

WLUFA



AMPLIFYING UNITY & EMPOWERING MEMBERS

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



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From Our Labour Past



Image Courtesy of: Canadian Association of Labour Media

Dear WLUFA Members,

I would like to welcome you all back to a new academic year. Last year for WLUFA was challenging but successful, with two rounds of negotiations and two new collective agreements ratified and the successful campaign that resulted in our pension plan members voting to transition to the University Pension Plan. This year is a non-bargaining year, and we will be using some of that space to build our membership engagement efforts to position WLUFA as a member-centred organization.

Even early into the academic year, it has become apparent that the administration will be engaging in austerity measures similar to those we endured last year. WLUFA is monitoring these developments closely, and the WLUFA Finance Committee is back at work analyzing last year's financial statements and providing advice to the WLUFA Executive.

At universities across the province, administration and faculty associations alike are also waiting to hear what recommendations the recently formed Blue Ribbon Panel on university funding have made to the Ministry of Colleges and Universities, and what course of action the government will take in response to them. Media commentators of all political stripes have been quite united in their profiles of Ontario's university system as being chronically underfunded by government, resulting in our universities placing last in Canada in funding terms by a number of different financial measures. I have met personally with members of government to outline our concerns about funding. In these efforts I have worked in league with other faculty associations through the Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations (OCUFA), your provincial organization, to push this message.

The safety and well-being of our WLUFA community has also been high on our list of priorities. In the wake of the horrific events at the University of Waterloo this summer, WLUFA sought legal advice and formed a small committee to consider the number of fronts on which we needed to make sure the administration was providing a safe working environment to our members. As a result, we have discussed with them a very long list of safety issues and urged action. While we have not achieved all our goals - such as panic buttons in classrooms - significant headway has been made in assuaging at least some of our concerns. Just this week, for example, at our prompting the administration kindly amended guidelines for dealing with disruptive students by adding that it is an option for any of our members to end class and leave the classroom if they deem the environment unsafe.

Continued on next page

* See page 9 for details

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE - CONTINUED

At the centre of many of our collective efforts is our important role in academic governance. This year we have continued our popular pre-Senate caucus to bring together all faculty involved in university governance to discuss items from Senate and Board agendas and larger issues more generally. This forum includes all faculty who sit as Senators, members of Senate subcommittees, members of the Board of Governors, as well as members of the WLUFA Executive, Governance and Finance Committees. These well-attended meetings feature robust discussions of the central issues facing us and provide our colleagues who are involved in governance with important input as they formulate their positions on an array of topics.

As your President, I am committed to listening to your feedback and collaborating with all WLUFA stakeholders to ensure that your voices are heard. Together, we can build member engagement, encourage open communications, empower faculty through participation in governance, prioritize on-campus safety, and create a brighter future for our university.

WLUFA President, Rob Kristofferson

DID YOU KNOW?

The Research Ethics Board (REB) has made several changes to the human ethics application process. If you supervise graduate students, you should know that now only full-time faculty, contract teaching faculty who are on an active teaching contract, or staff will be able to act as Principal Investigator (PI) on ethics applications. Students will still be able to draft applications, however the final submission to the REB must be completed by their supervisor, and thus the responsibility for ensuring that graduate students are trained on ethical protocols, and that these protocols are followed during the research, lies with the supervisor. If you are a supervisor, it is a good practice to keep notes about the ethics training you have provided to your graduate students.

University of Waterloo Violence and Campus Safety

Following the tragic incident at the University of Waterloo this summer, the WLUFA community has rallied to explore potential actions aimed at addressing the growing concerns of violence, particularly gender-based violence, on our campus. Though not covered in full detail in this article, these considerations are at the heart of enhancing campus safety and proactively addressing a spectrum of issues related to workplace violence, discrimination, and harassment. As of this article's drafting, some proposed actions have already been under consideration by the University and, in certain instances, implemented.

Included among the many issues we have explored are the quality and protocols of our institutional risk assessments used by our administration. These instruments are conceived to help in the prevention of workplace violence. However, there are a variety of risk assessment approaches and we have signaled to the administration the need to determine whether the present system is adequate to the needs of our community. We have therefore encouraged exploration of potentially more robust risk assessment frameworks, consideration of how social media activity is integrated into such assessments, and a number of other items.

Proposed safety measures include relocating courses to more secure classrooms, safeguarding information disclosing class locations, and facilitating emergency response training to enhance overall safety on campus. We are encouraged that a committee has been formed with faculty representation to consider wider measures than those already implemented and we will monitor its progress.

Internally, we have put focus on empowering and supporting our Joint Health and Safety Committee (JHSC) representatives, encouraging them to play an active role in enhancing safety communication and updates. Our Grievance Committee is also considering ways we can enhance supports for members coming to us with safety concerns. A comprehensive communications strategy is also in development.



University of Waterloo Violence and Campus Safety - Continued

Central to these actions is the adoption of a person-centered approach, which respects individual consent and preferences for safety measures when addressing safety concerns. WLUFA also plans to engage with department chairs to enlist their support in assisting faculty members with safety concerns and guiding them to connect with WLUFA for appropriate assistance. Resources will be developed and training provided to equip members with the knowledge and support necessary to address safety concerns and report incidents of violence or harassment effectively.

In terms of additional safety measures, we recognize that flexible class modalities can be a tool to provide enhanced safety. We have advocated for the widespread installation of panic buttons, privacy measures, and de-escalation and emergency response training to further underline the employer’s commitment to campus safety. We have also advocated for enhanced training on how to respond to harassment that is tailored to the experiences of targeted groups.

We have also expressed concern about student conduct investigations. We strongly urge members to contact WLUFA if you encounter a conduct problem in the classroom. We will accompany you through any process and make sure your interests and safety are properly centred.

We are on your side, and we advocate for you.



TERRY'S CORNER

Being WLUFA’s Executive Director for over a year has been an immense privilege. The academic landscape has undergone a drastic shift in recent times, challenging our entire community to adapt swiftly. However, let’s not forget that employers must adhere to essential rules, and employee rights are non-negotiable.

WLUFA Members are the lifeblood of Wilfrid Laurier University, and their voices should resound confidently. Every member has the right to grieve, and as the Grievance Coordinator, I strive to ensure fair representation at all times.

WLUFA is more than just addressing concerns and complaints; we are here to provide support as well. Looking for resources related to health benefits, retirement, or compensation? Stay tuned for WLUFA updates. Seeking a better understanding of the collective agreement? Stay tuned for WLUFA updates. Need guidance for research grants, tenure, or a full-time appointment? Stay tuned for WLUFA updates.

In this corner of the newsletter, I will share my perspective on WLUFA. I aim to provoke intriguing thoughts that challenge the way people think about their union and encourage all of our Members to reach out to WLUFA whenever there is doubt, need, or simply the desire to connect.

Stay tuned for “Terry’s Corner” in all future publications of this newsletter.

-Terry Poirier-



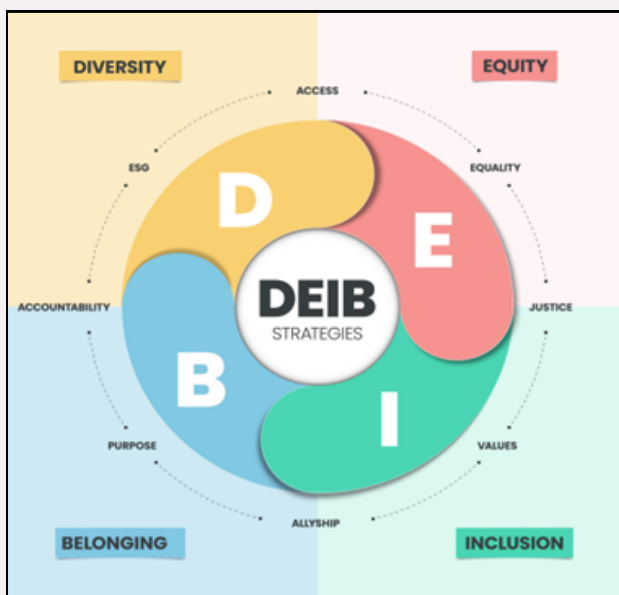
WHY EQUITY, DIVERSITY, AND INCLUSION (EDI) HAS TO BE A PRIORITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION

DR. ARDAVAN EIZADIRAD, ASSISTANT PROFESSOR IN THE FACULTY OF EDUCATION

Higher education institutions play a pivotal role in shaping the future of individuals and society at large. To ensure institutions fulfill their potential and align with the values of equity and diversity, it is imperative that they foster inclusive environments for students, staff, librarians, and faculty where they can show up as their authentic selves, experience belonging, and be valued for who they are, and what and how they contribute to the growth of the institution. One key player in this effort are the role higher education unions, which can significantly impact the culture, policies, and practices within academia. This critical analysis explores the importance of prioritizing equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) within higher education unions and provides guiding questions for self-reflection and improvement.

Equity, diversity, and inclusion are not merely buzzwords or theoretical concepts. They are action-oriented verbs that should underpin the operations of higher education unions. Inclusive institutions promote equitable access to education, celebrate diversity, and create environments where all members can thrive. This includes not only recruitment strategies but how to create supporting and healing spaces upon entry into the academy.

A critical examination of EDI in higher education reveals that EDI issues are often overlooked, inadequately addressed, or implemented superficially using a checklist approach. Below are a series of guiding questions for higher education unions to reflect upon to assess and examine where they are in their EDI journey and how to identify next steps for improvement and growth.



Representation and Leadership

How diverse is the leadership within the union?
Are marginalized voices adequately represented in decision-making processes? How are they recruited and through what means?
Are there reporting tools to identify concerns from the membership? What data is being collected? Demographical data? Race-based data?
Do we value international experiences?

Bargaining for Equity

Does the collective bargaining agreement include provisions for EDI?
How can we negotiate for policies that promote pay equity, anti-discrimination measures, and support for underrepresented groups?
Are we advocating for a diverse faculty and staff through our negotiations?

Professional Development

Are there opportunities for members to engage in EDI-focused training and development?
Are there opportunities for culturally reflective mentorship?
How can we ensure that all members have access to resources that foster intercultural competence?

Safe and Inclusive Work Environments

How are tracking and addressing concerns related to harassment, discrimination, and bias within our institutions?
Are there channels for reporting EDI-related incidents, and are they effective?
How can we support community initiatives that promote EDI in higher education? Are there partnerships we can establish or strengthen to advance EDI efforts?

Transparency and Accountability:

How are we communicating our EDI initiatives and progress to union members?
Do we have mechanisms in place to hold ourselves accountable for EDI-related goals and shortcomings?
What metrics are we using to track and assess our EDI efforts?

CLIMATE ACTION COMMITTEE UPDATE

CAC background and recent work

As employees, researchers, teachers, and participants in university governance, WLUFA members have a collective responsibility to contribute to Laurier's efforts to address the climate crisis. WLUFA's Climate Action Committee was created in 2020, building on faculty participation in climate mobilization at Laurier, across Waterloo Region, Brantford, and beyond. We meet roughly once a month and engage with the WLUFA membership, the administration, students, and others around specific issues related to climate change. Our core objectives include holding the university to account for its commitments to climate change mitigation and encouraging stronger commitments.

Our key work over the past year has included:

- 1) Participating in the consultation process for Laurier's [Sustainability Action Plan 2023-2028](#) by writing a detailed response to the draft plan and by meeting with the Sustainability Office.
- 2) Monitoring, evaluating, and responding to [Laurier's commitments to incorporate climate concerns into its investment practices](#), including by giving an October 2022 presentation to the Board of Governors' Joint Finance, Investment Property and Pension Committee and by sharing our concerns and suggestions about the commitments and Laurier's reporting on them with the administration. We have also been researching climate-related investment commitments at other Canadian universities. Look for our communications on this work over the next couple months!
- 3) Working with Teaching Excellence and Innovation and with other Laurier faculty to create a new [Climate Pedagogy Community of Practice](#). This group now meets once a month and we encourage all faculty who teach about climate change or would like to do so to get involved! Contact: climatepedagogy@wlu.ca.
- 4) Investigating Laurier's policies on e-waste (see below) and on emissions tracking and reporting. The CAC will have [ten members in 2023-24](#) (our largest complement ever) and we have some big initiatives planned for the fall. Stay tuned!

Spotlight on the Evergreen program

CAC aims to work constructively with the Administration on issues related to climate change, and part of that means sharing good news when the university is making successful or promising efforts. One good-news highlight from this past year is in relation to the Evergreen program. We were contacted by a WLUFA member, getting a new computer through the program, who was wondering what would happen to her old one. We've all read reports of e-waste ending up in other parts of the world, where it is recycled in unsafe and environmentally harmful ways. Were our used computers part of this global e-waste problem? What steps was Laurier taking to reduce e-waste and perhaps give our computers a second life with other users?

CAC members conducted research on the Laurier website and in SharePoint to see if we could locate university policies and practices for evergreened computers. Finding little information in this regard, we engaged ICT over email, leading eventually to a June meeting with Julie Topic, Director of ICT Support, and Eric Meliton, Manager of the Sustainability Office. We learned that Laurier has made admirable commitments to sustainability in managing our computing resources. Laurier sends evergreened computers to [Greentec](#), which not only recycles but also refurbishes and repurposes computers—some for resale and some for donation to charity. Greentec's data erasure and recycling facility is in Cambridge. Moreover, they track their GHG emissions and provide that data back to Laurier for our own emissions accounting.

Computers come up for evergreening after five years at Laurier, while the industry standard is three. We should all try to get as many years out of our computers as we can, thereby reducing our climate and other environmental impacts. But we also need to be sensitive to the university's assertion that maintenance costs (especially in terms of demand on the time of ICT technicians) can ramp up as computers age. Since Laurier seems to be doing its best to ensure that evergreened computers are responsibly repurposed and recycled, WLUFA members can feel better about exchanging their old computer for a new one when the time comes.

NEW SEXUAL MISCONDUCT LEGISLATION - THE FULL IMPLICATIONS OF ONTARIO'S RECENT ENACTMENT OF BILL 26

WITH PERMISSION FROM: KAREN SISSON - GRIEVANCE OFFICER, QUEENS UNIVERSITY FACULTY ASSOCIATION AND CHRISTINE MCLAUGHLIN - EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, THE UNIVERSITY OF ONTARIO INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY FACULTY ASSOCIATION; ADAPTED FOR WLUFA BY RYAN LADNER

Earlier this year, faculty associations across the province were alerted to legislative changes introduced by the Ford government related to sexual relations with students that have now come into force as of July 1st, 2023. The Strengthening Postsecondary Institutions and Students Act (Bill 26) amends the Ministry of Training, College and Universities Act and the Private Career Colleges Act, 2005 to add new requirements regarding sexual misconduct towards a student by an employee of a publicly funded university or college. It is meant to mirror similar legislation governing health care employees' relations with clients and patients. However, the "... bill will interfere in the collective bargaining and arbitration rights of university and college employees—a long-standing and fundamental aspect of the Canadian system of labour relations". (OCUFA Statement)

Bill 26 changes how disciplinary proceedings are conducted. A finding of sexual misconduct can result in work termination, or the discharge of an employee from their position. Under this new legislation the employee is not entitled to notice of termination, financial settlement, or eventual reinstatement.

Other faculty associations and the Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations (OCUFA) are very concerned that this bill significantly erodes the capacity of unions to represent their members under the guise of addressing an issue that universities already have appropriate tools to address.

Nevertheless, as of July 1st, 2023, Bill 26 is the law, and we wish our Members to be mindful of its implications. Sexual misconduct is broadly defined within Bill 26 to mean, among other things, failing to follow the rules laid out in any employer policy or other rule respecting relations with students at the institution. The Bill deems any discipline issued by the university to satisfy a "just cause" analysis and removes the jurisdiction of an arbitrator or any other adjudicator to override the penalty if the finding of sexual misconduct stands. In other words, aspects of "due process" are abridged.

WLUFA members need to be aware of new Article 9 language in the Full-time collective agreement which states that a Member's entry into an intimate or sexual relationship with a student over whom they have authority is a Conflict of Interest. We are concerned that Members found to be in such a conflict could be exposed to allegations of sexual misconduct.

More generally, Bill 26 only focuses on faculty as perpetrators, overlooking how sexual harassment can happen in the workplace to faculty, especially faculty from equity deserving groups (including and especially racialized and women faculty), and faculty who are precariously employed (as post-secondary institutions increasingly rely on contract labour to mount academic programs).

We encourage all Members to take steps to ensure that you maintain professional relations and communications with students, all students, always.

Finally, if you think you are at risk of having crossed those professional boundaries, please reach out to WLUFA's Executive Director, Terry Poirier tpoirier@wlu.ca.

UNIVERSITY PENSION PLAN CONVERSION

DR. DAVID MONOD, PROFESSOR, AMERICAN SOCIAL AND CULTURAL HISTORY

On 12 July, WLUFA's Executive ratified a tentative agreement consenting to the transfer of assets from the WLU Pension Plan to the University Pension Plan (UPP). A few weeks earlier, WLUFA Members had voted over 90% in favour of the tentative agreement.



The tentative agreement was the result of almost a year of preparatory work and negotiations between the University administration and WLUFA's Pension Committee (Azim Essaji, Sheila McKee-Protopapas and David Monod). In addition to negotiating with the employer, the Committee's job was to educate members on the two pension plans. It did so through a series of town hall meetings, brochures, Q&A sessions, and bulletins. The overwhelming vote in favour of conversion was deeply gratifying for both the Committee and the Executive.

The pension conversion agreement will come into effect under certain conditions: first, the University must successfully negotiate agreements with the other union groups on campus; second, the retirees must not oppose conversion; third the University must reach a conversion agreement with the UPP; and finally, the conversion of assets must be approved by the Financial Services Regulatory Authority of Ontario. Assuming all these conditions are met, WLUFA members would see conversion of pension assets to the UPP on 1 January 2026.

WLUFA's primary interest in entering negotiations over conversion to the UPP was to secure greater stability and accountability for the pension plan. The Laurier Pension Plan is a Single Employer Plan where the employer has sole responsibility for funding the plan and has sole authority to make funding decisions; it is responsible for funding deficits and administering surpluses. The UPP, in contrast, has shared governance and risk. It is a pension plan that is jointly sponsored, governed, and funded by the employers and plan members. It is administered by an employer- and employee-appointed Board of Trustees, whose members jointly make decisions on the day-to-day operations of the plan. While the members of the UPP are employees of individual universities, the UPP makes its own investment decisions and determinations. The UPP's ability to meet ongoing and future commitments is not directly tied, in the way the Laurier Plan is, to the financial health of any one institution.

In addition to providing greater security for our pension assets, the agreement WLUFA negotiated with the University provides several advantages to our members. UPP contribution rates are higher than the WLUPP's and the agreement provides a one-time offset of 1.2% that covers the difference, effective on the Laurier Conversion Date. The offset will apply to all members of the Pension Plan and to all Contract Teaching Faculty, and Part-Time Librarian whether they are members of the Pension Plan or not. The Agreement also provides that past WLU service will count towards the UPP's attractive early retirement option. Effective on the Conversion Date the University shall amend the WLU Plan to provide for unreduced early retirement for pensionable service earned prior to the Laurier Conversion Date if a WLUFA Represented Employee has both attained age 60 and has at least 80 plus continuous service points.

The tentative agreement also amends the Laurier Pension Plan, effective on the Laurier Conversion Date, to include stipends for members who serve in administrative positions (such as Associate Deans, Academic Department Chairs, and Department Heads in the Library) within the definition of pensionable earnings when determining benefits and contributions. Finally, the agreement moves the Supplemental Pension Plan (provided by the employer to members whose salary exceeds contribution limits under the Income Tax Act) into the Collective Agreement for the first time. The University also agreed to increase its contributions to the Supplemental Plan and to introduce different pay-out options.

Did You Know? Members are entitled to the following holidays: New Year's Day, Family Day, Good Friday, Victoria Day, Canada Day, Civic Holiday, Labour Day, Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day, Boxing Day, any other day declared as a holiday by the University President or as a statutory holiday by the federal or provincial authorities, and any other day on which the University premises are declared closed by the University President.

WHAT'S HAPPENING

With life, especially our social lives, returning to a sense of normalcy, WLUFA's Start of Fall Term Luncheon was a fantastic opportunity for our members to reconnect, share stories, and enjoy a quick mid-day bite. It was wonderful to see everyone at our two events. Stay tuned for more exciting social activities throughout the year!



HEAD SCRATCHERS

A. Four folks sat down to play. They played all night 'til the break of day. They played for gold and not for fun, with separate scores for everyone. When they came to square accounts, they all had made quite fair amounts. Can you the paradox explain. If no one lost, how could all gain.

B. In Duncan's cottage, where the temperature was below freezing, there was a newspaper, a fireplace, some kindling, and a kerosene lamp. What should he light first?

Answers on the last page...

RECENT & UPCOMING EVENTS

Fair Employment Week - October

The Annual CAUT Fair Employment Week has just finished. **October 16th-20th** featured on campus events showing support for Contract Faculty, Part-Time Librarians, and all Members of our academic community facing unfair workplace conditions. Thanks to everyone who volunteered and came by.



End of Fall Term Dinner - December

Please join us for the WLUFA End-of-Term Dinner on Friday December 8th!

WLUFA covers the cost for you and one guest to attend and will provide two drink tickets for each person. There will be a DJ for those who wish to kick up their heels!

Check your email inboxes for the invitation.



WHAT'S NEW

Membership Engagement 101

Ryan Ladner - Communications and Membership Engagement Officer

As my role with WLUFA continues to expand, I am excited to see the return of numerous faculty Members this upcoming fall term. While I have already had the pleasure of meeting many of you, my dedication lies in developing a sincere comprehension of the true sentiments held by the Membership regarding their experience here at Laurier.

In the forthcoming months, both I and other members of WLUFA's staff will be proactively engaging with the diverse associates across all campus locations. Our goal is to attentively listen and gain insights into your experiences and those of your colleagues. Whether it's during a casual coffee encounter or following a departmental meeting, I extend an invitation to anyone who spots our new blue WLUFA buttons, encouraging you to share your thoughts, highlight areas for improvement, or even request additional buttons to decorate your workbag.

As a Faculty Association, our strength is intrinsically tied to the unity of our Members. The enhancement of our working conditions and overall well-being hinges on our willingness to vocalize concerns and work in partnership in finding resolutions. I take great pride in being the newest addition to the WLUFA staff, and I eagerly anticipate further interactions and dialogues with the individuals I have the privilege to collaborate with and serve.

Looking forward to reconnecting this fall.



Name that Newsletter - CONTEST!!!

Dear Readers,

Our newsletter is fresh off the press and ready to make a splash, but it's missing a crucial ingredient: a catchy name! Three question marks won't cut it, so we're turning to our fantastic community of Faculty Members, Librarians and Association Friends for your brilliant suggestions.

The winning name will be carefully chosen by WLUFA's Executive Committee, following what promises to be an exciting debate. The triumphant WLUFA Member will proudly claim naming rights for the newsletter's lifetime and receive a \$100 gift card of their choosing.

To toss your hat into the ring, simply email your ideas to rladner@wlu.ca. Let the naming games begin!!!



EMAIL: WLUFA@WLU.CA

Seeking Contributors

The editorial staff of this newsletter is looking for content. We are looking to highlight matters pertaining to Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Indigeneity, committee contributions, research accomplishments and much more. If you would like to share your academic experiences with all your peers, please contact Ryan Ladner at rladner@wlu.ca to submit your content or provide feedback about this new publication.

KEEP IN TOUCH



EDITORIAL POLICY

The views expressed in WLUFA "Newsletter" are those of the individual authors and do not necessarily reflect those of WLUFA, the Communications Officer or the editor, except where such views are clearly indicated. The editor reserves the right to edit and reformat submissions to the newsletter. It is the policy of WLUFA "Newsletter" to encourage discussion and debate that is respectful. We do not publish or (re)print ad hominem attacks on fellow Members, nor any submission that might be deemed libelous or discriminatory. Submissions to the newsletter must include name and contact information. Name(s) may be withheld upon request.

HEAD SCRATCHERS

A. The players were professional musicians. B. A match.