

FROM THE PRESIDENT

By Terry Gordon, Acting President

BCIT Budget Priorities

The FSA and the two BCGEU bargaining units have been asked to make presentations later this month to the BCIT Leadership Team regarding BCIT's budget for the 2009 – 2010 fiscal year. Over the past few weeks we have gathered input from our Tech Reps and general membership so that we can take advantage of this rare opportunity to have some influence on BCIT's spending priorities. Here's what we have heard.

Retention and Recruitment

The number one concern voiced by our members is the difficulty that many BCIT programs have with recruiting and retaining faculty and staff. Let's face it – our wages and benefits are falling further behind what is available in many industry sectors. As a result, it is getting more difficult to convince our colleagues in industry to make the leap into teaching. They are no longer buying the "but it's a great lifestyle" argument. Our members have put forward the following suggestions:

Avoid layoffs and other forced staff reductions.

Given that staff recruitment is only going to be more difficult in the future, BCIT should make every effort to hang on to its existing employees. Wholesale staff reductions would also send the wrong signal to potential employees in industry that BCIT is an unstable and risky place to work.

Post permanent instead of temporary positions.

We can attract more and better candidates with regular positions, yet any threat of a future reduction in work seems to be reason for the Institute to choose a temporary posting. In most cases, regular employees cost the same as temporary employees. Let's do what we can to attract the best staff for the long term.

It is time to revamp how new employees are placed on the salary scales. Recent experience has shown that the existing placement provisions do not allow potential employees in certain program areas to start high enough on the salary scales to attract them to BCIT. It's time to take a hard look at the credit that potential employees receive for their education and experience.

Invest in training. Some members are not receiving the training they need to do their jobs unless they use their own PD funds. Investing in training will not only help us meet the needs of students and help us make the most of our available resources, it will do a lot to improve the

quality of the working environment and enable BCIT to retain capable staff to meet future demands.

Allocate resources to improve the BCIT employment experience. Recent initiatives such as BCIT's focus on wellness are a step in the right direction and should be expanded. Eliminating annoyances such as dirty and poorly lit classrooms, inadequate office accommodation and timetabling glitches would also help with the general level of employee satisfaction.

Workload

Workload continues to be another major area of concern for our members. Departments need to be given adequate resources so that they can properly manage and fairly allocate the work done by department members. Workload drivers other than just classroom contact hours need to be recognized and factored into individual workloads. Providing relief for Instructors with heavy preparations or marking is cheap compared to going without those Instructors when they choose to work elsewhere.

Departmental Control of Program Development and Delivery

BCIT has a long history of departmental control over the development and delivery of programs. The budget process needs to respect departmental responsibility in this area and provide adequate resources for the ongoing maintenance of existing programs and the development of new programs to meet the changing requirements of industry. Programs with declining student enrolments need targeted resources to assist with student recruitment and/or program redesign if necessary.

If BCIT wishes to measure the performance of programs, the key performance indicators should be developed through consultation with the members of the departments responsible for the programs and for meeting those indicators.

Facilities and Equipment

Our members are deeply concerned about the state of BCIT's aging facilities and equipment.



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The equipment in some labs is old and no longer meets current industry standards. There are still many classrooms that have not been upgraded to be "smart learning spaces". Additional resources are required to address these issues.

Be Strategic

Few areas of the campus can tolerate cuts. Changes to programs, in some cases significant changes, may well be coming. Rather than trying to pick winning and losing programs, our members' priorities point to investing in the effective means to position BCIT for whatever lies ahead.

FSA Returning Officer Needed

Article VII.5 of the FSA bylaws state, "In December of each year the Executive Committee shall appoint a Returning Officer to receive nominations for, and coordinate the election of, the Executive Committee according to procedures approved by the Executive Committee."

For the past several years, the role of FSA Returning Officer was ably filled by Michele Morrison of ITS. Michele had to miss the last election cycle and Rob Guest of ITS was appointed Returning Officer on an interim basis. The FSA Executive Committee also decided at that time to make the opportunity to serve as Returning Officer widely available to members this fall.

The Returning Officer oversees the nomination and voting process, which occurs from March through May each year. In some circumstances, a by-election also may be held in the fall. The FSA uses electronic balloting through the internet. Details of the election process are available in the FSA office. Appointments as Returning Officer are for one year and may be renewed.

The FSA Executive Committee will be meeting on December 3. Members who wish to be considered for the position of Returning Officer are encouraged to contact FSA Executive Director Paul Reniers before 4:00 p.m. December 1 with a statement about why they are well suited for the role.

Does Your Department Have a Tech Rep?

FSA Tech Reps fill many important roles. They are the FSA representatives in every department. They create a link between the union and its members. They help ensure that the concerns and interests of the members are heard and acted on by the union, and they help ensure that members receive the full benefits of the collective agreement. They provide an important link between the FSA and management and can help clarify rumours and resolve potential problems at the earliest stages.

Being a Tech Rep is a simple way to contribute to your department and the union. By attending one FSA meeting a month and forwarding messages to their colleagues, most Tech Reps fulfill their responsibility to keep departments informed of FSA issues and to keep the FSA informed of departmental concerns.

Yet not every FSA department has a Tech Rep. FSA members are busier than ever and, as departments change and grow, connections with the union sometimes break down. Right now, the FSA is busier

than ever. We're actively consulting and negotiating with management on matters like the Education Vision, the Institute's budget, the selection of Vice-Presidents, salary placement, PTS appointment rights, research opportunities, childcare, and the changing profile of BCIT students. Now is the time for you and your colleagues to have a say through the FSA.

Becoming a Tech Rep is easy. The role is elected or approved by the FSA members in a department. Get your colleagues together, in person is best but electronically is okay for this purpose, and have them select or approve a candidate for Tech Rep through your department's normal decision making practice. Then have that person contact Eileen Chaban in the FSA office and they will start receiving Tech Rep information and invitations. Each department is entitled to an alternate Tech Rep as well. If you would like more information on becoming a Tech Rep, contact FSA Executive Director Paul Reniers.

"To live a creative life, we must lose our fear of being wrong"

Joseph Chilton Pearce

Part-time Studies Joint Committee Launched

By Paul Reniers

The Faculty and Staff Association has taken steps to initiate a joint FSA-BCIT committee on Part-Time Studies employment. The joint committee was incorporated into the collective agreement more than twenty years ago but was never called to meet.

The decision to move on the joint committee follows the important arbitration decision on the right to reappointment in PTS won by the FSA this summer. At the same time, the FSA feels that BCIT has taken steps to move work away from regular and temporary contracts into auxiliary Part-Time Studies contracts, a move which we feel undermines the security of the bargaining unit and is contrary to many aspects of the collective agreement.

The PTS Joint Committee is responsible for clarifying many areas of the collective agreement which are not adequately explained. Under the terms of Article 20.1 of the collective agreement, the joint committee shall determine:

20.1.2.1 The definition and classification of persons in the Bargaining Unit and employed in Part-Time Studies and Industry Services;

20.1.2.2 The specification of which clauses of this Agreement shall apply, and which shall not apply, to Part-Time Studies and Industry Services;

20.1.2.3 Additional clauses applying to Part-Time Studies and Industry Services.

An effective and efficient PTS program has blossomed at BCIT in the absence of greater specification in these areas. Our experience now shows that the rights of members working in PTS are increasingly at issue and the line between PTS and "the day school" is increasingly being encroached upon.

The definition and specification called for in the collective agreement is needed to ensure

that PTS remains an effective compliment to the regular and temporary work done by our members while ensuring the strength of both aspects of our work. We believe that PTS and other work at BCIT will benefit by our clarifying and protecting the rights of our PTS members.

We need to hear from our members who work in PTS: instructors, administrators, co-ordinators, and faculty who teach PTS in addition to their regular appointments. We need to know more about their concerns, their experiences, problems that need resolution, and potential solutions that can be addressed through the collective agreement.

The FSA will be consulting with members and departments on these issues over the next few months. To make your voice heard or to arrange for a meeting in your area, contact Paul Reniers in the FSA office.

Welcome!

We are pleased to welcome Christine Nagy, Grievance Officer, who joined the staff of the FSA office this October. Previously Christine worked for the New Westminster School District for 5 1/2 years as a Human Resource Officer.

Her involvement in the labour movement began in 1979, when she organized a small outfit into the United Food and Commercial Worker's Union and she subsequently became chief shop steward. Christine also spent seven years at the Langley School District where she became involved on the executive team of her CUPE local. In addition to serving two terms as president, she sat on union committees at the district, provincial and national level.

Along with general member representation work, Christine will serve as the FSA representative on the Rehabilitation Committee and will be responsible for Occupational Health and Safety.

Influencing Issues in the Post-Secondary Education Sector

By Peter Seidl, Acting Vice-President

The FSA is not an island! Whether provincial government funding for post-secondary education institutions is increased or decreased definitely affects BCIT's budget and programs and, as a result, FSA members' jobs, workload, and quality of work life.

The extent of financial aid for students indirectly affects our members. The new universities may or may not affect us – the jury is still out on that issue. However, they now have senates, instead of education councils, governing the educational priorities of those institutions. Should BCIT also have a senate? Are changes to the College and Institute Act necessary to advance the interests of BCIT and, therefore, BCIT's faculty and staff? What are the issues relating to the designated funding by the government (for example, the ministry of health) of specific programs and student seats?

These are among the many important issues that the FSA could have at least some influence over by having our voice heard by government and other key stakeholders. There is no shortage of potentially critical issues. There is a need, however, for the FSA to take a more systematic approach to identifying the main issues of concern to us and then developing positions on those issues before we seek to have our voice heard by government and others. Policymakers are amenable to influence before they set their priorities and implement new approaches. We should take advantage of that opportunity.

What issues are the most important to you? The FSA is interested in hearing from our members about key issues in post-secondary policy. Before we can craft a coherent action plan to advance our interests with policymakers, we

need to have a solid understanding of what our members consider to be important developments in the education sector. With this information, the FSA can begin to develop principles that will guide our post-secondary education sector strategy. With such a strategy, we would then be well-placed to influence the thinking and actions of others.

We welcome your input. If you would like to share your views about what the key issues are, please let us know of your interest by contacting acting vice president Peter Seidl at pseidl@bcit.ca. Or speak to your tech rep and ask them to forward your name to Peter Seidl.

PD Expense Funds Issues

The administration of the professional development expenses is clearly laid out in Article 10.3 of the Collective Agreement. Members are entitled to access their PD expense funds through application to their Program Group. BCIT has, however, sometimes refused to pay out certain claims even though a Program Group has approved the expense.

The FSA views the failure to pay PD expenses approved by the Program Group as a clear violation of the Agreement. The Agreement does not provide for the Finance Department or Labour Relations Department to override the judgement of the Program Groups in determining what are appropriate PD expenses.

This issue is currently being grieved by the FSA both as a policy issue and with several individual cases being brought forward. If you have had a claim denied after it was approved by your Program Group, please contact

FSA Grievance Officer Ian Stockdale.

A member also recently identified an error in the allocation of additional PD expense funds for Faculty at Step 12 and above. Due to an error, an Instructor who had moved to Step 12 on April 1 was still reported as being on Step 11 for the PD allocations. Once identified, the error was readily corrected, resulting in an additional \$502 allocation. All members are encouraged to check their PD expense funds and other allotments to ensure that they are receiving the amounts to which they are entitled.

“Integrity without knowledge is weak and useless, and knowledge without integrity is dangerous and dreadful.”

Samuel Johnson

The FSA to Host Members' Forum on VP of Student Services Selection

BCIT will soon be launching a search for the next VP of Student Services. As a participant in this selection process, the Faculty and Staff Association needs your input regarding this very important position. Please attend our upcoming members' forum to share your thoughts on:

- the institutional role and scope of this position, and
- the desired characteristics, experience, skills and educational credentials of the next VP

Date: Wednesday, November 26, 2008

Time: 2:30PM - 4:00PM

Room: SW3 3615

If you are unable to attend the forum, please forward your comments via Lotus Notes to Terry Gordon, FSA Acting President .

Sick Leave and Vacation Accrual while on Maternity Leave under 9.6.1.3

By Ian Stockdale

The FSA has succeeded, in a recent grievance, to correct a discriminatory practice whereby a member exercising her right under Article 9.6.1.3 to use three months of Sick Leave while on Maternity Leave would accrue neither sick leave nor vacation for the time spent on that leave. This anomaly arose from the Employer's reliance on Article 9.2.6, which reads "An Employee on paid Leave shall continue to accumulate vacation entitlement at the same rate as when on active duty, except when the Employee is on Maternity Leave, or on any Leave Without Pay." It was also discovered that the Employer was denying members on 9.6.1.3 leave the accrual of sick leave credits per Article 9.3.1.

The effect of this practice was that women on Maternity Leave were treated differently than a member on any other paid leave (e.g. paid professional development leave, adoption leave, etc.) This distinction contradicts the B.C. Human Rights Code's prohibition on gender-based discrimination.

The Employer and the Union have agreed that vacation accrual under 9.2.6, as well as sick leave accrual under 9.3.1, will be applied to **all** paid leaves, thereby resolving the grievance and bringing application of 9.6.1.3 into compliance with the Human Rights Code.

FSA Open House

On September 18, the FSA office held an Open House commemorating the one-year anniversary of the Guichon Creek flood.

We appreciated the good turnout by members who dropped by to socialize, enjoy some refreshments and inform us of issues that matter to them.

Kathy Vance, Communication Department, was the "lucky duck" who won the door prize of a \$50 gift certificate to Brentwood Mall.



Ask a Grievance Officer

By Elinor Hudon

Election Leave

Q. Is there a provision for time off from work to vote in municipal elections?

A. No, there is no legislated requirement that your employer provide you with time off from work so you can vote in the upcoming municipal elections. Nor is there such a provision in the collective agreement. Municipal elections in B.C. are held on Saturdays, so most members will not be affected.

Q. I thought that in a federal election, we got 3 hours off work to vote so I planned to leave work at 4:00 p.m. to vote on October 14th. My manager said I couldn't leave early. What are my rights?

A. Yes, you are entitled to three (3) consecutive hours away from work to vote in a federal election. However, this will depend on the voting hours in your area and your hours of work that day. In B.C., the voting hours for a federal election are 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. If you did not start work until 10:30 that day, BCIT was not required to give you time off from work to vote because you have at least three consecutive hours for voting in the morning.

Note that it is your employer who decides when time off for voting will be scheduled – probably something that should be decided before election day.

Details on voting in federal elections can be found at www.elections.ca.

Q. What about provincial elections?

A. For the upcoming B.C. election, to be held in May, employees are entitled to have four (4) consecutive hours free of employment to vote. Voting will be scheduled from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Again, it is up to your employer to schedule any time off work that is necessary.

Details can be found at www.elections.bc.ca.

Q. I'm considering running for office. Can I get time off work to campaign? Do I have to quit if I win?

A. Article 9.10 allows for leave without pay for any member who is seeking elected office at the municipal, provincial, or federal level. If a member wins election, they are entitled to further leave without pay while holding office. A member seeking this leave must provide notice in writing to the Institute.

THE FSA TEAM EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Amy Fell, President (On leave)
Terry Gordon, Vice-President (Acting President)
Peter Seidl, Director-at-Large (Acting Vice-President)
Neil Cox, Director-at-Large
Steve Finn, Director-at-Large
Terry Gordon, Director-at-Large
Taco Niet, Director-at-Large
Jennifer Orum, Director-at-Large
Teresa Place, Director-at-Large
Silvia Raschke, Director-at-Large
Randy Singer, Director-at-Large

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Ian Stockdale, Grievance Officer
Eileen Chaban, Financial Administrator
Marian Ciccone, Office Assistant

We're on the Web!
www.bcitfsa.ca