



May 2019

Report to CAUT Council

This year, the CAS Committee welcomed two new members: Kristin Cavoukian from CUPE 3902 and Michael Brisbois from Grant MacEwan. Over the year, the Committee held three conference calls, two in-person meetings in August and March, and has begun to experiment with a short newsletter for months without a meeting.

Make it Fair Campaign

Fair Employment Week took place from October 22 to 26, 2018 and consisted of over 40 events on campuses across the country. Events included social media actions, celebrations of contract academic staff, panels, research forums, and tabling. This year, Fair Employment Week activities were used to further disseminate the results of CAUT's national survey on CAS, released in September 2018.

As a continuation of the Make It Fair campaign, the Chair participated in CAUT's Parliament Hill Day and was able to meet with Members of Parliament to discuss issues facing CAS.

CAUT continues to work on expanding the Make It Fair campaign, including making precarity a central issue of CAUT's federal election campaign.

Conferences on CAS Issues

The Chair of the CAS Committee is organizing a full day workshop titled "Invisible to Visible: A Symposium of Contract Faculty Work," taking place on June 4 as part of Congress 2019. Several members of the CAS Committee will be presenting. With a larger than usual number of academics attending Congress, the Committee is hoping to use this as an opportunity to highlight CAS work and issues to a large number of academic staff from across Canada.

There have been several CAS conferences and colloquia over the past year. In August 2018, some members of the CAS Committee attended and presented at the Coalition of Contract Academic Labour (COCAL) conference in San Jose, California. This Coalition includes CAS associations and unions from Canada, Mexico, and the United States. The 2018 meeting was particularly useful in balancing skills-based training with presentations on labour conditions across the three countries.

Coalitions of CAS in Toronto and Vancouver organized conferences in April 2019 that focused on precarious academic labour. Other members of the CAS Committee are also in the process of proposing panels and colloquia on precarity at their own institutions.

Looking Forward

CAS continue to experience poor working conditions and job insecurity. Time-limited, shared, or missing office space means students are denied privacy and mentorship, while their CAS instructors are denied the space to conduct their work. Many CAS have their email access and library privileges revoked at the end of each contract, making it difficult to plan courses and order course materials. CAS report that late contracts are also making course planning difficult and result in late payment for work already completed.

It is often difficult to engage CAS members in labour activism due to the very real fear that their contracts will not be renewed. CAS have no redress for this, as, at most institutions, no justification is required when a contract is not renewed. Mental health challenges are increasing, as CAS find themselves marginalized by their institutional culture, often teaching at different institutions to cobble together a living, overworked and unable to address their basic health, and constantly under financial jeopardy.

The CAS Committee deeply appreciates CAUT's work in challenging these harmful policies and working conditions that are eroding higher education in Canada.

Acknowledgements

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Respectfully submitted by,
Sarika Bose, Chair