LOCAL LINES

Algonquin College | OPSEU | Local 415

Volume 32 Issue 2 | http://www.locallines.org | December 2020

Time for Change: The Mystery of the Missing Pandemic Adaptation Time

Jordan Berard

A satisfying mystery novel, movie, or television show typically starts with the committing of a crime. From this point, it slowly and dramatically unpacks the questions of "whodunnit?" and "why?" Finally, it concludes with a climactic revelation in which the mystery is solved. Lives go on, and everyone is satisfied that justice has been served.

As we enter the winter 2021 term, there is a mystery at Algonquin College surrounding the disappearance and absence of adaptation time related to the preparation of course materials for remote delivery. Unfortunately, it is not one with a satisfactory ending.

Already scarce at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, adaptation time has become even more inadequate as we move into the winter term. As Local 415 Secretary, Judy Puritt, argued at the November 9, 2020 Town Hall, adaptation is a continual process. By reducing and/or cutting the paltry level of adaptation time that was already in place, Puritt argued, the college is simply not providing "a level of support recognizing that we are in a very unusual situation… a support to try to create classes that engage students in a better fashion than what we have managed in our first endeavors."

So, we know the crime… but "whodunnit"? Well, there's no mystery here. Speaking on behalf of the college executive, SVPA Chris Janzen's reply at the Town Hall was disappointing: "The decision was made that once [a] course was adapted to remote delivery… within the SWF calculation of preparation and assessment," the "normal process of continual improvement of courses kicks in."

Though Janzen acknowledged that room would be left for faculty with expectations or requirements "above-and-beyond" the normal preparation time to consult with their Chairs, "so that a reasonable assignment of that work can be made on that SWF," this has only further frustrated the situation. It has also compounded the mystery, by creating scenarios in which adaptation hours have been granted or denied inconsistently across different programs and departments.

At the root of the problem, obviously, is a vast discrepancy between what the college administration considers to be the "reasonable assignment of [adaptation] work," and the reality of what we as faculty know that work to be. If management thinks that we were able to do any adaptation work beyond preventing our courses and students from drowning when the pandemic hit during the winter 2020 semester, they are clearly out of touch with the reality of just how much work that herculean effort actually took.

As faculty, we know better than anyone else that it takes more time to adapt our courses for remote delivery than has been reflected on paper through the college's mysterious and inconsistently applied SWF pandemic adaptation formula. To say that the "normal process of continual improvement" of our remotely-delivered courses should now be starting is to completely ignore the fact that we are still in uncharted waters, and that there is nothing "normal" about our current situation. Most of us are still learning how to teach remotely, so how can our courses be considered to be fully-adapted? Now that we are revisiting some of these courses for a second time, doesn't it make sense to give us a chance to make them better for our students?

We read in the news about students across the province who feel frustrated with the inadequacies of postsecondary remote learning. Who can blame them?

"Time for Change..." continued on page 3

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Editorial: Happy New Year?! ...2
A Word from Annette ...3
Bargaining in a Pandemic ...4
Virtually Lost ...5
Critical Pedagogy Institute ...6
Health and Safety ...6
Educational Developer ...7
Get to Know Your Stewards ...8

Officers of OPSEU Local 415

Annette Bouzi	President	7716
David Haley	1st Vice President	5932
Enrico DeFrancesco	2nd Vice President	5405
Vacant	Chief Steward	
Shawn Pentecost	Treasurer	2766
Judy Puritt	Secretary	5872
Laura Rashotte	Office Administrator	7716

Stewards

Pembroke
Shawn Pentecost 2766

Perth
Patrick Murphy 5616

Woodroffe
Dan Anderson 3427
Jordan Berard 5755
Landyn Blais 7056
Louise Boudreault 5427
Annette Bouzi 5910
John Cloutier 6219
John Cochrane 2165
Sharleen Conrad-Beatty 7066
Carolyn Côté 6237
Enrico DeFrancesco 5405
Sean Edwards 7416
Scott Fewer 3242
Colette Garvin 3429
David Haley 5932
Tracy Henderson 7006
Ken Hill 6186
Carmen Hust 7263
Howard Kravitz 3106
JP Lamarche 2569
Martin Lee 6642
Sharon Lightfoot 5274
Chinedu Mba 7758
Rick McParland 2901
Jérôme Mizon 3446
Don Moen 6287
Stephen Murphy 7396
Michael Nauth 5232
Steve Neumann 7034
Judy Puritt 5872
Patsy Pyke 3226
Bill Roberts 6095
Lisa Roots 7069
Ala' Qadi 6599
Maria Taylor 5396
Saif Terai 3467
Elisabeth von Moos 3451
Rebecca Wakelin 6200
Leslie Wyman 5843

The editor would like to acknowledge the writing and proofreading assistance of:

- Annette Bouzi
- Carolyn Côté
- William Hennessy
- Rob Kershaw
- JP Lamarche
- Shawn Pentecost
- Judy Puritt
- Elisabeth von Moos
- Rebecca Wakelin
- Jack Wilson
- Leslie Wyman

Editorial

Happy New Year!? From the Unexpected Challenges of 2020 to the Expected Challenges of 2021

I don't think that any of us will be disappointed to see 2020 come to an end.

Put bluntly, it has been a year of unexpected fear and challenges. We faced a pandemic that not only forced us to change the way that we operate as professional educators, but also provoked unprecedented levels of anxiety, uncertainty, and sorrow in our private lives. As we abruptly switched to remote methods of delivering our courses—with minimal or no adaptation time provided from management—we also bore witness to the suffering of our colleagues in support staff areas as they were hit with redeployment, furlough, and "reduction," to use management's recent not-so-subtle doublespeak. All this while the college cried "deficit," but continued to hire into executive positions.

Though an end to the pandemic is mercifully in sight, there is no vaccine for what we have suffered through this year.

It would be nice to be able to say that the transition from 2020 to 2021 will bring a return to normal. Indeed, the arrival of a vaccine means that some things will, undoubtedly, return to the way that they were before the pandemic. The uncomfortable truth for us as CAAT-A members, however, is that we are transitioning from one hard year to another.

Where the pandemic was an unexpected challenge, the difficulties of entering a bargaining year are an all-too-familiar reality for many of us. Undoubtedly, with the current Collective Agreement expiring in fall 2021, anxiety and uncertainty will be another shared experience for all academic employees.

As with the "we're all in this together" mantra of the pandemic, the only way for us to get through the difficult period of bargaining is in solidarity. In the coming weeks and months, it will be important for us to voice our Local-level concerns to our provincial bargaining team (stay tuned for information on this process from the Local). We remain fortunate that our Local 415 Treasurer, Shawn Pentecost, has been elected to the bargaining team again this year—he will represent us well.

Yes, 2021 will be another difficult year. At the same time as we face the reality of a new, compounded, challenge of bargaining during a pandemic, we can take small comfort in the fact that we've been through bargaining before—it is an expected challenge of our profession. Fortunately, if the bargaining process and subsequent strike of 2017 are indicators, we can also expect that this particular challenge will provide an opportunity for us to come together as a Local in many positive ways.

Indeed, after the private suffering and professional solitude that the pandemic has created, we should embrace the opportunities for solidarity that 2021 brings with it.

Happy New Year!?

In Solidarity.

A Word From Annette: More Than Words

Annette Bouzi—President Local 415

Since the start of this pandemic, there have been many trendy words used about the state of post-secondary education. Faculty are tasked with *pivoting* and *adapting* our teaching. We hear a lot about the importance of *resilience*—for ourselves and our students—as well as how we must all adjust to a *new normal*. Beyond these words, what I have come to rely, act, and build upon in our union is the *solidarity* between our members.

Over the past few months, we've had many faculty members come to the Local for guidance on their SWFs, or to exercise their right to bring forward workload concerns to the Workload Monitoring Group (WMG). The union solidarity at the table is real—through constructive conversation with the college around workload issues, we've resolved numerous workload complaints to the satisfaction of our members. This includes getting further time credited for remote teaching. While being proud of

having achieved these gains through the WMG process, it is frustrating having to sing for our supper. The additional work is something that the college is aware of and should readily acknowledge.

The solidarity is further evidenced through successful resolution of many salary calculations over this past semester. Through our first attempts at a new process—mass mediation—the Local was able to resolve several salary calculation grievances to our members' satisfaction, some dating as far back as 2016.

Now, more than ever, we need a college that adheres to our Collective Agreement—in spirit and letter. I do not believe that working faculty to the bone, simply because time is made to fit on a prescribed workload formula, is in keeping with the spirit of our agreement. Now, more than ever, we need a college that truly respects the dignity of faculty work. Talk of faculty wellness must come with multiple layers of institutional support. Now, more than ever, we need a college that observes its own guiding principles of caring, learning, integrity and respect.

The fall 2020 end-of-semester fatigue that we're feeling right now is unlike any we have ever experienced before. The unrelenting pace of online teaching, or face-to-face teaching with COVID-19 safety precautions and restrictions, is not sustainable.

To that end, I encourage you to take time over the winter break to unplug and recharge. We have accomplished many great things this year. We will need renewed energy to face the challenges of 2021.

"Time for Change..." cont. from page 1

We have struggled and succeeded in keeping our courses afloat, while being compassionate and understanding with students. So, isn't this the perfect time to improve our floatation devices?

We saved our courses, but we're not heading back to campus anytime soon. Technology is not effectively replacing us. Instead, most of us are looking for opportunities to change our courses so that they better reflect the realities of remote learning. We will inevitably spend too much time making these changes—it would be nice if at least a realistic portion of this time was acknowledged by the college.

Unfortunately, a satisfactory conclusion to the mystery of the missing adaptation time does not seem likely. The Local continues to object to the college's continued use of its SWF adaptation formula. Various workload complaints have been raised to management through the Workload Monitoring Group (WMG), and while some objections have fallen on deaf ears, other complaints have been resolved, supporting the argument for further adaptation time.

Though a conclusion that satisfies all of us is unlikely, the Local encourages its members to identify and request the seemingly mysterious (to management) number of hours that you (the expert) deem appropriate to complete the continuing adaptation of your courses. After all, at the end of the fall semester, you now have a much greater sense of how much further revision is actually needed.

It is time for the college to acknowledge and solve the mystery that it created about how we're expected to work under the "normal process of continual improvement," when there is still nothing normal about our current situation. It is time for a wholehearted and respectful review of how faculty adaptation time is acknowledged and distributed so that it can be fair, consistent, and predictable.

It is time for change.

Bargaining in a Time of Social Distancing

Shawn Pentecost

Local 415 Treasurer and Provincial Bargaining Team Member

As you are all likely aware, our Collective Agreement expires on September 30, 2021. Bargaining preparations began with the CAAT-A Pre-Bargaining Conference on November 20 and 21st. Delegates, alternates, and observers from all 24 college locals gathered virtually for two days to discuss our current bargaining context and to elect our bargaining team. The stakes were high as we are the first OPSEU division to hold a virtual provincial meeting that involved voting. The Divisional Executive and OPSEU staff deserve a high five for organizing an informative and engaging virtual event. Voting was secure and seamless. The voting set-up from our Pre-Bargaining Conference will likely form the blueprint for future provincial meetings.

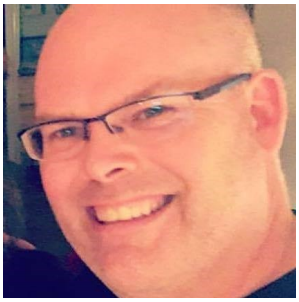
Once everyone was signed in Friday morning, our meeting began with the land acknowledgment, statement of respect, and welcoming remarks from OPSEU President Smokey Thomas and First Vice-President-Treasurer Eddy Almeida. Friday was devoted to presentations by guest speakers, committee updates in relation to bargaining, and nominations to the bargaining team.

The first guest speaker, Randy Robinson, Ontario Director of the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, spoke to the economic landscape of this round of bargaining. He shared statistical information regarding the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. He highlighted that lower income earners were the most adversely affected by the pandemic. Conversely, many corporate executives are profiting during the pandemic. The information he presented is important for us to remember going into bargaining as our partial-load members are among those most adversely affected.

The second speaker, Larry Savage, Professor of Labour Studies at Brock University, spoke about bargaining during the pandemic. Brock's faculty association was able to bargain an on-time collective agreement with significant gains in the areas of intellectual property rights, governance, equity, and librarian workload. He shared strategies for digital organizing and member engagement. His presentation was motivational and provided those present at the conference with ideas of how we can make meaningful gains in our upcoming bargaining round.

Friday concluded with nominations to the bargaining team. I was nominated, along with nine other delegates. The nominees came from several regions across the province with a broad range of experience.

Before nominee speeches on Saturday morning, local delegates, alternates, and observers gathered together in breakout rooms to discuss bargaining priorities. The priorities that were identified will form the basis of the member survey that will be sent out in the New Year. Next were the bargaining team nominee speeches. Nominees spoke to their strengths and vision for this round of bargaining. It was very clear from the speeches that no matter which seven candidates were elected, we were going to have a strong bargaining team who understood the context of this round of bargaining. The secure online voting was conducted by Dots Connect and the following people were elected to the bargaining team:



- JP Hornick, Local 556
- Jonathan Singer, Local 560
- Ravi Ramkissoonsingh, Local 242
- Kathleen Flynn, Local 354
- Rebecca Ward, Local 732
- Shawn Pentecost, Local 415
- Michelle Arbour, Local 125

Immediately following the Pre-Bargaining Conference, the bargaining team met to discuss our first steps as a team. I was thoroughly impressed with the discussion, and I am excited to work with the highly-skilled and qualified individuals who make up the 2021 bargaining team.

You will be hearing from the team in the coming months as we prepare for this round of bargaining. The team understands that given the COVID-19 pandemic, the way we communicate, motivate, and bargain will be different. The level of engagement we saw at the Pre-Bargaining Conference was inspiring and was a glimpse at what we will be able to do together in these unprecedented times.

SOLIDARITY!

The Struggles of Being *Virtually* Lost

Judy Puritt

As academic employees, whether professors, instructors, counsellors, or librarians, we are committed to supporting students. During these unusual times, the way we support learners has changed. We aren't in our offices, conveniently available for a quick check-in and chat with those students too nervous to schedule a meeting. So, what is happening with and for students needing extra support?

According to Karen Barclay-Matheson, the counselling services counsellor assigned to the School of Business to help staff and faculty navigate services or to act as a consult, there are many students (and faculty!) who are "virtually lost."

"We are still here, but students are accessing our services slower than usual. They prefer face-to-face contact. So, even though we have group meetings on Teams a few times a week, and many other services via Zoom and phone calls, it's not what they're looking for," explains Barclay-Matheson.

"Students are coming in with different issues: they're having difficulty coping with COVID, and they're experiencing new family and housemate stressors. Many are worried about being in the wrong program. And one of the most common questions we get is, 'Will I ever get back to the classroom?' They're lost and they're not interested in looking at one more thing on the screen."

Barclay-Matheson is one of eight full-time counsellors at Woodroffe, and there are two part-time counsellors at Pembroke

and Perth, as well. She expressed her concern about how this cohort of first-year students will need extra support throughout their academic experience at the college. (Faculty also have Bonney Hunt as a faculty liaison for CAL accommodations).

"These first-year students are generally floundering," Barclay-Matheson explained. "They're having difficulty developing skills because they need more of that in-person connection and support." It also means that Counselling is seeing fewer students and that there are now different peaks and valleys from non-remote teaching times.

Multiple platforms are being used to reach the widest possible group of students—from Twitter to Facebook Live to chat for intakes. However, faculty can no longer send a student 'up the stairs by the Starbucks.' Current options require navigating webpages, and even videos are hurdles for some students. This is increasing the challenge of support.

Special programs continue to run as well, including AspireAC. This helps current and prospective students with Access, Transition, and Retention. Although this year's Open House was different for everyone, Barclay-Matheson felt that she was still able to provide some career clarity to students looking to attend the college through the Choosing a Program and Planning Your Career information.

Below are a few additional key links that faculty members might find helpful:

Counselling Services remain open for personal, mental health, career, and/or academic matters. You can direct students to the Counselling Welcome site or invite them to call 613.727.4723 x 7200.

If you would like to find out more about the options for referring students to counselling, you can find plenty of information.

Also, if you have students still struggling with the transition to remote learning, even if they're just having trouble navigating Brightspace, they will find some excellent resources in the Student Learning Kit.

In the end, much like all who work at the college, the students' lament is relatable: "This is not what we signed up for."

Introducing the Critical Pedagogy Institute

Will Hennessy and Rob Kershaw

At a time when the national discourse is focusing on racism and systemic racism in Canada, and when the COVID-19 pandemic is disproportionately affecting racialized and under-represented communities, faculty are looking for knowledge, resources, and strategies to discuss these issues in their courses.

Critical Pedagogy is an educational framework that centres the examination of power structures and oppression, encourages self-reflection and critical thinking, and instills in learners a passion for fighting racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, and other forms of discrimination and oppression.

Learning and Teaching Services is in the process of establishing a Critical Pedagogy initiative to support faculty in implementing social justice education and anti-oppression pedagogy into their teaching praxis. This initiative has the potential to be transformative, and is believed to be the first of its kind in the Ontario college system.

The Critical Pedagogy Institute will provide support to AC faculty who are interested in:

- Challenging the assumptions, values, and beliefs ingrained in their teaching practice and reflecting on how these impact the learner experience;
- Identifying and working to decentre the societal structures of power and knowledge that influence both learner and educator beliefs in the classroom;
- Creating an inclusive learning environment that recognizes and represents learner diversity.

Through LTS, this initiative will provide one-on-one support, resources and reading lists, as well as PD opportunities. The team is currently undergoing a process of consultation in order to offer PD workshops and support in the winter 2021 semester.

If you have questions, or want to contribute ideas and resources, please do so via the LTS contact page.

As a classroom community, our capacity to generate excitement is deeply affected by our interest in one another, in hearing one another's voices, in recognizing one another's presence. -bell hooks

Reminder from Joint Occupational Health and Safety Representatives

Leslie Wyman & JP Lamarche

If you have any concerns about your health and safety (COVID-19 related or non-COVID-19 related), the first step is to notify your Chair. Documentation is essential for anything related to health and safety. We recommend, when notifying your Chair about any concerns or illness/injury, that you do so in writing and keep copies of all communications.

For COVID-19 specific issues, in addition to reporting to the college, we also encourage you to fill out this OPSEU Questionnaire if you believe or know that you have been exposed to COVID-19 (whether working on-campus or remotely).

Further health and safety recommendations and guidelines can be found on OPSEU's Pandemic Exposure and Illness Questions and Answers page, as well as Algonquin College's COVID-19 Employee Information website.

Questions? Contact us:
wymanl@algonquincollege.com
lamarcj1@algonquincollege.com
Messages submitted through COMMS@locallines.org will also be forwarded to us.

Stay safe!

The Educational Developer's Corner

Rebecca Wakelin

An analogy I use a lot at work is of a fictional trucking company. It goes like this: imagine a large trucking company that employs many drivers to fulfil its business goals. Each year, they hire hundreds of new truck drivers. Candidates need to know about trucks and the trucking industry as a whole. They are not *actually* required to have driving expertise. Moreover, the company does not put resources into driver training, and drivers are expected to "figure out" how to drive on their own. Years down the road, each driver has a performance appraisal whereby their managers evaluate their driving performance. Management *hopes* that they have learned how to drive during their employment, but no one really checks.

It seems ludicrous to manage staff this way, but this is exactly how the Ontario college system hires and trains its faculty. Colleges hire mostly industry experts, some academics, and some certified teachers. The first two categories of hires have a vast amount of knowledge in their areas of expertise, but often (not always) little to no teaching knowledge. Colleges then hope that the faculty member learns how to teach, evaluating their teaching performance at some point during their employment. Teaching and truck driving are skillsets made up of technical and theoretical knowledge, and not usually something a person can learn by osmosis. Yet in both the trucking company story and in the Ontario college system, osmosis is exactly how employees are expected to learn the required skills and knowledge needed to perform their jobs.

The pre-requisite to gain employment as an elementary/secondary teacher in publicly-funded school boards in Ontario is to be a member of the Ontario College of Teachers (OCT). The OCT requires teachers to have completed teacher training, typically by way of a Bachelor of Education degree. In this sector, the employer (school boards) has no obligation to train incoming teachers since there is a regulatory body that ensures members are properly trained. Using the same logic, since there is no regulatory body governing teacher training for professors at Ontario colleges, the onus should then fall on the employer (the college) to provide the appropriate training. After all, the college evaluates the teaching expertise of its employees. Where exactly do they expect professors to be trained to teach if there is no regulatory body ensuring proper training? The job of training incoming professors has historically fallen to centres for teaching and learning… kind of.

Centres for Teaching and Learning have experienced a renaissance during the pandemic. Resources and money are *finally* being given freely to these centres, and long overdue recognition "from above" is flowing downwards to these centres. As it turns out, faculty *do* need teacher training to do a good job during a pandemic. But what about *before* the pandemic? Resources for centres were dismal at best, and good teaching and teaching development were mostly afterthoughts when setting strategic direction. As a result, teacher-training programs were not considered essential (not for lack of trying on the part of the centre staff!).

In our own institution, other initiatives have taken precedence over good teaching, and these usually have a more corporate flavour to them—such as entrepreneurship. Other initiatives have skirted around good teaching and good teaching development to focus on "sexier" topics like the Learner Driven Plan, Universal Design for Learning (UDL), and others. These are all noble pursuits, but perhaps a focus on good teaching *itself* is more in line with what we do as an educational institution. Moreover, it's good to embrace the latest trends in education, but the actual root of all these things is good teaching—shouldn't we focus on making sure everyone can teach well before we start baking the educational buzz words into our practice?

In other institutions that already have a strong focus on teaching as part of their strategic plans, centres are well funded and typically contain a leadership team that takes a special interest in teaching as a strategic direction.

The college should provide robust, consistent, ongoing, and personalized teacher training to anyone who teaches at the institution. How? Keep the high-level funding flowing to teaching and learning centres after the pandemic is over. Keep teaching and teacher training as a priority in the college and visible in strategic planning. Continually invest in all professors through investing in quality training programs and staff to ensure all new faculty can develop their own craft in the ways that work for them. Most importantly, do not assume that people can learn how to teach well (or, by extension, drive trucks) simply by virtue of having been hired to do so.

Get To Know Your Stewards: Elisabeth von Moos (SAT/ACCE Math)

Interviewed by *Jordan Berard*

One of Local 415's newest stewards, Dr. Elisabeth von Moos, is a professor of mathematics who teaches to students from a variety of programs in the School of Advanced Technology and the Algonquin Centre for Construction Excellence. As all of her colleagues know, she is also an avid bicyclist and skier! I recently caught up with Liz to find out how her first few months of being a steward have gone.

You are a steward with Local 415 – what made you step up to this role?
I was inspired to become more involved in the union by the leadership of our current President, who represents a voice of change in the Local that I want to support.

How long have you been at the college, and what roles have you had?
I started my career at the college as a part-time professor in 2010 and never looked back!

I was part-time and partial-load for several years before becoming a full-time professor in 2014. I teach math in a variety of programs in SAT and ACCE, which provides insight into how different programs and departments operate. This is useful for being able to tailor my courses based on the individual needs of each of the programs where I teach.

I also helped to develop and launch the Regulatory Affairs—

Sciences graduate certificate program in the Department of Applied Sciences and Environmental Technology. For six years, I coordinated that program, before stepping back to focus on my real passion—teaching!

Since becoming a steward, how have you become more active?
I became a steward of Local 415 in the November 2019 round of nominations and voting for stewards. Since then, I have become more aware of the function that the union plays at the college, and of the content of the Collective Agreement. This has better equipped me to answer my colleagues' questions and to direct them to the right person or group in the union for assistance.

Having experienced the uncertainty and precariousness that comes with part-time and partial-load work at the college, I take particular pride in having helped launch the Partial-Load Hardship Fund earlier this year. The fund has provided grants of $250 to partial-load members who are in need, and is still open for applications.

What has been your biggest discovery since becoming a steward?
It has been eye-opening to see the various ways that the union is involved in our professional lives. There is so much happening behind the scenes to ensure that faculty can focus on doing what they do best—teaching. In the meanwhile, the union negotiates difficult scenarios with management and provides members with assistance when called upon.

Do you have any suggestions for anyone considering becoming more active in Local 415?
I would advise anyone looking to become more active in the Local to start by attending an Annual Members' Meeting. An AMM provides a peek at the different work being done in the Local, and provides a sense of where the union's activities intersect with your own interests.

There is so much to do!