

FACULTY CIRCUIT

THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER of ACIFA • FEBRUARY 2006



Phil Gougeon, Assistant Deputy Minister of Advanced Education, seated at the head of the table, takes questions from members of ACIFA's Presidents' Council. The Council met on January 28, 2006.

The labour scene

As seen by Terry Sway, ACIFA Labour Relations Officer



This is the time of year when all of the institutes make public announcements about their financial plight. Coincidentally, this is also the time of year when faculty associations and the employers exchange opening proposals to commence collective

bargaining.

On that front, this is a relatively busy year. The following institutes are active in collective bargaining: Grande Prairie Regional College, Northern Lakes College, Portage College, Keyano College,

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Eye on government

by Brett Bergie

The second session of the 26th Legislature will convene on February 22, 2006, at 3pm. The Speech from the Throne, which opens the Session, will outline the government's legislative agenda for the year. As the post-secondary education review, *A Learning Alberta*, is still incomplete, post-secondary education policy commitments will likely not heavily define this year's Throne Speech. The Review, however, is scheduled to be complete by the end of March 2006, providing a

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“labour scene”

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NorQuest College, Olds College, and Mount Royal College.

The majority of settlements from last year concluded through the ratification of a variety of memorandums of agreement. Two institutes went to interest arbitration to settle the items in dispute at the end of negotiations. At the Southern Alberta Institute of Technology, there was a considerable period of retroactivity dating back to July 1, 2004. The arbitration hearing was held June 14, 15, and 16, 2005; the decision was

released in early November. It is my understanding that the overwhelming task of calculating “back pay” is now complete.

The arbitration hearing for Bow Valley College was held on December 20 and 21, 2005. The parties are waiting for the decision.

Generally speaking, the salary settlements continue to feature an annual increase of approximately 4.0%. Interestingly, more and more settlements, in addition to “percentage increase,” include structural changes to the existing salary grid. Structural changes generally come in the form of additional grid steps, which

provide targeted increases to deserving individuals but the changes do not show up in “provincial averages” The employers do not appear interested in what happens elsewhere. Also, arbitrators are not keenly interested in “structural” changes to salary grids when they determine appropriate compensation levels. In other words, arbitrators look only to salary increases that are expressed as a percentage applied to the entire grid and few other details are considered. Structural changes, while extending positive enhancements locally, have no direct bearing provincially.

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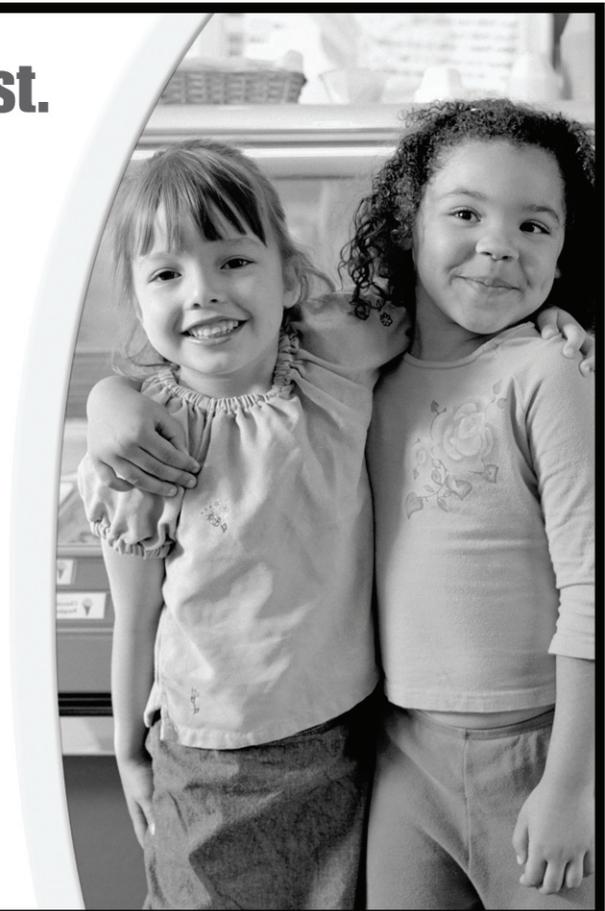
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“eye on government”

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strong basis for post-secondary education to have a starring role in the coming legislative session.

The Review’s Steering Committee has formed three subcommittees to focus on key policy areas: Learning Foundations, Aboriginal Learning, and System Transformation. The latter subcommittee has a broad mandate, which includes “affordability, increasing capacity, expanding research and innovation, creating a seamless

In the absence of government direction on tuition, most institutions will be left asking how increasing costs, particularly soaring energy costs, will be met?

advanced learning system, and refining roles and responsibilities.” David Milner, ACIFA’s President, will participate in the System Transformation Subcommittee as a full member.

The subcommittees must resolve policy questions and devise recommendations to be presented to the members of the Steering Committee, who, subsequently, must pen a final report by the end of March. Arduous as it may be, meeting the deadline is crucial

if the recommendations are to benefit from any opportunity for inclusion in the 2007-08 Alberta Budget cycle.

The 2006-07 Alberta Budget is expected to come down this coming March. ACIFA will pay close attention to any new commitments on post-secondary education. In particular, ACIFA is interested in the Alberta government resolving the tuition freeze funding issue. In November, Premier Ralph Klein vowed to freeze tuition fees for the 2006-07 academic year. Since that time, the Alberta government has not committed to financing the costs of the tuition freeze, as it did for the 2005-06 academic year through its one-time Centennial Tuition Rebate Program. An unfunded tuition freeze will have devastating consequences for institutional operating budgets.

The cost burden of financing the tuition freeze is precipitous; Minister Hancock, quoted in the Edmonton Journal placed the cost at \$87 million. Fortunately, the Minister is working to embed that \$87 million in the ongoing base operation budgets of universities and colleges. ACIFA is hopeful that the Minister’s efforts will be successful, but a government commitment to that effect remains unannounced.

The time for the government

to announce its intention on the tuition question is now. In the absence of government direction on tuition, most institutions will be left asking how increasing costs, particularly soaring energy costs, will be met?

The University of Alberta and the University of Calgary have already taken the step of approving tuition increases, 6.4% and 7.2% respectively.

On the necessity of the tuition increase, Carl Amrhein, provost of the University of Alberta, told the Edmonton Journal that the University still faces an operational budget deficit of \$11.1 million. Of that, \$10 million is due to soaring natural gas prices.

Tuition hikes are being registered on the institutions’ books. The government, however, has placed a two-year moratorium on levying those increases on students. Those increases, left unmet by ongoing government funding, set in place a framework for a triple bump in student tuition in 2007-08.

The prospect of an unfunded tuition freeze will create a host of hardships for institutions and students. The government must allocate the necessary funding to address both the tuition freeze problem and soaring energy costs. Failing that, one thing will be certain for the institutions: precarious operational budgets will not be relics of the past, despite our best hopes to the contrary.

Call for Submissions

Alberta Colleges & Institutes Faculties Association
2006 Spring Conference

Your Session proposal must address one of the following strands:

- Insights into ACIFA
- Inspirations in Teaching
- Innovation in Technology
- Imagining the Future

Submission deadline is Monday February 27, 2006

Session presenters will be provided with one night of accommodation at Mountain Park Lodge in Jasper, Alberta.

Please complete a session proposal form, available from your local faculty association or at www.acifa.ca.

Return to: Lynn Devlin, Executive Officer, ACIFA,
#412, 10357 - 109 Street, Edmonton, AB, T5J 1N3
E-mail devlinl@acifa.ca



Extended

Teaching & Learning Action Research Awards

ACIFA, through the Alberta Post-Secondary Education Trust Fund, awards up to three \$500 grants annually for action research projects related to improving teaching and learning conducted by our members. The award is intended to assist with materials and other costs absorbed with the research project.

These awards are open to all members of ACIFA. All applicants must include appropriate institutional consent to conduct the research.

Award winners are notified by June 1, 2006.

For more information on the selection process and criteria, recipient obligations, and guidelines, please consult the ACIFA web page, www.acifa.ca, or visit your local faculty association.

Post-Secondary Education – At the Crossroads

Calgary • February 23 • Orpheus Theatre • SAIT Campus • 1301 16 Avenue NW
Edmonton • February 24 – 26 • Crowne Plaza Hotel • 10111 Bellamy Hill

All members of ACIFA are encouraged to participate in the upcoming Public Interest Alberta conference: Post-Secondary Education – At the Crossroads. The purpose of the conference is to assemble stakeholders, advocates, members of the media, and members of the public to strategize and develop action plans to keep post-secondary education moving forward in Alberta. While the conference is about action, it is also balanced with expert speakers.

Jeffrey Simpson, national affairs columnist for the Globe and Mail and recipient of all three leading Canadian literary awards, and Peter MacMenamin, Deputy General Secretary of the Teachers' Union of Ireland, are the keynote speakers. The keynote duo will present a program in Calgary on February 23 from 7pm to

9pm; they will also open the full Edmonton conference, on February 24, from 7:30pm to 9:30pm. The conference will also welcome Advanced Education Minister Dave Hancock, who will speak on Sunday February 26, in Edmonton.

The registration fee for the conference is \$125 or \$75 for students and under-employed persons. Tickets for the keynote presentation are included in the conference fee; or they can each be purchased independently for \$10 or 10 tickets for \$75. Register by mailing the registration form to Public Interest Alberta – 35, 9912 - 106 Street, Edmonton, Alberta, T5K 1C5 – or register online at www.pialberta.org/. A full conference agenda and an account of all participating expert speakers are available at www.pialberta.org/.

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION AT THE CROSSROADS ADVANCE REGISTRATION	
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*The registration fee includes the cost of all hand-out materials and two lunches.	
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The 2005-06 ACIFA Presidents' Council

Members of the Council take time from a meeting for a group photo



- Back row, left to right, Paul Hawthorn, Glen van't Wout, Rick Murphy, Kazem Mashkournia, Don Fisher, Neil Maclean, David Hyttenrauch, Walter May, Craig Abramowski, Doug Fratini, Doug Short, David Purkis
- Front row, left to right, Rick Blakeley, Betty Koch, David Milner, Ceril Kenny, Gloria Ulry

Building and educating tomorrow's workforce – public consultation

The Alberta government, through Human Resources and Employment, is devising a ten-year strategy to address skill and labour shortages. The strategy, titled *Building and Educating Alberta's Workforce*, also seeks to better position the province to respond to the challenges and demands of the knowledge economy.

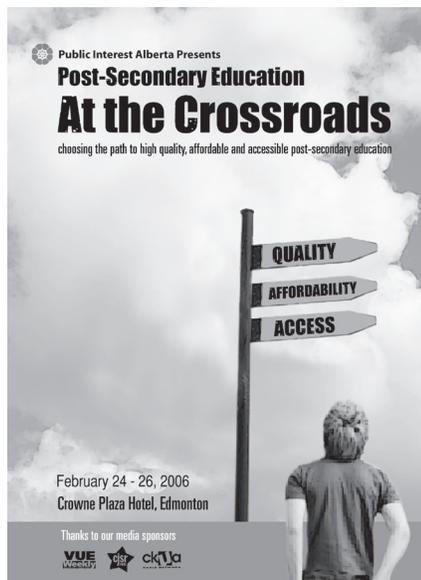
Albertans interested in contributing to the development of the Strategy can provide input by clicking on "public consultations" at www.gov.ab.ca/. Completed questionnaires and written submissions will be accepted by the government until March 10, 2006.

According to a government media release, Alberta's growing

economy is expected to create close to 400,000 jobs in the next decade; currently, however, only about 300,000 new workers are expected to enter the labour market, leaving a shortfall that may be as high as 100,000 workers. The Strategy outlines a framework to develop upon four main themes: inform, attract, develop, and retain.

Reminder

NAC & PAC members
Next meeting
March 11, 2006
Delta Edmonton South
404 Gateway Blvd.
(780) 434-6415.



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the know

Editorial

The views expressed in Faculty Circuit are those of individuals and do not necessarily reflect ACIFA's policies and positions.

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- Bow Valley College Faculty Association
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- Grande Prairie Regional. College Academic Staff Association
- Grant MacEwan College Faculty Association
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