

# NEGOTIATIONS 2012

# COLLEGE FACULTY

Bargaining Update - June 13, 2012



## Symposium a huge success

On Friday, June 1, more than 75 faculty from across Ontario, Manitoba, and British Columbia gathered at Ryerson University for the “Symposium on Quality Education and Academic Freedom in Ontario Colleges” co-hosted by the Ontario Public Service Employees Union (OPSEU) and the Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT).

After a warm welcome from James McKay, president of OPSEU Local 596 at Ryerson University, participants were saluted by Eduardo (Eddy) Almeida, First Vice-President/Treasurer of OPSEU for the work college faculty do. Almeida noted that we are in a time when we are being led to believe that quality education should only be for those who can afford it. “Quality education is a human right,” said Almeida, “and our job as unionists is to stand and fight for it. [College faculty] have OPSEU’s full support in your quest for academic freedom and quality education. We will stand behind you all the way...not just for us, but for all generations, for my children, for your children, for our neighbours’ children.”

*continued on page 2...*

# NEGOTIATIONS 2012

## COLLEGE FACULTY



## Putting Academic Freedom front and centre

The keynote speaker was Marcus Harvey, Executive Director of the Trent University Faculty Association, and an expert on academic freedom. “Faculty expertise is the real product that colleges have to offer,” said Harvey, “and the exercise of faculty discretion is what college students have signed on for.” Academic freedom is essential for the exercise of that discretion.

Harvey states that CAAT-A members should be commended for putting academic freedom front and centre in this round of bargaining since contract language on academic freedom would drive the creation of language on collegial governance. Harvey linked keeping academic freedom high on the bargaining agenda in U.S. colleges and universities with robust collegial governance (i.e., faculty input into the academic governance of the institution) and the unionization of faculty.

The next logical step in the evolution of colleges in Ontario is to use strong, collectively bargained academic freedom language to contribute to quality education through the acknowledged professionalism of faculty. Harvey argued that academic freedom benefits

faculty, students, and society: It allows faculty to base their teaching on expertise and knowledge, and serves common good, enabling those trusted with disseminating knowledge to do so free of external pressures.



Eduardo (Eddy) Almeida, OPSEU First Vice-President/  
Treasurer and Marcus Harvey, Executive Director of the  
Trent University Faculty Association

*continued on page 3...*

## Quality Education depends on Academic Freedom

During the afternoon panel, moderated by author and academic Margaret Visser, speakers tied together the history and importance of academic freedom in the US and Canada generally, and Ontario and British Columbia specifically. Each speaker emphasized the link between academic freedom for faculty and their ability to



Panel moderator: author and academic Margaret Visser

provide a quality education to students. Angela Regnier, Communications Officer for CAUT; George Davison of the Federation of Post-Secondary Educators, British Columbia; and Penni Stewart, a professor at York University who specializes in issues related to academic freedom all reinforced the need for academic freedom language to be enshrined in collective agreements. This language is crucial as the law does not provide such protection and colleges actively fight against it. Stewart argued, “Academic freedom is never given to us, never offered to us; we

will always have to fight for it because if there’s a place that our employers can cut back, they will cut back.”

Davison added that this language must not be limited to faculty handbooks or general college policies, but must be part of collective agreements in the colleges. He pointed to the British Columbia colleges’ language, most of which is based around social benefits clauses, which say that “society benefits from the search for knowledge and its free exposition.”

Jonathan Singer, professor at Seneca College in Toronto, emphasized the need to communicate the issues around academic freedom to our colleagues more effectively. Academic freedom, he argued, “is the right to fulfill our responsibility to our students: It’s not about wielding power without responsibility. Academic decisions must be determined by academic staff with expertise to do so and who

*continued on page 4...*

# NEGOTIATIONS 2012

## COLLEGE FACULTY



will be responsible for implementing them in the classroom. It is not about individual faculty doing whatever they want, nor about locking managers out of decisions.” He added that selection of course materials, curriculum design and delivery, and methods of evaluation are about “the freedom to be academics—to see the delivery of quality education not as an issue of excellence, but of necessity.”

Panelist Cindy Brownlee, graduate of George Brown College and current Commissioner of Mature and Part-time Students with the Canadian Federation of Students-Ontario, noted that Ontario provides the lowest per student funding in Canada, and is ahead of only Alabama in all of North America. She closed with a call for coalition building between students, faculty, and staff as essential to ensure quality education. “Coalitions between students, faculty and staff scare administration, who benefit from the divides. Use today to lay seeds for a foundation to build broad coalitions at each local institution. Students support workers and are ready to link arms.”

Participants engaged in lively and thoughtful discussion throughout the day. It was clear by the close of the symposium that academic freedom is a crucial issue



Angela Regnier, Communications Officer for CAUT, Cindy Brownlee, graduate of George Brown College and current Commissioner of Mature and Part-time Students with the Canadian Federation of Students-Ontario and Jonathan Singer, professor at Seneca College in Toronto, and well-known blogger.

*continued on page 5...*

# NEGOTIATIONS 2012

# COLLEGE FACULTY



facing college faculty in Ontario, and that the only way to guarantee this essential right is to enshrine academic freedom language in collective agreements. College faculty agree that academic freedom is at the forefront of demands for bargaining.

This symposium was an important forum for sharing ideas and building solidarity. Faculty members across the province, students, and other labour allies agree that gains around academic freedom must be made at the bargaining table.



## Quality Education Video Contest winner announced

**Peter Biesterfeld, faculty member from Algonquin College, produced the winning video. You can view the video at: <http://youtu.be/4CWjwSyooDE>. Thanks to all the faculty and students who took part in the contest!**

### Your bargaining team

- Carolyn Gaunt, Cambrian College (Co-Chair)
- Ted Montgomery, Seneca College (Co-Chair)
- Rod Bain, Algonquin College
- Gary Bonczak, Fleming College
- Benoît Dupuis, La Cité collégiale
- Lynn Dee Eason, Sault College
- JP Hornick, George Brown College

### Contact your team:

**[negotiations2012@gmail.com](mailto:negotiations2012@gmail.com)**

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Ted Montgomery, Carolyn Gaunt (co-chairs)  
and Warren (Smokey) Thomas, President, OPSEU.

