

UVIC PEA CHAPTER – 2010 AGM – CHAIR’S REPORT

By Catherine Franz

This has been a particularly challenging year for the UVIC PEA Chapter. There has been much activity from the bargaining of a new two-year collective agreement, to issues arising from major building renovations with the KIP projects, upgrades to Banner and increasing enrolments.

In preparation for bargaining, Scott McCannell, Tom Gore, Rebecca Michaels and I traveled to Vancouver in February to meet with our counterparts from the Association of Administrative and Professional Staff of UBC and the Administrative and Professional Staff Association of SFU. The meeting fostered and strengthened relationships and allowed for the exploration of potential bargaining priorities.

In March, the entire Executive along with Bargaining Committee members Sandra Guerreiro and Matt Steigemeyer gathered at Queenswood Lodge for our annual day-long working retreat. At the retreat we discussed collective bargaining in the context of the Labour Relations Code, dynamics of collective bargaining, the summary of public sector deals, UVIC strategic context and an overview of the Public Sector Employers Council mandate. We also reviewed the results of the UVIC PEA members’ prebargaining survey and discussed priority lists of key issues for bargaining.

Bargaining, which took place during April, May and June, was heavily constrained by the Campbell government’s wage-freeze mandate and therefore focused on nonmonetary gains. Our bargaining team, consisting of Executive members John Foxgord, Lynn McCaughey and Jonathan Foweraker and members-at-large Sandra Guerreiro, Jane Godfrey and Matt Steigemeyer, along with Labour Relations Officer Scott McCannell, reached an agreement that was ratified by 77% of members who voted. The new collective agreement saw improvements to the LTD qualifying period, PEA representation on selection panels, compassionate care benefits, removal of the prescription cap, improved benefits for chiropractor and massage visits, and the resolution of Management Exclusion issues resulting in the creation of a \$300,000 scholarship endowment for UVIC PEA members and their dependents.

This past year also saw 38 members actively participating on committees focused on issues that affect all UVIC PEA members, including the

Employment and Education Equity and Human Rights Working Groups, Campus Planning Committee, Central Professional Development Committee, Job Evaluation Appeals Committee, Association/University Joint Committee, Mental Health, Personnel Benefits, Elections, Seminars, the University Safety Committee and the Bargaining Committee. To all the PEA members who volunteered countless hours we extend our sincerest gratitude. Your active participation and willingness to take on a role for your union truly makes a difference. Your steady support is outstanding.

The PEA was also represented at the orientation sessions for new UVIC staff and at regular meetings with the other unions present on campus.

In May the UVIC PEA Chapter was well represented at the Education Conference held in Vancouver. Topics discussed at the Conference included collective bargaining and membership engagement.

Social events for our members included the Pond Party in June and the recent Fol-de-Rol in October. While these were not attended by as many members as we had hoped, they appeared to be greatly enjoyed by those who did attend and the Pond Party was prominently featured in the August edition of "The Professional." This year the Executive voted to forgo the February Blues Bash in order to conserve funds for lunches at two information sessions to discuss the ratification of the new Collective Agreement. These sessions were well attended and included detailed discussions of many points in the new Agreement.

There were also two Job Evaluation Lunch and Learn sessions put on by Scott McCannell and Christine James, for members thinking of having the salary grade for their job reviewed. The sessions provided an overview of the UVIC/PEA Joint Job Evaluation Plan, related tools and processes, and the Joint Job Evaluation Questionnaire.

Our Chapter Executive also saw changes this year with the addition of Jonathan Foweraker, who capably fills the role of director, and Arie Epstein, who has since resigned to run for Vice-Chair. We unfortunately lost dedicated member Rebecca Michaels who is currently pursuing graduate studies at the University of Toronto. It is also with sadness that we say farewell to John Foxgord, who has been a member of the Executive since 2002. His calm demeanour, ethics, sense of fairness and ability to clearly and logically think through issues has made him invaluable to the Executive and to the Chapter as a whole. His knowledge, experience and personality will be very much missed, but he won't

be far as he continues to sit on the Association Executive. John, we thank you and wish you the very best.

Now with a busy year and the recent round of bargaining behind us, the executive turns to the future. There is less than two years before we are once again bargaining. With the provincial economic climate not likely to change, a 1.5% cut in budgets this year and possible 5% cut in department budgets over the next several years, plus working under the new Strategic Plan which will be unveiled next year, it has never before been as important to have an engaged membership. Our voice is only as strong as our collective members. I encourage each one of you to take the time to get to know your union and seize opportunities to participate. Union participation is open to all, regardless of age or length of service. Joining us here today is one step. You can also talk to your co-workers, take the time to answer a survey, meet with your local rep or volunteer to become a local rep, volunteer for a committee, take a member of the Executive out for coffee or even run for the Chapter Executive.

In closing, I would like to thank our Local Representatives, who are our eyes and ears on campus and who work to keep us informed of what is happening in the work place. I would like to thank our Labour Relations Officer Scott McCannell who joined us only a few short months before heading into bargaining. He has worked tirelessly to learn about our Chapter and its people. He does not shy away from the tough issues, but faces them head-on while always maintaining collegial relationships. I also wish to thank the members of the Executive. The Executive is comprised of professionals working at the University, just like everybody in this room today. They do this work without compensation and too often without thanks. They put their names forward because they believe in our union and in working for the common good of all our members at the University. I am honoured to be able to work with such dedicated individuals and I thank you all for your service.

I will leave you today with this final thought, “let our aim not be simply to survive the future, but to help shape it.”

Respectfully submitted,
Catherine Franz