

Faculty Times

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President's Report

No university is an island

by James Compton

"Always historicize." I was reminded of Frederic Jameson's famous advice recently as I pondered the significance of our recently completed round of collective bargaining. Our Negotiating Team, led by Chief Negotiator Mike Dawes, served us well to be sure. Their dedication, together with the volunteer efforts of many faculty members, and the collective resolve of our membership, staved off an aggressive set of administration proposals that, if accepted, would have redefined our working lives at Western. As reported in previous editions of [Faculty Times](#), they consti-

tuted a set of related proposals that, taken together, would have instituted performance management techniques alien to Canadian academic culture and best practices.

During negotiations, many faculty colleagues expressed genuine concern and disbelief to me. A regime of centralized control and micro-management runs counter to collegial governance and would harm scholarship, they said. Why would the administration propose such a thing? Who is driving it? Who is responsible? My response then, as it is now, was to reframe the question away from the personal. Instead of asking who is responsible I suggest we try to understand the extent to which our negotiation experience at Western is part of a broader set of changes affecting universities around the world.

In what follows, I sketch out a rough picture of this context, moving between the international and the local. Western, as it turns out, is not alone; and in this sense we may view recent failed attempts to micro manage faculty as connected to a much broader set of changes that are putting quality education and research at risk.

The Bologna process

In 1999, 29 European Ministers of Education signed the Bologna Declaration. It committed signatory nations to the development of a European area of higher education. The so-called Bologna Process sought to promote student and labour mobility, and to foster efficiencies and measurable outcomes across the European

education sector. One of the more concrete results of the reforms was the creation of a European-wide system based on three cycles: a three-year BA, a two-year MA and three-year PhD. The new cycles are further integrated through a standardized credit system, which, it must be said, is an obvious benefit to students. This public good notwithstanding, the Bologna Strategy ushered in a series of linked changes of questionable public value.

The Bologna Process institutionalized an already developing shift away from a traditional academic teaching and research model of independent knowledge-seeking to an instrumental, market model focused on measurable learning outcomes designed to serve a 'knowledge economy' that is ostensibly more competitive and 'flexible' than the one that came before it. In this Post-Fordist global economy, universities are being re-imagined as having a central economic role in the production of a mobile and flexible educated workforce; and in this sense the Bologna Process was fully compatible with the European Union's Lisbon Strategy to modernize the European Union's post-industrial economy through research and development. The Bologna Process's rhetoric of social inclusion and harmony notwithstanding, under the new model, assessment of universities would be governed primarily by utilitarian economic standards of measurable outcomes and efficiency. Facts before values. Dickens' infamous headmaster, Mr. Thomas Gradgrind, would be pleased.

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The utilitarian market model

Writing in a recent issue of *Time & Society*, Oili-Helena Ylijoki argues that the growing market orientation of universities has had a profound impact. "Following this doctrine, university management has changed from the previous collegial model towards a managerialistic model emphasizing the need to transfer ideals and practices from the private sector to the public sector, including higher education institutions."

Nowhere is this more true than in the United Kingdom, where the coalition Tory-Liberal Democrat government has cut direct block-grant funding and imposed a market-oriented funding model on universities and colleges. Following the recommendations of the [Browne Report](#), the United Kingdom government's new funding model is driven by student choice – where students are reduced and re-imagined, first and foremost, as consumers, not knowledge-seekers in need of expert training and mentoring.

The impulse is not new. As Simon Head explains in a recent New York Review of Books [article](#), systems of bureaucratic state control and oversight merged with the managerial theories of the private sector decades ago. Reforms first instituted by Margaret Thatcher's Tories, and later extended by the Labour governments of Tony Blair and Gordon Brown, created the Higher Education Funding Council of England. Under this regime, academic work, from the hard sciences to the arts and humanities, is subjected to centralized review using standardized Key Performance Indicators. Both Head and Ylijoki argue that these changes create an enormous strain on faculty as they are thrust into direct competition with each other for a shrinking share of the research funding pie and secure academic positions. The managerial buzzwords of accountability, efficiency, productivity and cost-

effectiveness predominate, not the enduring standards of quality scholarship. For the Just-in-Time Professoriate, time is money.

This performance metric is taken to extremes at Texas A&M University. Here the efficiency of professors is assessed by comparing revenue derived through their teaching (tuition) and research grants with their salaries. As first reported in the *Wall Street Journal*, under this reductionist system Chester Dunning, a respected Professor of Russian literature and history with numerous teaching awards to his credit, fails the test. He's considered inefficient because his personal balance sheet is in the red. Despite his sterling record in teaching and research, he doesn't always have a sufficient number of student bums in the seats of his classes. Therefore, his work simply doesn't add up.

**For the Just-in-Time
Professoriate, time
is money.**

Canadian Gothic

As we've seen, the funding model for universities across Europe and North America has changed dramatically over the past few decades. Policies of deregulation and privatization have weakened state support for public services generally. Universities, in particular, have suffered a decline in direct government funding. In Canada, federal government Public Sector Education (PSE) cash transfers, as a percentage of GDP, slid from 0.50% in 1984 to 0.15% in 2005 before rising slightly to 0.22% in 2009, according to data provided by the Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT).

This is not to say that Canadian universities are broke. In fact for

many, including UWO, the opposite is true. The drop in PSE cash transfers has been replaced by other increased revenue streams: tuition, corporate partnerships and endowments. Indeed, according analysis done by the CAUT, operating revenue at most Canadian universities has been on the rise since 1990, and coffers are relatively flush. The single largest category of increased spending at Canadian universities is capital financing, usually spent on things like new buildings, not faculty. Conversely, academic-rank salaries as a percentage of operating expenditures have plummeted from roughly 39% in 1990 to just over 29% in 2009.

Revenue is up, but its nature and mix has changed fundamentally. Decreased state cash transfers have amplified the importance of tuition income and the need to attract students, now viewed increasingly (and inevitably) as consumers. Competition for this revenue stream has become fierce and is reflected in such things as the Maclean's university survey and capital spending, as universities try to woo students with sparkling new sports and leisure facilities. The brand slogan "Best student experience at a research intensive university" is a gloss on this more fundamental change.

In Ontario, the push for a more centralized planning system for universities and colleges is championed by the Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario (HEQCO). A 52 page [report](#) released by HEQCO last October calls for a system of specialization to be imposed on universities and colleges by the province in the name of achieving greater efficiencies. A two-tier system is envisioned that would separate research-intensive universities from teaching-only institutions. Local autonomy would be lost while funding decisions would become subject to whether universities met pre-determined targets based on a set of Key

Performance Indicators that undervalue the liberal arts and social sciences.

Resistance is not futile!

A centralized, utilitarian university system is not inevitable. Resistance has taken many forms. Students have taken to the streets in England to voice their opposition to Tory-Lib Dem policies. At the University of California campus in Los Angeles, students and professors participated in sit-ins and walkouts to defend

public education, after cuts and layoffs sparked widespread anger. Closer to home, the Lakehead University Faculty Association (LUFA) successfully challenged the imposition of four furlough days on faculty in December 2009. An arbitrator struck down the plan saying it violated the collective agreement.

And a good thing, too. Because collective agreements matter. They matter because they are not simply self-interested documents. They matter because, increasingly, they form a

nodal point of resistance against the instrumental interests of money and political power. It's in this context that we can truly see the significance of our last round of bargaining.

James Compton is UWOFA President and Associate Professor, Faculty of Information and Media Studies.

2010 faculty negotiations wrap-up Strike preparedness is the key

by Mike Dawes, Chief Negotiator and Aniko Varpalotai, Deputy Chief Negotiator

Our newest Collective Agreement is still being edited as we write this retrospective on our most recent round of bargaining. It is useful to reflect on the key issues, lessons learned, and the role of the bargaining unit membership. While the next Faculty negotiations are three years away, the Librarians and Archivists are gearing up for the renewal of their collective agreement, which expires on June 30, 2011. Despite our goal to amalgamate the two bargaining units within UWOFA, the Employer continues to stonewall on this attempt to harmonize the parallel collective agreements and facilitate a better use of each of our resources in this regard.

While some aspects of labour relations on campus have improved since Faculty certified more than twelve years ago, the entrenchment of strike brinkmanship is of concern to many members. The success of the most recent gruelling negotiations can be attributed in large part to effective UWOFA leadership, solid communications strategy and the overwhelming support and contributions of UWOFA members across this large and diverse campus. Mem-

bers clearly understand that the Negotiating Team is only as strong and effective as the solidarity demonstrated by the Bargaining Unit membership.

Even the most mild mannered UWOFA members found such draconian and ill-conceived proposals hard to reconcile.

It takes a lot of effort and commitment to engage and mobilize a campus population with the size and scope of UWO. Membership meetings enabled the airing of a diversity of views and facilitated healthy debate as we reviewed the members' goals against the Employer's proposals. The backlash heard in response to some of the more insulting and punitive proposals should have been

anticipated by the administrators, yet many hours were spent rebuffing and ultimately removing these from the negotiating table. Other challenges came to the table thanks to government legislation or pressure with respect to Bill 168 (workplace safety, harassment) and proposed wage freezes in the public sector. The Employer attempted to shoe-horn their own controls into the collective agreement on the back of these government interventions. Proposed zero-tolerance policies on all intimate relationships on this large campus, a central unelected administration disciplinary and assessment body, and zero pay increases were also pushed off the table as we moved towards our strike deadline. Such extreme proposals are not conducive to reasonable negotiations and compromises. Even the most mild mannered UWOFA members found such draconian and ill-conceived proposals hard to reconcile: no other faculty agreement in the country had such language – why should we? The Employer's proposals were widely seen as an opportunistic and intolerable attempt to impose centralized control and performance management, arguably worse than the

PACFED proposals of 1997 that led to our union certification drive in 1998 (a description of the PACFED controversy can be found in David Heap and Marjorie Ratcliffe's article in the September 2010 issue of *Faculty Times*). These recent proposals would have rolled back key aspects of collegial self-governance and peer assessment, instituting a level of central surveillance and scrutiny of members' lives and work more to be expected inside totalitarian regimes.

In the end, thanks to pressures within and outside our campus gates, a reasonable collective agreement was achieved. Neither side got everything they were seeking – we never do. But one wonders why some of the changes in our collective agreement could not have been achieved with less time, less stress, and fewer human and financial resources. The Employer's proposals in this round, though breathtaking in their audacity, broad scope, and punitive invention, are a continuation of an old theme: centralized control.

We have seen it in every round of collective bargaining, including the first (1998), where the Employer proposed an outrageous check-box approach to performance evaluation, management, discipline and termination. While it is clear that the recent efforts that went into strike preparedness saved the day, again, must we look forward to resisting the hydra heads of this drive for power and control every time we negotiate?

The answer is almost certainly "yes," given our experience so far. This should be taken as call for renewed determination, not a cause for despair. The tensions between Members' and the Association's dedication to the academy and our profession on the one hand, and the internal and external command and control drive in an increasingly centralised and corporatised institution on the other, will almost inevitably lead to such confrontations again. From these and previous negotiations, we take the message that the union must be ever vigilant and begin

preparing today for the ongoing 'negotiations' with our Employer. Despite the successes of this round, the negotiations don't really ever end. Through the monthly meetings of the Joint Committee, the work of the Grievance Committee and routine work of other union committees, we must be cognizant that we are always in the process of negotiating the conditions of our work. And of course, another round of formal negotiations is about to begin as our Librarians and Archivists renew their collective agreement this spring. The work of UWOFA and its members continues; solidarity is a necessary condition for our success.

Mike Dawes is Chief Negotiator for UWOFA and Associate Professor in the Department of Mathematics.

Aniko Varpalotai is Deputy Chief Negotiator for UWOFA and Professor in the Faculty of Education and in the Department of Women's Studies and Feminist Research.

Guest Commentary

Thank you, UWOFA and members

by Peter Simpson, Canadian Association of University Teachers

Because my work for CAUT involves bargaining policy and practice nationally, I get to visit campuses frequently, often leading collective bargaining training or assisting at bargaining tables. During this sort of work, one has occasion to refer to other associations whose work in bargaining sets a gold standard for managing difficulties. For some time, the UWOFA librarians and archivists have played that role: their level of intensity and commitment in their last round of bargaining was critical in their success at the bargaining table, and academic librarians and archivists and union leadership across the country watched and cheered them on.

But for the time being at least, their role as exemplars in collective bargaining has been taken by the faculty bargaining unit of UWOFA!

In the last few years, no issue has been as significant in collective bargaining for academic staff associations across Canada as the erosion of the academic profession's core values. Sabbaticals, tenure, and academic freedom have come under attack from a variety of sources and on a wide range of fronts. As the province of Ontario announced the goal of no increases in compensation, many associations preparing for bargaining assumed that the current round would be about money, and about the need to protect salaries

against inflation. I think it is fair to say that none expected that the past pattern of attacks on the core values would continue while compensation was also under attack.

The University of Western Ontario administration chose, instead, to open up bargaining on several core issues, as well as attacking compensation. Many of us were stunned when the UWOFA bargaining team and executive forwarded the employer's proposals, and we saw overt threats to tenure and academic freedom, and further, unprecedented assaults on the ways academic staff, in their private lives, conduct themselves.

Thanks to a seasoned and temperate bargaining team, and an amazing group of leaders in the union, UWOFA began to push back as only a union can. While bargaining advice was sought on a number of the more complex and contentious issues, meetings with members began. The union leadership opened up its response broadly, preparing for job action, preparing media campaigns, and reaching out to academic staff associations across the country. I was lucky enough to visit the campus a couple of times and to see the level of engagement among members, and to have strategy sessions

with the union leadership. It is rare in my work to be able to work with a group so prepared, resolved, and informed.

The result of the negotiations is a victory for the union, and for its members. But you should know that it's also a victory for other academic staff associations across the province, and across the country. Your willingness to support the union, and to commit to challenging employer positions whose threats to the academy were often unprecedented, has shown to others how to protect the best academic practices we have all worked so hard to build over years.

I thank you for giving me a whole new set of examples to share with others, and to use to inspire others. They thank you too. As UWOFA-LA prepares for another bargaining round, we can all take real satisfaction in knowing that the faculty bargaining unit has just accomplished one of the clearest victories for academic unions in Canada in recent times.

Peter Simpson is Assistant Executive Director of the Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT).

Almost a strike: Lessons learned

by Albert Katz

I have been a faculty member at UWO for well over 30 years, a former President of UWOFA, and I am currently a trustee of the CAUT Defence Fund. I can attest that on the night of 2 November, 2010, we were closer to having a faculty strike than ever before. As coordinator of the UWOFA Strike Action Committee I sat for a period of time in our strike headquarters at Oxford and Wonderland that evening and went over the to-do list time and again. *Strike Headquarters:* Rent paid to cover a sufficiently long strike – check; communications and media rooms ready – check; computer, telephone lines and staff moved in – check; tasks assigned to over thirteen hundred faculty members – check; food services up and running – check; coffee and food ready for transport to picketers the next day – check. *Transportation:* Fleet of cars rented to bring strikers and food to their assigned picketing stations – check; cars gassed up – check; schedule of drivers ready to go – check. *Picketing:* Strike captains trained and ready – check; picketers assigned to time slots and locations: check; portable toilets in place –

check; meetings and agreed-upon protocols with city and campus police completed – check; picket passes assessed and ready to be used – check; contact made with local unions about our pickets – check; confirmation that some unions will not cross our picket lines – check. *Finances:* Procedures for printing and distribution of strike pay cheques in place – check; protocols for dealing with absences from picket or other duties in place – check. *Communications:* Committee in place ready to produce daily reports to membership – check; protocols for dealing with media, students and other interested parties – check; arrangement made with the CAUT Defence Fund for visiting pickets from other universities – check; arrangement made for solidarity rallies with other unions – check. *Entertainment Committee:* Plans for family-friendly morale boosting solidarity activities in place – check.

While many of my colleagues stayed up to the early hours of 3 November to see if last minute negotiations would prove successful, I left the headquarters, fed my children

and went to bed early. I knew if we were on strike at 7 am we would be ready, and if the strike was averted, we would have learned valuable lessons. It was averted. So what have we learned?

First, one cannot start planning too early. The number of details to be completed is extremely large, as is our membership (UWOFA is, after all, among the largest unionized faculty associations in Canada). Sometimes there is a perception that early planning is a sign that the UWOFA Board is spoiling for a strike. We have to dispel that notion. We have a duty to our membership to follow their lead. If the message given to the UWOFA Board by the membership is that we are being faced with unreasonable tactics and proposals by our administration, we have to be prepared that our membership may ask us to consider job action. This cannot be done adequately at the last moment, especially when we are dealing with organizing 1300-plus faculty members! It is essential that a communication committee be set up even before negotiations start so that the membership can be informed of

issues if and as they arise, and so that our students recognize threats to their education. It is also essential that potential and sufficiently large strike headquarters be identified that are reasonably close to the campus and for which there is adequate parking.

Second, we must never think we are working in a void. Many other faculty unions have gone on strike or, at least, have prepared for one. There is a wealth of information and help we can get from the CAUT, the CAUT Defence Fund, and other faculty unions. We should not – and did not – hesitate to make use of these sources. We were aided in our preparations by discussions with people from other faculty associations, strike manuals and check lists prepared by the CAUT and the University of Windsor Faculty Association and by our Librarian/Archivist Bargaining unit who a mere year earlier had also been in a strike position. The CAUT provided a workshop to train people who volunteered as picket captains.

Third, despite the support sources made available to us, it became clear very quickly that procedures that worked at some other university might not work for us. There are considerable differences from campus to campus on characteristics such as the geographic size of the campus, the size of the bargaining unit, the number of entrances onto campus, the mix of disciplines, the presence of a University hospital or other public health facilities, the need to consider animal care and so on, each of which brings its own challenges. During this round, we had to make numerous decisions based on our unique conditions. A clear message emerged: We need our own strike manual sensitive to the conditions that exist on our campus. We are in the process of putting together such a manual, looking at what worked well and where we can improve upon the procedures we used this time, if needed in the future.

Fourth, there needs to be a core of active people who are willing to do the necessary work and who, ideally, have had experience in strike-related activities. Fortunately, the people I asked to Chair subcommittees were dedicated, knowledgeable and prepared to serve. The checklist that I went through that fateful November evening was only completed because each of the committee chairs stepped forward, populated their committee with excellent colleagues and worked their butts off. The Strike Action Committee met frequently, often in the evenings because of our full

The most important lesson to learn is that the best way to prevent a strike is, paradoxically, to be prepared for one.

schedules. The complete list of people who either served as chair of a strike action subcommittee, or on the main committee, or who volunteered for some specific task, is in fact too large to completely unfold here, but some deserve special notice (alphabetically): Ann Bigelow (Finance Committee), Kim Clark (Picket scheduling), Regna Darnell (Food services), Michael Kehler (Entertainment), Stephanie Kelly (Food), Marjorie Ratcliffe (Strike Support Services), Hristo Sendov (Finance), Graham Smith (Transportation), and Liana Zanette (Picket passes adjudication). Special acknowledgments are due to David Heap (picket line coordinator) who did yeoman work in getting the picket captains trained, the portable toilets in place and who, along with President Compton, Vice-President Traister and myself, met with police to clarify how our picket protocol

would work in practice and negotiated with the administration a protocol for people on sabbatical and other such issues. Communications Committee stalwarts Amanda Gryzb (chair) and Alison Hearn spent long hours getting pertinent information to our members quickly and accurately and worked with Marjorie Ratcliffe and David Heap in providing handouts to students on campus. We were all regularly buoyed by the widespread support of the student body. The dedicated and hardworking staff at UWOFA made sure that the many requests that came their way were handled efficiently, quickly and with good cheer. And finally, the delectable barbeque that Don and Harley provided from Shmokey Rob and Sons Southern Eatery, down the hall from our strike headquarters, nourished us through our long hours of preparation.

One might imagine that the circumstances that led us so close to a strike will not be repeated on this campus again. I hope this will be so, but I suspect otherwise. Each round of negotiations we have had since certifying as a labour union has been difficult, and in the last three faculty negotiations and in the last librarian/archivist round, the membership has asked for a vote, and has subsequently given the UWOFA Board a mandate to call a strike. It is worth emphasizing that in none of these episodes did we actually go on strike and that each ended with a negotiated settlement, though in the last two instances we have come increasingly closer to walking the picket line. Perhaps the reason that negotiations eventually succeeded is because, as my fellow CAUT Defence Fund colleagues tell me, the most important lesson to learn is that the best way to prevent a strike is, paradoxically, to be prepared for one.

Albert Katz is Professor and Chair of the Department of Psychology.

For contract faculty, change begins now

by Patrick Kennedy

As the dotting of i's and the crossing of t's are being finalized on the most recent Collective Agreement, one looks at the huge expenditure of time and effort it has taken to get a new contract with the administration of the university and asks, "Was it worth it?"

For many – most it seems – the fact that a settlement was reached without a strike means it was worth it. That the administration caved on its proposed draconian measures to micro-manage our lives and classrooms means it was worth it. That there were significant "language" improvements in several areas of the contract means it was worth it. That we all got a little more money ("in these times") means it was worth it. For Limited-Term members, access to non-scale components of their career progress means it was worth it.

For many Part-Time Members a new category of appointments, a faster accumulation of rights, and the continuation of those rights if employment is interrupted means it was worth it.

For a limited few, the creation of a new "Standing Appointments" status means it was worth it.

As the [Bargaining Bulletin](#) of November 18th states "A collective agreement is a work in progress, reflecting... a continuing endeavour of many people... to improve the terms under which we carry out our fundamental responsibilities to the academy and our profession." However, for Contract Faculty, trying to be recognized as professionals who provide an essential service to the institution is a Sisyphean task.

For Contract Faculty, job security remains the single most crucial issue and nothing in the new contract reduces its importance. In fact, it can be argued that for Contract Faculty, there is no other issue; anything less than improved job security is but "crumbs from the master's table." The administration remains unrelenting in its blind ambivalence toward the needs and wants of what they perceive to be a disposable faculty.

For Contract Faculty, trying to be recognized as professionals who provide an essential service to the institution is a Sisyphean task.

The vulnerability of contract faculty at this university was made clear recently in an email from a colleague with many years experience whose position "will cease to exist due to operating reasons" (a convenient management euphemism for masking the unarticulated real reasons); however, the position is not being eliminated, and the work this colleague is doing will continue to be done by someone else. In the words of the colleague, "They are letting me go simply because they can. This is totally unfair. I'm sick to my stomach over this." This anecdote should serve as a warning: it can happen to you.

The central managers of the university are intent on governing the university with a corporate business model that few of us could have imagined a few years ago. And, as is typically the case with corporate impulses, to the extent that ethical considerations matter, they begin and end with a cost-benefit analysis. Numbers, not human beings, are the capital of the corporate university just as they are with corporate entities elsewhere. People are seen as commodities; contract faculty are viewed as flex-labour whose ranks expand and contract in response to the ebb and flow of the market place or the expediency and convenience of nebulous "operational reasons." Having a teaching staff of expendables provides the administration with a cushion against the fixed costs inherent with full-time faculty.

And so, what should you, as Contract Faculty, do? Hope for the best? Behave yourself? Keep your head down and hope that you're not the next to be "rationalized" out of your position as a result of some administrative cost-cutting machination?

It would be foolish to believe that four years from now, when UWOFA enters into negotiations for a new collective agreement, the prospects for Contract Faculty – as far as job security are concerned – will be much different than they are today. So, one fact is clear – unless there's a change, things will remain as they are.

The real work for the next four years is to initiate a program of change. We need to raise our own level of awareness regarding the injustice and inequality experienced by our members – to understand,

appreciate, and respond to the consequences of callous disregard for human value. We need to reawaken the moral intuition – ethical consciousness – that was born and nurtured in the academy of the past by raising the volume of our dissatisfaction with the status quo. We need to publicize and promote values that are not measured by the performance metrics of commercial interest alone but by the principles of justice and human dignity.

If collectivism means anything it means that we can accomplish things together that are unobtainable individually. It means that together we

can project a voice loud enough to be heard above the rhetoric of corporate doublespeak. Collectivism gives us the strength to push back against the visionless, short-sighted solutions of institutionalized thinking. And for those of us who lack the comfort of tenure, collectivism mitigates the fear and intimidation that muzzle the voice of dissent.

Yes, the months of committee meetings that delivered a new contract were worth it. The selfless dedication of UWOFA's negotiating team to hammer out the best deal was worth it. But whatever significant yardage has been gained in the new

Collective Agreement, if we sit on our hands relieved that we avoided walking the picket line, the stone will roll back to the bottom of the hill and the long, uphill struggle will begin in another four years. Why wait until then? Why not roll up your sleeves and lean into the task now?

Patrick Kennedy is Co-Chair, Committee for Contract Faculty and Lecturer in the Department of Writing, Rhetoric and Professional Communication.

Update from the UWOFA-LA Contract Committee

by Linda K. Dunn and Elizabeth Bruton, Co-chairs, UWOFA-LA Contract Committee

Librarians and Archivists are back at it.

In anticipation of the June 30, 2011 expiration of the current Collective Agreement between the University of Western Ontario and the University of Western Ontario Faculty Association-Librarians and Archivists (UWOFA-LA), the UWOFA-LA Contract Committee has been diligently working since this past September and is on track with the formulation of draft goals for our next Collective Agreement. The Committee surveyed UWOFA-LA Members in the Fall of 2010 on the employment issues that are of most concern to them. The results of the survey have provided the Committee with a real sense of the issues that need to be addressed in our next Collective Agreement. The survey also identified concerns that will be best addressed at a later date through an FAQ to the membership. As well, careful consideration by the Contract Committee is being given to the issues and concerns of members that have come forward

through the grievance process and/or as complaints or questions to the UWOFA Professional Officer, or through the system of UWOFA-LA stewards. We wish to express our appreciation to the UWOFA Professional Officer and to the UWOFA-LA stewards for forwarding Members' issues to the Contract Committee.

Concerns that have generally been raised by Librarians and Archivists in Ontario are also being considered by the Contract Committee in an attempt to be proactive in identifying problems that our members may be facing in the near future. Our colleagues across the province and at OCUFA are proving to be invaluable in providing the context for important bargaining issues that have implications for Western's Librarians and Archivists.

At this point, Committee members anticipate their work being completed in the very near future. The Committee as a whole meets weekly, with committee subgroups meeting on an

even more frequent basis. This shows a strong commitment to the work of the Committee. The presence and participation on the Contract Committee by our faculty colleagues, including our Chief Negotiator, Aniko Varpalotai and Mike Dawes who is acting in an advisory capacity, is invaluable to the work of the Committee and is greatly appreciated.

Linda K. Dunn is Co-chair, UWOFA-LA Contract Committee and Associate Librarian in the Allyn & Betty Taylor Library.

Elizabeth Bruton is Co-chair, UWOFA-LA Contract Committee and Associate Librarian in the John & Dotsa Bitove Family Law Library.

The promotional university

by Alison Hearn

Many of us will remember the survey sent out to members of 'the Western community' last summer in which participants were asked how they felt about Western and its competitors in purely emotional terms. "We know universities *aren't* people", the survey stated, "but if they *were* people how would you *feel* about them?" Was Western "cool" or "nerdy", "aggressive" and "masculine" or "feminine" and "caring", "old-fashioned" or "cutting-edge"?

As we later found out, this survey was part of the work contracted out to Level5 Strategic Brand Advertisers and their partners HotSpex at the cost of \$265,000. In his letter to Senate about the expense, VP external Kevin Goldthorp explained that the survey was a necessary precursor to a \$500 million fund raising campaign and would help "tell the Western story better, which will lead to enhanced funds from all sources." With this pithy explanation, Kevin Goldthorp actually tells us much more about the *real* Western 'story' – and the story of most other universities around the globe these days – than many of us might want to know: the practices of university branding, advertising and promotion have taken centre stage as a strategic necessity in an era of academic capitalism.

While forms of university advertising have been around since the 19th century, it was not until the early 20th century that universities in the United States installed formal public relations offices. In response to this, and as early as 1903, conservative critics were bemoaning the move as a sign of the university's inevitable commercialization. Universities actively began to import marketing strategies from business, in spite of vocal dissent amongst the professoriate, in the 1970s, and by the 1980s, univer-

sity marketers had formed their own professional associations, consortiums and conferences, and textbooks and an academic journal about marketing for higher education emerged.¹

Competition between universities, then, is nothing new, and reputation has always been central to the university's survival. However, as Andrew Wernick has recently written, "the self-consciousness with which a university's corporate image has come to be managed, the administrative prominence this task assumes, and the objectification, and indeed monetization, of academic reputation

University branding campaigns now work across media platforms ... and are accompanied by strict rules about 'message discipline'.

itself as a brand" comprise a relatively new state of affairs in Canada. Indeed, internal communications and marketing departments have only been in existence at Canadian universities for the last decade. Some will be surprised to learn that Western's tower logo was not introduced until the year 2000 as part of a wider fundraising campaign. Since the year 2000, the amount of money spent on marketing and communications by colleges and universities in the US alone has grown by more than 50%. UCLA spent 1.25 million dollars on its last campaign, while the

University of Maryland spent 5.1 million dollars. University branding campaigns now work across media platforms, from newspaper and television ads to promotional videos on youtube and fan groups on facebook and are accompanied by strict rules about 'message discipline' for all university communication materials. Boston University, for example, recently issued a 67 page manual specifying the "look, tone and feel" of appropriate university communication.

University branding campaigns now replace traditional mottos with pithy slogans. A small sampling of these reveal startlingly similarities: "A legacy of leading" (University of Idaho), "Redefine the Possible" (York University), "Inspiring Minds (Dalhousie University), "Inspiring Innovation and Discovery" (McMaster University), "Open Minds, Creating Futures" (Ohio Dominican University), "Grasp the forces driving the change" (Stanford University), "Knowledge to Go Places" (Colorado State University), "Investing in Knowledge" (University of Liverpool), and "Wisdom. Applied." (Ryerson University) (a collection of current university slogans can be found at <http://www.textart.ru/advertising/slogans/education/university-slogans.html>). Here we can clearly see the limiting, homogenizing, and flattening effects of promotional discourse; even as universities wish to stand apart, their subscription to standardized marketing efforts effectively render them, at least in terms of image, all the same.²

So, while branding seems necessary in a world where shrinking public funding forces universities to compete more intensely for student revenue, it also has serious consequences for the institution. As brand-

ing works to abstract a heterogeneous and complex institution into a mere image, the image is then deployed and exchanged as a commodity in a new 'reputational marketplace' – in the form of rankings and ratings produced by magazines such as *Maclean's* and *US News and World Report*. The end result, as Gordon Chang and J.R. Osborn have written, is a "spectacular economy of education, in which abstract rankings become images of educational institutions and the exchange values of these spectacular images replaces the use values of the institutions themselves." Indeed, in a clear case of the tail wagging the dog, many universities use the categories for university adjudication established by these publications as blueprints for their future, abdicating the task of determining their own values, priorities and goals.

What conclusions can we draw from all of these empty university slogans, all of these similar university 'stories'? In the 'feelings' survey described above, we can clearly see the displacement of any internally generated ideals regarding independent cultural critique, self-governance, and pedagogical and intellectual rigor

in favour of the pursuit of 'promotional capital'. Think of all the more concrete and meaningful ways the \$265,000 could have been used within Western to better understand the collective project of the university and improve its educational and research missions.

As public monies dry up and corporate styles of governance effectively replace collegial, bicameral governance, the forces of academic capitalism turn education into a product and research into venture capital. Professors, as a result, are being forced to think like middle managers, while students become little more than consumers, or, in the eyes of administrators, captive markets to be managed and sold to private interests. When research is viewed as nothing more than a product in a marketplace, academic ethics and principled critical distance from undue influence take a back seat to filling university coffers and pumping the university brand. If only Western had decided to invest that \$265,000 directly in student aid, it might not now feel obliged to offer a promotional opportunity to the disgraced Goldman Sachs in exchange for a paltry \$36,000 scholarship.

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¹For more on the history of university marketing, see Scott Cutlip (1970), "Advertising Higher Education: The Early Years of College Public Relations (Part 1)," *College and University Journal*, Fall, 21-28; and Lindsay Carrocci (2009), *Representing the Promotional University: Undergraduate Student Recruitment Strategies in Ontario 1997-2007* (M.A. Thesis, Faculty of Information and Media Studies, University of Western Ontario).

²These facts were drawn from Laura Luetzger (2008), "Brands speak beyond images; reflect lifestyle, students," *Rochester Business Journal* 24:18, 22; Melissa Miley (2009), "Universities finally espousing branding" *Advertising Age*, 80:20, June 1, 6; and Jane Porter, (2008) "Brand U: Marketing the Alma Mater," *Business Week Online*, August 6. http://www.businessweek.com/bschools/content/aug2008/bs2008085_851921.htm

An uneasy ménage: the Balsillie School of International Affairs, its affiliated universities and its external funder

by Paul Handford

Ramesh Thakur was, to great acclaim, appointed Director of the Balsillie School of International Affairs; then suddenly, in mid-2010 and with no explanation, he was fired. CAUT this summer expressed deep concern about the decision to fire this internationally renowned academic without stated cause or due process and in violation of his contract, and appointed University of Saskatchewan Professor Len Findlay, one of Canada's leading experts in academic freedom, as ad

hoc investigator. Findlay's report is now published, and may be found at <http://www.caut.ca/pages.asp?page=937> and http://www.caut.ca/uploads/Findlay_Report_Final.pdf

The Balsillie School of International Affairs (BSIA) is an initiative, along with the Perimeter Institute and the Centre for International Governance Innovation (CIGI), made possible by the extraordinary generosity of the founders of Research in Motion (RIM), Mike Lazaridis and Jim

Balsillie. Balsillie in particular was instrumental in securing financial and institutional support from the federal and provincial governments, with other support from the City of Waterloo, for the establishment of CIGI, and of BSIA as an institution closely associated with the University of Waterloo (UW) and Wilfrid Laurier University (WLU).

CIGI, founded in 2001, is self-described as an "independent, not-for-profit, non-partisan think-tank... that

conducts research... publishes working papers and books, and makes policy recommendations on international governance issues" concerned with matters from environment and resources to governance and international law, institutions, and diplomacy. The BSIA, founded in 2007, is an offspring of CIGI, whence it derives much of its funding, but it is a teaching institution, granting graduate degrees, explicitly in affiliation with two conventional universities and, as such, may be expected to enjoy the intellectual autonomy and academic integrity and freedoms usual in such entities.

In May 2007, the Board of CIGI, chaired by Mr. Balsillie, recruited an internationally prominent academic, Dr. Ramesh Thakur, as Distinguished Fellow at CIGI and Professor of Political Science at UW. Before this Dr. Thakur had served since 1998 as Vice-Rector and Senior Vice-Rector of the United Nations University and as Assistant Secretary-General of the United Nations. Thakur's appointments at CIGI and UW were publicized energetically and with unrestrained pride.

Thirteen months after joining CIGI, presumably having much impressed the Board and his colleagues, Thakur was offered, and he accepted, an appointment as the inaugural Director of the BSIA. Though this appointment was for two years, early in 2009 CIGI's Strategic Committee, chaired by Balsillie and including the Presidents of both UW and WLU, unanimously approved a motion that Thakur's term be extended from two to five years. Dr. Thakur accepted this term change, which was henceforth to run until 2013.

All appeared well... but things soon began to change. Towards the end of 2009 Dr. John English suddenly ceased to serve as Executive Director of CIGI. His departure was a

major surprise, causing shock and dismay both locally and among English's international network of colleagues, so much so that it provoked discussion in our national media.

English was a firm admirer and champion of Thakur and it was not long before rumours appeared that English's disappearance was but the first step in a more general purge. Thakur took these persistent and internationally-circulating rumours sufficiently seriously as to seek reassurance from high officials in UW; they unreservedly repudiated them, President Johnston offering firm backing and a determination that they together reinforce Thakur's leadership of BSIA and stabilize the School's long-term success. This was affirmed shortly thereafter by the President of WLU who, however,

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went on to say that "...the wider issues of governance relating to the intersection of BSIA with CIGI should be deferred until there is more information available from those who have the mandate to review... governance... at CIGI."

This last was probably reference to the fact that, about one year earlier (just before English's departure), determination of the governance structure of BSIA and its relations with CIGI had been assigned to a member of CIGI's Operating Board (a corporate tax lawyer, not an academic), without Thakur's knowledge, and notwithstanding that Thakur had given the task of drafting such governance structures to his Associate Deans from WLU and UW. This CIGI agent quickly asserted that CIGI required direct involvement in all BSIA's dis-

cussions of academic matters so as to monitor their consistency with CIGI's interests, raising obvious potential problems for academic independence and integrity.

Suddenly, early in 2010, it seemed that a new Director of BSIA was being sought, and it had become clear to Thakur by mid-January that, in the face of pressures from CIGI, the academic independence of the BSIA, along with that of WLU and UW, stood to be compromised, and he conveyed these concerns to the two Presidents. He received no response. In March, Thakur circulated a detailed memo among his colleagues, outlining his worries about CIGI intervention in the institutional autonomy, academic freedom and integrity of BSIA, calling for the sequestering of the School and its Director from "non-academic institutions, personnel and pressures" – yet no investigation was carried out by either university.

Later in March, Thakur contacted CAUT to convey his concerns about the situation and two months later, in May 2010, Thakur was summarily terminated as Director of BSIA, without explanation, following his refusal to take part in an early summative review of his performance as Director ordered by UW's Provost (approximately one year after Thakur's having accepted the 5-year appointment). Later the same month, Thakur was terminated as Distinguished Fellow of CIGI. This apparently extraordinary treatment seems all the more egregious when one learns that Thakur's Dean at UW had stated as late as November 2009 that the BSIA "has exceeded the most optimistic forecasts and expectations". One is left to puzzle at what new and dramatic negative evidence should have suddenly come to light as result of processes never described.

There is much more to tell in this sorry tale, but space does not permit,

and the curious are directed to the links to Len Findlay's report. For the record, though, here are what strike me as the more important of his findings:

- UW and WLU buckled under pressure from CIGI to renege on their repeated commitment to Thakur's Directorship of BSIA
- Thakur's freedom to pursue his work as he saw fit was unreasonably constrained
- Members of academic entities hosted by universities must function free from the whim of donors or external institutions

Lamentably, Thakur's case is no isolated event; it is merely recent and local. Interference by donors and contractors in the work of academics and their appointments – sometimes of a far more destructive nature – is something that happens far too often, commonly with the connivance of the hosting academic institutions. Many readers will recall the egregious case of Nancy Olivieri at Sick Kids Hospital in Toronto. Olivieri fell foul of the pharmaceutical corporation Apotex, sponsor of one of her research programs, because she alerted patients

to possible dangers in the drug treatments that were part of her sponsored studies. Her academic employer, the University of Toronto, in a context of massive pressure from the drug company, utterly failed to defend her academic freedom. To this day, and despite their having lost in court, Apotex [continues to harass](#) Olivieri and several of her colleagues for their presumption in protecting the public interest first.

Each passing year brings more similar cases to CAUT. Perhaps this should occasion no surprise, embedded as we are in a culture where corporations speak ever more loudly and universities are increasingly seen by powerful interests as handmaidens to the corporate project. Some will recall the Corporate Higher Education Forum of the 1980s and 1990s, an initiative with the explicit agenda of bringing universities firmly into the corporate embrace. Such a perspective has been pushed firmly ever since, and has become adopted by many university presidents and administrations, with reduced public funding and restructuring of government research support providing further stimulus.

It is tempting to take comfort in the thought that such things could not possibly happen in one's own workplace, yet it is unlikely that those who have suffered unhappy fates expected what happened to them. Indeed, many institutions are now setting up policies and procedures to protect their academic staff – and themselves – against abuses. As a local example, last year the Schulich School of Medicine & Dentistry saw the beginning of a phase-in of excellent policies directed explicitly at protecting against conflicts between patient safety and academic integrity on the one hand, and responsibilities to commercial sponsors on the other. It is simply indispensable to academic independence and integrity and the continuing public trust that universities and similar institutions develop strong policies and practices to ensure the academic freedom of all academic staff involved with corporate interests.

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Research News

2nd Annual Queer Research Day

The Sexuality and Gender Research Group and the Queer Caucus are co-sponsoring the 2nd annual Queer Research Day on April 14, 2011. Faculty and graduate students are invited to submit either conference-length papers or posters. Please contact Wendy Pearson at wpearson@uwo.ca for more details.