

# BUFA Forum

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## Haste Makes Waste: Slow Down, Reflect, Then Plan

*President's Message*

**Hans Skott-Myhre**  
BUFA President

In the latest town hall Dr. Lightstone unveiled the administration's perceptions of where we are, where we have been, and where we ought to go. Kathy Belicki has addressed the missing element in her column on his discussion of where we have been: the profoundly negative impacts of the administration's restructuring efforts so far on faculty and pedagogy, so I won't address that here.

Except to wonder what ever happened to the chart that Dr. Lightstone promised us in the second town hall. The chart that would show the impacts of the rescission "exercise." The chart that would be used, Dr. Lightstone told us, to guide us in reinstating what had been lost. Perhaps we haven't seen it, because, according to Dr. Lightstone, we may not be done yet. In this latest town hall, he informed us that we may have up to two years more rescission exercises ahead of us.

He was asked, by me, if he was concerned about the feedback we at BUFA had been receiving from members as we traveled across campus. I pointed out that there was endemic low morale based on ballooning class sizes, lack of equipment and research support, lack of teaching supports, an increase in bureaucratic demands, and an ever expanding uncompensated workload. He responded that of course he was concerned, "but we have no money," and shrugged his shoulders. I then asked him if he could tell us that no money had been taken from the operating funds (those funds that support the faculty) for buildings. He said, that he couldn't deny that operating funds had been borrowed.

It is significant to note that we have been asking for this information about operating funds for nearly two years with no success. This is the first time the administration has been willing to acknowledge this. What we don't know is how much this borrowing had to do with the "structural deficit," because the administration won't give our accountants access to the budget lines that would tell us how much

# Haste Makes Waste: Slow Down, Reflect, Then Plan

*(President's Message cont'd)*

was borrowed. Dr. Lightstone did explain, however, that all the other universities are doing this. Leaving aside the fact that this excuse never worked with my mother when I tried to use it growing up, I would ask that we look at the situations at other universities. A quick look around shows that these universities are having the same kind of structural deficits and operating fund shortfalls we are experiencing. Is this the kind of funding model we want to follow?

Speaking of models, let me now turn to the new strategic plan that Dr. Lightstone addressed in the second half of the town hall. I want to clarify and distill what I see to be the key issues related to our interests as representatives of the faculty here at Brock.

- The HEQCO document referred to in the town hall and the media is not a policy document. In fact, OCUFA has now repeatedly stated that the government has said that differentiation is very low on its list of priorities for secondary education and very likely will not become a policy direction in the near future. This means that the urgency promoted by the Lightstone administration, that we restructure Brock immediately or get swept away by differentiation, is very probably unnecessary.
- The HEQCO document in no way represents the form of differentiation referred to as the model for Brock. Indeed, the only mention of Brock is in a paragraph that notes it as a largely teaching oriented university for undergraduate education. The idea put forward in the town hall that restructuring Brock into transdisciplinary clusters at the graduate level would put us at the cutting edge of innovation and set the model for the province is not reflected anywhere in the HEQCO document.
- HEQCO in fact, posits that research is too expensive an enterprise for most universities in Ontario and as a result we should differentiate into those few universities who should focus on research and graduate education, while the remaining universities should become teaching institutions responsive to the needs of the job market.

The HEQCO document draws on four models outside Canada for its ideas about restructuring post-secondary education: New Zealand, Australia, California, and Britain. This is profoundly counter-intuitive as anyone following the news knows that Britain, for example, has instituted massive cuts to post-secondary education of 85%, leading to a proposed virtual elimination of humanities and social sciences as significant aspects of university life. Let me quote a paragraph from the London Review of Books (Nov 4, 2010) on the report that is driving the restructuring of education in Britain:

The report proposes a far, far more fundamental change to the way universities are financed . . . Essentially, Browne is contending that we should no longer think of higher education as the provision of a public good, articulated through educational judgment and largely financed by public funds (in recent years supplemented by a relatively small fee element). Instead, we should think of it as a lightly regulated market in which consumer demand, in the form of student choice, is sovereign in determining what is offered by service providers (i.e. universities). The single most radical recommendation in the report, by quite a long way, is the almost complete withdrawal of the present annual block grant that government makes to universities to underwrite their teaching, currently around £3.9 billion. This is more than simply a 'cut', even a draconian one: it signals a redefinition of higher education and the retreat of the state from financial responsibility for it.

# Haste Makes Waste: Slow Down, Reflect, Then Plan

(*President's Message cont'd*)

Similarly, California's post-secondary system has been in crisis for several years now, with extremely detrimental effects on the tenure system for example. These models have led to cut backs in tenured faculty, lay offs of whole departments, significant reductions in salary scale for faculty, huge increases in untenured teaching sessionals, increased privatization of research and teaching, and radical assaults on faculty governance.

If this is indeed, one of the models HEQCO is drawing upon, then concerns about a neo-liberal trend in Ontario universities and at Brock seem more cogent than ever.

From our point of view, the restructuring of Brock proposed by the Lightstone administration is profoundly problematic. However, leaving aside our differences of vision for Brock, I want to suggest two questions that all faculty should ask at every opportunity when this plan is presented, whether at department meetings, consultations, or at Senate:

1. **What is the impact of increasing the number of trans-inter-multi-disciplinary units at Brock on faculty governance?** Our concern here is that currently a model is evolving for interdisciplinary programs to report through the Graduate Program Director to the Decanal level. This is a significant challenge to faculty governance since the role and authority of the GDP is as yet undefined and the composition of the faculty committee for such units is also unclear.
2. **How will this be funded?** We are already unduly burdened by unfunded graduate mandates that are having significant impacts as noted above. It looks to us (since as Dr. Lightstone says we have no money and may have further cut backs in the future) that the development of these units will be built on the backs of existing programs much to their detriment.

In light of this, we **would respectfully and urgently request that all faculty oppose any rapid approval or implementation of this strategic plan**. In particular, we would ask that our colleagues in Senate force a clear hearing of the concerns on faculty governance and funding implications before moving a single step in the direction of approving this plan. While, there may be a need to rethink our current structure in light of provincial initiatives and economic necessities, but this plan is far from being a well thought solution.



## RUMOUR MILL

10 years or 10,000 hours... whatever comes first, the outcome will likely be the same for the audio-visual technologies in the Academic South classrooms, and when those LCD bulbs go, they're all going fast. Anyone teaching there.... Have plan B...and C... and..... don't say you haven't been warned!

## The Missing Challenge

I attended Jack Lightstone's Town Hall the other day. OCUFA disagrees with some of his perspectives (and Hans Skott-Myhre will update you on that), but that aside, I thought that he raised some worthy issues. However, by the end of his talk, I was absolutely exhausted.

That brings me to the missing challenge. Jack outlined the challenges and opportunities facing Brock as he sees them. I do not quibble with many of his points. Who would not agree that we need more space and that we are under-funded, for example? However, there is one very pressing challenge on my list that was conspicuously—and perplexingly—absent from Jack's list: faculty (and staff) frustration, demoralization, and burnout.

I am quite tired these days and I am only four months post-sabbatical. At BUFA, we have found out that I am not alone. The negotiating team has been soliciting feedback from faculty throughout department visits, and exhaustion is a recurrent complaint. I am not surprised to hear that: I have been at Brock for 24 years. It was a challenging job when I came, but in the last decade the workload has steadily increased, while my sense of professional autonomy has steadily decreased.

As Jack noted, in recent years we adopted the goals of developing research and graduate programs, while maintaining undergraduate quality. The resources to do this have not kept pace with the workload. Therefore, despite the growing responsibilities associated with the graduate program, I feel a real pressure to maintain high quality undergraduate education—and in fact have a strong desire to do so. I deliberately chose to come to Brock over other possibilities because of my commitment to undergraduate education. However, course sizes are ballooning. In psychology we have long since abandoned the concept of seminar-sized fourth year courses—and now, at least the faculty of Social Sciences has abandoned the idea of seminar-sized seminars. It is all very demoralizing.

I am delighted to participate in a graduate

program, but with it has come a net increase in workload. Despite that increase, the department is under pressure to continue to develop and expand that program, something we would actually like to do, but no one is offering adequate resources. Therefore, any expansion will come at the cost of more work and less administrative support.

Speaking of administrative support, individual faculty really do not have access to it any more. For example, we all do our own photocopying now. I am one of the highest paid photocopy clerks in the province. And I have not even begun to address such issues as the burgeoning workload that came when the culture switched to e-mail as the principal form of communication, over the time-honoured—and time-limited—office hours.

Then I hear Jack talking about the need for new pedagogies for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. I teach a first year course and change it every year. At the moment, we are exploring new technologies that we hope to use next year. It is all very exciting. It is also increasingly exhausting in the context of my burgeoning work-load. That is without even thinking about bigger innovations that presumably Jack has in mind, such as developing web-based courses.

We have to intensify research, Jack says. How? At the cost of what? Moreover, within that intensification, we have to explore new trans-discipline structures. In isolation, both are exciting ideas worth discussing, if only we could find the time and muster the energy to discuss them, not to mention the resources to enact them. As a member of the Life Span Centre, I have benefited from one of those trans-discipline collaborations, but I can tell you it also has created more red tape in my life. Moreover, as we expand such programs we are going to have to sort out governance issues. All of that means more work.

I'll admit it: I am whining. That's what over-stressed, over-tired people do. (Did I mention that I am only 4 months out of a

## The Missing Challenge *(cont'd)*

sabbatical?). I love this job and I still love Brock, though the latter sentiment is stretched thinly these days. We simply cannot amp up research, new pedagogies, and new transdisciplinary structures on air. We have to face the missing challenge.

We have seen impressive inroads made on such issues as getting more space. Why? Because, early on, Jack identified that inadequate space was a major challenge for Brock. He put it on his “challenge list” and threw administrative intelligence and will power into solving it. We need that kind of will-to-fix and ingenuity to tackle

the challenge that’s missing from Jack’s list, our mounting fatigue.

There is no easy answer for the growing demoralization, frustration, and burnout of our academic community. However, if we do not put it squarely on the list of University challenges and give it the serious attention that other challenges are getting, there will be no solution.

**Kathy Belicki**  
**Vice President, BUFA**  
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## GOOFY POETICS

### ROCK, PAPER, SCISSORS

silver-tongued light gleams  
thrown stone skims smooth crease belies  
a swift heavy hand

## *Letter to the Editor*

# **At Least Nero Was Only Fiddling**

Hello all. While it may by now be old news that undergraduate education at Brock is under attack, you may be surprised by who is doing some of the attacking. I've been experiencing an ever-increasing challenge in putting on the best undergraduate course I can. For several years I have repeatedly raised my issue with Human Resources, to little avail. I finally went to see whether or not BUFA might help me fulfill, as best I can, what I perceive to be my professional right and obligation to serve my undergraduate students. Imagine my surprise when I was advised that BUFA also could not help because there was no language in our collective agreement assigning faculty any particular priority in determining course curricula.

In my own case, an intrusion on my ability to determine curriculum has been created by TA hiring policies, imposed by the administration and by CUPE 4207, the union representing part-time teachers and TAs. My course is PSYC1F90. For 30 years now we have taught that course with current undergraduate TAs. Even before we developed graduate programs in Psychology, we recognized that employing undergraduate TAs could be a virtue and not just a necessity. Already in 1982, Stan Sadava and I published a short piece on the value of undergraduate TAs. I won't trouble you with the details here but there is a well-developed literature supporting our preference, to be found under the heading of peer mentoring (or peer tutoring or peer-led team learning). Simply put, it is my professional judgment that undergraduate TAs perform better than more senior TAs in mentoring undergraduates in PSYC1F90. Besides, those psychology undergraduates who gained TA experience with PSYC1F90 have themselves gotten better educated and often gained a "leg up" in applying to graduate school. (I would be happy to articulate the pedagogical arguments in much more detail some other time).

Historically we were "left alone" to hire according to our pedagogical vision. In the last decade, however, the growth of graduate programs, both in Psychology and in related disciplines, has begun to erode our ability to staff our course as best we can. We have not yet been *forced* to hire graduate students as TAs in PSYC1F90 (including non-psychology ones, by the way) but the day will soon arrive. Our administration is more concerned with funding incoming graduate students by assigning them TAships than with the resulting impact on the quality of undergraduate teaching. Further, as many of you may know, CUPE 4207 has been successful in removing preference in hiring for current undergraduates. Instead, they would have us exclusively hire more senior TAs. The end result is that our administration and CUPE are, together, dictating my staffing. One effect is to effectively block my ability to implement our long-standing peer mentoring model and, in my professional judgment, damage our ability to mount the best PSYC1F90 course that we can.

It was in this context that I went to BUFA to ask if my pedagogical expertise counted for anything on this campus and it was there that I was shocked to learn the answer is, more or less,

## *Letter to the Editor*

(cont'd)

no. Now before you turn away from this article, please consider two distinct ways in which my particular plight is more generally relevant to you, to BUFA, and to undergraduate education at Brock.

First, I freely admit that working with undergraduate TAs is not the only way to go, nor is it always, or perhaps even often, the best way to go. In fact, I doubt, in 2010, that more than a tiny fraction of undergraduate courses at Brock would be staffed by undergraduate TAs, even under the best (or worst, depending on your point of view) of circumstances. So please do not interpret this missive as an argument about how you should staff your course. I support the priority of individual faculty in determining how best to do this for their own courses. In this regard, I have heard many, many horror stories about how our administration and CUPE 4207 have intruded their overly rigid vision of staffing in course after course. Up until now many of us have suffered this particular invasion of our pedagogical responsibilities in silence. I urge other faculty members who have run across other versions of staffing problems to share them in a public forum. In my opinion, it is high time for BUFA to begin to more openly address this festering staffing issue if, in fact, they have addressed it at all.

Second, and more generally, whether it be staffing your course, or some other aspect of your curriculum that you're having trouble implementing, I don't think you currently have much legal right to insist on having it your way. To be sure, historical precedent does assign us some customary rights but I don't think they are particularly secure. It apparently doesn't matter that I've taught PSYC1F90 for a long time, or that my course evaluations are always high, or that I have won any number of teaching awards for my teaching. BUFA tells me that they can do very little to support my claim to pedagogical priority. In the absence of any such priority there is little I can do to prevent the degradation of my undergraduate courses and little you can do in yours.

In closing, I must insist I am not here offering an antiunion rant. Not against BUFA and not against CUPE. These unions offer one of the few effective counterweights we have against our administration and the whims of ever-shifting government policy. However, our mission, as individual faculty, as a university, as unions, and as members of Canadian society must, first and foremost, be focused on the best interests of our students. All I am asking is for our administration to stop imposing pedagogical barriers to effective undergraduate teaching (Senators, where are you?). While I am happy for all of my TAs to be members of CUPE, all I'm asking is for CUPE to be more sensitive to the pedagogical challenges posed by different teaching environments. And finally, all I'm asking is for BUFA to more effectively represent my ability to act in the best interests of my students. I don't think that's too much to ask.

**John Mitterer**  
**Professor, Department of Psychology**

## **OCUFA Report**

The most recent meeting of the OCUFA Board of Directors was held October 23 -24, 2010. At this time, Henry Mandelbaum (Executive Director) updated the Board on the issue of system differentiation. Henry stated that he is not convinced that the government is interested in differentiation. OCUFA is confident that if differentiation becomes an issue at all for government, it will be a minor one. Further, there is no agreement on what differentiation even means. Through numerous consultations with "government", OCUFA is convinced that what is on the government's agenda is: the government wants more foreign students, on-line education, and system integration (easy movement of students from college to college, from college to university, and from university to university).

Henry also updated the Board on the outcome of the government consultations regarding compensation restraint. There is recognition that faculty associations do not bargain collectively, rather bargaining happens at the local level. Further, there is no intention on the part of government to act punitively toward those institutions that may settle above the "0", "0".

The OCUFA Collective Bargaining Committee has expanded its role to support all of the associations currently in bargaining and those about to enter bargaining (12 in Spring 2011). As a result of their expanded role, you will now see a weekly edition of the OCUFA report (circulated electronically, and also available on the OCUFA website [www.ocufa.on.ca](http://www.ocufa.on.ca)) providing you with updates on bargaining progress at other Ontario universities.

Mark Langer, President of OCUFA, published an editorial in the St. Catharines Standard in response to the release of the HEQCO document recommending of universities. The piece can be found at::

<http://www.stcatharinesstandard.ca/ArticleDisplay.aspx?e=2832966>

*Academic Matters: OCUFA's Journal of Higher Education* is available at:

<http://www.academictmatters.ca/>.

The latest issue is organized around the theme of "Who are Your Students?"

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions about the OCUFA materials or if you would like me to raise something with OCUFA.

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## ANNOUNCEMENTS



At the recent OCUFA Annual Board Meeting Michelle Webber, BUFA's OCUFA Director, was appointed to the OCUFA Status of Women Committee. At that same meeting Larry Savage, BUFA Grievance Officer, was appointed Vice-Chair of the OCUFA Grievance



### **BUFA General Membership Meeting**

**Friday, December 3, 2010 12:00 noon to 1:30 p.m. Sankey Chamber**

**Refreshments are served at all General Meetings  
In the interest of sustainability feel free to bring your own beverage cup.**

#### **OCUFA extras:**

#### **Data Check: Few zeroes in sight as wages increase more than 2%**

A Conference Board of Canada survey of public sector employers reveals that less than three per cent are planning zero-per-cent wage increases this year. That figure is down from last year's six per cent, in spite of the Ontario government's no-net compensation wage policy.

In fact, surveys conducted by the most respected wage analysts in the industry show that employers are approving wage increases above two per cent for 2010.

The Hay Group's survey of the broader public sector shows an average 2.4 per cent increases in that sector, while the Hewitt Associates' survey shows 2.5 per cent.

An Ontario government argument for public-sector wage freezes was that public employees were pulling ahead of private sector workers. But Conference Board surveys are showing an average 2.3 per cent wage increase in the public sector, compared to 2.9 per cent in the private sector.

## **X FILES: THE MONEY TREE IS NOT THERE AND IT NEVER WAS**

Faculty members here at Brock University are an innovative and oft' times irreverent lot. They get these... ideas... and then they find like-minded colleagues and form institutes, or centres, or courses, or collaborative teams or strategic alliances, or really preposterous extensions of their ideas, like graduate programs. As often as not, they manage to get these entities up and running without incurring costs or inconveniences, two idea killers on a good day. Faculty members are ingenious; they figure out ways to problem solve and deliver using overload, unscheduled teaching, and "trade" (eg, opting out of an undergrad course to teach a grad course on load leaving the undergrad course to a departmental part time budget that is not able to accommodate the trade). This marvelous magical mystery tour has been in full swing for about a decade or so, and not only is there no end in sight to this type of strategizing, but also there has developed an altered perception of what constitutes "busy". Busy used to mean that a person was running around at peak times during the year to get important, time-sensitive stuff done. Busy now means that a person is doing the work of three people and is running around all the time because there is very little time that is not peak time. I am not only referring here to faculty members.... Staff and senior admin are also avid participants in this bizarre chicken dance.

What does this have to do with the money tree that is not there and never was? Overload costs money; contract faculty covering undergraduate courses so full-time faculty members can teach graduate courses costs money. Unscheduled teaching / supervision is worth money. In the same way that creating nomenclature does not create governance structure, moving money around does not make more money. It is the same amount, except when it isn't. Like now. There is no new money, and even when we were (and are) at our best, most well-intentioned selves and working to fulfill on the ideas that mean so much to us, there

really was not enough money to do that then, either. In that afterglow of imagination and scholarly passion, the worthwhileness of the work was effective as misdirection. The fatigue from a decade of working at the red-line has a way of holding something still just long enough to take a good, hard look. There is the back yard; there is no money tree and there never was.

Ideas, collaborations, new, renewed and imaginatively organized and conceived institutes and partnerships are part of our culture here at Brock. We have powerful examples of this across our faculties. This spirit of unconventional and "don't say it can't be done" rising to the challenge is not going to go underground; however, the levels of frenetic work are not sustainable, and they are affecting how we treat each other. Our next decade of innovative and imaginative adventures calls on us to be a community committed to excellence, yes; yet I cannot accept that it asks us to sacrifice common sense and common decency as part of the bargain. Are there ways to be strategic that do not require a non-human pace of work and non-money type of budget? Now there's a challenge for a scholarly community....

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