

## MEMORANDUM

**To:** LUFA Board; Lee-Anne Fielding  
**From:** Leda Culliford, Sessional Faculty Member  
**Date:** June 3, 2007  
**Re:** CAUT Conference

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On May 31, 2007, at the University of Alberta in Edmonton, approximately 50 sessional representatives gathered for a conference entitled “Career Path or Pit?: Overcoming the Challenges Facing Contract Academic Staff.” As one of the attendees, I was impressed with the professionalism of the conference and the amount of valuable information disseminated in one day. I certainly recommend that a sessional member be sent to the next available conference on this topic.

After registration at 8:30 a.m., we were welcomed by Greg Allain, CAUT President, whose subsequent address was excellent, listing the challenges faced by contract academic staff at universities. Allain cited such elements as the chronic underfunding of postsecondary education and the fact that universities have developed a corporate flavour. Pointing out that fully one-third of university faculty are now part-time, he mentioned that globalization has been largely responsible for this occurrence: the Information Age, increase in non-standard work, a divide and conquer approach, and general casualization have all had an impact. Allain then listed some of the proactive work carried out by CAUT in its attempts to abolish “campus apartheid.”

Allain’s introduction led the way to discussion of the “Pro-Rata Model”—basically this model means that if a part-time person teaches half as much as a full-timer, he/she receives 50 per cent of what the full-timer would make; this includes salary, benefits, research funds, governance, and so on. Interesting questions were raised here, one of which was: is the research done to enhance teaching really research? The pro-rata model is obviously a fair one, but will take time and patience to implement. Geoff Martin (Mount Allison) and Tom Friedman (Thompson Rivers) presented interesting personal accounts of their institutions’ attempts to “rebundle” tasks into a format that would encompass the Pro-Rata Model.

Our last activity in the morning session involved four different workshops. I had signed up for the one titled “Negotiating the Shift from a per course to a Pro-Rata Model of Work” and this proved to be an interesting session. Tom Friedman reported on our session, making the points that the market is now conducive to this Model, that it is a fair one, that it should be institution wide, but could vary, and that such a model could remove much of the burden currently carried by full-timers.

After a lovely lunch at the Faculty Club (and what a club it is!), we returned to the Tory Building. We were next addressed by two sessional faculty members, who gave us their personal case histories of “sessionalism.” These were amusing but also saddening, as it became obvious that these very talented people had not been treated fairly by their institutions and had only lately received the kind of employment they had sought for many years and for which they were fully qualified.

The final workshop was one valuable to all union members: “Mobilizing Your Members.” In groups of four/five, we came up with suggestions for combating the common problems: lack of motivation, fear, apathy, and so on. Many excellent suggestions were made from the groups; these would entail some serious work, but could be most effective in achieving greater participation rates. Brenda McLean (U of A) took us through these suggestions and will be emailing them to us. I will be happy to make them available to anyone who is interested.

After a short break, we gathered again at the Faculty Club for a delicious dinner and then slowly walked back to residence through the beautiful U of A campus. This conference was both informative and enjoyable. It was good to learn what sessionals are doing on other campuses and to discuss our issues with other people. It was also pleasant to meet so many new people with whom I have so much in common. I particularly enjoyed meeting the CAUT representatives, whose names I have heard many times, and having brief discussions with them. Thank you for the opportunity to attend this conference; I am sure what I have learned will prove to most valuable to our sessional members in the future.

Please call me at extension 3426 if you require further information.

Leda Culliford