, and dollars only, giving no consideration to the human costs of their decisions.

As I said above, there is much to be gained from useful dialog at UCC and CESC. Should such a decision stand, my elected successors might be unwilling to volunteer their time for these committees.

If that happens, what will *we*, and by *we* I mean the *entire Fanshawe College community*, lose?

**In solidarity,**

*Darryl*

## Officers of the Union

**President:** Darryl Bedford

**Chief Steward:** Mark Feltham

**1st Vice-President:** Kathryn Tamasi

**2<sup>nd</sup> Vice-President:** Mike Boisvert

**Treasurer:** Rachel McCorriston

**Secretary:** Whitey Hoth

## Contact Your Union

519-452-4205

## Details of the Family Tuition Program

### **Eligible employee:**

Eligible employee is defined as a person who is employed as a full-time permanent employee for 3 months or longer at the start of the first day of the relevant term and includes the following;

- Full-time permanent employees who are on development leave under the provisions of the appropriate collective agreement
- Full-time permanent employees on approved leaves of absence
- Full-time permanent employees on LTD for a maximum of 2 years

### **Family Member Criteria**

- Your eligible dependent(s) are your spouse/partner, your children and your spouse/partner’s children (other than foster children) who are residents of Canada and the United States and who meet the criteria based on Sun Life definition as defined in the benefits booklet.

*For clarification if your child or spouse qualify, please see the benefits booklet at*

[MyFanshawe > Employee Resources > Human Resources > Benefits and Compensation > Links Tab](#)

### **Program Eligibility:**

The College will provide tuition assistance equivalent to the standard full-time tuition fee as determined by the Registrar’s Office per semester, for a full-time post-secondary school program, less \$20.

The tuition fee assistance excludes all other costs associated with the program or course tuition such as, but not limited to ancillary fees, activity fees, books, lab fees or materials.

The Tuition Program is applicable only to full-time domestic Fanshawe College Post-Secondary Programs only. For the purposes of this program, a full-time Fanshawe program is defined as a full-time credit program of Fanshawe College funded by the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities and taught by Fanshawe College faculty. Those programs for which the registrant is not required to pay a tuition fee do not qualify.

Check back on the Human Resources page for application forms and further information.

# A Question of Quality

## Policy Implications for Funding Ontario Colleges

*Fred Varkaris*

Over the last four and a half decades community colleges in Ontario have undergone significant changes in purpose, structure and funding. The community college system in Ontario was created on May 21<sup>st</sup> 1965 when a bill was passed in the Ontario legislature establishing the initial 18 Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology (Ontario Department of Education, 1967). When the colleges were established, each was to service one of the 19 defined geographical areas with Area 19 not initially serviced. (Ontario Department of Education, 1967). For example, Fanshawe College was founded to service Area 11 and Mohawk College to service Area 9. Today there are 24 colleges in the system, which are quite diverse both in size and purpose. As an illustration, most community colleges in Ontario append the title of College of Applied Arts and Technology to their name as prescribed by the original documents establishing the college system. Conestoga appends the title of Institute of Technology, while both Humber and Sheridan append the title of Institute of Technology and Advanced Learning. Enrollments vary from the largest college, Humber, with over 21,700 full time students (2012/13) to the smallest, Northern with just over 1,100 (2012/13) (Colleges Ontario, 2014). In the fall of 2013, 58% of new students attending postsecondary education chose to attend college

and this number is conservative as colleges also have intakes in the winter and spring terms which this percentage does not reflect (Colleges Ontario, 2014). As the system has evolved over the last 46 years, its purposes and credentials have expanded to include one-year certificates, two-year diplomas, three-year advanced diplomas and four-year applied degrees. Has this expansion come at the expense of quality education? There appear to be three main factors to consider when pondering the maintenance of quality: the future purpose and structure of higher education, the desire of the colleges, and the financial distress of the provincial government.

### **Future of Higher Education**

Higher education is evolving at an ever-increasing pace to keep up with rapidly changing demands of both students and their employers. The future of higher education may look very different from what is currently provided in today's institutions and may come to resemble older apprenticeship and craft guild models where students work with one master at a time to learn skills that together constitute an education. There has been much published in recent years concerning this by a variety of authors. For example, most recently in a 2014 report published by the Deloitte



University press the authors predict the future will look very different.

*The emerging higher education landscape is one that is befitting of the digital era and of today's tech-savvy students. It's one that uses the cloud, social networks, mobile computing, and big data to create digital learning ecosystems that serve entrepreneurial learners, allowing them to design their own educational path based on the goals they want to achieve. It may or may not involve four years of study. Rather, students set their own pace, progressing not through semesters but as they master various competencies. And similar to electronic health records, the credentials they earn follow them throughout their professional lives, reflecting the total sum of their education, from traditional degrees earned to alternative badges and*

*corporate training completed* (Sledge & Fishman, 2014, pg.4).

In Anya Kamenetz's 2010 influential book *DIY U: Edupunks, Edupreneurs, and the Coming Transformation of Higher Education*, she reports "most of the growth in higher education over the next century will come from the 85 percent of students who are 'nontraditional' in some way" (pg. xi) and she foresees "stripped-down institutions that focus on instruction or assessment only, or in a particular discipline area, will find larger and larger audiences" (pg. xi). She also echoes Sledge and Fishman's prediction that students will not be tied to brick and mortar institutions and will not be bound by traditional semesters, rather they will be competency driven and will seek to gain knowledge from any institution they feel has the best teaching talent to provide the knowledge they seek (Kamenetz, 2010). In the 2013-14 academic year, 65.3% of college applicants were non-direct, that is, applicants not applying directly from high school (Colleges Ontario, 2014), a fact which supports Kamenetz's prediction of non-traditional students being the norm.

Everything evolves. Film changed the way in which people entertained themselves, then television changed it again. At one time VHS was revolutionary but evolved into DVD then into Blu-Ray and now streaming services are changing this landscape again. Similarly, digital music players irrevocably altered the music industry with much of the technology driving change not even

imagined by the majority of the population even a few years before its introduction. Just as evolving technology has dramatically changed many other facets of our lives, so too will it change higher education whether institutions are ready or not. The few students who desire a more traditional educational path will not likely be adequate to sustain the plethora of brick and mortar educational institutions. Community colleges have kept up with the desires of students and technological trends better than most Ontario universities as they are bound to serve industry stakeholders that have informed curriculum changes and have promoted the adoption of current and emerging technologies. However, Ontario's colleges will need to continue to change dramatically over the coming years in response to a changing postsecondary educational landscape driven by technology.

### **Desire of the Colleges**

The original documents outlining the creation of the Ontario community colleges described the purpose of their inception as a remedy to the "...deficiency in our educational system in regard to the training of technical personnel..." (Ontario Department of Education, 1967, pg. 5) and were clearly differentiated from the established universities.

*COLLEGES OF APPLIED ARTS AND TECHNOLOGY are neither universities nor extensions of the secondary school; they will find their identity in the service to that large segment of society that is inadequately served*

*by the university; that is, those students and adults whose failure to recognize the applicability of the humanities, languages or abstract mathematics to their own lives has made them potential or actual dropouts. (Ontario Department of Education, 1967, pg33)*

Originally, the colleges were designed to serve 19 defined catchment areas with programming to serve those environs but the protection of these defined areas was formally eliminated in 2002 when the Ontario Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology Act was updated. Over the first 25 years following the establishment of the colleges, rapid population growth, along with an improvement in Ontario's economy driven by increasing manufacturing and use of technology, changed the purpose and function of community colleges (Dennison & Gallagher, 1986). Though growth was initially driven by external factors, the colleges became progressively addicted to it. As far back as 1981, a Minister's Task Force on College Growth reported, "The existing headcount approach to funding, combined with the status quo scenario of inadequate resources, tends to encourage colleges to give priority to quantity of students rather than the quality of education" (Skolnic, 1985, pg. 70) The colleges' developing addiction to growth was further fueled by the change in funding practices to drive home the Ontario provincial government's desire to have an ever-increasing proportion of its population possess postsecondary

education. Currently the government's target is to have 70% of Ontarians graduate with some level of postsecondary education (Commission of the Reform of Ontario's Public Services, 2012).

Although publicly funded colleges in Ontario are not-for-profit, like many universities, they seem to have embarked on a quest to be the largest and the best. This quest is evident by the ever-increasing number of programs offered at colleges across the province. A scan of the list of approved postsecondary (APS) programs provided by the MTCU reveals that over the last 5 years, the 24 colleges in Ontario have added just over 800 new programs to their offerings while just over 500 programs have been dropped for a net increase of 300 programs. This illustrates the desire of the colleges to add more programs and thus more students, to bolster income with tuition and counter ever dwindling funding, though it also emphasizes the rapidly changing requirements of both employers and students to meet employment gaps. Despite the fact the provincial government expressed a desire to curb the explosive growth of the colleges in 2011 (MacKay, 2014), most continue to be addicted to growth.

### **Financial Distress of the Provincial Government**

There has been a long history of difficulty in obtaining accurate funding data for Ontario colleges, but the one statement that has been made repeatedly in many reports is

that funding for the colleges has been in decline ever since they were established (e.g. Skolnic, 1985; MacKay, 2014). **Currently Ontario has the lowest per-student funding of all the provinces and its postsecondary institutions receive less than half of the support provided for postsecondary institutions in Alberta and Saskatchewan (Canadian Federation of Students, 2013). Despite much reporting on the financial crisis that is currently being experienced by the Ontario provincial government, mixed messages are being sent with regard to educational funding.**

On one hand there seems to be a message of constraint and reduction. "In Light of the current fiscal climate, and as we continue to recover from the recession, it is necessary to lead the province's publicly funded higher education system towards lower rates of spending growth. Costs in the postsecondary sector have grown at a rate above inflation during a time when growth and grants from government have been constrained." (MTCU, 2012, pg.8). On the other hand, in a memo dated July 2014, Didem Proulx, Assistant Deputy Minister of Postsecondary Education Division of the Ministry of Training Colleges and Universities, indicated, "College enrolment growth will continue to be fully funded" (pg.3), and she went on to write "The ministry is projecting an increase of \$28.2 million in funding for 2014-15 through the CFF [College Funding Formula] to support growth in college enrolment" (pg.3).

The government is starting to lose its sway with the colleges. Even with the modest increases in government support of the colleges, the grants provided on a per-student basis have dwindled from approximately 75% of the operating fund in 1993 to well below 50% (Canadian Federation of Students, 2013). Most colleges are now turning to increased tuition, the international student market, contract training, and programs that are fully student funded to support their addiction to growth. "In the last 20 years, tuition fees have outpaced inflation by 435%" (Canadian Federation of Students, 2013, pg. 1).

The government cannot sufficiently feed the beast it created in 1965, and needs to look for a way to curb the explosive growth of the colleges. The 2012 report from the Commission of the Reform of Ontario's Public Services entitled *Public Services for Ontarians: A Path to Sustainability and Excellence*, commonly known as the Drummond Report after its Chair, Don Drummond, recommended "increasing differentiation through the establishment of multi-year mandate agreements" (pg.246). Is this the golden ticket the Provincial government needs?

### **Differentiation**

**Initially, geographical location and a prescribed service area differentiated the colleges and limited their growth through the implicit mandate that each would service its own catchment area. With the removal of these geographical boundaries in 2002, the colleges**

started to look to other jurisdictions to attract students, essentially poaching from each other to feed the desire for growth. This coupled with the concomitant desire of the Provincial government to have an ever-increasing percentage of the population with postsecondary education, fostered unbridled growth in the college sector. But the government is now hugely in debt and cannot support funding for all programs at all colleges and needs to find a way to rein them in.

*The 2008 economic downturn and the ensuing precarious state of the global economy have made Ontario's fiscal environment challenging. Substantial new investment by the government at levels comparable to the previous decade is not feasible. Also, as enrolment growth is expected to slow in the near future, so too will operating grant funding. With institutions' costs outpacing growth in revenues from operating grants and tuition, existing cost structures are under pressure (MTCU, 2013, pg.5).*

As recommended in the Drummond report "The government has opted for differentiation as a primary policy driver for the system. The government's policy of differentiation sets the foundation for broader postsecondary system transformation by publicly articulating government expectations and aligning the mandates of Ontario's colleges and universities with government priorities." (MTCU, 2013, pg.6). Thus were born the Strategic Mandate

Agreements that every publicly funded postsecondary institution in Ontario must write, sign and abide by for the next three years. *Ontario's Differentiation Policy Framework for Post-Secondary Education* dictates that each institution list ten subject areas of strength and their five areas for future growth (pg11) in their strategic mandate agreement and indicates that funding and much more will be tied to these areas.

In a letter from Premier Wynn to the new minister of Training, Colleges and Universities Dr. Moridi dated September 25<sup>th</sup>, 2014, she indicates: "Your goal is to drive differentiation in the postsecondary education sector..." (pg. 3). Not only does the government wish to restrict which type of programs a college can offer, but also wishes to control the building of new facilities by policy, "Ensuring that future large-scale capacity expansion supports long-term postsecondary education priorities, including institutional differentiation." (MTCU, 2013, pg.6).

Institutional differentiation policy will serve as both carrot and stick for the government in the foreseeable future. In Premier Wynne's letter she also instructs Moridi to consider "...the new outcome measures and ongoing initiatives when developing the next tuition framework and the next round of Strategic Mandate Agreements to be implemented in 2017-2018" (pg.4).

### **The Big Picture**

A 2005 report entitled *Ontario a Leader in Learning: Report and Recommendations*, more commonly known as the Rae report after the Honourable Bob Rae, then advisor to the Premier and the Minister of Training Colleges and Universities, suggested the lack of funding was directly related to poor quality and recommended "...a significant increase in public funding for higher education..."(pg19). However, the Provincial government has ignored this and similar recommendations in reports over the last three decades and has continued to decrease per-student grants to postsecondary institutions.

Recent changes to the way in which MTCU grants college program approval are not simply about quality, as the ministry claims, but more about money and the establishment of boundaries based on areas of specialization as opposed to geo-political boundaries. In the funding application a college must indicate how a proposed program fits into the signed strategic mandate agreement and how it will distinguish itself from similar programs offered at other colleges in their region. Quality is not addressed. In addition, the whole exercise seems to be disconnected from the predicted future of education. The unbridled growth in the college sector, resulting from a string of previous decisions by the government, created an environment of vicious competition between the colleges and resulted in the inability of ever-diminishing government funding to sustain the



momentum. The introduction of the strategic mandate agreements to create differentiation based on programming is a desperate attempt

to reestablish boundaries removed in 2002 in order to curb growth and limit funding. Policy is being used by the Provincial government as a

means to curtail funding in the guise of creating a more efficient postsecondary system to provide “quality education”.

## Show me the money! *Rachel McCorriston/Treasurer*



Have you ever wondered what your Union spends money on? More importantly, where does the money come from?? The union has a desire as well as a responsibility to be transparent with members regarding our revenue, choices and spending.

**Sources of Cash:** We receive Local monthly union dues from *you* – our members. We also receive reimbursements from OPSEU Head Office for out of pocket expenses such as workload release for Executive Staff and Membership costs for Area and Regional Councils. Finally, we have a large contingency fund set aside for times of need that provides a steady stream of investment income. Last year our total income was just under \$250,000.

### **How do we decide each year what to do with the money?**

Ultimately this is up to you. Our Executive drafts a budget based on what we think the collective needs. Annually, we present this budget to you and ask for approval. The membership who attend discuss and modify as needed. Once passed, the Executive are free to spend the money under the agreed upon guidelines. If ever our financial requirements change unexpectedly due to circumstance, we again reach out to the membership for approval prior to proceeding.

### **What did we spend our \$250,000 on last year?**

Breakdown: Workload Release and expenses for Executive Staff (\$95K), Administrative Personnel Costs (42K), Office Costs including supplies, printing, telecommunications, office upgrades, and professional services (22K), Education including books, member training, and research projects (15K), Public Communication and Bargaining Support (9K), Grievance Support, Memberships and Donations (8K).

In 2014 we had a surplus of \$60K which will be used in part to cover some late bargaining costs from 2014 (12K) and to increase the contingency fund which is currently at just over \$1 Million.

### **What are we planning to do this year based on your approvals?**

Projected Revenue: 210K

Projected Expenses: 100K Workload Release and expenses for Executive Staff, 55K Administrative Personnel Costs (includes CAAT Pension for Staff), 22K Public Communication and Bargaining Support (we are developing a new website), 21K Office Costs, 9K Grievance Support, Memberships and Donations, 8K Education.

Expected Shortfall: 5K

### **Have questions? Want answers?**

Contact the Union 110 Office at [union@opseu110.ca](mailto:union@opseu110.ca)

## TriOS College: Lessons from a Failed Privatization Deal – Darryl Bedford

You may recall that in April 2014, Fanshawe administration had indicated that at that time it was looking at having a private college, TriOS, deliver the Information Security Management (ISM) and the International Business Management (IBM) programs in the Greater Toronto Area. Here was management's original announcement from that time:

*Original Fanshawe administration communiqué from April 10, 2014*

The purpose of this email is to provide information on an opportunity that Fanshawe is currently exploring.

To help drive international enrollment growth, Fanshawe has entered into discussions on the development of a short-term pilot partnership with triOS College, a private career college with locations in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) and recently awarded the Gold Standard level as one of Canada's Best Managed Companies.

The pilot would see international students take post-graduate programs in International Business Management and Information Security Management. The pilot could begin as early as this fall with programs offered in Brampton, Mississauga and Scarborough.

The pilot is specifically aimed at international students who are interested in Fanshawe programs and want to study only in the GTA. Students who are accepted will be Fanshawe students and will receive a Fanshawe credential upon completion of the program.

The partnership is expected to generate revenue which will support the enhancement of operations at Fanshawe's existing campuses.

Further information will be communicated when relevant.

Your Local sprang into action, working with the OPSEU CAAT-Academic Divisional Executive to execute a plan to tackle the private college threat head-on. Nearly as suddenly as it was announced, Peter Devlin announced to College Council on April 16 2014 that the deal was dead.

Prior to the cancellation of the deal, your Local had submitted a Freedom of information (FOI) request to obtain more information. We proceeded with the FOI request and the college's provision of a whopping 322 pages was received last summer. It included draft contracts and e-mail correspondence to and from TriOS College. Through much of the material, TriOS is referred to as the PCC (Private Career College) opportunity.

Even though the TriOS threat is gone for the moment, we are reporting on what we learned from the material.

### **What Does the Document *not* Tell Us?**

There is a lot the documentation doesn't tell us as a great number of e-mails are heavily or completely redacted. For e-mails that express concern, almost the entire e-mail has been censored with the exception of the subject line.

Curiously there are only three names that are visible, despite someone taking a lot of care to redact any and all identifying information. Mary (Pierce), David (Belford), and Wendy (Curtis) are thanked on page 37 of the document for bringing the TriOS deal to the College. Given that is the only instance where names haven't been redacted, it begs the question, did someone in the administration want the Union to see their names to direct all of the attention to them?

The document does leave a lot of questions unanswered. For example, TriOS would receive the following from Fanshawe: "Curriculum in a box includes items such as: CIS [course information sheet], supplemental CIS for 7 week delivery, bank of PPT [PowerPoints], activities, lesson plans, additional resources, rubrics, tests, answer keys & assignments."

That list goes beyond mere curriculum. How would they get all of this material? It is not all posted on FanshaweOnline. Would they have required faculty to turn these items over? Do they have the capability to mine photocopiers or hard drives for this information?

And what if there was material that had been provided by textbook publishers? The document says: "Intellectual Property: Fanshawe is the sole owner of all curriculum and teaching materials used for courses and programs which are part of this agreement. These materials cannot be used, reproduced or distributed without the express written consent of Fanshawe College."

For some strange reason, someone in the administration expected labour negotiations to be complete by May 2014. How could that have been possible when the "notice to bargain" for either Academic or Support Staff could not have been given until June 2, 2014?

It was unclear who the program coordinators would be, whether they would be Fanshawe or TriOS employees. There was also some strange indemnification language in the draft contract. It is unclear that there would be any consequences to TriOS for claims arising "from the delivery of the Licensed Services."

### **So What Does the FOI Tell Us?**

Fanshawe had been working on this plan for a long time: since August 2013. We also know that they looked at the numbers for another program, possibly not for hosting at TriOS and maybe just for comparison, and that was the popular and highly recognized Music Industry Arts (MIA).

We now know from the FOI that the programs being considered for outsourcing to TriOS were:

#### Graduate Certificates:

- a. International Business Management
- b. Project Management
- c. Supply Chain Management
- d. Insurance and Risk Management
- e. Accounting
- f. Information Security Management (ISM)

#### Diplomas:

- a. Purchasing/ Supply Chain Management (SCM)
- b. Insurance

The FOI document also gives some context to the negotiations and the views of some administrators. Obviously they were preoccupied with luring international students and the belief that they are not interested in coming to London, Ontario. One administrator remarks that international students are interested in Niagara College because "international students don't know it is Welland." Despite heavy redaction, cautionary administrator comments such as "private colleges need constant support and supervision" made it through. (Do they ever! Everest College had not gone belly-up at the time.)

Also revealed are the public colleges that have arrangements with private career colleges to deliver their programs:

- Cambrian College outsourced to Hanson
- Canadore College outsourced to Stanford
- St. Lawrence College outsourced to Alpha
- Lambton College outsourced to Willis-Cestar
- Not included in management's list is St. Clair College outsourcing to Acumen.

We do know that in the middle of the Fanshawe-TriOS negotiations, on 7 February 2014, things did fall apart. The document doesn't exactly explain why. It might have been over the split in revenue. For example, TriOS was seeking an 80% share. Fanshawe would have received only 20%.

It could have fallen apart due to labour relations concerns. The College did anticipate there could be Collective Agreement issues including grievances in their risk assessment matrix. To mitigate the risk, they wrote "need to appropriately address our relationship with the PCC [private career college] will be reflected in operating agreement structure to mitigate collective agreement issues." Your guess is as good as ours when it comes to exactly what *that* means.

By February 24<sup>th</sup>, negotiations between Fanshawe and TriOS resumed. An e-mail includes the words "apology accepted."

Things quickly get back on track. Soon everything was ready to go from contract language, to revised admission letters that included Brampton and Mississauga as Fanshawe campus locations, to lanyards reading "Fanshawe @ TriOS," to a student card design, to a project timeline with assignments. Everything was developed and ready to go.

### **What Have we Learned?**

A decision not to proceed with the TriOS deal would have been made by Fanshawe administration after our FOI was submitted so there is no information about that included here.

A close look at the teaching cost comparison (see chart) reveals that Fanshawe would not have saved much money through outsourcing to a private career college. In fact, Fanshawe would have lost out as the student numbers increase to 136 and beyond, due to the projected profit margin that TriOS would be taking.

Although there were a few administrator comments about quality in the documents, it is quite clear that colleges will pursue the deals strictly based on their ability to bring in revenue.

I'm sharing this information with you, our members, so you are aware of the types of outsourcing arrangements that the union will need to deal with. What has happened once can happen again!

In one e-mail TriOS defends the deal as being "good" for the union and our members. We knew from a straw poll of ISM students that all of them would have preferred to take the program in the Greater Toronto Area. And if the GTA programs are delivered using non-Fanshawe employees, the risk to our membership we faced at that point was very real. We might need to face this down again in the near future.

Although our bargaining team successfully added a reference to outsourcing in our latest Collective Agreement, we must remain vigilant and do more to combat this threat

## ***The Scandal of Part-Time Employment in Colleges and Universities***

***Equality for contingent faculty: Overcoming the two-tier system, 2014, Vanderbilt University Press, ed. Keith Hoeller.***

**Keith Hoeller, “The academic labor system of faculty apartheid.” – Jennifer Boswell**

Keith Hoeller is an adjunct faculty advocate, cofounder of the Washington Part-Time Faculty Association, and co-organizer of the advocacy group [New Faculty Majority](#).

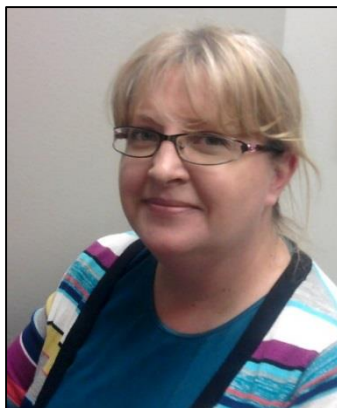
He is also the author of “The academic labor system of faculty apartheid,” which I referenced in my last article for the *Educator*. My earlier article explored the working lives of involuntary contingent faculty. Now, I propose to review Hoeller’s article in detail. Hoeller’s ideas are radical, and adjunct faculty may be interested in his extreme position.

Most sensationally, Hoeller denounces faculty unions for their culpability in dividing faculty and maintaining a two-tier faculty system, and he advances extreme and uncompromising demands regarding equality for contingent faculty.

### **Union role in dividing the faculty**

The two-track system, as all faculty know, divides us up into haves and have-nots. Even when contingent faculty are part of the union, as partial-load are in Ontario, they work under inferior and unequal conditions. Hoeller uses the term “unionized sweatshop.” Sessional and part-

time faculty in Ontario have even more difficult conditions since they have no representation whatever, and their lack of representation is condoned by the inaction of faculty unions.



An undeniable fact about this unequal system and its genesis is that full-time faculty serve on the bargaining teams that negotiate contracts seeking to preserve the unequal advantages, rights, benefits and salary that full-timers enjoy. It is true that any contingent faculty members’ job is too insecure to allow him or her safe involvement in bargaining, but whose fault is that? Hoeller and other advocates point their fingers directly at the full-time union members who negotiate on their own behalf, and who defend the status quo at the expense of their contingent colleagues.

In the CAAT-A contract just negotiated for 2014-2107 there were a few improvements for contingent faculty, including salary increases and extended eligibility to apply for full-time positions. However, the fundamental precariousness and immense stress that goes along with contract work remain, and no gains have been made for the growing ranks of non-unionized part-timers.

### **Precarious employment continues**

When partial load faculty complain to the union about an issue, the union often has to counsel the member that there is nothing to be done. Any action on the partial load member’s part would expose him or her to possible non-renewal of contract. It is an informal policy amongst the union officers whom I have worked with, (and my own policy when I was one), that we would not recommend partial load members assert their rights because it would put them at too great a risk of job loss. So, partial load faculty should be content with their benefits and relatively good salaries, negotiated back in the late 1980s, but they shouldn’t complain about classes over the number limit, too many new

preps, or not enough courses assigned, etc.

Partial load faculty members' employment is so precarious they can't assert many of the rights they supposedly have as guaranteed in the collective agreement. Part-time and sessional member complaints? Even more risky. Who is at fault for these oppressive working conditions?

It's not just college administrators who are complicit in the oppression of contingent faculty. It's irresponsible that the union hasn't been able to bargain for more job security for part-time faculty over all these decades. My personal observation has been that the will to fight for contingent faculty at the union policy level hasn't been there until relatively recently.

Hoeller, being a contingent faculty activist, has complained long and loudly about the mistreatment part-time faculty get from their own unions. He notes that the response of union leaders has been denial and hostility.

I have worked with well-meaning and extremely hard working union officers, stewards and supporters. Many work out of a profound sense of justice, and try to protect workers whenever necessary. Often they do this work at their own personal cost. But the good people working within the union, and I count myself as a part of this group, do not diminish the fact that the union itself is not set up for contingent faculty. The system itself is set up to protect a

shrinking minority of faculty. It appears that the major business of the union is to manage a retreat for this dwindling minority while their professional peers languish in a system of contingent servitude.

#### **Full-timers as supervisors**

In the past, labor unions made sure that supervisors and managers couldn't be part of the union so the union could fully represent the workers without intimidation or threat of future retaliation. Removing managers from the union removed conflict of interest from amongst the members. Unfortunately, the manager/worker boundary has been blurred in faculty unions. Hoeller notes that full-time members are often in a supervisory role over their part-time colleagues. Full timers "serve as de facto supervisors of the contingent workforce who often have marginal contact with college administrators" (p. 144).

Full time faculty at Fanshawe College sit on hiring committees, unofficially evaluate part-time faculty, advise on class assignments, and most often determine the curriculum. Part-timers are in the uncomfortable position of having to be careful around their full-time colleagues as well as administrators.

The author quotes a Seattle-based adjunct professor named Douglas Collins, who believes the following: "Metaphorically, part-timers are in an abusive marriage with the full-timers, but they are not allowed to seek a divorce. For

many, the only recourse is to keep smiling—or else lose their jobs" (p. 145).

#### **Union actions: Questionable**

Hoeller acerbically notes that "after ignoring the adjuncts for decades, the faculty unions are now claiming to be their saviors" (p. 147). He points out several problems with this assertion.

Many faculty unions in the States believe that having a chapter for contingent faculty within the faculty union itself will solve issues through the collective bargaining process. Unions believe that solidarity will be achieved through this organization and the "colleges will not be able to pit one group against the other" (p. 147). Hoeller dismisses these ideas as "lip-service," going on to say "there is no evidence that any of these unions or their leaders have any serious intention of abandoning the supremacy of the tenured faculty" (p. 147). Contingent faculty will continue to languish in their "academic ghetto."

Hoeller takes issue with what he calls a "cynical solution" that the unions are working on: faculty unions seek to restore full-time faculty to 75% of staff, and aim to convert part-time to full-time positions, because quality and excellence can only be ensured through, or by, having more full-time faculty. However, if this conversion ever happens, it would mean the loss of thousands of part-time jobs. In Holler's view, the focus should be on the people

and on promoting existing part-timers to full-timers, not *positions*.

Hoeller says that unions act to stifle any movement that threatens the hegemony of the tenured faculty. They would act quickly to make sure that no independent adjunct leaders emerge to challenge the union's power base, and I would add, financial base. But Holler believes independent contingent faculty leaders are the only hope for breaking out of a system that will never be able to properly represent what is now the new faculty majority.

Given this entrenched system, how can contingent faculty ever hope to make improvements or gain equality?

### **Abolition of part-time faculty slavery: Anti-Contingency Association**

Holler uses the term "abolition" and draws a direct parallel between the inequality of the faculty employment system and chattel slavery. Similar to abolitionist thinking in mid-nineteenth century America, most people agree that contingent faculty are mistreated and exploited, but there is no agreement on what should be done about it. The movement to aid contingent faculty is similar to the anti-slavery movement in that many at the beginning of the movement felt deeply that slavery was wrong, but at the same time many abolitionists didn't feel that African-Americans were equal.

The colonization movement, which sought to purchase, free, and then deport former slaves back to Africa, was ascendant at the time. The colonization movement came under severe criticism in part because it did not want to integrate freed blacks with the white population.

Hoeller writes, "While all three faculty unions [in the U.S.] have issued policy statement deploring the plight of the contingent faculty, none has acknowledged its own role in creating and perpetuating the two-track system of faculty apartheid. None has called for the abandonment of the two-track system and complete equality between contingents and tenured faculty on such issues as salary, benefits, and job security, much less developed a coherent plan to bring about those provisions that are undeniably central to workplace rights" (p. 149).

The author notes that associations dedicated to equality for contingent faculty have made gains in his home state of Washington and California through class-action lawsuits and lobbying for legislative change. He calls for an "American Anti-Contingency Association" which would dedicate itself to the abolition of the two-track system and establish complete equality for all professors. All teaching would be judged on its merits. There would be a single scale for all professors at a college, a single scale for raises, and a single set of procedures for job security and

for grievances. Pay would be prorated according to 100 percent of a teaching load. Contingent faculty, like formerly enslaved African-Americans, would be fully integrated into the dominant and privileged population.

Holler sees, and I agree, that it is fundamentally wrong, and darkly ironic, that colleges offer to their students the chance at a better life through educational opportunity "while denying these same opportunities to the professors who make all of this possible" (p. 151).

Keith Hoeller passionately believes the contingency faculty movement is a civil and human rights movement. He ends with a quote from Frederick Douglass, ex-slave and abolitionist:

*Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never did and it never will. Find out just what any people will quietly submit to and you have found the exact measure of injustice and wrong which will be imposed on them, and these will continue till they are resisted by either words or blows or with both. The limits of tyrants are prescribed by the endurance of those whom they oppress.*

I welcome your comments and concerns.

Jennifer Boswell  
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[Coalition of Contingent Academic Labor \(COCAL\)](#)  
[AdjunctNation.com](#)  
[The New Faculty Majority](#)



2015 is an election year, and there is a palpable hum throughout the college (well, at least for political geeks like myself). I am hearing talk of

prospective candidates, nomination battles, and the latest words to come out of Justin Trudeau's mouth. Everywhere I turn people are ramping-up for the election, because it's time to get excited for the return of democracy! My only question is, where did it go?

If we think about it, we get to vote a mere handful of times throughout our lives. Our lifetime supply of democracy – in that context – boils down to roughly 15 ballots. That doesn't seem like much. In truth, democracy isn't something that hibernates for four years (although some New Democrats might argue that it's been dormant for decades). Most of 'democracy' happens between elections, not during them, and it requires active participation from its citizens. There's plenty we can be doing.

For one, reach out to a political party. Political parties are a great vehicle for participating in the democratic process. Local riding associations are always looking for new people to take an active part in their efforts. If that isn't your cup of tea, get in touch with your Member of Parliament. They will never say no to a constituent. Even if it's to trade barbs with Ed Holder over his government's latest stage-managed announcement, you will be welcomed! Very few constituents connect with their MPs, so the office door will always be open.

Second, write for *The Educator*. It's hard for others to know what you are thinking if you don't speak up. While there may be plenty of great conversations around the office, they can be constrained by geography. A forum such as *The Educator* can reach a wider audience and connect with people beyond our own silos. This exchange of ideas is essential for a healthy democracy. John Stuart Mill encouraged a diversity of ideas to challenge the prevailing ones; a

vibrant democracy requires a thoughtful debate.

And finally, ask questions. When it comes to matters of ideology and political choice, it is tempting to think we have all the answers. In reality, we don't. Political problems are extremely nuanced and complex, and they can't be boiled down to a sound-bite or catch phrase. Have a conversation with your colleges; reach out to students; try to get a sense of their needs, expectations, and priorities. Our perception of what is important and necessary may be very different from others around the college.

Once the election is over, don't go back into democratic withdrawal. Stay engaged. Just as we need to take a pulse to monitor heart health, a healthy democracy requires active citizens who are consistently engaged. Connect with people, share your ideas, and listen to those around you: take the pulse of your democracy so it doesn't go back into hibernation.

### **Partial-Load Faculty! Sign Up for Your Free Benefits!**

Many partial-load faculty members fail to sign up for their free benefits. Call the Union office (ext. 4205) to be sure you have the following **no-cost-to-you** benefits: 85% coverage for prescription drugs - 85% coverage for paramedical services (physio, massage, psychologist) up to \$1,500/year – 85% coverage for nursing services – 85% coverage for orthotics – coordination if covered under another plan

**Call 519-452-4205 Today**





Hard and soft skills—you’ve probably heard of them. Hard: technical, vocation-based, job-specific skills. Soft: communication, critical thinking, and interpersonal skills.

You might also have heard that employers in many industries and sectors are becoming more and more vocal about the fact that they’re noticing a lack of soft skills in new recruits, and even older hires in many cases. Reports and studies produced in consultation with industry leaders are concluding there is indeed evidence of a so-called “soft skills gap,” and that it is widening.

At the same time, there seems to be a growing consensus amongst many students that learning the soft skills is a waste of time. I know how to think and communicate already, seems to be a common misconception.

Why is it that a number of our students are failing to see the value in what are alternately

known as “essential employability skills” right at the moment employers have become most outspoken in announcing their importance?

It might not be their fault. On the whole, our culture finds more immediate and visible value in learning the hard skills. Seeing the soft skills as secondary is evident in the very terms we’ve decided to use to describe them.

One way we make sense of our complicated world is using paired opposites to categorize and organize our experiences. Good/bad, clean/dirty, mind/body—the list is practically endless. But while these dichotomies can be helpful, paired opposites also reflect (often unconsciously) our social or cultural values in the way we favour one opposite over the other.

When we think about the relationship between the paired opposites “hard” and “soft,” it’s easy to see that our culture, in its emphasis on productivity, individualism, and effort, privileges the former over the latter. Hard-working citizens are our most celebrated members of society. Rules that should be followed are hard and fast while those that aren’t are soft and loose. A hard read is a challenging one and therefore rewarding. Hard-nosed people are lauded for standing up for their principles.

Hard-hearted souls garner sympathy for their strength when they endure hardships. Even a hard-headed individual, though maybe socially annoying, is preferable to an old softie, who bends to the will of others and thus lacks conviction. The term hardcore has come to signify extreme dedication to something—a hardcore grammar nerd, for instance—while its opposite suggests lack of commitment.

And no one wants to admit they enjoy listening to soft rock.

There is of course the odd exception. We don’t enjoy sleeping on a hard mattress. And we certainly prefer soft bed sheets. (But they never feel as good as after a hard day’s work, do they?)

The connotations associated with “hard” and “soft” follow a similar pattern. An undertaking that is hard for us to complete is “difficult” and therefore worthy of our attention and effort; it’s also rewarding once we’ve struggled through it to achieve success. This line of thinking then renders soft as “easy” by comparison. “This course is hard,” we might hear a student say, or “that professor was too soft on us” (though we probably hear the former more than the latter). We also associate the idea of hardness with strength. “Obama is soft on terrorism,”

we've heard many times over the last six years.

So how then did we start referring to what are alternately known as "essential employability" skills as being soft? Purely by default, probably: if the technical or practical skills are the hard skills—hands-on, difficult to learn, tough to master, worthy of our efforts—then any other skills—communication, critical thinking, analysis, research—must be soft in opposition to them.

My point is that when we refer to employability skills as soft skills it is automatically pejorative; it devalues these skills while referring to them. It reflects and perpetuates the popular misconception that these skills are either of secondary importance or, in the extreme, completely useless. Soft skills, the binary tells us, must be easy, not worthy of our effort or time, cerebral and therefore impractical.

Needless to say, despite the way the terms soft and hard skills roll off our tongues and serve the purpose of separating vocational skills from those that are not job specific, the idea that soft skills are unimportant is both unfair and wholly incorrect.

Soft skills are also sometimes called essential employability skills because they are valuable in the pursuit of employment. Moreover, and more importantly, they are crucial to our occupational

development and the fulfillment of our long-term vocational success. Soft skills enable us to perform each aspect of the job we're expected to do in addition to those needing the technical skills we were hired for. The way we interact with others. The way we approach a problem. The way we carry yourselves. The way we find and work with information. In short, it is the soft skills specifically that contribute most to our professionalization. We cultivate our productive, fully functioning, professional selves through the learning and honing of communication, critical thinking, interpersonal, and researching skills.

Maybe this is why these skills are in fact difficult to learn, tricky to master, and challenging in their own right—these are skills you can't simply learn from a textbook.

For these reasons, the soft skills are the ones that we also designate as "transferable." That is, they are the skills we can bring with us from job to job, position to position, industry to industry, career to career. In other words, they will always maintain their value. When we hear now that, with the progression of technologies, new media, and the shifting of industries, the most important jobs in the coming decades do not yet exist, we should also start thinking of transferability in a temporal sense. As our economy continues to go

soft in its shift from manufacturing and goods and services to an information or knowledge economy, hard skills and the jobs that require them will come and go, but those who have mastered the soft skills will endure. When we talk about use-value, we should frame soft skills in this way.

Employers know this. Any candidate who demonstrates mastery of these skills will win out any time over others who possess only the hard skills—for employment and for advancement.

The internet knows this. A quick search will reveal numerous articles with titles such as "How to Help Millennials Fill the Soft Skills Gap" and "Soft Skills That Could Land You the Job". As the title of a recent report on the soft skills gap states very clearly, "Talent Is Not Enough," a sentiment best summed up in the saying, employees are hired for the hard skills they have and fired for the soft skills they don't have.

And yet, for some reason, many of our students still don't know this.

So here's a suggestion. If the "soft skills" coinage is destined to last, and it appears it is, I recommend we embrace it by promoting an analogy that will put both sets of skills into a keener perspective. It begins with the premise that the hard skills are crucial: they are absolutely necessary for the structural, technical, and practical

elements of any job. In other words, they are a kind of occupational hardware. But what good is a piece of hardware without a program to make it work, without conceptual applications to bring it to life—without its software? In other words, the essential, employability

skills, optimize the ways we implement our hard skills. Communication, critical thinking, interpersonal, and research skills do no less than provide us with the software we need to best operate the technical skill hardware we acquire through our education and leverage on the job.

With that in mind, it's time we start recognizing and advocating what is at its core a mutually beneficial relationship between the soft and hard skills. In practice, both sets of skills enhance one another.

## The Union Syllabus: Staying Informed about Postsecondary Education – Mark Feltham

As an English teacher, I naturally like to read, but as Chief Steward of OPSEU Local 110, I often read things far removed from my own ongoing research in writing pedagogy. Aside from this research (and such occasional recreational readings as the latest Stephen King novel), my own “union syllabus” is crowded with things like arbitration awards, cases in employment law, and reports and books about educational policy.

What with recent talk system transformation by differentiation, Strategic Mandate Agreements, new accreditation processes, and various other initiatives in higher-educational policy and governance, documents, books, .PDF files, and other paper and electronic documents have been piling up around me like barnacles staking competing claims on the hull of a ship.

I'd like to take this opportunity to introduce a few useful readings for staying informed about postsecondary education, including a few specific publications, to readers of *The Educator*.

### HEQCO

Whatever one might think of the Higher Education Quality Council of

Ontario, its work, and its agenda, publications from HEQCO are important in that they signal current trends of thought amongst those with a particular vision for higher education in this province. Their website has numerous reports on a wide variety of topics relevant to postsecondary education in Ontario. If you want to know about tomorrow's initiatives, stop by here on a regular basis.

### The McGill-Queen's University Press Policy Series

McGill-Queen's University Press, an excellent (and, of course, Canadian) academic publisher, has a series called “The Queen's Policy Studies Series,” and this series contains several excellent books about higher education.

A few years ago, I read two fascinating books from this series. Twins of a sort, the books have similar titles: *Academic Transformation: The Forces Reshaping Higher Education in Ontario* and *Academic Reform: Policy*

*Options for Improving the Quality and Cost-effectiveness of*



*Undergraduate Education in Ontario*. Published just a few years apart (in 2009 and 2011, respectively), these books provide both a detailed history of how the Ontario postsecondary has come to look as it does and a particular set of visions for its future.

### And for Next Week, Please Read . . .

In light of recent suggestions that the Colleges are moving towards accreditation and increased emphasis on quality assurance and learning outcomes, I next plan to read *Measuring the Value of a Postsecondary Education*, a 2013 collection from the Queen's Policy Studies Series.

Finally, in the interests of historical perspective (**everything** old may not

be new again, but we can rest assured that much of it probably is), I've also dug out the office file copies of *Survival or Excellence? A Study of Instructional Assignment in Ontario Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology* and *Ontario: A Leader in Learning*.

The former is a report published in July 1985 by a panel chaired by Michael Skolnik, one of the most-often-cited academic experts on the Ontario College system and also, interestingly, a co-author of *Academic Transformation*.

The latter is better known as the Rae Report, and was published in February 2005. It's worth noting that the so-called Rae money may well have paid for my own job (I was hired in 2005).

As we approach the twenty- and ten-year-anniversaries of both documents, it's certainly worth seeing how the perspectives of those years mesh with what's going on now.

### Conclusion

I do not mean to suggest that I agree with the positions taken in all of

these publications—sometimes I do. Other times, I seek out particular ideas and passages that, to borrow the words of Nicholson Baker in his novel *The Mezzanine*, “represent with particular clarity a way of thinking that I disagree with.”

And on that final note, here is one final suggestion for dealing with the flood of information, with its competing perspectives and visions for the future of higher education in this province: read *A Short Course in Intellectual Self Defense*, by Normand Baillargeon.

## Navigating Return-To-Work (RTW) at Fanshawe College – Kathryn Tamasi and Mark Feltham

**NOTE: this article refers to several policies, including Early and Safe Return to Work (1-B-19) and Accommodation of Employees with Disabilities (1-B-52).**

**We encourage you to go to the Portal and read these policies and to contact us if you have any questions.**

If you're away from work because of a medical problem, you may need to have a **return-to-work (RTW) meeting** when you return. If you're off because of a workplace injury, your return to work is governed by WSIB rules. More commonly for Local 110 members, however, return to work happens after a non-workplace injury, illness, or surgery.

If you're returning to work and don't have any restrictions (such as limits on lifting, bending, walking, and so on) or require modified or alternative work while you continue to recover, the RTW Policy may not apply. For example, if you're off after surgery and your doctor indicates that you have fully healed and have no need for any changes to your work,

you may be able to return without an RTW meeting.

If you have a permanent disability, meanwhile, a different policy applies—Accommodation of Employees with Disabilities (1-B-52). If you're not sure what policy/process applies to you, please check with us.

### The Return-to-Work (RTW) Meeting

Often the RTW meeting will happen automatically, but we strongly encourage all members to request a RTW Meeting in writing (e.g., email) prior to beginning any duties with the College after a medical absence. Ideally, this meeting should happen first thing in the morning on an employee's first day back: this way, all necessary elements to support the return can be in place before the employee begins performing any duties. Ensuring that everything



needed is in place from the beginning helps prevent a lot of problems later.

### Participants and Roles

Generally, the meeting includes you, the Occupational Health and Safety Nurse, your supervisor, and a union representative. At this meeting, we review your restrictions, any need for alternative work, and verify that all necessary elements are in place. Then, you, the nurse, your supervisor, and the union representative all sign off the Return-to-Work Plan, a document that specifies any

accommodations, restrictions, or alternative work arrangements arising from the reason for your absence.

### **I Have a Question/Problem—What Do I Do?**

Any return-to-work plan is a work in progress: changes may be necessary depending on your changing circumstances as you recover and the advice of your physician.

If your circumstances change at all, or if you're experiencing any problems at all, contact the Union right away: we can negotiate changes on your behalf.

## **On Mind-Wandering in the Classroom – Michael Boisvert**

A Professor expounds on the distinctions between functionalist and conflict perspectives in her sociology class, her arms sweep across her body in excitement, her voice arpeggiates as she elucidates their essential detail.

The Professor is fully present; she swells with pride in the belief that she's doing it; she's delivering a lecture worthy of the interest and imagination of her students; she is engaging them. And they are *engaged!*

She glides across the room, stiffening only for a moment while behind a student whose laptop is screening an episode of something called *Ice Road Truckers*. Unshaken, she continues around the room and spies a student who shows the telltale signs of engagement; head down, his hand dashes feverishly across his page. Her steps quicken as she moves in front of the student anticipating a parchment abounding with script that marries the intensity and importance of her words with the flair of a skilled calligrapher. Instead she finds a sketch of an angry clown. Or maybe a cat with the face of a horse. She's not really sure. It looks like a Rorschach inkblot she notes silently. 'But that's ... *Psychology?!*' she laments in dejection.

What went wrong here? Why were these students distracted with other thoughts?

Perhaps they were unmotivated. Perhaps the Professor is to blame for not being lively enough, or maybe too lively. Perhaps it was because she dared to lecture in an era of active-learning and collaborative classrooms. Maybe the topic is just inherently boring.

Probably, no one is to blame. Our minds wander. We all find ourselves at various times each day attending to thoughts that have nothing to do with the task at hand. It goes by different names: mind-wandering, daydreaming, and zoning out are but a few. Research suggests that humans spend almost half of the day engaged in such episodes. Whether mind-wandering is a net benefit or a net cost is hard to say. Mind-wandering is associated with a diverse set of costs, including alterations in mood, and disruption of reading comprehension; on the other hand, it has been associated with enhancing creativity, and reducing impulsivity (Mooneyham & Schooler, 2012).

### **Mind wandering in the classroom**

As suggested in the anecdote above, students are no less susceptible to mind-wandering than anyone else.

When asked to self-report on their own experience of mind-wandering, students report episodes throughout the day. Two contexts, however, are associated with an increased incidence of mind wandering for students: when studying and when in the classroom. In a recent investigation of mind wandering (Lindquist & Maclean, 2011), university students were prompted at various points during a series of 50-minute lectures to indicate whether or not they were experiencing a daydream at the time of the prompt. On the whole, students reported doing so on about 33% of the prompts. Daydreaming varied across time, however, with most and least frequent daydreaming occurring at the end and the beginning of lectures, respectively. Daydreaming was also associated with student age and interest in the topic: most frequent bouts of daydreaming occurred among the youngest and the least interested students.

Thus, mind wandering is common in the classroom, and is associated with a student's age and interest in the course. It's also associated with spatial factors: research suggests students seated near the front of a classroom experience less mind-wandering than those seated further to the back. We might expect that

mind-wandering is the product of the traditional and increasingly maligned lecture method. Some research has asked whether mind-wandering occurs among students participating in more active, collaborative classrooms. Researchers found that more than a quarter of students' participating in small-group discussions reported experiencing thoughts that were off-task.

### **Should we be concerned?**

Though some memories are established without conscious effort (e.g. remembering what you did yesterday, even though yesterday you weren't trying to commit to memory all the things you were doing), focused attention is crucial for understanding and remembering information encountered in the classroom. When one's mind wanders away from task-related information, attention is not focused on information at hand, making it less likely that the information will be understood, established in memory and retained. Evidence suggests, as educators, we have reason to be concerned about mind-wandering in the classroom. Research indicates that students who experience more frequent bouts of mind-wandering take less detailed notes and retain less material compared to those who sustain focus.

Countless factors – situational, dispositional, cultural, institutional – practically inspire mind-wandering among students. Consider the typical duration of a class in light of what we know about the time-course of mind wandering. Class

periods are scheduled in 1 hour, 2 hours or 3 hour blocks. Some evidence indicates that students' exhibit the physical signs of inattention (e.g. diversions in gaze, fidgetiness) during the initial 10-20 minutes of a class and that these markers become more frequent as time elapses, with bouts of mind-wandering occurring every 3-4 minutes toward the end of lecture (Johnstone & Percival, 1976). Earlier it was noted that when students are prompted directly they indicate increased mind-wandering as time passes during a lecture. With class sizes getting ever larger, there are ever more sources of distraction for students to confront over the course of a lecture.

Individual differences in motivation and personality factors likely influence one's tendency toward distraction during class. Some students seem without fail to maintain focus in note-taking and discussion across an entire lecture period; others drift in and drift out. Many students deal with specific cognitive or physical constraints that affect their ability to sustain focus.

Smart phones and laptops enable students' access to virtually any piece of information or entertainment instantaneously. A smart phone itself has a special ability to spread distraction, as when one beeps or vibrates against a desk, discharging what amounts to a high-tech fart that immediately captures the attention of all within earshot. It is encouraging at least, that many of the faces that snap up in response to the intrusive sound show the same disgust they would were it a fart itself. Some effects of high-tech

gadgetry may be more unsettling. Some neuroscientists liken our frequent use of technology and the multi-tasking it inspires to increased stress, muddled thinking, impulsivity, and impaired decision making (Levitan, 2015).

The instructor, of course, influences student attention too. Instructors who are enthusiastic about a topic and who can present it in a lively manner and with clarity command greater sustained attention. One wonders to what extent expertise and depth of knowledge matter here. Anecdotal reports from full- and non-full-time faculty in various programs at the college suggest that faculty are commonly asked to teach topics with which they have little or no expertise, or indeed knowledge. Absent a detailed understanding of a topic area, can an instructor inspire student attention in the classroom as readily as one fully versed in the topic? Will she feel the same confidence and self-efficacy in teaching? And what of the ability to answer questions and provide feedback thoughtfully and accurately? These are all among the central components of professional competence. Research indicates that students' are sensitive to instructor competence; indeed, perceived lack of competence negatively impacts student motivation and engagement with the material (Kearney et al., 1991).

### **Two strategies to reduce mind wandering**

In spite of these and other contributors to student inattention, educators can influence the process. Research has begun to describe

straightforward classroom interventions that can reduce mind wandering.

One strategy shown to sustain attention and improve learning is to incorporate quizzing into lectures. This has been examined in the context of online, videotaped lectures. Students, it turns out, mind wander about as frequently in this format as in face-to-face lecture formats. In one approach, a 50-minute lecture was divided up into sections with a brief quiz separating each section (Szpunar et al., 2013). At the start of a lecture, students were instructed that they may or may not be tested between each section, and that they would also receive a final test at the end of the lecture. Compared to students who were not tested between each section, students who were tested took more notes, scored higher on the final test, and reported less mind wandering when prompted at various points during the lecture. The prospect of facing quizzes, however brief, may increase physiological arousal making mind wandering less likely to occur. Quizzes also require students to test their own memory for concepts, an active approach that succeeds over more passive approaches to remembering, such as highlighting information or rereading passages.

Another approach, interleaving, has been used in the teaching of related topics that may be easily confused (e.g. meiosis and mitosis). Here,

instead of separating the teaching of the topics into separate blocks, the instructor intermixes the topics, alternating among them. When the topics are interleaved in this way, students must learn to discriminate the essential features that frame a problem, and cannot rely on expectation to guide them. This approach likely stimulates sustained attention. Consider how this might work in a mathematics lesson (Rohrer, 2012). If a student is told to solve a set of problems by applying the same algebraic rule to each problem, she will probably become less attentive and vigilant than if she was told to solve a series of problems but not told in advance which of several rules to apply to each problem. In the latter case, without the instruction to apply a particular rule, the student instead must choose the appropriate strategy. In an interesting application of this approach to motor learning, baseball players learned to hit fastballs, curveballs and change-ups more effectively when they practiced hitting them in interleaved sessions, than when they practiced hitting each pitch type in separate sessions (Hall et al., 1994). Presumably, they had to learn to quickly identify the salient sensory features that were associated with each pitch type.

### **Conclusion**

Mind wandering is a normal feature of everyday life for all of us and may be beneficial. Among students, mind

wandering is especially frequent in the classroom, whether engaged in lecture or in more collaborate activities. In the classroom, mind wandering is associated with time (it increases across a lecture period); space (it occurs less frequently among students seated near the front); student age (it decreases with age); and, interest in the course (it increases with lower interest). Crucially, mind wandering is also associated with reduced note-taking and lower retention of information.

Smaller classrooms, lower enrollments and shorter classes would probably reduce mind wandering among students, but faculty have little influence over these aspects of education. The recent literature on mind wandering, however, suggests other ways we may be able to limit inattention, whether teaching a lecture or leading active learning exercises, such as by including quizzes or interleaving topics.

If this seems infeasible in the context of your classroom, you might be advised to let students' eyes be your guide. Researchers looking for physical markers of mind wandering, recently observed that blinking tends to precede moments of inattention (Smilek et al., 2010). When you spot increased blinking perhaps allow your students a cognitive break. Maybe ask them to imagine what it must be like to drive a rig down an icy highway, or stare into the face of an angry clown.

## The 64 Trillion Dollar Question/ Reflections on Naomi Klein - Jamie Austin

*I know the question. Not the answer; I confess that I don't even really understand the question, but at least I have seen it written down. – (quotation ascribed to unidentified episode of Kung Fu)*

Naomi Klein's latest book, *This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. the Climate*, is about the earth hitting its biological wall. Her point, in a nutshell: either we radically alter our economic, political and moral systems pretty well right away, or a groaning, pushed-too-far planet will see to it for us. Klein is one of those rare birds, even rarer in Canada, a PI (Public Intellectual). Love their ideas or loathe them, we tend to brandish our PI's by their surnames: Chomsky. Paglia. Hirs. Ali. Hedges. Pinker. Ignatieff was probably quite relieved to retreat back into public intellectualism, but simply trying to remain a PI can be a tough job. American Naomi Wolf, author of *the Beauty Myth*, seems to have been driven quite mad by it. Nowadays she rants about FEMA camps, faked ISIS videos, the obviously switcheroo relatives of the faked headless, etc.

Naomi of the North, however, must be conceded by even the most ardent Klein-deniers to be fully *compos mentis*; her use of language is expert, her analysis detailed, her documentation comprehensive. Of course, this is not at all the same as saying that her reasoning is accepted, her sources are unimpeached, or her motives are unquestioned. To back up *This Changes Everything* Klein quotes liberally from UN sources, the IMF and the World Bank, which is really all that some of her detractors need to hear. Pack of West-haters. Dilletantes. Bureaucrats. There's a real problem with PI's preaching to the choir and often seeming, frankly, a little one-note. Although he has been proven remarkably right in most of his against-the grain predictions, Paul Krugman has been rewording essentially the same economics article every other day in the *New York Times* for at least six years. Thus, once apprised of the essence of a given PI's thought, some feel quite justified in reflexively dismissing any new utterance. *Chomsky: ugh, pass. Klein? Lemme guess: She still hates capitalism.* If we're on board, we devour everything from someone like Klein because it's a pleasure to have our worldview confirmed by someone more articulate than ourselves. On the other hand, the number of movers, shakers, frackers and "job creators" who will peer into Klein's latest book and come out gasping *Gadzooks! We must change everything* must be vanishingly small.

So, for many, *This Changes Everything* changes nothing. Klein has said that she assembled the manuscript over a five-year period during which she suffered miscarriage after miscarriage, the first just after she'd been down to stare, agape, at the stupefying outrage BP had just visited on the Gulf of Mexico. Klein feared for some time afterwards that exposure to all of those toxins had directly cost her that baby (and perhaps the later ones, too). Writing this book was, then, a deeply visceral catharsis, especially so for a public intellectual. However, the PI must produce something beyond mere *cri de coeur*, and Klein has certainly done so, pointedly disregarded though it may be in some quarters. Of course, one doesn't *not* publish simply because so many will reject the message, but it's interesting to speculate on what Klein really expected to come out of this. This is a call to action: what action does she expect? Perhaps the secret object of a book like hers is to catch just one person's eye; someone like Stephen Harper who may read rethink Canada's approach to ... who knows? Maybe oil sands development. One can only hope.

Anyway, what *is* that 64 trillion dollar question? It was embedded in a brief October 21 *Financial Post* dismissal of Klein's newest "attack on Western civilization". Here commenter Peter Foster contrasts Klein's views with those of the obstreperous Mark Steyn. Foster, shall we say, prefers Steyn; he acknowledges that the liberal-left's continuing victories in the culture war have left social conservatives "floundering". Foster believes that most of the lib-left have shifted their fire to social targets precisely because of the utter failure of all of their answers to economic problems. Foster doesn't directly say this, but he's apparently looking for a quid pro quo. Okay, the libbies have managed to "nationalize the family" (a Steyn-ism), but with that they should be satisfied. Let them have the social realm; it's churlish of the left to keep on condemning an economic system that has so markedly enhanced the world's wealth and welfare, and for which they can offer no workable alternative. Thus, according to Foster, the 64 trillion dollar question is (*drum roll*)..."why haven't our moral sentiments evolved to appreciate capitalism as they have adapted to accept gay marriage?" Indeed. Indeed. Well that, folks, is apparently what you get for 64 trillion dollars.