

FROM THE PRESIDENT

By Terry Gordon, Acting President

Welcome Back Faculty and Staff Association Members!

As I was preparing to write this article, I spent some time looking at our last newsletter from June 2007. Whew! What a difference a year makes!

In mid 2007, our community was experiencing feelings of anxiety about the future of BCIT. Tony Knowles had recently left BCIT and there was concern and confusion about the “polytechnic vision,” the role and direction of applied research and, generally, what our core business should be. Several of our key leaders were in “acting” positions and there was a sense that they did not have a mandate to take decisive action or implement necessary changes. Many of us felt that there was a serious “disconnect” between the views and actions of the senior management group and the rest of the BCIT community. There was also anxiety about BCIT’s standing in the post-secondary sector. The Campus 2020 report had recently been released and many of us were left scratching our heads trying to figure out how BCIT would fit into the vision of an integrated post-secondary system that had been articulated by Campus 2020 author, Geoff Plant.

In this climate of uncertainty, the FSA called for wide ranging discussions about the future direction of BCIT. We challenged BCIT’s senior management group to listen to our members’ concerns and ideas and to involve them in a meaningful way in getting the Institute back on track. We called for a renewal of the collaborative partnership between management and our members that had served BCIT so well for most of its 40-year history. To prepare for that collaboration, we initiated an Institute Vision Analysis project to try to bring definition to BCIT’s role, character, and strengths.

Now, 14 months later, there are many signs that the collaborative spirit is returning and that our views about BCIT’s direction are once again valued. As Acting-President, Verna Magee Shepherd followed our lead and initiated a long overdue visioning exercise, which Don Wright renewed shortly after becoming President. Many FSA members and other members of the BCIT community have had the opportunity to articulate their views of BCIT’s future through their participation in various forums and workshops. Our Institute Vision Analysis Committee produced its own position paper and has worked closely with John English on the visioning exercise. Our members were also invited to participate in conversations about applied research that were held earlier this summer.

BCIT has opened up other venues for consultation over the past year. The FSA now participates on the Institute’s Application Review Committee and the Marketing Council. As Acting FSA President, I was invited to attend Kumbaya I and II. The FSA Executive Committee met with the BCIT Leadership Team in June and further meetings are planned.

Following the adoption of its renewed vision, BCIT will embark on a new strategic planning process. We anticipate that there will be many opportunities for our members to contribute to this process and further influence the direction of BCIT. Consultation will also be an important part of BCIT’s upcoming review of its operational policies.

The wide ranging discussions that we called for 14 months ago are now underway, due in part to our advocacy and leadership. We now need to ensure that those discussions are lively, well-informed, and result in decisions that reflect the interests of our members. In order to be effective partners in these discussions, the FSA needs to be able to respond quickly when called upon for input. We need the input, feedback, and ideas of our members

From the President	1
Newton College Instructors Newest FSA Members	2
Part-time Studies Re-appointment Rights Upheld at Arbitration	2
Sick Leave Calculation Improved	3
New Collective Agreements Coming Soon	3
FSA Pursuing Changes to Salary Placement	4
Thank You!	5
Good-Bye.....	5
Deferred Salary Leave Plan	6
The FSA Team	6



on a wide range of issues. And we need members to volunteer to gather, summarize, and contribute those views to the forums being established to address various issues. We need your help in responding to and shaping the extraordinary changes that are ahead of us.

Many opportunities now exist for our members to help set the direction for BCIT by sitting on committees, researching issues, writing position papers, participating in focus groups, and sharing their views with FSA representatives. Let me know how you are prepared to participate.

NEWTON COLLEGE INSTRUCTORS NEWEST FSA MEMBERS

Four instructors at Newton College have been brought into the FSA bargaining unit. BCIT purchased Newton College at the end of 2006 and has continued to operate it as a separate ESL school serving overseas students.

Since the acquisition, the FSA has maintained that the instructors are employees of BCIT and have rights under our collective agreement. An agreement finalized this month recognizes FSA jurisdiction over the work and provides for a manageable transition into the bargaining unit. By negotiating an agreement, the parties avoided the possibility of protracted hearings at the BC Labour Relations Board.

Under the terms of the agreement, Newton College instructors will be employed on Part-Time Studies contracts through the International Business Services department. Current FSA departments and instructors will not be affected by the move. The Institute expects Newton College to operate as a separate school for some time to come.

PART-TIME STUDIES RE-APPOINTMENT RIGHTS UPHeld AT ARBITRATION

The FSA has won a grievance arbitration against the failure to re-appoint two instructors in Professional English Language Development (PELD). In a case that began in 2004, Arbitrator John Steeves agreed with the FSA that the instructors' right to normally be rehired under Article 5.2.5.2.7 was violated when they were given little or no work while other PTS instructors in the program were given several courses. A copy of the decision is available on the FSA website.

The decision confirms that Article 5.2.5.2.7 of the collective agreement gives Part-Time Studies instructors the right to normally be rehired except when the Institute has stated reasons not to do so relating to either a lack of work or the instructor's qualifications, experience, and suitability. In the example of PELD, a course loading system based on seniority that did not ensure that instructors would normally be rehired when work was available was found to be contrary to the collective agreement. A review of several other course loading models (such as the "Brian Green" method used in the School of Business) found that they were consistent with the collective agreement.

The FSA and BCIT must now negotiate both a remedy for the two grievors and a loading procedure for PELD. The parties may also look at ways of improving the PTS selection provisions of the agreement in light of this decision. Few if any changes should be required to PTS selection practices outside of PELD.

If there are changes you would like to see in the PTS selection provisions or if you have questions or concerns about PTS selection practices in your area, please contact FSA Executive Director Paul Reniers (preniers@bcit.ca, 604-432-8696).

"There are shortcuts to happiness and dancing is one of them."
Vicki Baum,
Writer

SICK LEAVE CALCULATION IMPROVED

By Laurin Mair, Senior Grievance Officer

Improvements have been made in how sick leave is calculated for FSA members on a graduated return to work after an absence due to disability or illness. The changes are the direct result of a grievance filed by a member.

Past Practice

In the past, if a graduated return to work (GRTW) plan resulted in less than a full day of work, BCIT deducted all absences from the member's sick bank on an hour-per-hour basis. For example, if an FSA employee was on a GRTW that required him or her to work six hours per day instead of seven hours per day, the Institute deducted one hour a day from his or her sick bank. This practice was different than the practice followed with respect to an employee who left work one hour early because of illness. In these latter cases, no deduction was taken from the employee's sick bank for an absence of less than half a day as per Article 9.3.4.1.

New Practice

The new practice will follow the sick leave sections of the Collective Agreement. For those on a GRTW, the Institute will treat deductions from that employee's sick leave credits in the same way that it treats deductions from sick leave credits for an employee who becomes ill part way through the day and has to go home. Specifically:

- there will be no charge against an employee's sick leave credits when the absence is less than one-half day;
- when the absence is at least one-half day but less than a full day, one-half day only will be charged against the employee's sick leave credits; and
- when the absence is a full day, one full day will be charged against the employee's sick leave credits.

As a result of a member bringing this grievance forward, several hours were restored to her sick bank. If you have any questions about this, please feel free to contact an FSA Grievance Officer.

NEW COLLECTIVE AGREEMENTS COMING SOON

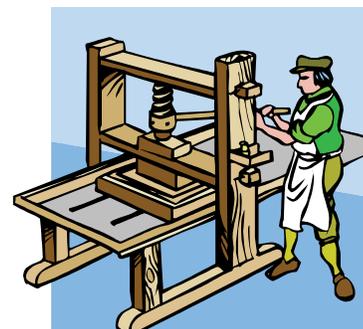
By Paul Reniers, Executive Director

After months of careful editing and review, the 2007-2010 collective agreement is now ready for printing. All that's required are signatures from the Post-Secondary Employers Association, the government agency responsible for collective bargaining in this sector.

Given the length of time

since the previous printing and the extensive changes that have been made, BCIT and the FSA agreed to do a major edit of the documents to address longstanding formatting issues and inconsistencies. We expect to have the new collective agreement printed and distributed sometime in October.

I'd like to extend special thanks to Elinor Hudon in the FSA office and Danielle Somogyi in Labour Relations for their considerable effort, diligence, and co-operation in seeing this major project through to completion.



FSA Pursuing Changes to Salary Placement

By Paul Reniers, Executive Director

The rules for placing new employees on our salary scales are a major recruitment problem. That's been the finding of several Technologies over the last year. The FSA has responded by making new agreements on placement with the Institute and seeking further changes to how placement is done.

Salary placement was identified 18 months ago during preparations for bargaining as a significant challenge to recruiting new staff. While pay at BCIT lags behind industry in many sectors, our starting wages are particularly low when we are looking for experienced professionals.

The FSA bargaining team sought to address this last year by restructuring the salary scales and reducing the number of steps while keeping the top of scales in line with the provincial mandate. Reducing the number of steps and maintaining the current placement rules would have resulted in higher starting wages. The Post-Secondary Employers Association (PSEA), however, refused to consider these changes.

Less than six months after bargaining, BCIT asked the FSA to agree to remove the caps for placement on the Faculty scale for a new Instructor in Civil Engineering. We agreed with two conditions:

- The same change would apply to all departments facing recruitment challenges;
- All Instructors in the department with similar qualifications would be raised to the same step as the new Faculty.

Since that time, we have had at least four cases where the initial place-

ment rules have been waived to provide a more appropriate starting wage. Several continuing FSA members in at least three job categories have been advanced along the salary scales as a result.

Based on these examples and the concerns raised by our members, the FSA Executive concluded that placement must be reviewed comprehensively. In addition to negotiating with the Institute, we must also continue consulting with the membership about the needs of their departments and the concerns they have as the colleagues of newly-placed employees.

We know already that some aspects of our placement rules cannot or should not be changed. Although the large number of steps on our salary scales is clearly a problem, the PSEA will not agree to changes. As union members, we also expect equity between members and between departments. In this situation, we expect the same rules to be applied to all departments with similar situations. We will also insist that continuing staff with similar qualifications to a new employee shall not be paid less than the new employee.

A few options for changing placement include:

- Removing the overall caps or the caps for experience or education
- Increasing steps given for education, experience, or certain types of experience
- Adding steps for other reasons, such as achievement, industry comparison, etc.

- Suspending some or all placement rules when there is a serious recruitment problem

Discussions on possible changes to placement have begun in the School of Health, but placement rules have already been waived in at least three different schools. We will be seeking a broader discussion with the Institute in the coming weeks. We need to hear the views of members now to make the changes that will best meet the needs of our members and their departments. Please contact Paul Reniers with your views and suggestions (preniers@bcit.ca).

THANK YOU!

In the past year, more than 100 FSA members contributed to the work of the union by representing their colleagues in a variety of capacities including:

- The FSA Executive Committee
- Tech Reps
- Participants on management selection committees
- Participants on departmental selection committees
- Members of the PD SuperCommittee and School PD committees
- Members of FSA committees like Institute Vision Analysis and Internal Audit
- Many other special roles such as the Returning Officer or the facilitators of our year-end Tech Rep forum.

Supporting these many members are the countless others who attend meetings and events and who share their views and observations at these forums, through e-mail, by phoning the FSA office, in hallway conversations, and by speaking up for themselves and their colleagues to management.

The success of the FSA in representing our members depends on this involvement. Thank you for this extraordinary level of participation.

GOOD-BYE.....

It is with regret that we announce that Beverly Lowen, Grievance Officer will be leaving our organization. Beverly has been with the Faculty and Staff Association since June 2005 and we are going to miss her sense of humour and optimistic outlook on life. If you would like to come by the office to sign her farewell card, we will have it available at the Open House on Thursday, September 18.



Why can't we get all the people together in the world that we really like and then just stay together? I guess that wouldn't work. Someone would leave. Someone always leaves. Then we would have to say good-bye. I hate good-byes. I know what I need. I need more hellos. ~Charles M. Schulz

Ask a Grievance Officer

By Elinor Hudon

DEFERRED SALARY LEAVE PLAN

Q. I heard that BCIT has a deferred salary plan. How does it work?

A. A deferred salary plan is available. By deferring a portion of your salary for a few years, you can provide yourself with an income while taking a year of general purpose leave without pay from BCIT.

During the 5 years of the plan, your salary will be 80% of your usual gross pay. The 20% of your salary that you defer in each of the first four years of the plan is invested by Royal Trust, the plan provider. Should circumstances change during the years leading up to the year you are going on leave, you can quit the plan and have your investment returned to you.

During your leave, you will receive a deferred earnings payment from BCIT on the last day of each month. The gross deferred payment is approximately equal to the total amount of your deferred earnings divided by the number of months you chose to be on leave.

You will not pay income tax on the earnings you defer during the contribution period. However, you will pay taxes on the deferred salary received during your leave. Because your income is reduced while on the plan, you may drop into a lower tax bracket and your resulting net pay may be more than you anticipate.

You won't pay Employment Insurance (EI) during your leave and you will not be eligible to apply for EI during your leave. You will pay CPP during your leave and that contribution level will be based on the salary received during the leave period. BCIT will also pay its share of these contributions.

You will not be able to contribute to your pension plan during your leave. However you can buy back this time as pensionable service as per pension plan regulations. If you decide to purchase this service, you will be required to pay both your contributions and the employer's contributions.

You will not accrue sick leave or vacation during your leave. You will be responsible for the full cost of your benefit coverage during your leave including medical, dental, extended health, LTD, life insurance and accidental death and dismemberment insurance.

A deferred salary plan may be an attractive and easy way to finance a sabbatical. More detailed information about how the plan is administered and copies of the plan contract are available from Human Resources and the FSA Grievance Officers.

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

STAFF

Paul Reniers, Executive Director
Frank Greenlay, Senior Grievance Officer (On Leave)
Laurin Mair, Senior Grievance Officer
Ian Stockdale, Grievance Officer
Elinor Hudon, Grievance Officer
Eileen Chaban, Financial Administrator
Marian Ciccone, Office Assistant

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