

BUFA VOICE

Message from the President



Linda Rose-Krasnor, BUFA President

On behalf of the BUFA Executive, I would like to welcome everyone back to Brock, as we start a new academic term and the 2017 calendar year. It looks as though it will be a year of significant transitions and events in the broader political domain, as well as within the University. At the provincial level, the implications of a new post-secondary funding formula and strategic mandate negotiations will affect the way that Brock

operates in as yet uncertain ways. Within Brock, we will hopefully see the conclusion of a successful and open search for a new University President, as well as the selection of new Vice-President Research and Dean of the Faculty of Education. We expect to see progress in Senate and other initiatives focusing on enhancing Indigenous education and services at the University. This year BUFA will negotiate a new Collective Agreement with the University and we intend that those negotiations will result in improvements to our working conditions, consistent with our core values of educational quality, academic freedom, shared academic decision making, and enhancing community. At our next General Membership meeting, the BUFA Executive will present a negotiating mandate for your approval. This mandate will guide the Negotiating Team and the Executive during the bargaining process. It is therefore very important that you attend this meeting (10am-12pm on Thursday, February 9th) to discuss and vote on the mandate.

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BUFA General Membership Meeting

«2017 MANDATE APPROVAL»

**Thursday, February 9, 2017
10am-12pm in the Pond Inlet**

Quorum Required – Bring a BUFA Friend!

**A light brunch will be available*



News and Views

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Keep up-to-date on what's happening with your faculty association through social media.

Twitter: @BUFABrock

Facebook: search "Brock University Faculty Association"

Editor: Kathryn Belicki

Editorial Assistant: Joy Werner

www.BUFA.ca

Message from the President *(continued from cover page)*

On page 5 of this issue of the BUFA Voice, you will find an article by Professor Barbara Sainty explaining the University's financial position, with specific attention to the question of whether Brock has a surplus or deficit. BUFA is very fortunate to have someone as knowledgeable, experienced, and insightful as Barbara in the role of BUFA Budget Advisor and, indeed, we are the envy of many other Ontario Faculty Associations. I thought it might be useful to add some colour commentary to Barbara's analysis, in order to provide a political context related to the points she makes. This commentary follows her article. Please let us know if you have any questions or comments.

Preparation for Collective Bargaining Well Underway

Larry Savage, BUFA Chief Negotiator



Before coming to Brock, I worked in the labour relations field and sat through many a bargaining session. Since arriving at Brock, I've taught the collective bargaining simulation course for the Centre for Labour Studies many times, served as an elected representative on several BUFA Executives, and presented and published research on faculty associations. Nevertheless, the last few months I've spent with the Negotiating Team preparing BUFA for collective bargaining have been truly eye opening and even inspiring.

Our BUFA member survey yielded a record high participation rate, thanks in part to the great outreach work of our newly established Contract Action Team. Between October and December of last year, members of the BUFA Negotiating Team met with over 30 academic units in order to hear about their priorities for collective bargaining. We also held a series of thematic meetings for Chairs, Directors and Librarian Heads, members of equity-seeking groups, and LTAs and ILTAs. Through these exercises, *it became crystal clear just how much BUFA members care about the student experience and the success of the Brock community more generally*. Many of our colleagues who participated in department and thematic meetings or wrote comments as part of the member survey crafted their interventions in a way that linked the Faculty Association's bargaining priorities to enriching student learning, strengthening collegial self-governance, or advancing our collective research capacity for the benefit of the broader community. This dynamic inspired your Negotiating Team to think creatively about ways to advance the interests of the entire Brock community through the collective bargaining process. We are excited to begin work with the BUFA Executive to draft a bargaining mandate that will help to achieve this goal.

I can tell you without reservation that your BUFA Negotiating Team is working exceedingly well together. Each member is good humoured, dedicated, open-minded, conscientious, and hard working. I look forward to our meetings each week and I have every confidence that our team will be fully prepared as we head into formal collective bargaining in April 2017.

Negotiating Team	
Larry Savage	Chief Negotiator
Michelle Webber	Deputy Chief Negotiator
Martin Kusy	Team Member
Beatrice Ombuki-Berman	Team Member
Carmela Patrias	Team Member
Nancy Taber	Team Member
Cathy van Ingen	Team Member
Heather Whipple	Team Member
Linda Rose-Krasnor	Ex-Officio Member
Shannon Lever	Administrative Support

In the weeks and months to come, your BUFA Negotiating Team will continue preparing for collective bargaining. Members will be asked to approve a bargaining mandate at our next general membership meeting on February 9, 2017, from 10am to 12pm in the Pond Inlet. Many hours of research, drafting of contract clauses, negotiating, and problem solving still lie ahead. That said, we have definitely started off on the right foot.

We are genuinely excited about the prospect of achieving a new Collective Agreement that will help to actualize Brock's strategic priority of becoming a preferred place to both work and study.



Issues in Providing Accommodations for Students with Anxiety Disorders

Kathryn Belicki, BUFA Communications Director



I teach PSYC 1F90 with an enrollment of over 1300 students. One of the course assignments is seminar participation valued at 20% of the course grade. For most seminars, students read and discuss material not taught in lecture—in fact, this material is not on the exam. We make clear to students that our seminars are not tutorials and that their purpose is to develop such “boardroom” skills as behaving respectfully in groups, effectively communicating (both speaking and listening), regulating one’s emotions (we deliberately assign some emotionally challenging material), navigating conflict, and being able to think critically “on one’s feet.”

In recent years, we have had a surge of students register with student services as having a formal diagnosis of anxiety disorder, typically social anxiety. With the backing of student services, some of those students have asked us to waive the requirement to participate in seminars and instead allow them to submit written answers to the discussion questions we provide. We have said no.

To be clear, the law clearly requires the university to accommodate them, but I would argue that waiving this part of the course requirement is not an appropriate accommodation. In fact, from what we know about anxiety, it is not even a helpful intervention for the student.

To state the obvious, anxiety has its roots in fear. Fear is an emotion that conveys danger and mobilizes us to escape, when possible, or freeze and reduce our visibility (to a predator, for example). Therefore, the desire to escape and avoid the stressor is inherent in the experience of anxiety. However, there is a simple truism: the more we avoid the stressor, the greater the anxiety. Therefore, simply put, to waive the requirement of participating in seminar is to enable the problem.

Anxiety is one of the most treatable of the psychological disorders and all the psychological treatment approaches that are effective share a common feature: safe exposure to the stressor. How do we make exposure “safe”? That varies with the individual, but, generally speaking, safe exposure involves gradual exposure while providing support. In the seminar context that might mean starting with the goal of simply having the person attend, and then gradually increasing their involvement with perhaps initially simple responses like saying, “I agree.” Seminar leaders could be instructed to initially avoid putting the person on the spot. Other measures can reduce anxiety: I have in the past rescheduled a seminar into a larger room because a tightly packed room exacerbated a student’s anxiety.

However, when we refused to waive seminar participation, it wasn’t on such therapeutic grounds. Writing out answers to discussion questions was not an equivalent assignment—in fact, it would convey an advantage to the student because it would be easier. But more importantly, it pedagogically is a very different assignment.

The point of accommodations is not to change a course requirement but to remove, as much as possible, obstacles to achieving the course requirement.

I recently attended a day long training workshop on the AODA with a lawyer who is a disabilities activist. Over lunch I raised our dilemma with students presenting with social anxiety and she was surprised that the suggestion had been made by student services that a course requirement be waived. She reiterated that the university had to accommodate, but that did not entail removing a pedagogically sound requirement.

So how do we accommodate social anxiety? First, you may well notice that I keep saying *the university* must accommodate. It does not have to entirely fall on an individual professor’s shoulders to accommodate. One accommodation the university could offer would be psychological treatment for social anxiety by a counsellor trained in this specific problem. There are excellent treatment protocols, including group-based (hence cost-efficient) approaches.

However, there are also accommodations that professors can make. Seminar leaders can be taught simple techniques to minimize anxiety such as I describe above, but also strategies like breaking groups up into smaller groups of 2 or 3 for short discussions, which can ease anxious students into discussion. Perhaps the grading scheme can be adjusted so that the participation grade of a student with an anxiety disorder is based on the best 50% of seminars, rather than all seminars. This is just an initial list to get you thinking of ways of accommodating.

As a bottom-line, accommodation involves removing obstacles, not removing course requirements. Nor does it involve it guaranteeing success—we are not able to guarantee that every student, disabled or not, can successfully meet our course requirements.

On a concluding note, we have been keeping track of the students who have self-identified to us in PSYC 1F90 as having diagnoses of anxiety, and most are performing very well in seminar.



What To Do About the Rising Impact of Student Accommodations?

Deborah McPhee, BUFA Health and Safety Officer

As you may have read in Kathy Belicki's article, there are a lot of instances of accommodation for students that are thrust on us, without consultation, and it can lead to considerable frustration on our part. The law clearly states that we must accommodate for disabilities, but it also says that consultation is required between the parties. As it stands, we are advised by the SAS office that a student requires accommodation and we are told what that accommodation will be. The student may then come into our class demanding that a particular accommodation be made, where in fact, another alternative may exist that may suit both parties. In many instances, we just accept the stated accommodation without question.

There are perhaps some faculty on campus who are not familiar with their obligations and rights under the AODA, and as such, you are encouraged to complete the [AODA training](#) which is posted on our university's portal. This is a legislation-mandated training that all employees must complete. You may have forgotten about the requirements if you completed the training a while ago, so you may want to consider reviewing the training modules again.

In any case, there are multiple demands on our time, and the number of accommodations for students is certainly on the rise. We must respect fulfilment of accommodations, but we have some say on what accommodations might be reasonable. As I mentioned above, consultation is required between the parties, and true consultation rarely takes place. The law also states that even though you may have 20 students with the same disability, the accommodations might be quite unique for each individual. Some of our large courses on campus may have upwards of 80 individual accommodations.

If you feel that a recommended accommodation for a student has been what you consider to be unreasonable, I encourage you to send me an [email](#) telling me about the circumstances. We would like to find out what is happening with this so that we can work towards better resolutions. We are in the process of meeting with the Interim Provost and Vice-President Academic to discuss these matters and your examples will be helpful. All e-mails will be treated confidentially at the executive level.

So what can we do about the rising impact of student accommodations? To learn more about AODA and associated issues, BUFA will be hosting a Special Membership Meeting on February 15 with one of our lawyers, Cathy Lace, talking through accommodations in the university sector. We encourage you to come out and learn more about accommodations as prescribed under the AODA as well as your rights as faculty under the Act.

I look forward to hearing from you and/or meeting you at one of our upcoming gatherings!



Special Membership Meeting with guest speaker Cathy Lace, Partner from Golblatt Partners LLP, to discuss issues in making course accommodations for students with disabilities on:

Wednesday, February 15, 2017
1:30-3pm, in Thistle 241!



Surplus or Deficit? What's the Real Picture?



Barbara Sainty, BUFA Budget Advisor

It can be very confusing to understand Brock's current financial position as, based on budgeted information, there is much doom and gloom. Enrolments are down (Memo from Brian Hutchings to SAC, December 6, 2016). The **2016-17**

Budget Report forecasts a decrease in government grants (p. 32) and an increase in personnel costs (p. 40). However, in each of the past two years, when a deficit has been budgeted, we have ended the year with a surplus. In the 2015-16 fiscal year, we were budgeting a deficit of \$3,937,000 and ended up with a surplus of \$4,510,000 (**2015-16 Annual Report**, Brock University, p. 36). The difference of \$8,447,000 is significant!

How did it happen?

(000's)	Funding Basis	
	Actual (2015-16)	Budget (2015-16)
Revenue		
Student fees	152,369	151,030
Grant revenue	93,326	91,014
Internal chargebacks	7,522	7,690
Other revenue	48,490	47,359
Total revenue	301,707	297,093
Personnel costs	(195,227)	(199,967)
Other operating costs	(101,970)	(101,063)
Total operating costs	(297,197)	(301,030)
Mitigation target		3,937
Funding surplus	4,510	-

As indicated in the above table, revenues were higher than budgeted and expenses were lower. In order to achieve this, Brock instituted a number of mitigation targets that were successful. (Details on specifics can be found on pgs. 36 and 37 of Brock's **2015-16 Annual Report**.)

The budget is developed in advance and represents Brock's commitment to sustain its operations based on its estimated intake. However, the ending amount (*Funding surplus*) is no longer an estimate but a picture of what actually happened by the end of the year.

Furthermore, remember that our budget is Brock's best estimate of costs and revenues at the time it is prepared. However, we know that there will be (many) differences from budget.

So can we spend the surplus?

The surplus has been allocated to a number of initiatives.

(000's)	Actual
Funding surplus	4,510
Transfer to contingency reserve	(1,300)
Transfer to strategic initiative fund	(1,200)
Transfer to capital and infrastructure projects reserve	(1,999)
Net funding surplus	11
Opening balance	11
Unrestricted cash (year end)	22

Details about each of these can be found in the **2015-16 Annual Report** (p. 44).

What about 2016-17? The **2016-17 Budget Report** again forecasts a deficit (or mitigation target) of \$3,920,000 (p. 26).

(000's)	Funding Basis	
	Budget (2016-17)	Budget (2015-16)
Revenue		
Student fees	158,610	151,030
Grant revenue	92,358	91,014
Internal chargebacks	7,752	7,690
Other revenue	47,481	47,359
Total revenue	306,201	297,093
Personnel costs	(204,169)	(199,967)
Other operating costs	(105,952)	(101,063)
Total operating costs	(310,121)	(301,030)
Mitigation target	3,920	3,937

Surplus or Deficit? *(continued from page 5)*

It is difficult to say what our position will be at the end of the fiscal year. In the 2016-17 budget, there is a projected increase in total revenue. However, according to the **2016-17 Trimester 1 Report** (p.9), we did not obtain the enrolment

numbers used in the original budget. Furthermore, there is a significant increase in budgeted operating costs for the year.

So, stay tuned! Understanding the numbers is never an easy task (and keeps me employed!) but don't be afraid to ask questions.



Budgets, Choices, and Priorities

Linda Rose-Krasnor, BUFA President

Every budget contains choices. Every choice reflects priorities and values.

Investment in new buildings



Constructing big buildings seems to hold a special allure to Brock Administrators and the Board. The proliferation of campus buildings continue, in spite of its strain on, according to the University, our overstretched resources, projected reduced enrolment, declining revenues, and increasing expenses. Although some of the capital expenses of new buildings come from the government or donations, the University itself is responsible for substantial portions of the building costs. Typically, we must borrow to fulfill this commitment and/or take the money from other budget priorities. The new LINC Innovation Atrium is a case in point. The total capital cost of the Atrium is approximately \$19 million. The province will contribute 8.5 million and approximately \$3 million is expected to come from donations. The remaining approximately \$7.5 million required for this building will be taken both from the University surplus and funds that had been set aside for the deferred maintenance of other areas of the University.

Beyond the costs of building the new structures, both in capital funds and financing charges, there will be ongoing claims on our operating budgets for maintenance and overhead costs (cleaning, heating, etc.). The full extent of these costs is rarely fully specified in advance, as we saw with the Cairns building. This drain on our budgets will negatively affect the operations of other areas of the University, given little expectation for increased operating funds. This is especially true when new buildings offer minor total increases in teaching space, in combination with an expected enrolment decline. The new Atrium space, for example, will be dedicated to commercialization and research functions.

So, if the University says it does not have enough money to spend on upgrading technology or replacing retired faculty or other needs, you can remember that much of our budget was spent on new buildings – money that could have been spent in other ways. For example, as we heard at Senate in December, the University took \$3000 from BUSU in order to keep the library open extra hours during exams because the Library didn't have the budget to do so without the Student Union paying directly for this service. When you hear about such situations, you too might wonder about the factors driving the University's budget priorities.

Investment in people (and which ones)

Over the last ten years, Brock has seen large increases in the number of students. We have seen noticeable increases in the number of senior administrators. However, we have not seen an increase in the number of full-time members of the teaching faculty. Indeed, there has been a small but unexpected decrease! We had 573 BUFA members in 2007, 568 members in 2012 and 569 members in 2017 – a net decline of four teaching faculty while there has been an increase of approximately 1900 students over the same 10 year period. Further, many of us have also experienced the loss of support staff at the Department and Centre level, while witnessing growth in the staffing of the offices of Deans and other senior administrators. These spending choices reflect the Administration's priorities in human resource budgets.

We have had two years of substantial surpluses following on the heels of doom-and-gloom budgets. Those surpluses mean that there is money available for spending, for example, as seen in the funding of the Innovation Atrium. Further, as Barbara Sainty pointed out above, the University has set aside funds for discretionary spending in the form of \$1.2 million into "strategic initiative" and \$1.3 million into "contingency reserve" funds. We recognize that there have been significant decreases in government funding, new funding formulas are on the horizon, and we face a likely period of increased competition for a declining student applicant pool. Yet, it is just at these very times of possible financial contraction, that we need to be most reflective and careful about the spending choices that we make and the values upon which these priority decisions are made.

Calendar of Events at Brock and in the Community

(Visit us online for more information)



Save the Date: Membership Meeting
February 9 2017 - Pond Inlet
 10am - 12pm



www.BUFA.ca

Show your union pride...
BUFA GEAR
 Place your order NOW!



DAYS OF WINE & CHOCOLATE

WEEKENDS IN FEBRUARY FROM 11AM TO 5PM
 Explore the decadently sweet and savoury art of wine and chocolate pairing. Visit the Wineries of Niagara-on-the-Lake and taste over 20 VQA wines matched with chocolate-infused dishes.

BUFA

2017-2018 EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

ELECTIONS

COMING SOON!



Reading Week
 February 20-24th, 2017



2016-2017 Executive Committee & Staff Contact List

President	Linda Rose-Krasnor Psychology	Extension 3870 linda.rose-krasnor@brocku.ca
Vice President	Michelle Webber Sociology	Extension 4411 mwebber@brocku.ca
Past President	Dawn Good Psychology	Extension 3869 dgood@brocku.ca
Treasurer	Jennifer Li Accounting	Extension 4238 jennifer.li@brocku.ca
Grievance Officer	Nancy Taber Graduate & Undergraduate Education	Extension 4218 ntaber@brocku.ca
Health and Safety Officer	Deborah McPhee OBHREE	Extension 3908 dmcphée@brocku.ca
Communications Director	Kathryn Belicki Psychology	Extension 3873 kbelicki@brocku.ca
Equity Officer	Tamari Kitossa Sociology	Extension 5672 tkitossa@brocku.ca
Professional Librarian Representative	Tim Ribaric Library Systems & Technologies	Extension 5358 tribaric@brocku.ca
Non-Tenured Faculty Representative	Simon Black Labour Studies	Extension 5348 sblack2@brocku.ca
Member-at-large	Bozidar Mitrovic Physics	Extension 3415 mitrovic@brocku.ca
Member-at-large	Debra Harwood Graduate & Undergraduate Education	Extension 5873 dharwood@brocku.ca
Executive Assistant	Shannon Lever BUFA Office, D402	Extension 4643 slever@brocku.ca
Administrative Coordinator	Joy Werner BUFA Office, D402	Extension 3268 jwerner@brocku.ca
Administrative Assistant	Laurie Jansen BUFA Office, C409	Extension 5378 ljansen@brocku.ca