

# WLUF ADVOCATE

Building community through dialogue, discussion, and debate.

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## New (and old) faces of WLUF executive

Dear Colleagues,

Another Association election is now behind us and it's netted us some really wonderful results. The first is that our trial use of Simply Voting for the last few years seems to indicate that our Members really *will* vote if we make it as accessible as possible. In our inaugural year, online voting easily broke our records for the previous years' in-person balloting – and this year's voter turn-out exceeded even that. Thank you to all of you for casting your ballots. A strong voter turn-out helps to ensure that your union Executive is as diverse and representative as possible.

The other great news is that – along with some tried and true “old” faces – we're welcoming a number of new members to the 2017-2018 WLUF Executive. This coming year's Exec-

utive is split almost in half between members who are now Executive veterans and members who I know will bring fresh new perspectives and capabilities to the Association.

Your 2017-2018 Executive is: Anne-Marie Allison, Kari Brozowski, Kimberly Ellis-Hale, Azim Essaji, Jim Gerlach, Marcia Oliver, Herbert Pimlott, Robin Slawson, Zilin Wang and Byron Williston. Additionally, of course, Rob Kristofferson will continue in his role as Past-President due to the fact that my (getting much older) face is remaining in the President's seat.

On a personal note, I have to say that I have very mixed feelings about being acclaimed as your President for the third year in a row. On one hand, I find this position as rewarding as it is challenging and I am very happy to be continuing to oversee some of the initiatives that I've seen launched during my time in office. I am also hopeful that your continued trust in a President who is also a Contract Faculty member is a sign that our bargaining units recognize the many ways in which our interests are intertwined.

On the other hand, however, I also know that the main reason for my acclamation is that we simply don't have enough members with enough union experience – and with enough time in their schedules – to let their names stand for the position. When I began my Presidency, I was very aware of

the skepticism voiced by a number of our members about the fact that they believed that WLUF was built around certain “dynasties” – and that only certain voices were given a platform in Association matters. I've worked hard, and will continue to work hard, at dispelling those opinions of our union. None of us, however, need *me* to become a dynasty...

It is for this reason that I am very pleased to welcome so many new faces to our Executive. I'm not saying (yet) that I won't run for President again next year. I would, however, love to run for President up against another person who also really wants to do the job.

Even if I lost, it would be great news for WLUF.

Sincerely,  
Michele Kramer  
WLUF President

WLUF

Spring Wine & Cheese Social  
Retiree Recognition  
and  
Century Club Induction

Wednesday  
April 19, 2017  
4:00—6:00 p.m.  
Hawk's Nest




 \*Snacks and two drink tickets provided!

## Fight for \$15 & fairness on the Brantford campus

By *Eddie Sauv , MA Candidate, Social Justice and Community Engagement*



This term, students at Laurier-Brantford have begun a campaign for the Fight for \$15 & Fairness. Provincially the movement is driven to raise the minimum wage to \$15 an hour and to improve protections for workers from things such as precarious scheduling techniques. Low-wage workers today, making the current minimum wage of \$11.25, cannot afford to meet their most basic needs.

Our group began by making short presentations in classrooms and by tabling in the university's lobby. After the first day of our campaign, we had 104 petition signatures and a group of 13 students, faculty and community members committed to becoming more involved. Since then, we have gained momentum, new signatures (149 at last count) and dedicated individuals at each of our events. It has become clear that the Fight for \$15 & Fairness is something that resonates within our community.

As a group, we are determined to continue collecting petition signatures and bring them to Brantford's MPP, Dave Levac. We hope this will show how much our community needs \$15 & Fairness and provide Mr. Levac with the confidence to read and support the demands of the movement when the Changing Workplaces Review – a report aimed at reforming Ontario's la-

bour legislation – reaches the legislature in the very near future.

Additionally, through discussions while tabling and within our group, we've learned how much our students and contract faculty at Laurier-Brantford are being affected by low-wage, precarious work. We don't feel comfortable fighting only at the provincial level and recognize that there is a need to also push our university to provide its workers with wages that reflect our basic needs now. Students are paying a lot of money to attend this university, and we should expect that our students, faculty and staff that keep it running are paid enough to afford a basic standard of living.

Fight for \$15 & Fairness has also played a key role in making connections and building solidarity within our campus. After attending a canvass training session led by Ryerson sociologist and activist Alan Sears, different campus groups recognized that if we work together towards shared goals, we could accomplish a lot more. Inspired by this moment, Fight for \$15 & Fairness, the Women's Centre, Laurier Student Public Interest Research Group (LSPIRG), Advocates for a Student Culture of Consent (ASCC) and independent students worked together to organize a university-wide student walkout on International Women's Day. The walkout was held in solidarity with women's strikes around the world, and it demanded accountability from the university while

## Full-time faculty and Librarians meet your Negotiating Team!

With the June 30<sup>th</sup> expiry of the Collective Agreement (CA) for Full-Time Faculty and Librarians and negotiations expected to begin in the spring, your negotiating team is already hard at work. The first members' survey was sent out at the beginning of March (thank you to those who completed it), Faculty-based meetings are in the final planning stages and work on developing proposals to take to the table is underway.

While earlier employee group negotiations were particularly challenging and the team is ready for that, WLUF is hopeful that this round of contract talks for Full-Time Faculty and Librarians will be constructive and mutually beneficial.



**Azim Essaji,**  
Economics Co-Chair



**Shelia McKee-Protopapas,**  
ED, Co-Chair



**Andrew Herman,**  
Communications



**Glenda Wall,**  
Sociology



**Joanne Oud,**  
Library

## Fight for \$15 cont'd...

building student confidence that collective action is possible and important in Brantford. The event was incredibly successful drawing in over 100 students who walked out of class to a rally in RCW Lobby. This is the first time such an action has ever happened on the Brantford campus.

Our groups hope to continue to work in solidarity. Each week Fight for \$15 & Fairness is hosting Passionate Letter Writing Nights led by other campus and community groups, such as the Sexual Assault Centre, the Mental Health Education Group and the Injured Workers of Brantford. There are also plans for our groups to collaborate on a social justice themed zine to keep in contact and work together.

Keep up to date with upcoming events and find out how you can get more involved by requesting our weekly email summary from [lb15andfairness@gmail.com](mailto:lb15andfairness@gmail.com), or join LB Fight for \$15 & Fairness on Facebook.

## Century club inductees

Having taught 100 or more courses at Laurier is worthy of recognition in and of itself but, when that milestone is reached by a Contract Faculty member it is a testament to their ongoing commitment to their teaching, their students and to Laurier.

In recognition, WLUFAs will be honouring the newest Contract Faculty members to reach this impressive mark at the Spring Wine and Cheese. Their names will be added to the 11 Contract Faculty members already inducted into WLUFAs 'Century Club'.

Congratulations to **Helen Ramirez, Elin Edwards, Angela Trimarchi** and **Kathy Foxall**.

## WLUFAs equity and diversity town hall a success

*By Laurie Jacklin, Society, Culture & Environment & Michele Kramer, President*

The issue of equity has been on most faculty association agendas for quite some time, but it has only been in the fairly recent past that equity has been closely scrutinized as something that needs addressing beyond pay-scales and gender. WLUFAs is proud to be among a very short list of associations that have decided to institute an Equity and Diversity Committee as part of their association committee roster. The idea was to have a committee that was different from other University-driven equity and diversity committees in that this committee would find ways to foster and support, specifically, our diverse *faculty* complement. Additionally, a WLUFAs Equity and Diversity Committee would be charged with looking into how the language of our collective agreements themselves may or may not produce barriers to an equitable workplace.

Naively, we believed that the way forward was fairly clear but, as many of you know, putting this committee into place has not been without its difficulties. One of the greatest of these was the (justified) criticism that our newly-constituted Equity and Diversity Committee didn't seem all that "diverse". Of course, WLUFAs had its challenges here: of the approximately one thousand faculty members registered with WLUFAs, only a very small handful offered their services – and so the Committee was convened mainly by acclamation. It was, however, this acclamation, and the criticisms of it, that lead to the committee's inaugural town-hall mediated by York University's Carl James which, overall, has been seen as an enormous suc-

cess.

Though the town-hall was originally called in order to discuss how, exactly, the WLUFAs E&D Committee should come together, its focus quickly shifted to why the committee really needs to be an essential part of our Association's mandate. Numerous faculty members stepped up to the microphone in order to discuss their (often painful) struggles and the need for change, rather than to debate the details about the structure of the committee. For WLUFAs, this fact alone reinforces the notion that it's not who is on the committee that matters, it's that the committee is seen as a needed resource for WLUFAs members.

According to Laurie Jacklin, a member of the WLUFAs Equity and Diversity Committee, the WLUFAs E&D members are now, "invigorated and enthusiastic about the success of our Town Hall meeting. We also realise the enormity of the initiative(s) required to transform WLU attitudes, policies, and cultures into a positive environment that is welcoming for all faculty, regardless of our race/ethnicity, gender identity/expressions, age, (dis)ability, creed, sex, sexual orientation, and employment status".

WLUFAs is looking forward to hearing about the recommendations that our Equity and Diversity Committee brings to our Executive table.

### AGM

**Date:** Wed., April 19, 2017  
**Time:** 12:00 p.m.  
**Place:** Waterloo – PMC  
Brantford – RCW324

## Mental health: helping our students

By Anne-Marie Allison, Mathematics

The recent suicides of students at nearby universities (two at UW and four at UG this academic year) are a somber reminder of the profound importance of student mental health and campus resources.

Last month at the second [High Incidence Disabilities in Higher Education Conference](#), Hara Estroff Marano focused on the increasing prevalence of depression, anxiety, (perceived) stress, and emotional dysregulation among college and university students in her talk 'Crisis U'.

"College students in North America are reporting unprecedented levels of stress and experiencing serious symptoms of mental distress, from depression and persistent suicidal ideation to self-mutilation and panic

attacks. Campus counseling centers find that problems are not only common, and growing more common by the year, but severe and growing more severe." She, like many others, underscores the importance of addressing the student mental health crisis occurring across our campuses.

Faculty are an important point of contact for students and they require now more than ever the skills, the support and well-defined resources to assist students who may be struggling. Dr. Shekhar Saxena, Director of the Department of Mental Health

and Substance Abuse at the World Health Organization says, "[For someone living with depression, talking to a person they trust is often the first step towards treatment and recovery.](#)" Faculty should be afforded collaborative assistance when they seek help on behalf of their students.

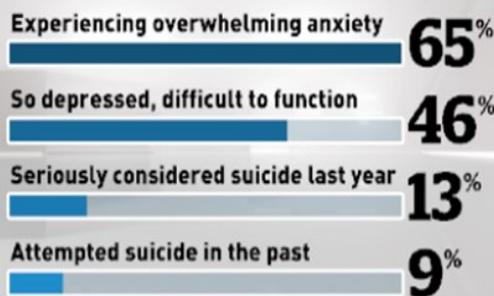
While most faculty genuinely care about their students' well-being, institutional factors can make getting this message across to students next to impossible. Growing class sizes work against students making connections with their professors. Fewer full-time hires and

the University's ethos of 'do more with less' in response to the ever increasing faculty administrative load severely limits the time faculty have available to interact with students. Precariously employed Contract Faculty teach a majority of students and are often responsible for larger classes. Usually

without individual offices, they lack adequate access to meeting spaces to meet with students privately. These institutional barriers can deter vulnerable students who want to reach out, no matter how approachable their professors may be.

Have you encountered situations with a student(s) where they asked for help or you thought they needed help? Have you found the resources on campus sufficient or lacking? Do you know what happens when you start the ball rolling on getting your student the help they need? Read on ...

### Ontario Students Survey



25,148 students Spring 2016  
National College Health Assessment II

## Student mental health resources for faculty

By Leanne Holland Brown, Dean of Students - Waterloo

There are many factors that can significantly impact a student's mental health during their time at university, such as issues related to transitions into a postsecondary environment, academic pressures, relationships, financial stress, a changing or developing sense of personal identity, substance use/abuse and wellness.

Our efforts are ongoing to create the best possible conditions for students' personal and academic suc-

cess. Because faculty are often the first point of contact for students, or the first to observe when students are struggling or are in need of support, we are committed to providing more opportunities for supporting faculty in their efforts to support student learning and success, particularly in the realm of mental health.

Over the last number of years, increasingly we have heard from faculty about student mental health issues impacting the classroom, completion of academic work, and at times student safety. In response to many conversations with faculty where the prevailing

## Student mental health cont'd...

theme of a need for more resources and supports in response to student mental health issues is paramount, a number of initiatives have been created.

1. The **Blue Folders** - [Waterloo](#) and [Brantford](#) - are resources for faculty and staff to identify and respond to students in distress. The folder provides: awareness of resources and supports; language for referring students to resources and supports; and assistance for faculty to understand the progressively higher levels of care or response that maybe required for a student in crisis.

2. One of the resources highlighted in the Blue Folder is the **Behavioural Intervention Team (BIT)** which is best described as a 'student support team' providing early intervention and elevated levels of support for students exhibiting disruptive or concerning behaviour. BIT aims to foster conditions for student support, success and safety through assessment, intervention and coordinated support. Faculty who observe or have concerns about students in distress should contact BIT immediately at [waterloobit@wlu.ca](mailto:waterloobit@wlu.ca).

3. **Training for faculty and staff:** We recognized that faculty and staff indicated interest in better awareness and tools to support students' mental health and awareness. Laurier's response was to provide training opportunities for three distinct programs. Since 2014, almost 1000 faculty, staff and student leaders have taken part in mental health training programs. Training opportunity information is available through Laurier's Human Resource web page by selecting [Register for Learning Workshops](#).

a) **Mental Health First Aid** is a 12-hour training course designed to provide participants with the skills necessary to assist someone who is developing a mental health problem or experiencing a mental health crisis. The course addresses four of the most common and most stigmatized mental health disorders and includes signs/symptoms, risk factors, and crisis first aid for specific situations: substance-related disorders, mood-related disorders, anxiety and trauma-related disorders, and psychotic disorders.

b) **safeTALK** is a half-day workshop that prepares participants to identify people with thoughts of suicide and connect them with life-saving first aid resources. Participants will learn to: notice and respond to situations where suicide thoughts might be present; recognize that invitations for help are often overlooked; move beyond the common tendency to miss, dismiss, and avoid suicide; apply the TALK steps: Tell, Ask, Listen, and

KeepSafe; and know community resources and how to connect someone with thoughts of suicide to them for further help.

c) **ASIST** (Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training) is a two-day interactive workshop in suicide first aid. ASIST teaches participants to recognize when someone may have thoughts of suicide and to work with them to create a plan that will support their immediate safety. Although ASIST is widely used by healthcare providers, participants don't need any formal training to attend the workshop—anyone 16 or older can learn and use the ASIST model.

4. Faculty in need of personal support can access confidential, professional, free counselling services through the **Employee and Family Assistance Program (EFAP)**. Homewood Health, EFAP's counselling provider, has extensive experience supporting employees in the post-secondary education sector and addressing the specific challenges they face while leading students to academic excellence. To arrange a confidential appointment at Homewood Health EFAP, call 1-800-663-1142 (anytime 24/7/365), or visit <http://homeweb.ca>.

Ongoing feedback and suggestions from faculty are greatly appreciated as we strive to respond to existing and emerging challenges, and to help faculty feel appreciated and valued as key influencers on student wellness and success.

### RLACs: 24/7

*Clayton McCort, Associate Director, Residence Life*

While Residence Life Area Coordinators (RLACs) are responsible for the day-to-day operational supervision of their assigned residence buildings and enhancing the living and learning environment for students living in residence, they also play a central role in maintaining the safety and security of the residence community. Increasingly, this involves responding to students in need of mental health support. While RLACs are not mental health professionals, their suicide awareness and prevention training has become increasingly important—particularly after most of the Laurier community has gone home for the day, on weekends, during Reading Weeks, during campus closures due to weather, etc., and on holidays.

Throughout the Fall and Winter terms, Laurier's

## RLACs: 24/7 cont.

RLACs work after-hours shift rotations seven days a week to ensure round-the-clock support for student-staff working in residence buildings. They respond to and triage higher level residence situations and, where appropriate, will refer situations to the Residence Life Manager on-call. While the [Department of Residence](#) will address faculty or staff concerns regarding students during regular working hours, concerns arising after hours can be called into Special Constable Services (SCS) who will inform the RLAC on duty. Recognizing that a familiar face can be comforting for a stu-

dent who may be struggling, the RLACs ensure that any time SCS, Waterloo Regional Police or Waterloo Fire is called to a Laurier residence, they are always there.

**More numbers**  
**Laurier's Waterloo campus employs 5 RLACs for its residence population of roughly 3,000 first-year students while Brantford campus has 2 coordinators who serve between 300 and 500 residence students.**

## Some days I feel overwhelmed

*By Kimberly Ellis-Hale, Sociology*

Some days I feel overwhelmed. Between students asking for support and understanding, Accessible Learning's term-long student accommodation updates, Dean of Student's requests for additional student-related consideration, and URGENT-student-related-notices, I very rarely feel that I have a handle on this side of teaching.

Maybe I am feeling this way because of my course load or student numbers or the tragedies at the Universities of Guelph and Waterloo, or the increase in the percentage of students, who require, ask or need more than just a review of their latest assessment. Whatever the reason, I am not alone in feeling the increased pressure that mounting student mental health concerns has created across the post-secondary sector.

Results of the 2016 National College Health Assessment (NCHA II) [Ontario Canada Reference Group's](#) survey of more than 25,000 Ontario post-secondary students indicate that rates of anxiety, depression, suicidal thoughts and suicide attempts have increased since 2013.

According to Meg Houghton, president of the Ontario University and College Health Association (OUCHA), campus mental health care providers are not only seeing increased severity and complexity of student mental health care needs, but also a broadening of the demands for their services which now often include supporting "significant diagnoses, trauma counselling and crises (Ontario campus counsellors say they're drowning in mental health needs <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/ottawa/mental-health-ontario-campus-crisis-1.3771682>)."

With words like 'increasing', 'crisis' and

'overwhelming' liberally interspersed in conversations and news reports on the situation faced by Ontario colleges and universities, it is not surprising that the mental health care needs of students has outstripped the post-secondary sector's capacity to meet the increasing demand. Perhaps that's why the Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development (MAESD) has recently announced that it will provide additional funding starting in 2017-18 to assist with the costs of hiring added mental health service providers at all publicly funded colleges and universities.

Laurier is not immune. Between 2014/15 and 2016/17, the Waterloo campus' [Wellness Centre](#) experienced an almost 20 percent increase in student mental health care visits and, according to the centre's Director, Karen Ostrander, the numbers continue to climb. When combined with the peak demand periods of end of October to mid-November and end of February until the end of March, students often have to wait several weeks just for an initial appointment. That is not to say that the Centre won't see students in crisis, but rather that their same-day appointment slots are limited.

While the Wellness Centre's approach to student health is multidisciplinary—providing access to family physicians, one consulting psychiatrist, registered nurses, Master's level trained counsellors, a dedicated mental health nurse, a case management and outreach counsellor and a gendered violence advocate (through the Diversity and Equity Office)--- there are many things it is not.

The Laurier Wellness Centre is *not* an emergency service. It is *not* equipped to provide long term counselling support. It does *not* provide specialized mental health services. More egregiously, however, is that it

## Some days I feel overwhelmed cont'd...

is *not* available to support students outside of 'regular working hours'. If only mental health issues were compliant!

Outside of 'regular working hours', the Blue Folder (see article by Leanne Holland Brown this issue) recommends that faculty contact Special Constable Services (SCS) if they are concerned about a student's safety or the safety of others. According to Karen Sider, SCS' Administrative Assistant, members receive initial specialized training on the Ontario Mental Health Act (1990) (which they have the authority to enforce), participate in Laurier's Mental Health and First Aid training, and have access to online de-escalation, suicide awareness and prevention, drugs and psychosis, etc. training through the Canadian Police Knowledge Network. Important training, indeed, given that the SCS not only appears frequently as the first point of contact in the Blue Folder but also because it has expanded its mandate.

In partnership with others on campus---some more easily identifiable than others---the SCS is a member of two specialized teams mobilized when either a student is said to be in extreme distress or it has been determined that the student's behaviour is disruptive or threatening. The first of these is the Behavioral Intervention Team (BIT) which is described as a 'student support team' providing "early intervention and elevated levels of support for students exhibiting disruptive or concerning behaviour" and "aim[s] to foster conditions for student support, success and safety through assessment, intervention and coordination" (see the Blue Folder). The second is the Threat Assessment and Prevention Team (TAPT) whose role, as described in the HR & Compensation Meeting minutes of Tuesday January 24, 2017, is to "triage, assess and report on violent behaviour by employees or students." Under the direction of Safety, Health, Environment & Risk Management (SHERM), its advantage is in [cost savings and outcome control](#) accrued by keeping it in-house rather than hiring external professionals.

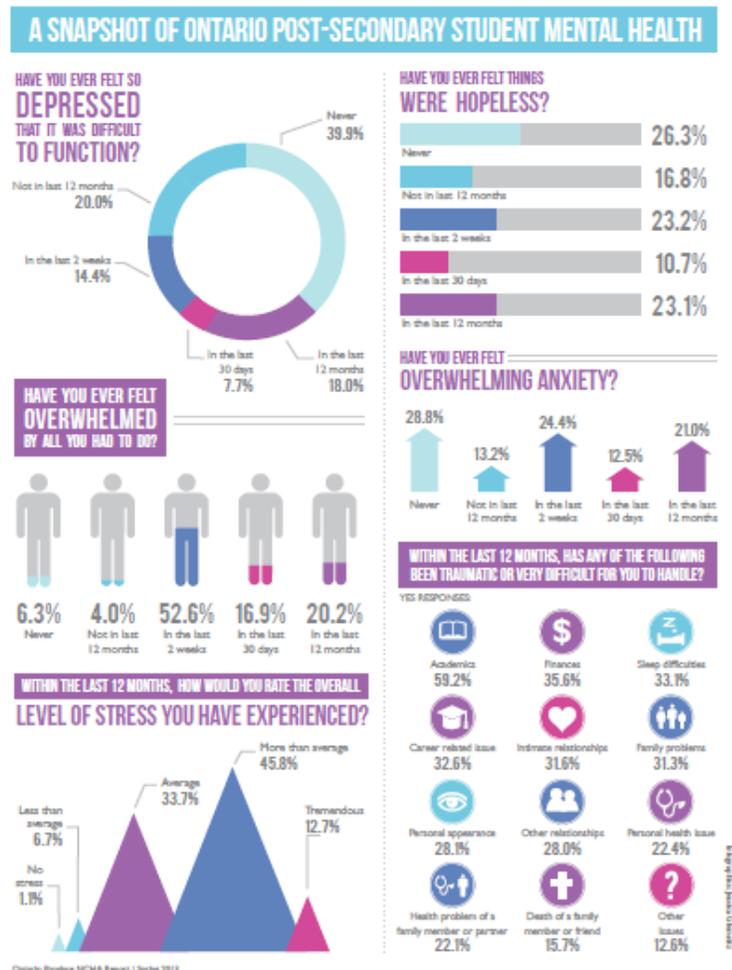
The difficulty with these 'Teams' as they are currently configured, and with online form-based programs like the [At Risk Student Reporting](#), is that there is very little clarity regarding the processes that faculty may have initiated. Given the lack of available information about such approaches and the termination of the faculty member's involvement, many faculty either hesitate to initiate or, for those who do, are left wondering just what they

have given license to.

Let's hope that at a minimum there is greater transparency in all aspects of SHERM's proposed changes to the way Laurier students, staff and faculty are handled under its Violent Risk Assessment and Management. But given that the [proposed changes](#), found on page 175 of the 176 page April 10th, 2017 Senate Agenda Package, provide little in the way of detail, it may be unlikely. Of equal, if not greater, concern in the proposed amalgamation of BIT and TAPT is the apparent loss of BIT's said focus on providing a safe and supportive environment for students.

So, what are faculty to do in the face of increasing mental health concerns among students? If there was a clear, easy answer to that you would be reading something else.

Faculty can take advantage of the various training opportunities (see Leanne Holland Brown's article this issue). Though having completed the Mental Health First Aid training, I was astonished at the



## Some days I feel overwhelmed cont'd...

expectation that we know all our students well enough to discern slight shifts in their behaviours. (This feat is unimaginable for growing class sizes, let alone the 'do more with less' environment faculty face.) And I was frankly horrified by the depiction of those with major mood disorders as threats.

There are the pathways laid out in the Blue Folder, extensions to dial and forms to submit but know that while these steps are easy, they are all missing their disclaimers: our Wellness Centre is stretched, on-campus counselling is restricted to working hours, off-campus resources may provide little comfort (especially for first-year students living away from home for the first time), online form-filling is somewhat suspect, training often confers a false sense of security and unclear lines of responsibility, SCS may seem too much while BIT, and especially TAPT (and who knows about the new Teams), appear to be downright heavy-handed. Until there is greater clarity around intent, opportunities for involvement, infor-

mation regarding process and clear statements about responsibly and student-desirable mental health outcomes rather than University cost savings and risk reduction, caution is needed – at least for our students' sakes.

What am I going to do? I will continue to show genuine interest in and concern for as many of my hundreds of students each term as I can. I will demand more information before I submit a form or call in the troops. I will advocate for the spending of Laurier's annual \$100,000 MAESD money to be directed towards the hiring of after-hours and weekends mental health service providers. I will hold my university responsible for the mental health needs of our students – after all, they are part of our Laurier family now right? And I will continue to seek out and talk with people who are also genuinely concerned about students to buoy myself when I am feeling overwhelmed.

## Governance report and recommendations to the Senate

Originally published Apr. 7/17

*By Kari Brozowski, Communications*

Despite having no official position in the WLU Act or Senate approval, the University Secretariat initiated its own [Governance Review of Wilfrid Laurier University](#). While some may applaud the gumption, faculty should be concerned that the Report's recommendations generally support the Secretariat's consolidation of power over the entire WLU governance.

For all intents and purposes, the Review recommends creating a centralized system whereby power is located with the Secretariat, essentially ending the democratic processes of Senate. Despite its claims that faculty would maintain their power in accordance with the Act, a close read of the Review's recommendations reveal a shift of power to the administration at the expense of the faculty.

Not letting the Report's lack of implementation recommendations hold back progress, the Secretariat presented its own [interpretation and implementation requirements](#) for Senate in the governance restructuring process at the March 8<sup>th</sup>, 2017 Senate meeting. Not surprisingly, it recommended handing the keys to our academic freedom and programming responsibilities enshrined in the Senate over to the office of the Secretariat.

However, three things have to happen before the Secretariat can consolidate this power:

- 1.The Act must be opened to add the new Secretariat position, since it currently has no such position or power in the Act, and it would be violating the Act by allowing its establishment. If the Act were to be opened, we as faculty should also increase the percentage of faculty on the Senate from fifty percent plus one to seventy or even eighty percent.

- 2.A new Secretariat must be hired with a Ph.D. and experience as a Senator, since the position would have academic oversight for the entire University governance.

- 3.The removal of the position of WLU President, since the President would have no role in the University governance in the potentially reconstituted Senate. Senators need to be concerned about violating the Act, which clearly states in Article 19(k) that only Senate can "create councils and committees to exercise its powers". If Senate is to review itself and change any of the governance processes, then it needs to strike a committee to review the Senate and makes its own recommendations.

It is up to us as faculty to attend the Senate meeting on May 23, 2017 at 3 p.m. in the Senate and Board chambers to voice our concerns.

## To divest, or to not divest – that is the question

In early 2016, the University received a letter endorsed by 80 faculty members calling on it to divest from fossil fuels. Fourteen months later, Laurier's Responsible Investment Working Group (RIWG) is distilling the results of written submissions and public consultations into a policy recommendation on responsible investing. Anticipating completion by mid-2017, the RIWG is certainly not the first tasked with such an undertaking, nor will it be the last.

Across Canada, universities are responding to the call to divest from carbon-heavy to climate-friendly alternatives. While divesting's financial viability and advocacy effectiveness are frequently questioned by its opponents, proponents point out that the financial risks are not different than those of fossil fuel related portfolios, particularly in what is referred to as the '[carbon bubble](#)'. Further, supporters are calling on universities to embody their stated values of sustainability and support for future ethical economies.

Canadian universities are not alone in navigating the divesting waters; [forty-three British universities](#) have already begun moving out of fossil fuels. Nor is the way uncharted for Laurier's RIWG as the University of Toronto's response to and York's Advisory Committee on Responsible Investment's [recommendations](#) for divesting attest. The question of divesting ultimately lies in the will and willingness of the community considering it.

### [What is RIWG's Purpose?](#)

*To advise the Pension Committee and the Finance & Investments Committee on whether and how to revise existing investment policies and procedures for University-managed investment funds to incorporate additional requirements around the consideration of environmental, social and governance and socially responsible investment factors in investment decisions.*

## 2017 CAS award recognizes Kimberly Ellis-Hale and James Gerlach

*By Michele Kramer, President*

The WLUFAs CAS Award was created to recognize the exemplary contributions a Member of the Contract Academic Staff Bargaining Unit has made to the Association. This year, the WLUFAs Executive unanimously voted to have the award shared by two nominees: Kimberly Ellis-Hale and Jim Gerlach.

Though both Gerlach and Ellis-Hale have served WLUFAs for a number of years and were already strong contenders for the award, it was their noteworthy individual contributions to this year's Contract Faculty negotiations that made it impossible for the Association Executive to vote for one nominee over the other. In a year of difficult bargaining – one that brought Contract Faculty to the brink of job action – Jim and Kimberly proved themselves to be formidable figures in the ongoing fight against precarious work.

Jim Gerlach has been actively involved with WLUFAs since 2008 when he first volunteered to work as support staff for the strike headquarters at the time. Since then, he has been a member of every CF negotiating team, including his role this year as Chief Negotiator. Jim has also held the position of Treasurer on the WLUFAs Executive for the past five years. His nomina-

tion package noted that Jim is an "excellent steward of WLUFAs assets" and furthered that statement by noting that "a strong financial position means a strong position in negotiations and Jim's leadership in this area strengthens WLUFAs position at the bargaining table for both Contract and Full-time faculty". In addition to these roles, Jim has also served the Association at both provincial (OCUFA) and national (CAUT) levels where he has been a member of various Contract Faculty committees.

Kimberly Ellis-Hale has served as the Contract Faculty liaison on the Association Executive for three years and, like Jim, she is also an active member of OCUFA's Contract Faculty Committee. She has also been a member of WLUFAs Communications Committee, taking on the role of Chair this year. In addition, Kimberly is now working on helping to bring the \$15 and Fairness campaign to Waterloo. In particular, however, it was Kimberly's work as Action Committee Chair during this year's CF negotiations that impressed the Executive. As her nomination package noted: "Kimberly immersed herself completely in the task of mobilizing the CF bargaining unit, keeping them informed about the process and status of negotiations, networking with local and provincial representatives in order to garner support for the bargaining unit and plain-old putting Con-

## 2017 CAS Award cont'd

tract Faculty (and their struggles) in everyone's face! Put simply, the strong strike mandate that the Executive received from its Contract Faculty – and the successful round of bargaining that resulted from that mandate – is almost wholly due to Kimberly's indefatigable approach to her work on this front."

The WLUFAs CAS Award acknowledges the risks to job security that CAS Members may take when they challenge the precarious conditions under which they and their colleagues must work. Kimberly Ellis-Hale and Jim Gerlach stand out as Members who will not shy away from bringing the plight of precarious workers into the limelight and, for that, WLUFAs is incredibly grateful.

### WLUFAs

*Spring Wine & Cheese Social*

*Retiree Recognition*

*and*

*Century Club Induction*

Wednesday

April 19, 2017

4:00—6:00 p.m.

Hawk's Nest



\*Snacks and two drink tickets

provided!

**Many thanks to this year's members of the Communications Committee for helping WLUFAs Members stay in touch with workplace issues and politics. The committee's annual report will be available on the WLUFAs website shortly.**

## Upcoming WLUFAs site redesign?

*By: Matt Thomas, eResources Librarian and WLUFAs Social Media Manager*

Last Fall Term, the WLUFAs Communications Committee worked with a group of students in Dr. Abby Goodrum's JN270 "Intro to User Experience Design" class to help them present a set of recommendations to us to improve the user experience of the WLUFAs site (<http://www.wlufas.ca/>). At the end of term, the group of eight students presented their findings with the rest of the class' groups and provided us with a report describing the process, their methods, and their recommendations for the site.

The WLUFAs Communications Committee can take these recommendations and determine how to proceed: Does the site need a major or minor redesign? If so, when and how should we proceed? As always, the committee welcomes your feedback and suggestions so please feel free to contact one of the committee members, the WLUFAs Office, or email [wlufascommunications@gmail.com](mailto:wlufascommunications@gmail.com).

WLUFAs Communications would like to thank students Alex Dinning, Danial Endrawes, Shea Harrington, Hayden Hellyer, Brittany Legault, Will LeGrand, Michelle Nemeth, and Tyler Winter, and of course Dr. Goodrum for helping us begin our process to improve our website and therefore communication with our Membership.

