

BUFA Forum

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Editor: Joe Norris, BUFA Communications Officer

Unless indicated otherwise, the views expressed in *Forum* do not necessarily represent those of the BUFA Executive.

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Policy and Vision: Whose University?

Hans Skott-Myhre
BUFA President

President's Message



The question of what constitutes a policy environment is a fascinating question. At times it seems relatively straight forward, while at other times one is compelled to “read the tea leaves.” We certainly live in a time when events and trends are indeterminate, variable, contingent and uncertain. The existing regime of production and value appears to be in significant crisis and the powers that be would appear to be having considerable difficulty figuring out a reasonable posture that will ensure their continuance and satisfy their conflicted constituencies. Social forms such as the family, the church, political parties, social service systems, financial markets, small businesses, and even corporations are shifting form and composition almost vertiginously. There are those who say that we have not experienced this degree of social upheaval and transformation since the seventeenth century. Of course, the university is no exception.

In such times, when definitions are up for grabs and social structures appear to be failing us, the question of how we prioritize what is important and should continue becomes central to any ethical approach to institutional development. Of course, there are any number of ways one could begin to determine this. An appeal could be made to utopian ideals or moral premises. We could say that certain aspects of the university should continue because they are simply good and right. As scholars, however, we are unlikely to find this compelling. We would be far more likely to seek some empirical data to support the institutional priorities of the academy. The question then becomes, on what basis would we seek this data? I would argue on the basis of function; that is what the institution is designed to do.

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(President's Message cont'd)

From the BUFA perspective, the function of the university is quite simply research, scholarship, and pedagogy. In our view, the institution should exist in order to facilitate these activities. To the degree that the institution loses track of its role in promoting and protecting these key functions, it loses a certain degree of integrity and opens itself to coercion or assimilation by other kinds of institutions such as governments or corporations.

In his book, *The Fall of the Faculty: The Rise of the All-Administrative University and Why It Matters*, Benjamin Ginsberg argues that universities that have extensive administrative or managerial infrastructure, rather than full faculty governance, begin to develop a perversion of mission. According to Ginsberg, instead of the administration serving the faculty and students in the pursuit of pedagogy, scholarship, and research, the university acts as though research, scholarly activity, and pedagogy are there to serve the needs of the administration.

This significantly shifts the mission of the institution. While faculty governance is rooted in facilitating the day-to-day activities of students, librarians and faculty, administratively driven governance is focused on facilitating a smoothly operating bureaucracy. Put simply, the priorities of an administratively driven university will focus on developing the tools that the managers and administrators will need in order to be successful in managing the institution. These include tools such as strategic plans, policy development, image polishing, and the introduction of management fads and trends as driving engines of institutional development.

Of course, these things are important to any large institution such as a university. The question is, should they be the primary functions to which other activities are subjugated? Should teaching be measured according the pedagogical needs of the faculty and students, or by the rubrics of cost effectiveness? Are research priorities and resources determined by the people developing and doing the research (faculty, students, librarians), or by the interests of forces outside the university such as corporations or governmental agencies? Are areas of scholarship (read academic units and disciplines) developed and nurtured according to their integral importance to a broad based liberal education for students, or by the narrow definition of utility in an ever shifting and uncertain job market?

I raise these questions because, as BUFA has pointed out empirically in past issues, Brock has experienced an explosion of administrative growth at a time that faculty ranks have decreased. At Senate, Brock has gone from a governance body composed of a majority of non-administrative faculty, to a Senate composed of a majority of administrators and faculty in administrative positions. Many of the hallmarks of an administratively driven university are also emerging at Brock. We have seen the introduction of strategic and market driven planning, the development of a dizzying array of policies and procedures downloaded to faculty on a regular basis, and a discourse of faculty and student accountability without any concomitant administrative accountability measures. One might ask, is there a vision that is driving this effort at restructuring Brock as we enter the 21st century?

In this regard, President Lightstone recently issued an article by Harvey Weinstein to the

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(President's Message cont'd)

Senate. The only comment accompanying the article was, “The following is sent to you on behalf of President Lightstone with respect to the policy environment in which we will have to develop if we want to succeed.” (I am going to quote selectively from the document, which can be found at: <http://heqco.ca/en-CA/blog/archive/2011/10/11/what-is-an-innovative-university.aspx>.)

The title of the document is “What is an Innovative University.” While Dr. Lightstone did not offer this document as his own vision, he has on numerous occasions referenced the need for Brock to be innovative if we are to succeed. One might assume then, that this document holds key elements of the administration’s template for innovation.

The document begins by stating that, *if one wants to know whether a university is innovative one should look to see whether it shows some or all of the following (not necessarily independent) attributes:*

- 1. It has articulated and advertised a limited number of clear priorities. To be innovative, you have to have some things that are far more important to you than other things.*
- 2. It has adjusted its processes and practices to advance its top priorities. In particular, it had amended and revised its programs and curricula to align with and teach about its top priorities.*
- 3. It has closed some programs. Michael Porter reminds us that “... the essence of strategy is choosing what not to do”. You can’t be innovative if you try to do everything; stopping doing some things that are lower priority allows one to focus attention on the high priority items.*
- 4. It has a budgeting model that allows it to allocate (or re-allocate) resources preferentially to high priorities. Stating key objectives without putting additional resources behind them is an empty exercise.*
- 5. It has increased its absolute revenues at the same time that it has decreased the proportion of total revenue it receives from government. To be innovative requires increasing amounts of entrepreneurial revenue derived from non-traditional sources.*
- 6. It measures its performance against understood international metrics of excellence.*

While many of these points are disturbing in and of themselves (number three, for example is presented as an indicator of excellence and innovation rather than a failure of leadership), I want to draw your attention to the implied centrality of administration in this vision of innovation. I would argue that this is not a set of innovations developed by faculty, students or librarians. This set of innovations is drenched in managerial lingo and saturated in the latest management fads.

Weinstein’s constituency is clearly administrators such as university presidents and provosts.

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(President's Message cont'd)

He encourages this group to be innovative by “bucking the trend . . . [and] knowing very clearly what you want to do and being committed to it even though you get very little support and are often roundly criticized by your colleagues and peers.” He suggests that administrators should not be bound by tradition or by what others are doing. This is very clearly a hierarchical model of management in which the administration sets the agenda based on their vision.

While I have nothing against bucking trends and challenging traditions, we must be quite careful what trends are being bucked and what traditions are being savaged. There is nothing magic about innovation for innovations sake. Being innovative can lead to the best or the worst forms of governance and institutional development.

For myself, I find much to be admired and preserved in the traditions of the academy. While we must be cognizant of the realities of financial pressures and constraints in the current policy climate, I do not believe we should take this as an opportunity to recreate the academy as simply another corporate entity. Indeed, I would call on our administration to fight these trends vigorously, not embrace them. In the absence of such advocacy by our administration on behalf of the traditional academy, I would call for BUFA members to fight the “innovative” trend towards the all-administrative university. We should call for a university that centers research and scholarship over profit and gain; the highest standards of pedagogy over metrics of student enrollment; mentoring relationships between students and faculty over the economics of enormous class sizes; and the protections of tenure in the pursuit of academic freedom against the economics of part-time non-tenured faculty. These are traditions worth fighting for.

Policy environments are not simply handed to us as passive recipients. Our administration assures us they are in constant conversations with key players who determine policy. The question is, what is our administration fighting for? To be innovative in creating a truly administratively driven innovative university that other administrators and reactionary politicians will admire, or a university that truly supports the values of faculty, students and librarians?

We can have an influence on the policy climate. I call on all faculty and librarians to exercise your influence in preserving those traditions you value at the departmental level, the faculty level, at Senate and in lobbying your political representatives. This is our university, let's care for it, respect its traditions and move it into the twenty-first century with its core functions intact.

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Health & Safety Officer's Report

Jonathan Neufeld

Deferred Maintenance of Facilities and Systems at Brock University

The concept of “deferred maintenance” is not difficult to grasp. Those of us who own homes understand clearly the caution that “there’s always going to be something” which basically means: “owner beware: if you own a house, you will never be finished repairing, renovating, or replacing failed components and systems of the building or property.” Added to this comes the “wish list” of improvements that you would like to make to your dwelling just to make it more aesthetically appealing or to improve its relative resale value.

Magnify this concept and these urgencies enormously when you are examining the physical conditions of a facility as large and as complex as a university campus. Of course, managing a large organization like a university can bring political challenges that make our “home economics” seem quite trivial. However, the basic value decisions can actually be quite similar when these two “economies” are compared.

To begin, “deferred maintenance” simply refers to the organizational practice of postponing maintenance activities such as repairs on real property (i.e. systems and infrastructure) or any form of machinery in order to save costs, meet budget funding levels, or to realign budget monies. The primary reason that maintenance is deferred is because there simply isn’t the money to pay for it (hence, the analogy that I’ve made with trying to manage your own domestic dwelling). When considering a large-scale organization, however, other considerations can come into play. For example, perhaps there’s lack of sufficient man-power; perhaps expertise is lacking; perhaps maintenance or repair would be too interruptive of operations at a given time; perhaps parts are not readily available or, perhaps upgrades can only be addressed as part of large-scale renovation projects or integrated into new construction.

At Brock University, the main reason for deferring maintenance of real property or machinery is lack of sufficient funding. Manpower and expertise is not the issue. Interruption of operations is customarily initiated when needed repairs are required. And indeed, there are some projects that may be deferred because they are postponed until spaces are vacated due to completed construction (e.g. Mackenzie Chown being vacated in favor of the projected Cairns Complex). Furthermore, diligence and oversight over maintenance and repair at Brock University by Facilities Management is exceptional and extraordinary. This has been my personal observation and experience as BUFA Health and Safety Officer since 2006.

The point of this editorial, therefore, centres on lack of sufficient funding for infrastructure and machinery that is in need of repair, replacement, and necessary renewal. And if we recall our domestic, home economics analogy, we then enter into a complicated and politically sensitive area of discussion. Why and how do we individually defer needed maintenance of our own domestic dwellings, especially when we know fully where and when repairs and upgrades are required? Part of the answer(s) come(s) with debates concerning values and priorities; however, I believe that an objective “science” can sometimes assist in responding to these needs and priorities. And I will make a case for this at the end of this editorial.

To explain further, maintenance is usually deferred to a future budget cycle or postponed until funding becomes available. This can produce a whole host of differing interpretations. As we know from personal experience, deferring decisions may result in higher costs (“if we’d fixed the chimney flashing

Health & Safety Officer's Report *cont'd*

last year, we wouldn't have had to *also* replace the rotten roof"), asset failure (the washing machine simply "dies"; or the toilet no longer flushes) and, in some cases, health and safety implications (the insurance company won't insure my house any more because the decayed wooden exterior banisters no longer provide safety-support for my visitors). Decisions are easier when *we* are the budgetary officers and facilities managers of our own homes. In a large complex organization, however, facilities managers and engineers sometimes make distinctions between "maintenance" and "repairs" where financial officers do not. And this creates another host of differing interpretations. For example, accountants may incorporate maintenance and repairs as period costs requiring immediate expensing as opposed to capital improvements that become capitalized and depreciated over time; whereas facilities staff may alternatively define "maintenance" in terms of *retaining* the university's *functionality* in comparison to "repairs" that may *restore* the university's *functionality*.

As faculty members, I suggest that our concern should also be with priorities and repair that maintain and restore the *functionality* of our teaching and research workplaces. We should act as on-the-ground stewards of our workplace facilities and their functionality. We should be highly sensitized to this functionality, not only in terms of its maintenance and repair, but also simultaneously with the environmental health and safety conditions of that functioning facility. Since 2006, I have been a tireless advocate for the maintenance of hygiene, health, and safety of our working environment, because I have always directly connected our ability to function as academics and scholars with the functionality of the teaching and research facility. For this reason, the issue of deferred maintenance is an important one for considering the quality of our working conditions.

If we were to inspect this topic at any Ontario university, we would always encounter a large "backlog" of deferred projects. It is necessary, therefore to:

1. Identify why projects are being deferred
2. Recognize the scale of the problem(s)
3. Quantify and communicate the financial impact
4. Prioritize projects
5. Develop a strategy to secure funding
6. Conduct maintenance; complete repairs to avoid further backlog

As a result of my research at Brock University, I have learned that all six of these points have been addressed. I will elaborate on these. and in doing so, I will argue that #5 still requires some attention from my limited perspective at this time. My "perspective," however, is not just an opinion but comes to me after inquiring with various stakeholders at the university. I will add that the challenges associated with #5 are real and urgent; however, they extend beyond the university itself and include Brock University's relationship with the provincial government.

In October 2010, a rigorous inventory took place at Brock by Facilities Management to ascertain the deferred maintenance needs of the university. It was indeed shown that 50% of all buildings at Brock were between 30-50 years old; that some systems and components were at the end of their operating life and begging for renewal and/or replacement. In that report, it was acknowledged that sources of renewal funding were:

- (a) Annual operating budget allocations (i.e., standing operating accounts and one-time funding)
- (b) Provincial programs (i.e., annual funding plus two one-time provincial grants)

Health & Safety Officer's Report *cont'd*

Competing needs, as would be expected, are submitted as appeals when the annual budgets are developed. However, it was shown that major capital projects are identified by using a Long Term Capital Planning process, while deferred maintenance and renewal has no such process in place. This results in #4 and #6 above being implemented necessarily because critical items are identified, prioritized, and remediated. However, I would suggest that strategies should be bolstered to consider and further implementing #3 and #5: “quantify and communicate the financial impact, and then develop a strategy to secure funding – based on that quantification. In particular, I have not seen adequate evidence that project identification, scale recognition, prioritization, conduct and completion is *directly* connected to any formal hazard assessment based on immediate and direct health, safety, and hygienic environmental standards.

Therefore, my main concern, as health and safety Officer and Worker Chair of the Joint Health and Safety Committee, is whether or not deferred maintenance projects are being connected with any systematic health and safety hazard(s) assessment. I say this, acknowledging that I would not expect the university to budget and implement every single example of maintenance that is being deferred. In fact, we might recognize that as being, quite frankly, wasteful of budgetary and human resources. That degree of implementation is not my goal in composing this editorial. I believe that maintenance will always be deferred. Deferred maintenance will always be required, in good practice, to meet the budgetary goals of the institution, just as it is necessary to meet the budgetary goals of any family home. However, I am arguing that repair and maintenance assessments (points #1 – #6, above) must incorporate a formal hazard assessment model pertaining to hygiene, health, and environmental safety priorities. In addition, cost-benefit analyses that alert university leaders are essential in order to urgently attend to deferred maintenance as a particular budgetary priority. Without remediation and repair, the systems and facilities will simply break down and teaching and research will discontinue due to unplanned shutdowns. But continued plant operation is an obvious goal. Equally as obvious should be the environmental health and safety dangers that come along with deferring certain projects. These must be assessed and then identified as such.

Facilities Management has alerted administrators that we are entering a “critical time.” We need to increase our operating budget and investment program through:

- (a) Increased operating budget allocation, and
- (b) Increased government advocacy

In response, Facilities recommends the following specifically:

- (a) Develop a risk management and prioritization framework
- (b) Reduce deferred maintenance backlog by including this priority within the university's strategic plan
- (c) Continue to identify needs within the university's five-year Program of Project Plans and MTCU Renewal Program
- (d) Continue to monitor and identify specific renewal needs
- (e) Increase the annual maintenance and operating budget for these purposes
- (f) Initiate provincial government advocacy.

They then conclude that Brock is unprepared, at present, for the next generations of campus programs and activities. University supervisors and administrative leaders should heed this warning.

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We can see that those on the “front line” have recommended that increased assessment (a), planning (b), and monies (c) & (e) be allocated to this problem. At this point, I should add that the provincial government is well aware of the continued decay of their university buildings and systems. Universities, both individually and as a community continue to advocate for increased funding of their deferred maintenance backlogs. And here Brock is certainly no exception. But we can imagine the kinds of needs, in comparison, that a 19th century institution such as the University of Toronto faces when they assess the conditions of their aging facilities. And in fact, when reporting on Brock’s financial credit rating, DBRS (a globally recognized provider of credit rating opinions) rated Brock University’s management of deferred maintenance buildup as “strong.” In their rating details, they cited the following:

“The relatively young age of Brock University’s buildings (31.3 years) is below average in Ontario and points to manageable deferred maintenance needs. Based on the latest facilities condition assessment released by the Council of Ontario Universities, deferred maintenance at Brock is estimated at \$68 million, or 23% of replacement value.”

The relatively young age of our own university inclines me to further agree with the recommendations of our Facilities Management staff: *we are at a critical moment in our history at Brock University*. And I say this from the point of view of health, safety and environment – but equally from an urgent financial perspective. I believe that it is now, during the early stages, when we should incorporate cost-benefit analyses into our deferred maintenance plans and integrate systematic health and safety hazard assessments into our risk management plans. These assessments should be incorporated into all of our long-term strategic planning. They should motivate financial deliberations and their decisions. They should speak to the manner in which budgets are designed and schematized.

A “business case” needs to be made to financial decision makers, and risk potentials need to be communicated in terms of costs in all areas, including the health and safety debilitations of non-action or postponed action. Models that accomplish this do exist (for example, Geaslin’s Inverse-Square Rule for Deferred Maintenance). As an example of implementing this attitude to deferred maintenance, the University of California, Oakland, organizes projects into the following categories:

1. Currently critical (immediate action that returns facility to normal operation; accelerated deterioration; or *correct a cited safety hazard*)
2. Potentially critical (critical within one year, given above criteria)
3. Necessary, but not yet critical (requiring reasonably prompt attention to preclude predictable deterioration and *potential downtime*)

I emphasize the cited priorities, above, to “cited safety hazard” and “potential down-time,” either by unit or by *personnel* – the personnel, being my editorial concern. The administrators at California/Oakland insist that projects with immediate health and safety-related ramifications should be categorized as “currently critical.” And these are often the most directly connected with seemingly unrelated items such as protecting the building envelope, increasing energy efficiency, and even updating aesthetics, all of which have the effect of boosting employee productivity and student retention/attraction.

It has been established (by applying Geaslin’s Rule) that if you defer maintenance, Financial Officers and Chief Executive Officers can expect future expenses to be equal to, or greater than, the cost of the

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part squared - or 15 times the total repair cost! Clearly, we can insist that it is irresponsible for administrators to avoid an effective and systematic preventative maintenance program to minimize their facility's decay. I am not and never suggesting by this that administrators at Brock would not respond beyond the calls of their duty to any given situation in which maintenance is most desperately needed, as in cases of emergency, or as in cases of clear and obvious health and safety threats. I acknowledge a highly self-conscious and diligent leadership at Brock when it comes to these kinds of responses.

I am only making the case for increased consideration of assessing, prioritizing, planning and funding for maintenance, repair, and remediation of our buildings at Brock University. And that this should be done with increased attention to how deferred maintenance impacts the hygienic, safe, and healthy working conditions of all employees at Brock, including, obviously, the executive decision makers who supervise workers.

Therefore, prior to concluding, I want to answer an important financial question: is the university leadership looking for ways to increase revenue? Well, early intervention provides positive cash flow! There's a "no brainer." In fact, we would start recouping (between) a 30:1 (and) 40:1 positive cash flow with every early intervention, and roughly 15:1 in maintenance working hours (again, according to Geaslin's Rule). To earn money for the university, it would seem that we should indeed be finding ways to repair every maintenance event at their earliest detection. Because *any* other approach results in higher costs. And should failure occur, the cost usually jumps up to 30 times beyond what would have been the intervention cost.

As BUFA Faculty members, we should be actively involved in contacting provincial decision makers concerning these educational issues. We should take greater attention to the health and safety standards of our workplace. We should pressure our Deans as supervisors and prompt our Chief Administrators towards greater sensitivity to the cost-benefit, the workplace productivity, and the humane factors associated with these priorities.

As Chief administrative officers, two challenges must be confronted: (1) Understand the real implications and escalations of all budgetary and human resource costs that flow logically from neglecting these priorities; (2) Find and channel adequate funds towards these areas.

Meeting these challenges constitutes responsible university leadership.

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I am grateful to the following resources for information in this editorial:

- *Jana J. Madsen, managing editor of Buildings*
(<http://www.buildings.com/Magazine/tabid/3070/Default.aspx>)
- *Deferred maintenance, as found in Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia*
- *DBRS Credit Rating of Brock University, April 5, 2011*
- *Brock University Report to the Capital Projects and Facilities Committee*
- *Ontario Government Universities' Facilities Condition Assessment Program (2005)*
- *Geaslin's Inverse-Square Rule* (http://www.geaslin.com/inverse-square_rule.htm)

Grievance Officer's Report

Linda Rose-Krasnor

Tenure and Promotion: Departments and Centres consider applications for Tenure and Promotion during the fall term. Therefore, since the last Grievance Officer report, I have been busy consulting with Chairs and Directors about Tenure and Promotion procedures, advising candidates about their specific applications, and accompanying members to Information meetings. I also clarified interpretations of specific provisions of Article 21 for the Tenure and Promotion Committee, both at a meeting with the Committee on November 18, 2011 and in email correspondence with Academic Provost and VP Knuttli. Requirements for information related to the quality of peer review and restrictions on external referees were among the issues requiring clarification. There remains one outstanding appeal of last year's Tenure and Promotion Committee's decisions; the result of the Appeal Hearing Panel deliberation on this application is expected at the end of November.

Complaints: At the time of my last report, there were two outstanding BUFA complaints; both involved violations of Article 4.05 in which the University is obligated to consult with BUFA when it implements new policy provisions. One complaint related to policies of the Development and Donor Relations Office and has been resolved. The second complaint was based on Research Services' policy regarding applications for external grants and the period of informal resolution for this complaint remains extended until January 31, 2012. Two new complaints have been submitted to the University recently. One is based on violations of Articles 2, 7 and 8 of the Collective Agreement and focuses on the University's responsibility to maintain a respectful workplace free of harassment and discrimination. The second complaint involves interference by a Dean in a Chair's attempts to fulfill the Chair's departmental responsibilities, as specified in Article 27. Both of these complaints are currently in the informal resolution stage.

Consultations and negotiations for members: Over the past month, members have consulted with me on a wide variety of issues and, in many cases, I have had discussions on these issues with Varujan Gharaikhanian (Director of Faculty Relations), the relevant Faculty Dean, and/or University staff on the member's behalf. These issues have included allegations of conflict of interest, possible violations of the Respectful Workplace and Learning Environment Policy, performance reviews, account overdrafts, workload adjustments, Normal Department Workload Standards, TA performance difficulties, sabbatical eligibility and procedures, and eligibility for pregnancy leave income subsidy. Following the request of several members, the University and BUFA agreed to waive, temporarily, the one-year notice requirement for applications to the phased retirement plans.

Other matters: I organized a seminar on contracts that was open to all members, with the assistance of Shannon Lever. It was held on November 4, 2011. Two lawyers from Sack, Goldblatt, & Mitchell, BUFA's law firm, presented a brief overview of contract law and then, in that context, analyzed specific clauses from four contracts that the Administration has given to BUFA members for signature.

The Grievance Panel has continued to be a valuable resource on complex Grievance issues.

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BUFA Committee Members

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UNIVERSITY OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH and SAFETY

Jonathan Neufeld (Chair)

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UNIVERSITY PARKING APPEALS

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JOINT BUFA/UNIVERSITY ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEES

ADMINISTRATION of THE AGREEMENT

Linda Rose-Krasnor

Hans Skott-Myhre

ANOMALIES

Dawn Good

Miriam Richards

Jeanette Sloniowski

EMPLOYMENT EQUITY REVIEW COMMITTEE

Ifeanyi Ezeonu

Dolana Mogadime

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Sandra Felton

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PROVISION of ERGONOMIC WORK STATIONS

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Vlad Wojcik

TIMETABLING

Fanny Dolansky
Jon Radue
Ebru Ustundag

WORKLOAD TASK FORCE

Jeffrey Atkinson
Coral Mitchell

BUFA General Membership Meetings

Monday, December 12, 2011	12:00 to 2:00 p.m.	Sankey Chamber
Monday, February 13, 2012	10:00 to 12:00 p.m.	Sankey Chamber

BUFA Annual General Membership Meeting

Tuesday, May 22, 2012	12:00 to 2:00 p.m.	Sankey Chamber
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**Refreshments are served at all General Meetings.
In the interest of sustainability feel free to bring your own beverage cup.
We look forward to seeing you there.**

The Links

No, this column is not for the avid golfer. In my monthly online readings, I have come across items that may be of interest to our members. Some have already been sent and others are new. Collectively, they provide an array of issues and points of view regarding our work. I find that after hours of writing, I need short mental interludes that take me out of my mental ruts and turn to such things as mental snacks. The following is an annotated list of some relevant links. Feel free to email your suggestions for the next issue.

Post Secondary Education

Canadian Federation of Students has released *Public Education for the Public Good*, a report that provides their vision for Canada's post-secondary education system. The PDF of the full document can be retrieved by clicking [*Public Education for the Public Good: A National Vision for Canada's Post-Secondary Education System*](#).

Copyright

Michael Geist, a law professor at the University of Ottawa and Canada Research Chair in Internet and E-commerce Law, is prolific in providing data about our government's proposed changes to the copyright legislation, now named Bill C-11. His blog, <http://www.michaelgeist.ca/index.php>, is well worth a visit.

Academic Matters

While you have just received your latest print version of *Academic Matters*, complete with a biodegradable pen, it can also be found online at <http://www.academicmatters.ca/>. It is easily accessible and always thought provoking. Their link, "web exclusives" provides interesting commentaries, including Todd Dufresne's on SSHRC <http://www.academicmatters.ca/2010/11/to-sshrc-or-not-to-sshrc/>.

The Brock News – Media Talk

In the next issue I will be addressing the increasing need to be media savvy. In the interim, find out more about what our on-campus colleagues are doing by going to *The Brock News* column, *Media Talk*, <http://www.brocku.ca/brock-news/?cat=6>. It's a great way to get to know our colleagues virtually and to appreciate the wide range of exciting work being done.

Umbrellas and Siblings

Visiting what is posted on CAUT, <http://www.caut.ca/home.asp?page=432>, OCUFA, <http://ocufa.on.ca/>, and sibling faculty associations, such as Queens University Faculty Association, <http://www.qufa.ca/>, can keep us up to date. Check out their virtual *Forum*.

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Open Mike

Where is Brock?



This is my 8th year at Brock since I moved from a university in Singapore and during these years I have been invited to speak all over the world as a featured, plenary and keynote speaker in such places as Bali, Singapore, Korea, New Zealand, Turkey, Hong Kong, Japan, Thailand, Dubai (UAE), UK, and of course Canada. In ALL of these places except for Canada, I have been asked the same question from delegates: “Where is Brock”? Each time I faithfully gave them a geographical lesson on southern Ontario and where St. Catharines is and they nodded as I also included that it was about an hour from Toronto, a place they all recognize. But I just now realize they were not really asking about Brock’s geographical location; rather they were asking where Brock is academically!

Why my sudden realization? Well I just read Brock News, Oct 28th, 2011 the article title: Maclean’s 2011: “The good, the bad and the ugly”. In the article <http://www.brocku.ca/brock-news?p=13183> it states that Maclean’s University Rankings this week placed Brock at the *bottom* [italics added] of its Overall Ranking list for comprehensive universities? The next part came to me as a real shock: “Knuttila says it was not a surprise” and he is Vice-President, Academic of Brock University; my university. The article continues: “Brock is a school in transition”. Yes, we seem to have been in transition for some time now as I have been hearing this as an excuse for inaction for the past 8 years from senior administrators for issues they do not seem to be able to face or fix.

The article continues and states: “University President Jack Lightstone said this year’s Overall Ranking result is the inevitable price of growing into a new category”. So now we have the two top senior administrators who seem happy with mediocrity. So, to answer the question “Where is Brock”? We can see, right at the bottom, and the people we pay to look after the place and guide our future seem to be very pleased with such a ranking instead of giving Maclean’s hell and/or themselves for their own failure. Why are they not asking such questions as: “Why are we not number 1”? And “How can we get to number 1”? Of course, if we continue to make endless cuts to programs across the university in the name of saving money, we will never move from the bottom of this Ranking. Maybe we need less administrators and more faculty! Now, I feel even more embarrassed when asked “Where is Brock”?

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Quoting?

Thomas Farrell's "Open Mike" submission reminds me of a comment attributed to Groucho Marx, "I don't want to belong to any club that will accept people like me as a member". In the movie, *The Associate*, the character, Laurel Ayres, played by Whoopie Goldberg, said something similar about those on Wall Street. Farrell is correct to question our place in the academic community. My peeve is related to the overall placing of universities by *Maclean's Magazine*. Personally, I ceased my subscription to *Maclean's Magazine* in the early 1990's after reading their university rankings. I don't want to support, through purchase, any form of publication that relegates itself as judge and jury over my field. I catch up on this reading at my dentist's and doctor's offices. Having been at a high scoring university, I know that it is more about the X factor, as in name recognition, in that case, the StFX ring.

Baudrillard writes extensively about dangers of the map replacing the reality (simulacra) and as Scieszka makes this explicit in his picture book, *The True Story of the Three Little Pigs*, it is about framing. Our President, Hans Skott-Myhre, also questions the framing of universities and I take note of #6 in Harvey Weinstein's article on the criteria of an innovative university, "It measures its performance against understood international metrics of excellence". I ask, "Who has given *Maclean's Magazine* such a role"? In their book, *Collateral Damage*, Nichols and Berliner warn of the dangers of high stakes testing and, national ratings are indeed high stakes. Decisions regarding criteria are complex and their choices can unjustifiably include and exclude. Weinstein's call for "understood international metrics of excellence" is flawed epistemologically, ontologically and axiologically. For example, "metrics" is one but not the only way of determining efficacy. To emphasize only this form of assessment demonstrates epistemological bigotry.

Farrell asks, "Where is Brock"? I ask, "What is *Maclean's Magazine*"? We've been framed!

Joe Norris - Editor

WHAT'S THE BUZZ?

November:

- Laurie Morrison - CAUT's Librarian's Conference
- Larry Savage – meeting of the Ontario Federation of Labour
- Kathy Belicki and Shannon Lever - CAUT's annual conference in Ottawa
- Hans Skott-Myhre - initial meeting of Occupy Niagara. He will report back as the movement unfolds.

Communications Commentary

Joe Norris



As foreshadowed in my last commentary, “Times are a Changin’...”. However, after a number of attempts at giving the BUFA Forum a new look, struggles with the software have kept us using this format for at least another issue. That said, Thomas Farrell inaugurates the “Open Mike” aka “Letters to the Editor” column. He reminds us of our stewardship responsibilities with a request that we do not accept the status quo, but always strive to improve our academic prowess and success.

“The Links”, another new feature, provides annotated links to items of interest. Since the BUFA Forum is now solely electronic, a quick click will take you to an insightful read. We encourage you to make submissions to the “Open Mike” and “The Links” columns to provide greater breath to our ongoing discussions regarding our workplace, it’s function and conditions.

Our President, Hans Skott-Myhre, has sent a letter to a number of Members of Parliament, communicating our position and supporting the positions of many other national educational organizations regarding the upcoming changes to the copyright legislation as proposed in Bill C-11. This responds to the request of James Turk, Executive Director of the Canadian Association of University Teachers to suggest an amendment to the “digital locks” articles.

Your Communications Committee has been tasked with the responsibility to completely redesign the Website, with an eye to both form and function. I have perused sibling sites, corresponded with other faculty association communication officers, met with some commercial designers and faculty members. The communications committee will entertain three proposals on December 19 and, based upon submissions, will make recommendations to the executive. While our new design construction will begin in January, the existing site will be maintained until the new one is complete.

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