



October 2020

Report to CAUT Council

The CAUT Contract Academic Staff (CAS) Committee last met in person at the regular Committee meeting in March, 2020, in Ottawa. During that meeting, Committee members spent a significant amount of time planning the CAS Conference scheduled for October 2020. It was decided that the 2-day conference would be organized by a set of panels and workshops that focused on main issues significant to CAS: Academic Freedom, Bargaining, Mental Health and Wellness, Student Opinion Surveys and Mobilizing.

The associations represented in the CAS Committee at this time were the University of Alberta (Tim Mills), the University of British Columbia (Sarika Bose), the British Columbia Institute of Technology (Holly Munn), Concordia University (Nick Papatheodorakos), the University of Calgary (Polly Knowlton-Cockett), Grant MacEwan University (Shannon Robertson), Nipissing University (Rhiannon Don), the Federation of Post-Secondary Educators of British Columbia (Teresa Fedorak) and the University of Toronto (Kristin Cavoukian). Issues discussed by the Committee were the budget cuts in Alberta and Ontario, seniority and career advancement language in collective agreements, inequities in access to campus workspaces for CAS, performance-based funding, provincial government intervention during bargaining processes, cyber-bullying, student opinion surveys, and increased job precarity due to more contracts with decreased protections for rehiring. There was some preliminary discussion about what situations might arise if COVID-19 necessitated moving to online teaching in the middle of term. The meeting was supported by former CAS Committee professional officer, Robert Johnson, for whom this was the last meeting before his retirement at the end of March.

After the March lockdown due to COVID-19, some of the associations in the process of bargaining were obliged to delay while CAS and colleagues at all ranks found themselves pivoting to online teaching. The additional workload required as instructors adapted their courses and assignments in the middle of term continued throughout the summer, whether CAS were actively teaching or were preparing for the fall term. The workload included taking training courses, and at some institutions such as BCIT, CAS were provided with some reimbursement for the extra preparation work. During the summer, the CAS Committee has met regularly through Zoom. The Committee's membership has changed, with Queen's University (Chantal Brunette) replacing Grant MacEwan, and Kristine Smitka becoming the new representative for the University of Alberta Faculty Association. In September, the CAS Committee met for a longer, more formal meeting in lieu of the meeting scheduled to take place along with the Conference in October. As CAUT's recent survey on COVID-19 and working conditions has found, concerns about workload, working conditions and mental health have become amplified by the pandemic. For CAS, job security has

become even shakier than before, and several CAS report reduced course loads or job losses at their campuses.

During the summer months and at the beginning of the fall term, several members of the CAS Committee contributed to local and CAUT workshops and webinars, including serving as breakout group facilitators during CAUT's 4-day remote course on Member Organizing. One committee member was an organizer for the remote panel held for COCAL (Coalition of Contingent Academic Labour), and the Chair was a panelist. Several Committee members and their associations participated in various ways in Scholars Strike events on September 9-10.

It was clear by the middle of summer that the CAS Conference scheduled for October, and held every 3 years, would have to be postponed until next year. However, CAUT has organized a week of virtual events to take place during Fair Employment Week which falls between October 19-23 in 2020. These include:

- a panel on member organization with presenters from UPEI, UOIT and Wilfrid Laurier, moderated by the CAS Committee Chair;
- a webinar by Dr. Sam Trosow on intellectual property rights for CAS during this time of remote learning;
- a keynote address by Dr. Liz Morrish on the ways in which the pandemic has affected labour, pedagogy and academic values;
- a day of virtual action;
- a Zoom social to discuss and strategize about working conditions and other issues affected by the pandemic.

In addition, several associations across Canada have scheduled Fair Employment Week events to highlight the conditions of CAS.

The CAS Committee will continue to meet regularly via Zoom throughout the 2020-2021 academic year to keep abreast of the conditions under which CAS are working during these unusual times. The Committee deeply appreciates CAUT's advocacy for CAS concerns in the Canadian post-secondary sector, and looks forward to working together to support collegiality and solidarity between all ranks of academics.

I would like to acknowledge the warm support of all CAUT officers, to thank our former CAUT staff officers, Christina Muehlberger and Robert Johnson, and to welcome Justine De Jaegher as our current CAS Committee Staff Officer.

Respectfully submitted by,
Sarika Bose, Chair