



## FEBRUARY 2010 NEWSLETTER

### ULFA EXECUTIVE

- Past President  
Ilsa Wong  
Kinesiology/2232
- President  
Bryson Brown  
Philosophy/2506
- VP/President Nominate  
Rob Sutherland  
CCBN/-Neuro.Sc/3987
- Secretary/Treasurer  
Ed Jurkoswki  
Music/2342
- Academic Welfare Chair  
Trevor Harrison  
Sociology/2552
- Economic Benefits Chair  
Marc Roussel  
Chem-Biochemistry/2326
- Grievance Chair  
Kate Chiste  
Management/2139
- Board Representative  
Vacant
- ULFA OFFICE/2578  
Brenda Rennie  
Executive Office
- Sue Edwards  
Administrative  
Assistant



### REPORT OF THE PRESIDENT

There have been a few events of interest to ULFA members since the beginning of the spring term. We held a workshop on the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act; Mariette Pilon, a lawyer working with CAUT, explained her work on the adjudication of a case at the University of Ottawa, in which the University had claimed 'custody and control' of course materials and emails written by faculty members. The adjudicator recognized the special nature of the work that academics do, and ruled that the University did not have custody and control of those documents. The underlying problem here is that the meaning of 'custody and control' is not specified in the act (this problem also applies to similar acts across Canada). Obviously enough, this lack of clarity leads to conflict: when an institution tries to respond fully to a request for access to information it naturally tends to include all the documents that the institution has access to. But the individual faculty members who have produced emails and course materials as part of their independently-directed work as academics rightly regard the documents as their own.

But of course the main focus of our efforts has been preparing for this spring's round of negotiations. We live in interesting times. On Tuesday February 9, the Government of Alberta released its budget for 2010-2011. Despite the large deficit and increased support for healthcare and K-12 education, budgets for post-secondary education and Universities in particular have been cut. Most disappointing, perhaps, is that despite having encouraged the Universities to develop new programs and expand ambitiously, funding to support that expansion and the new programs that have been committed to has been cut. This is particularly unfortunate given the increased demand for education and training that has emerged during the present recession: the Alberta economy has slowed and many Albertans are looking to the future, hoping to improve their education and acquire new skills. Post-secondary education is a counter-cyclical sector of the economy, so our funding has been cut just when the need for our services is growing, and when we had committed to grow to meet that need.

As our recent survey results show, ULFA members are very concerned about the forthcoming negotiations. Worries about the consequences of budget cuts for our colleagues, students and the rest of the community are on everyone's mind. Managing the cuts in the least damaging way possible will be a huge challenge for the administration, and reductions in wages and benefits are clearly high on the administration's list of ways to respond.

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In the circumstances, our negotiating teams have been working very hard. The Academic Welfare Committee will be proposing some important improvements to the handbook, and we hope to make significant progress on those improvements. The Economic Benefits Committee is working to clarify the budget situation, including the results of the recent retirement incentive program, the number of positions that have gone unfilled, the cost of our benefits program, and the costs of career progress and merit increments and how they relate to the entire budget. In addition, some short-term funding has been provided to help the University make adjustments; we will have to find out more about how this funding can be used and what the administration intends to do with it. We discussed some details of the funding situation with the Deputy Minister on February 12, in a meeting of the Confederation of Alberta Faculty Associations, and we will be following up on those discussions to ensure we have as much information about the financial situation as we can gather.

President Cade's recent account of the cuts that will need to be made provides a starting point for our discussions. It's clear that the University's plans for the next year (or probably two) will have to change, but until we have worked through the details carefully we can't really say what this will mean for our members. For some of us the situation is painfully familiar; from my arrival here in 1986 to the mid 1990's, PSE funding was frozen or cut several times, most harshly at the beginning of the Klein years. One consoling thought is that we managed to get through those hard times. But more consoling still is the knowledge that things will get better; in the meantime, we will do everything we can to come to a fair agreement that serves our members' interests.

***Bryson Brown, President, ULFA***

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## **SPECIAL GENERAL MEETING**

Plan to attend the Special General Meeting at 3:00 p.m., Monday, February 22, 2010 in the University Theatre. Handbook and economic benefits negotiations between the Board and ULFA will soon be underway. Take this opportunity to provide feedback to the negotiating teams.

Also mark your calendars for noon Monday April 19th for the Annual General Meeting.

Details to be announced at later date.

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## **CAUT to Launch Important Work Study**

The work of faculty is only poorly understood by those outside of the profession and there is little hard national data describing the breadth of faculty activities. Following on its study of "Occupational Stress Among Canadian University Academic Staff", the CAUT is poised to launch a new survey to assess and measure faculty workload and work experiences across the country. We anticipate that the data generated by this survey will be enormously valuable in helping CAUT to articulate the needs and value of the profession while providing our own association with a wealth of comparative data to assist in our own advocacy efforts.

In early February, a sample group comprising more than 10,000 Canadian Faculty Members, both full and part-time, a tenure track and adjunct, emeritus and clinical will receive an email inviting them to participate in the CAUT survey. If you are one of those selected, we would urge you to take the time necessary to complete the survey. To facilitate accuracy, respondents will be able to download and review a complete copy of the survey instrument prior to logging into the survey instrument. The survey may be completed in stages and respondents will be able to revise previous responses prior to completion.

## Recent Developments in Health and Wellness

### **For Women**

Were you aware that the health benefits of strength training go far beyond the ability to lift heavier objects? Strength training has long been known to improve bone density, reducing the risk of osteoporosis. A recent study from the University of British Columbia also showed that it may also help with retention of mental abilities as women age. Activities such as walking and swimming have shown similar results; however, strength training will be particularly attractive to those with limited mobility. Interestingly, another result observed in this study was that the strength training improved mobility and could therefore potentially serve as a gateway into other forms of activity.



### **For Families**

A recent study from Ohio State University showed that pre-schoolers were less likely to be obese in families who observed three household routines: eating dinner as a family, getting enough sleep, and limiting television time. Each of these routines was found to be significant on its own, and they combined additively. The study did not show whether the relationship between these routines and child health was causative or merely a correlation, but it certainly implies that families who choose to value sleep, non-television-based activity and family meals are more likely to have healthy children. A related study from the UCLA School of Public Health suggests that the commercials may be the main factor relating television time to children's weight as DVDs and commercial-free television appeared to have less impact.

### **For Everyone**

The Wellness Committee continues to encourage us all to get out and move more.

The Winter Walk Day on February 10<sup>th</sup> was a success, and hopefully the Steps for Life event on May 1<sup>st</sup> will be an even greater success. Teams of ten will walk around Henderson Lake, enjoy a barbecue and hope to be lucky in the event's prize draw. The cost is \$10 per person, and that includes food and entry in the prize draw. As your JWSHSC rep, I hope to put together at least one team for ULFA, so please contact me if you're interested in participating ([susan.lait@uleth.ca](mailto:susan.lait@uleth.ca)). We need to register by April 15<sup>th</sup>.

If you have any health- or safety-related concerns, please feel free to contact your ULFA rep on the Joint Workplace Occupational Health and Safety Committee, currently Susan Lait ([susan.lait@uleth.ca](mailto:susan.lait@uleth.ca)).

Minutes for our monthly meetings can be found at the Risk and Safety Services website under JWSHSC.




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I hear and I forget. I see and I remember. I do and I understand.  
Confucius (551—479 BC)

## Report from EBC

By now, I'm sure you have heard that the University will be facing a \$2.5 million cut to its operating grant. This is of course a painful reality we will face in negotiations. That being said, it is very difficult to say at this point what effect this cut will have on our compensation next year. We still have many questions about the University's budget and finances which will have to be answered **before** we enter into serious salary and benefit negotiations.

The budget includes \$1.7 million "in one-time restricted funding to assist with the reduction in operating funding" to the University. (The wording quoted here is from the President's letter to the University, and not from any government documents.) One of the questions we are keen to have answered is how this money can be used and what impact this will have on the bottom line. For that matter, we still don't have a full accounting of the impact the 14 ULFA voluntary retirements will have on the University's budget over the next few years, not to mention the 28 retirements from other employee groups. Vice-President (Finance and Administration) Nancy Walker is quoted in the Lethbridge Herald as saying that the University expects to save \$1 million from the voluntary retirements. I have two comments on that: First of all, it's a bit annoying that we're finding this out by reading it in the local newspaper. The University administration committed itself to openness as we face our current budgetary challenges. This kind of information really ought to be shared with the University community as soon as it's available. To my knowledge, it still has not appeared in any communiqués emailed to us or posted on the budget web site. I, for one, am very disappointed at this disrespectful treatment of our membership. Second, I find it interesting that the University adds up all of its expected liabilities in coming up with a \$9 million budget gap, but none of its expected savings or extra sources of funding, such as the voluntary retirement savings mentioned above.

On the topic of the size of the budget gap: Last Spring, we were told that the budget gap for 2010–11 would be about \$5 million, on the assumption of a 0% grant adjustment. We now know that the government grant will be \$2.5 million less than last year. Shouldn't that mean that we're facing a \$7.5 million budget gap, not counting expected savings from voluntary retirements? I have a number of other questions about the figures we have been presented. My impression is that the size of the budget gap is being systematically inflated. To say that this sets a poor climate for negotiations would be an understatement.

If you think that my assessment of the administration's behaviour in recent days is harsh, you should have seen the first three or four drafts of this report. I am using the most measured language I can, but I think that the membership needs to understand that the information we are being provided with at this time is unreliable. Perhaps this is due to poor communications from the central administration offices rather than to a deliberate strategy. Regardless of the cause, the administration now has to bridge a credibility gap, in addition to the budget gap. EBC is working hard on a variety of research projects in preparation for negotiations. I want to thank all my committee members for their efforts thus far. I look forward to working with you the rest of the way.

The negotiating committee, which includes Trevor Harrison, Ilsa Wong, Wayne Lippa and myself, has had a first and very productive meeting to talk about our approach to these negotiations. We are rapidly moving toward a state of readiness for negotiations

I also want to take this opportunity to thank everyone who participated in our poll. Knowing your attitudes to our compensation package is extraordinarily useful to the negotiating committee. I very much look forward to having a face-to-face chat with as many of you as can attend our meeting on Feb. 22. This will be another important opportunity for us to pass along some of our thoughts and to take the pulse of the membership.

Marc Roussel  
Chair, ULFA Economic Benefits Committee




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## CHINESE NEW YEAR FUN FACTS

**Did you know** that to cry on New Year's Day is to cry all year long, so children are indulged and never spanked on Chinese New Year

Chinese New Year is actually celebrated over a 15 day long period

The politically correct term is now *Lunar New Year*, as opposed to *Chinese New Year* since many Asian cultures other than China's observe the lunar calendar. The Chinese year is based on the cycles of the moon. This is called a lunar schedule (hence the Lunar New Year.

A complete cycle of the Chinese calendar takes 60 years.

The Chinese calendar dates back to 2600 B.C. It is the oldest known calendar.

2010 is the Year of the Tiger

Red is considered a lucky color in China.

According to superstition you must clean your house thoroughly to sweep away misfortune and make way for good luck and fortune in the coming year. The old year and its spirits are banished by sweeping the floors before New Year's Day. (Don't sweep on New Year's Day itself - you'll sweep away the New Year fortune if you do.)



(新年快樂)