

NEWS & VIEWS

JUNE 2012

From the President's Desk

Sharon Alward



I want to take the opportunity, in this my first President's message, to thank all of you who have congratulated me and wished me all the best in my new position as UMFA President. Your kind words and your confidence in me have been much appreciated.

I also want to take this opportunity to thank Cam Morrill on behalf of the Board of Representatives and the Executive for his dedicated service and strong leadership over the past two years as President. I look forward to working with you, Cam, as Past-President and on the Bargaining Team as we prepare for the next round of negotiations.

I confess I have a deep loyalty to this university. This is the place that helped me realize my dream of becoming an artist. The University of Manitoba gave me a strong foundation that led to a Fellowship to Yale and a Scholarship to UCLA to complete my Graduate work. I was happy to return to the University of Manitoba as a faculty member in the School of Art and to have the opportunity to teach new cohorts of gifted emerging artists.

We are facing many challenges today that twenty-seven years ago when I began teaching I would never have conceived of. The casualization of the academic workforce, the corporatization and top down management styles, the erosion of collegial governance, the priorities of marketing and outreach over support for existing academic programmes, the limiting of academic freedom, the introduction of a two-tiered system of researchers and teachers, the contracting out of instruction to for-profit entities such as Navitas, chronic underfunding, threats to tenure and the introduction of private sector performance

indicators, are some of the issues facing academics across Canada.

We have successfully confronted challenges in the past. During Manitoba's dark and difficult days of the 1990's, we were faced with budget cuts, soaring interest rates and clawbacks. At the University of Manitoba, tenure was under attack. It was then that I witnessed first hand what we as a faculty association can do when we decide to mobilize. The camaraderie and shared purpose can determine our future. Over the next year, one of my goals is to ensure collegial governance and academic freedom rights in our preparation for the next round of negotiations.

As a Grievance Officer for the past several years, I am familiar with the work we do to support our Members. Our Collective Agreement is essential to our academic work and we need to support the values of our Members through effective collective bargaining. Over the next few months, I will be working with the Collective Agreement Committee, the Executive and the Board of Representatives to put into place a plan for effective consultation with the Membership, including a series of constituency meetings in the Fall. We need to hear from you.

I am excited by the opportunities and challenges that we will face in the next year. I look forward to serving the Faculty Association Membership and to mobilizing the amazing talents of our Members. I look to you to keep me informed, tell me what your experiences are, what you think is important, what is working well and what needs to improve so that we can continue to be effective researchers and educators. We are worth the investment. If we need to convince the administration of the university, then that's what we need to do!

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Outstanding Employer Building Facilities

“We will also work to ensure that the people employed at the University of Manitoba have the tools, supports and facilities they need to succeed in their work.”

-- From the Strategic Planning Framework,
Office of President David Barnard

On June 5, 2012, UMFA President Sharon Alward met with Members in the department of Chemistry who have expressed serious concerns about the physical state of the Parker Building.

The Parker Building has been under renovation since 2006. After six years of construction, it is certainly not clear how the UM's commitment to providing faculty with the facilities they need to succeed in their work is demonstrated in that building.

In 2004, the Graduate Program in Chemistry underwent a review, and the review committee remarked “The university should plan for an upgrade of many of the laboratories, to ensure that workplace is safe for all building occupants. The working environment in the building would also profit from a fresh coat of paint.” While some of the laboratory upgrades have been undertaken and are still ongoing, the Parker Building remains a dreary and uninspiring place to work.



Wires hang in front of a washroom in the Parker building - June 5, 2012

In 2006, ceilings in the building were removed to prepare for wiring of new internet cables. This included an asbestos abatement process. Fast forward to 2012 – the ceilings have not been replaced, and although staff in Parker have been told that work will begin shortly, they have been told this several times previously and nothing has

happened yet. Not only are the ceilings open, as these pictures show there are numerous wires hanging down above doorways, pipes and ductwork are exposed, and dust and dirt fall down regularly onto work surfaces.

The open ceilings above faculty offices and boardrooms create acoustical issues. There is no privacy. Individuals in their offices can hear conversations from the next office over

– conversations that may be of confidential nature. Concern was raised about confidentiality and a boardroom ceiling was restored but office conversations can still be overheard.

An even more serious concern exists. After the fire in the Duff Roblin Building in 2009, the UM's insurer indicated that the removal of and failure to replace a ceiling compromises fire safety. Heat sensors require a ceiling to work properly. Additionally, a ceiling is a necessary part of a fire barrier. Not only does the lack of ceiling create privacy issues, it creates a serious health and safety matter.

Why the long delays in finishing this construction? Staff were told that the cost to renovate laboratories in the building is immense, and is the reason for the all the delays. Lab renovation projects began in 2005, and while many have since been completed, many projects remain.

During all this time, staff have been forced to relocate their research teams of graduate students to classroom labs. These labs are already filled with materials that undergraduate students need for their course lab work and there is no storage space for research equipment. In some cases, the only option was to store lab equipment wherever there was space on the floor, although the Department has recently made efforts to find temporary storage space elsewhere in the Parker Building. Research activities have been seriously and negatively affected.

“In order to remain vital and productive, we must recruit, retain and develop committed and engaged faculty and staff.”

--From the Strategic Planning Framework,
Office of President David Barnard



Wires hang down in front of a bulletin board - June 5, 2012



Open ceiling in a faculty office. Parker building - June 5, 2012



Construction materials stored in a hallway in the Parker building.
June 5, 2012

UMFA was told that the dismal state of the Parker Building has led to embarrassing comments by visiting academics, and also some difficulty in hiring. Two searches in the department were completed, with the successful candidates ultimately turning down the positions. The department has also had difficulty in recruiting

students to work in the labs, and due to constant disruptions from the starting and stopping of construction, has lost much in the way of research time.

This issue isn't unique to the Parker Building, and isn't the first time the Faculty of Science has had to deal with such a major disruption. In 2001, construction began on the Buller Building, which was home to the departments of Microbiology and Botany, and to Biological Sciences after the two departments merged. After more than a decade, work in this building is yet to be completed. Dr. Peter Loewen, whose office is in the Buller Building, has created a webpage ([Buller saga](#)) that details the construction and the effect on staff in the building over the course of this ongoing work:

"...there has been extensive disruption to the research programs of everyone in the building. All research groups have been forced to vacate their labs for some period of time from five months to as long as a year and a half, and some have been evacuated more than once. Researchers who remain in the building find their workbenches coated in dust, growth media contaminated and instrument filters continually clogged. Concrete chunks fall from the ceiling and water runs in through the walls. Their work has been and continues to be disrupted in a myriad of large and small ways."

Do the photos on Dr. Loewen's web page, or those taken by UMFA show a facility equipped to help faculty succeed in their work? Do the long disruptions indicate a dedication to retaining current faculty or recruiting promising new faculty members? Does this look like a safe place to work? Where is the employer of choice?

UMFA would like to hear from you about your working conditions. Please contact Sharon Alward, President at alwardsharon@shaw.ca or Linda Guse, Executive Director at lguse@umfa.ca.



Wide open ceilings above a hallway in the Parker building.
June 5, 2012

UMFA Lends Support to Defend Civil Liberties

On May 18th, in an attempt to stifle student protests against planned tuition increases, the Quebec government passed Bill 78, which makes engaging in peaceful assembly illegal. This law is a violation of a fundamental freedom guaranteed under the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. The law states that groups of 50 or more people must give eight hours notice, in writing, to the police prior to commencement of any demonstration. Additionally, the law imposes hefty penalties:

- Leaders of student associations could be fined up to \$35,000 for demonstrating contrary to the law. For participating in a second demonstration, the fine doubles to \$70,000.
- A student association may be fined an initial penalty of \$125,000 for supporting a demonstration, while a second offense would incur a fine of \$250,000.
- Any individual expressing support for demonstrations that are contrary to the bill could face fines of up to \$5,000.

Organizational representatives face a penalty of up to \$35,000 and their organizations could be hit with a fine of \$125,000.

On May 23, the Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT) [announced](#) they would provide financial and legal support to help "Quebec student organizations cover the legal costs to defend students charged while engaging in peaceful protest."

At the last UMFA Board of Representatives meeting, the group passed a motion to support students who are charged under Bill 78 while engaging in *peaceful protest* with a donation of \$500 towards their legal defense.

Demonstrations are continuing regularly throughout Quebec as the government and student associations struggle to come to an agreement to the over four month long impasse.

Highlights from UMFA's Annual General Meeting

UMFA held its Annual General Meeting on Tuesday, May 15, 2012. The meeting was well attended, with great participation and questions from attendees.

The Order of the Day was on bargaining preparations for 2013. Chief bargainer, Robert Chernomas, provided a brief discussion on some of the activity that UMFA will be engaging in over the next year. He encouraged Members to keep dialogue open with the Association, and to share with UMFA any concerns or issues Members may have. He also stated the importance of Member participation in the bargaining process. UMFA wants to hear from the Members on what they think some of the bargaining priorities should be. This can be done by coming out to events such as constituency meetings, providing feedback on newsletters, calling the UMFA office with information, and more.

The 2012-13 incoming President and Vice-President were

formally announced and introduced. Sharon Alward, as of June 1 will step into the role of UMFA President, and Tommy Kucera will take over from Sharon as Vice-President.

A number of reports were presented for acceptance by the Membership including the auditor's report and 2012-13 budget, various committee reports and grievance officers' reports.

Finally, a number of awards were presented. The Roy Vogt Memorial Award for Exceptionally Meritorious Service was presented to Pat Nicholls. The CAUT Dedicated Service Award was received by Peter Blunden, and Brian Latour accepted The Paul Fortier Prize for Student Activism.

Following the presentation of the awards, UMFA Members and guests stayed for a reception to honour the award recipients and mingle with colleagues.



President Cameron Morrill presents Pat Nicholls with the Roy Vogt Memorial Award for Exceptionally Meritorious Service at the UMFA AGM.



Brian Latour is presented with the Paul Fortier Prize for Student Activism.



Peter Blunden receives the CAUT Dedicated Service Award at the UMFA AGM.

Highlights of the Board of Representatives Meeting

The UMFA Board of Representatives met for the last meeting of this academic year on May 23. At the meeting, the Board approved the appointment of members to the 2012-13 Executive Council. The list of members can be found on the [UMFA website](#). Additionally, the Board approved three recommendations by the Executive Council to name members to the bargaining team (Robert Chernomas, Cameron Morrill, Dennis Felbel, Sharon Alward, Vanessa Swain, and Barbara Yapps), as well as to the positions of Chief Negotiator (Robert Chernomas) and Chair of the

Collective Agreement Committee (Mark Gabbert).

Following this, there were discussions on the previous round of bargaining, and on potential strategies for the next round. A question was raised as to whether Board members would receive training, especially in regards to the ongoing bargaining process. It was decided that an orientation session would be held in early fall.

A number of reports were then presented to the Board:

- Executive Director Linda Guse reported on the plans for

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- the Western Regional Conference that UMFA is hosting this fall. Plans are coming along well, and staff will be contacting western faculty associations in the near future regarding the agenda.
- Linda also reported that the first bargaining newsletter has gone out to Members, and there are plans to have another 3-4 go out over the summer.
- Outgoing Treasurer Pat Nicholls reported on the first statement of the new fiscal year. The members of the Board expressed their appreciation to Pat for her many years of service, and wished her well in her retirement.
- Brad McKenzie reported on the upcoming Manitoba Federation of Labour (MFL) convention that UMFA delegates will be attending at the end of June.

- Cameron Morrill made a brief statement as retiring President. The members of the Board expressed their appreciation for his hard work on behalf of the organization over the last two years.

The Board does not usually meet during the summer and so the next meeting will be in September. Meetings of the Board are open to Members of the Association.

The [Board Members](#) are listed on the UMFA website. If your unit is not there, it probably means that it does not have a representative. If you are interested in serving, please give the UMFA office a call.

Survey Coming Soon!

UMFA will soon be sending an electronic survey to Members for feedback on certain ROSE initiatives. Your responses and comments are anonymous and will provide valuable information to UMFA. Keep an eye on your inbox in the coming weeks!

Tweet With Us!



Don't forget that UMFA is on [Twitter](#)! Our Twitter feed features links to information on our website, information from our newsletter, as well as re-tweets of news from CAUT, the Manitoba Federation of Labour, media outlets, and other faculty associations from across Canada.

2012-2013 EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

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Brad McKenzie

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